

## **CHAPTER-I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background**

Any country, which shifts away from authoritarianism, is a country in transition towards democracy. The political transition marks its beginning when a country steers from an authoritarian regime towards democracy. The political transformation of the country from partyless Panchayat rule to the multiparty system also corresponds with the transition of newspapers. Newspapers undergo various manifestations of transition as the country slips from one kind of political system to another political rule.

Partisanship in this study denotes a kind of newspapers that present overtly political material with slant to a particular political party or faction. Political press with partisan leanings comprise newspapers with more militancy than truthfulness in covering political debates and controversies. Partisan newspapers aggressively propagate a particular cause and routinely take sides, and thus, intensify the divisions. They affiliate themselves to the particular party and are not impartial. Coverage in partisan newspapers undermines truthfulness, concentrates on messages designed to create a desired impact on the public.

Commercialisation of newspapers is considered the consequence of mass newspapers. Mass newspapers are called commercial for two reasons: it is driven through profit motive, caters to monopolistic concerns, and is heavily dependent on product advertising revenue which makes it both possible and advantageous to develop a mass readership. The commercial aims and underpinnings of the mass newspaper exert considerable influence on content, is skewed towards political populism as well as generation of business, consumerism and free enterprise. Commercialism is based on the notion that the first duty of any newspaper is to become saleable.

Impact of political reforms of 1990 A D is distinctly visible in several dimensions of Nepali newspaper landscape.

First, the political changes of 1990 proved to be the take off point for the mass newspapers era in Nepal. Reach and access of newspapers increased dramatically after 1990.

Second, the political reforms extensively affected small newspapers that were basically known for their views. The newspapers, mostly weeklies, used to demonstrate their allegiance to political parties. They were considered effective tools for political movements that eventually brought about the changes of 1990.

Third, the reforms started to enhance political diversity and plurality in the print media. Eventually, they opened a new horizon in the quest of reflecting the diversities of different aspects of Nepali society in newspapers. Subsequently, a privately owned publication launched a broadsheet daily from Kathmandu. It was the first time in Nepal that a publication house from private sector started a broadsheet daily without association with any political party. In the course of time, other dailies were also brought out, inherently entailing large investments.

With the political changes of 1990, the weeklies, which used to be the backbone of the media landscape in pre-1990 Nepal, started to decline from their traditional positions. Besides *Gorakhpatra* which was in existence since 1901, and *The Rising Nepal*, launched in 1965 as the English daily, there was a government owned Radio Nepal and Nepal Television on air. Thus the weekly newspapers were essentially considered as the major means of public communication, to acquaint with the public grievances regarding the public affairs prior to 1990 Nepal.

There were at least a dozen dailies circulating on the eve of 1990 changes. Press Council Nepal records shows that the major four-page small dailies that used to appear in the market were *The Daily Mirror*, *Dainik Nepal*, *Janadoot*, *Nabin Khabar*, *Naya Yugbodh*, *The Commner*, *The Motherland*, *Samaya*, *Samaj*, *Nepal Times*, *Biswabhumi* and *Himali Bela*.

Nepal Television started in 1980s as the pioneer television channel in the country. However, the government owned broadcasting services along with two broadsheet dailies, also run by the government, were not taken to be the reliable means for the

public to acquaint themselves with alternative points of view other than that of the government.

The prominent weeklies, which played a crucial role as the campaigners for democratic movement, could not thrive in the altered political atmosphere. In fact, the emergence of commercialism of the newspapers started to change their landscape. Contrary to the past until the 1990s, Nepal entered a new era of market-driven newspapers. Consequently, the country witnessed sea changes, a profound transformation, in terms of ownership and investment of the mainstream newspapers. The changed context began to affect the foundation of the newspapers, specifically the weeklies, and their partisan inclinations by creating the base for huge investment in the daily newspapers. The big dailies began to offer alternatives to the readers and provide a larger platform for public communication.

The escalating trend of commercialism in newspapers was one of the consequences of the establishment of democracy. Ghimire (2009, p. 23) states that the protective clause of the 1991 constitution encouraged many investors from the private sector to invest in the media on an unprecedented scale and in record number, posing a challenge to the vertical monopoly of the government over the media-print, radio and television. Over the years after 1990 broadsheet dailies were brought out from Kathmandu, with several of them possessing printing outlet outside the capital. PCN (2071-72 BS, p.278) states that there are 27 national dailies in the country comprising both broadsheets and tabloids. 50 per cent of them originating outside the Kathmandu valley.

The space for the traditional weeklies started to shrink and their role and influence declined with the emerging flood of dailies within and outside the capital city in the post-1990 years. Ogura (2009, p. 29), in the course of study of Nepali society and politics, observes that daily newspapers have been focusing more on events reporting and comparatively neutral whereas weekly papers have been carrying the political missions under the influence of certain political parties. In the course of time, commercialism created the mass newspapers that paved the way for professional practice. The weeklies started to lag behind the overtly non-partisan commercial papers in the post-1990 scenario.

Concentration of newspaper ownership and the trend towards hyper commercialism are the major concerns that have surfaced in the changed context. The issue of the control over the editorial sovereignty by the business and corporate interests in the market-driven newspapers is equally prominent.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The political changes of 1990 resulted in proliferation of newspapers, both broadsheet and tabloid size dailies. The change brought about a newspaper revolution in Nepal. Contrary to the earlier scenario with the existence of small newspapers with highly limited circulation figures, an atmosphere compatible to the newspaper industry started to appear in the post-1990 Nepal. Earlier, running a newspaper was not considered as an industry and partisan leanings in journalism was the dominant trend. With the advent of multiparty democracy, non-partisan, at least overtly, commercial newspapers proliferated and in a short span of time they assumed a dominant role.

The research, in order to describe the transition of newspaper landscape after 1990, examines the state of newspapers prior to and post-1990 decades. The research questions are designed to demonstrate the process of the transformation of the Nepali newspapers immediately after the reinstallation of the multiparty political system. Following are the research questions designed to compare and contrast newspaper journalism until and after 1990:

- To what extent professionalism existed in newspaper journalism before 1990?
- What is the nature and features of newspaper landscape during twenty-five years (1990-2015) of multiparty democracy?
- What are the impacts of 1990 political change on politics-laden weeklies known for their partisan leanings?
- What are the differences between the state of political communication based on newspapers prior to and after 1990?
- What is the level of commercialism in the Nepali newspapers in post-1990 Nepal?

### 1.3 Objectives

The general objective of the study is to examine the transition of newspapers from partisanship to the age of commercialism in post-1990 Nepal.

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- To examine the state of professionalism in newspaper journalism before 1990.
- To evaluate the newspaper landscape during twenty-five years (1990-2015) of multiparty democracy.
- To examine the impact of 1990 political change on politics-laden weeklies known for their partisan leanings.
- To compare the state of political communication based on newspapers prior to and after 1990.
- To examine the state of the commercialism in the Nepali newspapers in post-1990 Nepal.

### 1.4 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Political reforms along with alteration of socio-economic condition created the atmosphere for the emergence of mass newspapers in different parts of the world. Dominick (1999, p.89) outlines that several conditions had to exist before a mass press could come into existence in North America. Technological as well socio-economic and political changes gave birth to the mass newspapers in the United States in the 1830s. Along with restoration of political freedom, the first condition that had to exist prior to a mass press could come into existence was a printing press. The printing machine had to be invented that would produce copies quickly and cheaply. The second condition was an adequate number of literate citizens. Enough people had to know how to read in order to support such a press. The third condition was the emergence of mass audience.

Thus the newspaper revolution was an end result of the termination of colonial rule and the first amendment of the US constitution, popularly known as the Bill of Rights in the USA. Like the case of other countries of the world, the evolution of mass newspapers in the US shows that the political atmosphere is the foremost pre-

condition for proliferation of mass-based large dailies. Historical parallel to the US experiences appeared after one and a half centuries in Nepal, when the mass newspapers emerged as a major impact of the 1990 political changes.

The philosophy of a newspaper is based on the norm of truth seeking and serving common people by fulfilling their desire to be informed and updated on the current affairs of their surroundings and beyond. Truth telling is to the occupational norm of the media profession what the norm of healing is to medicine, justice to politics, and critical thinking to education. This norm is the foundation of professional journalism. As a profession the newspapers have been presenting the composite package of information, education, persuasion and entertainment through texts, i.e., letters, photographs, graphics, and illustrations. Over the years the newspaper industry has been operating in such a modality. Scott (2007), in this regard, states that a newspaper has a moral as well as a material existence, and its character and influence are determined by the balance of these two forces. It may make profit or power as its first objective, or it may conceive itself as fulfilling a higher and more exacting function.

A recommendation presented by Meyer (2009, p.11) is worth mentioning in this regard. It views a newspaper, in the Jürgen Meyer model, as producing two kinds of influences: societal influence, which is not for sale, and commercial influence, or influence on the consumer's decision to buy, which is for sale. This model provides economic justification for excellence in journalism. Meyer states that a news medium's societal influence can enhance its commercial influence. If the model works, an influential newspaper will have readers who trust it and therefore be worth more to advertisers. In addition, newspaper with societal influence serves as public sphere.

Proliferation of other channels of mass communication in Nepal such as radio and television in the 1990s and 2000s, have also contributed towards wider circulations of newspapers. Stating the strength of television exposure in order to encourage people for learning, Jeffrey (2005, p.261) says that with its tantalizing, six-second grabs; television introduces people to topics and stories they have never encountered before. However, he adds that the television rarely provides background or puts things into context. People read newspapers to address their curiosity the next day. Jeffrey (2005, p.261) recalls that at one stage in the early 1990s, some Indian-language newspapers

added readers by publishing local-language summaries of Hindi epics on *Doordarshan*, India's State-run television network. Based on his observation, it could be claimed that greater amount of flow of information and exchange of messages through different outlets of mass media further increased the circulation of newspapers in post-1990 Nepal.

The emergence of big newspaper companies in post-1990 transformed the newspaper landscape in Nepal. As one of the major consequences of the 1990 political changes, the Nepali newspapers started to depart from the era of cottage industry. Transformation of newspaper contents from political rhetoric to the human-interest reading materials with diverse range of topics is an encouraging aspect of newspaper journalism after 1990. However, for want of producing marketable contents and in search of huge amount of advertising, the Nepali newspapers gradually took to excessive commercialism. Subsequently, the attitude of the owners, too strongly influenced by a desire to earn big profits, gave birth to crass commercialism.

McQuail (2000, p.492) defines commercialism as a process by which media structures and contents come to reflect the profit seeking goals of media industries and are governed by market considerations. He states that commercial media are suspected of lacking full independence from their owners and advertisers. McQuail (2000, p.49) mentions that there were no shortage of vocal critics, from the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who touch upon rank commercialism, low standards of truth and decency, control by unscrupulous monopolists and much more.

Political transformation from any sort of authoritarianism to any variant of democracy inevitably levels the playground for newspapers in any society. However, after achieving a stage where the role of the state is diminished without evolving a just and functioning system, the mass media could be converted into a tool for pandering to corporate interests. Thus, the change in polity needs to be complemented by an effective and comprehensive media system that could ensure justice and well-functioning.

Democratic polity, when operating on a right track, shapes the media system that provides platform to many voices and also offers opportunity to the voiceless to express their point of views. An ideal media system, which is an outcome of a

functioning inclusive democracy, creates an atmosphere for the mass media to play a role of surveillance in order to expose the wrong doings without indulging in power and without harbouring vested political or narrow business interests. The newspapers that adhere to professional rules in producing the contents would be proved instrumental in creating public sphere so essential for lively and candid discussions in a given society.

In this theoretical underpinning, the study has examined the ramification of the introduction of liberal democracy in the state of newspapers in Nepal.

### **1.5 Justification of the Study**

The political history of the Nepali newspapers has been a matter of discussion amongst journalists and media educators, in general, over the years. However, systematic and in-depth studies as well as documentation are yet to commence.

Like in any other parts of the world print media is the oldest form of mass media in Nepal. The history of newspapers is also considered as history of basically the entire Nepali mass media until the mid-1990s. Government owned Radio Nepal, which was initiated with the 1951 political change, was the only radio station in the country until mid-1990s. Although Government started Nepal Television before the 1990 political change, it was never allowed to reflect political diversity of the country. Explaining the situation of Radio Nepal during the Panchayat regime Whelpton (2005) writes that from Mahendra's take over until 1990, news broadcasts normally had to begin with an item on the royal family and that was usually something of no real news value but a purely formal act such as sending greetings to a foreign head of state on his country's national day (p.170). Until then newspapers were the only media platforms where the commoners could find comparatively diverse and pluralistic views in socio-political and economic affairs. However, the newspapers that existed prior to 1990 were basically the strugglers for freedom of expression, especially for democracy.

The previous hardships imposed on the newspapers by political restrictions were gone with the adoption of liberal policy along with the political changes of 1990 that encouraged the newspaper industry. Before 1990, scrapping or suspension of licence, press seizer, summoning of editors by the administration, jail sentences if the contents



were considered seditious were normal. However, in the course of transition from one political system to another, a number of significant developments surfaced after 1990 when the media policy put an end to the monopoly of the state-operated radio and television channels and privately owned broadsheet daily newspapers began to take the centre stage. It is because the dailies were comparatively less partisan whereas the weeklies were inspired or run by the political forces. Consequently, the earlier forms of politics-obsessed weekly newspapers started to lose their influence in the market.

Watson (2004, p.26) elucidates the development of different forms of mass media in different phases of world civilisation. According to him the advancement of media technology has been paving the way for public discourse. Such discourse, eventually, paved the way for mass newspapers.

In the context of Nepal, the political changes of 1990 first opened the way for liberal polity. Likewise the technological advancement occurred as one of the major consequences of liberalism.

An historical survey of evolution of newspaper industry in Nepal with reference to political changes that took place in different phases is the underlying thread of this study. The study examines the linkage of evolution of the Nepali newspapers with the dawn of democracy in 1951 and the seizure of multiparty system in 1960 followed by several successive phases of political convulsions: the 1979 movement for political reforms and the referendum of 1980; People's Movement of 1990; and movement for *Lokatantra* in 2005-2006 and the promulgation of new constitution in September 2015 by the Constituent Assembly as well as their impact on newspaper landscape, i.e., growth of readership, improvement in their contents in terms of diversity, and evolution of newspaper as an industry in Nepal.

In this regard, the political change of 1990 was the benchmark for the emergence of the newspaper industry in Nepal. It invoked the process of changes in the practice of newspaper journalism that inevitably began to extend the shape and scope of Nepali newspapers. The impact of this change asserted itself in the form and contents of the Nepali newspapers.

The scope of this study is confined within the newspaper landscape and the evolution of mass newspapers in Nepal. The history of the Nepali newspapers is the voyage of struggle and advances that ultimately culminated in the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression and free flow of information in the country. In the course of time, the quest of free and swift flow of information, put forth first by the print journalists and writers, paved the way for other forms of mass media such as radio, television and internet.

### **1.6 Organization of the Study**

This study is designed and organized in six chapters.

Chapter I: The first part comprises the introduction to the research area. The introduction to the study in detail as well as historical aspects and objectives of the study are included in this chapter.

Chapter II: In the second part, the methodology of the study is described in detail.

Chapter III: The third chapter of the study comprises literature review. Where previous studies have been reviewed. The outcomes of exploratory approach to the subject matter have been presented in detail in this chapter.

Chapter IV: In the fourth part analysis and findings have been organized. This chapter specifically demonstrates the individual contributions from the researcher's part.

Chapter V: Fifth chapter comprises the convergence of findings regarding the nature and features of transition of newspaper journalism from partisanship to commercialism in Nepal.

Chapter VI: In the sixth chapter the summary and conclusion are presented.

Finally, the other related documents are placed as annexes. References are incorporated with the study.

## CHAPTER-II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of select literature on evolution of the newspapers is presented below to assess the cause and effects of political transition and the transformation of the Nepali newspapers. The study is not only to show the state of the Nepali newspapers in social, economic, and political contexts. First, an attempt has been made to demonstrate the transition of the Nepali newspapers amidst the political upheavals in Nepal and the world. The second objective is to identify data gaps regarding the existing understanding on the theme of the study, transition of newspaper journalism from partisanship to commercialism in post-1990 Nepal. Third, the review of the relevant literature aims at bridging the information gaps in the overall understanding of the theme. Thus, the major motive of this literature review is to examine data gaps regarding the political economy in the area of the study.

The history of Nepali newspaper journalism can be divided into two broad time frames. First, the state of newspapers prior to the 1990 political change, and second, newspapers in the aftermath of 1990. The history of Nepali periodicals dates back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, years before the advent of the country's first newspaper with the dawn of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first phase was over with the end of Panchayat political system. The media system in the aftermath of 1990 political change adjusted to the new liberal multiparty democracy. Thereafter newspapers witnessed an atmosphere of political freedom. The newspapers, on behalf of the general public, started to interplay with the political actors and system in free and fearless manner in the post-1990 Nepal. Amidst the constitutional and legal guarantees of media freedom, the Nepali newspapers between 1990 and 2015 largely experienced freedom of expression and opinion.

#### **2.1 The Global Scenario: Earliest Newspapers to Mass Newspapers**

In 59 BC the authorities in Rome issued the *Acta Diurna*, a daily round-up of important social and political events which was displayed publicly for citizens. Lewis (2003, p. ix) states that it was the prototype of a newspaper. However, it was a modest forerunner of later period newspaper. McQuil (2000, p.19) mentions that the

successful application of print technology to the reproduction of texts instead of hand writing, about the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, was only the first step in the emergence of a media institution.

In the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, Gutenberg introduced the printing press to Europe, though printing itself had been invented by the Chinese long before in 600 AD (Williams, 1982, p. 32). Even after the introduction of the Gutenberg press, it took more than one and a half centuries for regular newspaper to surface in any corner of the world.

Today's newspapers have several characteristics not found in these earlier publications. DeFleur and Dennis (1991) quote Edwin Emery, a distinguished historian of journalism, from his famous book, *The Press in America*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. published at Englewood Cliffs by Prentice-Hall in 1972, as follows: a true newspaper as a paper that (a) is published at least weekly, (b) is produced by a mechanical printing process, (c) is available to people of all walks of life (for a price), (d) prints news of general interest rather than items on specialized topics such as religion or business, (e) is readable by people of ordinary literacy, (f) is timely, and (g) is stable over time. By this definition, the first true newspaper was the *Oxford Gazette*, later called the *London Gazette*. First published in 1665 under the authority of the Crown, the Gazette appeared twice weekly (p. 43).

McQuail (2000, p.21), in the course of defining the modern newspaper in brief, states their characteristics as regular and frequent appearance, commodity form, informational content, public sphere functions, urban and secular audience, and relative freedom.

Kunczik (1995, p.15) states that the first regularly appearing newspapers were published in Germany in 1609: *Aviso* in Wolfenbittel and *Relation* in Strasbourg. He mentions that the first daily newspaper to be published in Germany was Leipzig's *Einkommende Zeitung* in 1650. It is considered as the first daily newspaper in the world. In North America the first newspaper appeared in Boston during the colonial period during the later part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Folkerts and Lacy (2004, p.138) state that Benjamin Harris in 1690 published a newspaper the *Publick Occurrences Both Forreign and Domestick*, but the royal government was not ready to tolerate critical comment on local affairs. It prohibited Harris from publishing the second issue. It was

shut down by authorities because of its controversial content. Dominick (1999) also mentions that the paper was suppressed after one issue. The notion of a free press had yet to surface in America, and the majority believed that a paper had to have the royal consent to be published. Then only after fourteen years another attempt was made to publish a newspaper in America. In 1704 John Campbell started *the Boston News Letter* (p.86). However, Folkerts and Lacy (2004, pp.138-139) mentions that by the year 1701 postmaster John Campbell had already circulated a handwritten News-Letter, published 'with authority' or approval, of the British governor.

De Fleur and Ball-Rokeach (1982, pp.7-8) state that the basic idea of a newspaper got developed quite early in the European continent, in England, and in the new United States. The American colonial press was established for some years before the new nation was formed, distributing small papers and pamphlets to the educated elite. In this context, McQuail (2000, p.20) argues that the 17<sup>th</sup> century commercial newspaper was not identified with any single source but was a compilation made by printer-publisher. In the course of time, newspaper journalism was to emerge as a distinct profession.

One of the early dailies was brought out in the United Kingdom. Wainwright (1986, p.29) mentions that *The Daily Courant* was the first regular daily newspaper to be published in the United Kingdom. This British daily newspaper was first published on March 11, 1702 by Edward Mallet. This was a modest digest of extracts from European news sheets, often out of date, and provided no comment and opinions. Its editors explicitly expressed their assumption that people have enough sense to make reflections themselves. The paper consisted of a single page with two columns. Mallet advertised that he intended to publish only foreign news, and claimed that he would not take upon himself to add any comments of his own.

According to Curran and Seaton (2003) between 1750s and 1800s, a section of the commercial press became more independent politically, partly as the consequence of the growth of advertisements in UK. They observe that the additional revenue reduced dependence on political subsidies and encouraged papers to reject covert secret service grants. It improved the wages and security of employment of journalists so that they became less biddable. Above all, it financed greater expenditure on newsgathering so that newspapers became less reliant on official sources and more

reluctant to trade their independence in return for obtaining prior intelligence from the government (p.6).

Barbrook (1995, p.14) mentions that during the 1789-99 revolution, the radical newspaper such as *L'Ami du peuple*, using hand-operated wooden presses, would produce a print run of around 3,000 copies everyday in France. By the late nineteenth century, according to Barbrook (1995, p.20), a combination of growing literacy, better transport and republican freedoms created a nationwide readership for newspapers within France. In response, he further states, the industrialisation of newspaper production proceeded quickly. He mentions that from 1872 to 1884, the daily circulation of the first newspaper printed on mechanised presses rapidly rose from 220,000 to 825,000 copies. According to him, the success of this first mass-circulation newspaper in France encouraged other publications to introduce mechanised production.

The first newspaper in South Asia began in the capital of British-India. Natarajan (1962, p.13) states that the first Indian newspaper, the *Bengal Gazette*, had made its appearance in 1780. He writes (1962, p.14) that James Augustus Hicky was the proprietor of the *Bengal Gazette* or *Calcutta General Advertiser*, the very first newspaper to be published in India. The first issue appeared on Saturday, January 29, 1780, announcing itself as "A weekly political and commercial paper open to all parties but influenced by none".

Natarajan (1962, p.14) notes that much of the pages of the *Bengal Gazette* were devoted to advertisements. However, he states that its special features were addresses to the public from Hicky, a "Poet's Corner", and all the local gossip relating to the British community in Calcutta. Natarajan (1962, p.16) states that though Hicky was sent to jail and the intention of the action was to silence his newspaper, which, however, continued to appear regularly and with no change in tone.

The British destroyed *Hicky Gazette* in March 1782. According to Natarajan (1962, p.19), within six years of Hicky's pioneering attempt, four weeklies and a monthly were being published from Calcutta.

The most important phase in press history started after the evolution of modern outlook towards the newspaper. Across the history McQuail (2000, pp.21-23) observes three genres of newspaper, such as the political press, the prestige press and the commercial newspaper. He (2000,p. 20) states that it is almost two hundred years after the invention of printing, what we now recognize as a prototypical newspaper could be distinguished from the handbills, pamphlets and newsletters of the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Stating about some early monarchies, and government attempts to suppress or censor news content, Dominick (1999, p.64), notes that it took until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to establish the notion of a press free of government control.

Journalism, the newspaper journalism to be precise, in early America underwent different phases such as the political press (1790-1833), the penny press (1833-1860) and yellow journalism (1880-1905) (Dominick, 1999, pp.87-94).

Baran and Davis (2002) state that by the mid and late 19<sup>th</sup> century, popular demand for cheap media content drove the development of new media such as the penny press. They further state that high-speed printing presses and other technological advancement made it practical to mass produce the printed word at very low cost. Newspaper circulation wars broke out which led to the development of yellow journalism, the irresponsible side of the penny press (p.41).

De Fleur and Ball-Rokeach (1982) argue that when a means was found to finance a cheap paper for wide distribution, and the techniques were devised for rapid printing and distribution, the first true mass medium was born in the form of the penny press. They states that these events occurred in the mid-1830s in New York City. They were of the view that the mass newspaper was a great success, and within a very few years it spread to many parts of the world (p.8).

Dominick (1999) states that Benjamin Day was only 22 years old when he launched the *New York Sun* in 1833. And that Day's paper would be a daily and would sell for a penny. He states that this was a significant price reduction in comparison to the other New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia dailies, which went for six cents a copy. According to Dominick, local happenings, sex, violence, features, and human-interest

stories would constitute the content of the *New York Sun*. Within six months *The Sun* achieved a circulation of approximately 8,000 copies, far ahead of its nearest competitor. The gamble had paid off, and the penny press was thus launched. The last of the major newspapers of the penny press era began in 1851 (1999, p. 90).

Dominick (1999) argues that the penny press redefined the concept of news. He mentions that the penny press hired people to go out and look for news. He notes that the reporters of the penny press were assigned to special beats: police, financial, sports, and religion, to name a few. He mentions that foreign correspondents of the penny press were popular and that even Karl Marx served as a London correspondent for the US based *Tribune* for some time (p.92).

Steinberg (1972) states that it was not until the latter part of the eighteenth century that the newspaper became a medium of information, opinion and advertising. He notes that printed journalism in the form of newsletters, however, circulated in England in the seventeenth century and that mass circulation, on a limited basis, began in the nineteenth century and laid the basis for contemporary American journalism (p.123).

As Campbell (2000) states, historians mark the 1830s as the beginning of the transition between the partisan and modern press eras. He views that though American journalism began as a venue for partisan politics (encouraging debate over issues such as constitutional amendments, slavery, and states' rights), in the 19<sup>th</sup> century publishers figured out how to sell news as a product. According to him, they used modern technology to substantially cut their costs; they also began to change news content to appeal to emerging middle and working class people, who could now afford a paper and had the leisure time to read it. Subsequently, as Campbell argues, publishers realized that they needed more practical content because many readers were not particularly interested in the intricacies of partisan politics (p.439).

Dominick (1999) argues that before the penny press, most of a newspaper's economic support came from subscription revenue. The large circulation of the penny papers made advertisers realise that they could reach a large segment of potential buyers by purchasing space. Moreover, the readership of the popular papers cut across political-party and social-class lines, thereby assuring a potential advertiser of a broadly based



audience. As a result, advertisers were greatly attracted to this new medium, and the mass newspapers relied significantly more on advertising revenues than did their predecessors (p.91).

Thus, Dominick (1999) presents three conditions that had to exist before a mass press could come into existence. According to him first of all, a printing press had to be invented that would produce copies quickly and cheaply. Second, enough people had to know how to read in order to support such a press. Third, he perceives that a mass audience had to be present (p.89).

Describing the first precondition for the mass newspapers to emerge, Dominick (1999) mentions that in the year 1830 a US firm R. Hoe and Company built a steam-powered press that would produce 4,000 copies per hour. The efficient steam-powered presses made it possible to print an extremely cheap newspaper that anybody could afford. After mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, popular press emerged in US armed with commercial advertisings and sensational news. The trend gave birth to the Press barons. By the 1830s, North America witnessed the rise of the penny press, a new class of newspapers targeted towards lower and middle-class audiences (p.89). Hodgson (1997) also states that the Hoe Company, in the United States, built faster presses which by 1890 made possible mass circulation newspapers in New York and Chicago, London, Paris and Berlin (p.6).

Dominick (1999) argues that the second element that led to the growth of the mass newspaper was the increased literacy rate of the population. The first state-wide public school system was set up during the 1830s. The increased emphasis on education led to a concomitant growth of literacy as many people in the middle and lower economic groups acquired reading skills (p.89).

The third element, according to Dominick (1999) was more subtle and harder to describe. The mass press appeared during an era in which ordinary people were first recognized as political and economic force. Property requirements for voting had died out. Every state but one chose presidential electors by popular vote. In addition, this period was marked by the rise of an urban middle class. The trend toward "democratization" of business and politics fostered the creation of a mass audience responsive to a mass press (p.89).

Dominick (1999) argues that the major changes in journalism were prompted by the success of the mass press during the period of 1833-1860. He states that the penny press introduced such four changes: the basis of economic support for newspapers, the pattern of newspaper distribution, and the definition of what constituted news, and the techniques of news collection (p.91).

The economics of newspaper started to take roots with the beginning of the penny press in the US. Huntington (1991) opines that the first wave of democracy took place around this time. He states that the wave had its roots in the American and French revolutions. According to him the US began the first wave of democratization roughly around 1828 (p.16).

Curran and Seaton (2003, p.6) state that the growth of advertising did not transform the commercial press into an independent fourth estate in UK. They view that the development of modern political parties from the 1860s onward encouraged a closer interpenetration of party politics and commercial journalism. They (Curran and Seaton, 2003, p.7) note that the conventional portrayal of advertising as the midwife of press independence is also directly contradicted by the emergence of the radical press as a political force in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain. They (Curran and Seaton, 2003, p.11) state that unlike the institutionalized journalists the radicals tended to view themselves as activists rather than the professionals. The duo (2003, p.12) notes that one of the important features of the economic structure of the radical press in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was its self-sufficiency on the proceeds of sales alone.

According to Curran and Seaton (2003, p.24) the radical newspapers of UK started to decline after mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Hence, communication processed commercially as a commodity for the mass market inevitably resulted in the manipulation of public tastes and attitudes for profit (p.26).

De Fleur and Ball-Rokeach (1982, p.8) state that the third decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, then, saw the technology of rapid printing and the basic idea of a newspaper combined into the first true mass medium of communication. In the course of further development, the newspapers were transformed into the mass newspapers.

Dominick (1999) states that after working at a string of unsuccessful jobs in St. Louis, a US city which then had the largest proportion of non-English-speaking immigrant, Joseph Pulitzer became interested in journalism and realized that he had found his calling. Dominick states that, in 1878, Pulitzer turned the St. Louis Post-Dispatch into a grand success. He obviously found a formula for newspaper success, and his innovations are worth considering. He attracted a mass readership by reintroducing the sensationalized news of the penny-press era into his paper (p.92).

Dominick (1999), describing the emergence of yellow journalism, states that Hearst, like Pulitzer before him, then invaded the big league, New York City. In 1895, he bought the *New York Journal*. Soon, Pulitzer and Hearst were engaged in a fierce circulation battle as each paper attempted to out-sensationalize the other. He states that as one press critic put it, the duel between these two spread "death, dishonour and disaster" all over page one. Sex, murder, self-promotion, and human-interest stories filled the two papers. This type of reporting became known as yellow journalism, and whatever its faults, it sold newspapers (p. 93).

Baran and Davis (2000, p.42) argue that at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, every industry had its barons, and the most notorious, if not the greatest of the press lords, was William Randolph Hearst. Hearst specialized in buying up failing newspapers and transforming them into profitable enterprise. In the course of describing the rise of yellow journalism, they observe that Hearst demonstrated that the news business could be as profitable as railroads, steel, or oil.

By the end of yellow journalism era the newspapers were already transformed into mass newspapers with a bright future of being a media industry. In due course of time the mass newspapers started getting recognition as a form of mass media. The essential prerequisites paved the way for the basic form of newspapers. Then a new kind of newspapers emerged aiming at the base of artisans, mechanics, and merchants. The base constituted the growing middle and working classes of the emerging urban-industrial society.

Dominick (1999) argues that although the period of yellow journalism was not the proudest moment in the history of the American newspaper, some positive features did emerge out of it. According to him, in the first place, it brought enthusiasm, energy, and verve to the practice of journalism, along with aggressive reporting and investigative stories. His second observation is that it brought wide exposure to prominent others and led to some fine examples of contemporary writing (p.94). Consequently, it established newspapers as the prime movers of journalism. Journalism started with the print media. For many years it was synonymous to the newspaper. Wainwright (1986, p.1) views that Journalism is *The Times* and the *Guardian*, *the Daily Mirror* and *the Sun*. McQuail (2000, p. 4) opines that despite a long history, newspapers could avoid the constraints of localism, elitism or sectionalism (political or religious) and became a medium 'for the masses' only towards the end of the nineteenth century.

According to Hodgson (1997), there is a clear relationship between those technical innovations of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and certain dramatic changes in the structure, the economics, the culture and perhaps the ideology of the media of the day. The new newspapers of the 1890s and 1900s were sold to people who had not previously read newspaper at all, with consequences which are extremely complicated set of enormous significance (p.6).

Baran and Davis (2002, p.46) state that mass newspapers of the yellow journalism era [1890s] were viewed as gigantic, monopolistic enterprises that employed unethical practices to pander to semi-literate mass audiences. McQuail (2000, p. 40) defines that the most obvious feature of this mass media is that they are designed to reach the many. He states that the term mass communication came into use in the late 1930s, but its essential features were already well known and have not really changed since, even if the media themselves have in some ways become less massive.

Mc Quail (2000, p.21) argues that newspapers did not really become a true mass medium until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the sense of directly reaching a majority of the population on a regular basis, and there are still quite large inter-country differences in the extent of newspaper reading.

Evolution of modern newspaper could be defined as a major manifestation of communication revolutions. Behringer (2006) explains the communications revolution as a macro historical process, comparable to the scientific revolution and the industrial revolution, both of them had permanent and irreversible consequences in the modern era. He argues that the communication revolution, like the other two, began in the early modern era, and is still ongoing. Writing and printing were the first and second communication revolutions evolving from oral traditions in 19<sup>th</sup> century. Print media facilitated awareness, information and knowledge through newspapers along with books, magazines, brochures and other forms of printed material. The process gradually took momentum with advancement in technologies. Behringer (2006) states that the concept of a communications revolution encompasses smaller 'media revolutions', more easily ascribed to a specific historical period, and to a large extent mutually interrelated and dependent. He argues that the development of postal services gave rise to a new perception of space and time which is the defining moment of the mainspring of change in the communications revolution. According to him the postal services enabled faster movements of people, goods, and information.

Behringer (2006) states that the new medium: of printed books, newspaper or sheet magnified the effects of this faster dissemination of news and information. After the invention of Gutenberg's manual printing press, the steam power and then electric power accelerated the number and the capacity of media forms.

By the dawn of 20<sup>th</sup> century, media landscape in Europe and the USA changed dramatically with the emergence of commercially run mass newspapers. However, in retrospect, newspapers had faced strong opposition from the forces of status quo. A mass society theory had to be defeated for the emergence of popular mass newspapers. Mass society theory is an idea which believes that media are corrupting agents that undermine the social order through their influence over defenceless general public.

McQuail (2000, p.74) states that mass society theory gives primacy to the media as a causal factor. He views that it rests very much on the idea that the media offer a view of the world, a substitute or pseudo-environment, which is a potent means of manipulation of people but also an aid to their psychic survival under difficult

conditions. McQuail (2000, p.75) argues that as a theory of the media, mass society theory strongly invokes images of control and portrays the direction of influences as flowing from above. McQuail further views that the theory posits that media will be controlled or run in a monopolistic way and will be an effective means of organizing people in masses as audiences, consumers, markets, electorates. Thus, mass society theory resents media's power to attract readers and considers media contents highly objectionable and sinful.

The essential argument of mass society theory is that media undermine the traditional social order. To cope with this disruption, steps had to be taken to either restore the old order or institute a new one. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fierce debate erupted over this issue. Mass society thinkers were unduly paternalistic and elitist in their criticism of average people and they feared that media's corruption of the masses would inevitably bring social and cultural ruin. Baran and Davis (2002, p. 48) say that envy, discontent and outright fear were often at the root of mass society theory. The theory makes several basic assumptions about individuals, the role of media and the nature of social change.

A fearful reaction against the newspapers surfaced with the proliferation of newspapers crossing the range of elitists to the average people. Such reaction, known as mass society theory, opposes the widening of the reach of newspapers. Baran and Davis (2002, p. 48) present six assumptions made by the Mass Society Theory. First, the media are a malignant, cancerous force within society and must be purged or totally restructured. Second, the mass society theory assumes that media have the power to reach out and directly influence the minds of average people. Third, it assumes that once people's minds are corrupted by the media, all sorts of bad, long-term consequences result in not only ruining individual lives but also creating social problems on a vast scale. Fourth, mass society theory reflects a fear that average people are vulnerable to the media because they have been cut off and isolated from traditional social institutions that previously protected them from manipulation. Fifth, it assumes establishment of a totalitarian social order will inevitably resolve the social chaos initiated by the media. Sixth, the theory believes that mass media inevitably debase higher forms of culture, bringing about a general decline in civilization.

In order to address the radical reaction and many concerns against the newspapers, media scholars and practitioners came up with the prescriptions of self-regulations. The measures adopted by the media professionals for self-regulation ultimately raised public trust in newspapers. Tunstall (2012, p.239) states that around 1900 in much of western Europe, and in Japan, the press was still only just emerging from state control; but in both the United States and Britain newspapers experienced very few governmental constraints. Obviously, the efforts of self-regulations started from the US and Britain.

In 1921 C.P. Scott (2007) put forward his notion of moral and material existence of a newspaper. Scott views that a newspaper has two sides to it. He states that it is a business, like any other, and has cost to pay in the material sense in order to survive. But it is much more than a business; it is an institution; it reflects and it influences the life of a whole community; it may affect even wider destinies. He states that a newspaper plays on the minds and consciences of men. It may educate, stimulate, assist, or it may do the opposite. He argues that it has a moral as well as material existence, and its character and influence are determined mainly by the balance of these two forces. Scott views that a newspaper may make profit or power its first object, or it may conceive itself as fulfilling a higher and more exacting function.

Scott (2007), in the course of explaining the functions of a newspaper, argue that there must be competence, to start with, on the business side, just as there must be in any large undertaking, but it is a mistake to suppose that the business side of a paper should dominate, as sometimes happens, not without distressing consequences. He states that a newspaper, to be of value, should be a unity, and every part of it should equally understand and respond to the purposes and ideals which animate it. He further states that between its two sides there should be a happy marriage, and editor and business manager should march hand in hand, the first, be it well understood, just an inch or two in advance.

Baran and Davis (2000, pp.75-76) state that Lippmann, in 1922, not only pointed out the discrepancies that necessarily exist between the world outside and the pictures in our heads, he mentions that the discrepancies were inevitable and he doubted that average people could govern themselves as classic democratic theory assumed they could. Lippmann (1961, p.30) inquires into the reasons why that picture inside so

often misleads man in their dealing with the world outside. He (Lippmann, 1961, p.29) argues that the pictures inside the heads of these human beings, the pictures of themselves, of others, of their needs, purposes, and relationship, are their public opinion. He (Lippmann, 1961, p.32) argues that the newspapers are regarded by democrats as a panacea for their own defects, whereas analysis of the nature of news and of the economic basis of journalism seems to show that the newspapers necessarily and inevitably reflect, and therefore, in greater or lesser measure, intensify, the defective organization of public opinion. Thus, he concludes that public opinions must be organized for the press if they are to be sound, not by the press as was the case at that time.

Mayer (1987,p.18) notes that The American Society of Newspaper Editors approved a code at its first meeting in 1923 amidst a public debate over ethical problems raised by the leasing to private interests of government oil reserves at Teapot Dome in Wyoming. ASNE's initiation was induced by the incident of the government leasing out oil reserves to private interests. The society declared the canons of journalism: a 7-point ethical guidelines for journalists. In its preamble, ASNE's canons of journalism states that it is a statement of principles as a standard, encouraging the highest ethical and professional performance. It envisages responsibility, freedom, independence, truth and accuracy, impartiality and fair play that are intended to preserve, protect and strengthen the bond of trust and respect between the American journalists and the American people.

All these attempts were, in fact, not only the struggle against the mass society theory, rather the efforts to uphold the credibility of newspapers and to win the public trust.

With the development of computers, in the period following the Second World War, technological digitization hastened practically the universal use of that icon of modern-age communication, the mobile phone. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century media convergence was common a phenomenon. Behringer (2006) argues that Communications Revolution have been the motor that enabled the construction of the infrastructure of the modern world, newspapers, cartography, and the 'public sphere' of politics, of warfare and diplomacy. Parry (2011, p.3) states that the world witnesses the beginning of a dynamic new era in which the convergence of text, audio, and video is creating a rich and compelling media mixture.



Stating that after the Second World War, economic forces continued to shape the American newspaper, Dominick (1999, p.96) argues that although newspaper circulation rose approximately 48 million in 1945 to about 62 million in 1970, the number of dailies stayed about the same in the US. In 1945, 60 chains controlled about 42 per cent of the total daily newspaper circulation. He states that by 1970, there were approximately 157 chains that accounted for 60 per cent of total circulation whereas the total amount of advertising revenue spent on all media nearly tripled between 1945 and 1970. The rising television industry cut significantly into the print media's national advertising revenue.

DeFleur and Everette (1991) state that the newspaper industry needs human resources of different disciplines and it encompasses all means of production—land, labour, capital, enterprise, technology, energy and raw materials— to come up with the media product embedded with moral and material existence. He views that newspapers at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had virtually the same kind of content and format seen today. Although computers have transformed the way newspapers are produced, their appearance and distribution techniques have much in common with those of 1910. But there have been significant changes in other areas—specifically, in circulation, ownership, and styles of reporting (p. 52).

In the course of discussing modern newspaper, Dominick (1999) argues that it is the phenomena of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He states that the 1970s and after have seen developments in reporting, economics, content, and technology (p. 97). In fact, with the changed environment in politics, economy and society, the US newspapers transformed into mass newspapers and subsequently in the other parts of the world. A fearful reaction and resistance, known as mass society theory, to the media during the period of transformation were reduced significantly in due course of time.

Dominick (1999, p.97) argues that investigative reporting enjoyed a resurrection in the 1970s because of the efforts of the *Washington Post* reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein in exposing the Watergate scandal, which eventually caused the resignation of President Richard Nixon.

DeFleur (1977, pp.17-18) says that the modern newspaper is a combination of elements from many societies and from many periods of time. McQuail (2000, p. 20) argues that the later history of the newspaper can be told either as a series of struggles, advances and reverses towards the cause of liberty or as a mere continuous history of economic and technological progress. The most important phase in press history started after the entry into the modern definition of the newspaper.

## **2.2 Evolution of Nepali Language Newspapers**

Since, Nepal was under authoritarian rule, the seeds of press and publication activities were sown outside the country. Nepali students studying in India found relatively safe and easy atmosphere to bring out publications.

Like in any other parts of the world, print is the earliest media in Nepal and it has put forth the agenda in every step during the national crisis. However, due to the lack of technology and democratic environment within the country, publications including the papers in the Nepali language were brought out from across the border.

Parthsarathy (1997) opines that the newspaper came to India as an alien product, as one of the benefits of British rule. In the early years it was confined to, and subserved, the interests of the ruling race and its subjects had very little to do with it, not for a very long time (p.19). In the course of time the scenario started to change. Ram (1997, p.xiii) states that the period between 1868 and 1919 witnessed a clear partisan between supporter of the colonial *Raj* and the nationalist movement. He says that the period witnessed the rise of the Indian press as part of the nationalist vs anti-imperialist struggle and the manifestation of the two lines or two tendencies in the press.

The process of evolution of Nepali newspapers is closely linked with India. As Baral (1975, p.169) states that Nepal failed to bring about a social renaissance. According to him, social, religious and literary renaissance was followed by political awakening encompassing many facets of Indian life. Obviously, Nepali youths residing in India for whatever vocation, got influenced by the ongoing socio-political activities of Indian society. Baral (1975, p.171) opines that many young, enthusiastic elements

working outside the country made serious bids for heralding a democratic era in Nepal.

In the struggle against the British, some newspapers played a very notable role in India (Chaturbedi, 2013). At that time journalists were the part of the movement for the independence. For example, Chaturbedi (2013) states that Tilak's *Kesari* became one of the leading media to propagate the message of freedom movement. It also made anti-partition movement of Bengal a national issue. In 1908, Tilak opposed the sedition ordinance. He was later exiled from India for six years.

The pro-independence newspapers played partisan role with acknowledged bias against the British imperialism. At this time Indian journalists were openly associated with the political parties. Chaturbedi (2013) notes that the editors commanded a very high reputation at the time of the birth of the Indian National Congress. He argues that one could measure the extent of this respect from the fact that those who occupied the frontline seats in the first ever congress session held in Bombay in December 1885 included some of the editors of Indian newspapers. He mentions that during his stay in South Africa, Gandhi had brought out *Indian Opinion* and after settling in India, he started the publication of *Young India*, *Navjeevan*, *Harijan*, *Harijan Sevak* and *Harijan Bandhu*. Subash Chandra Bose and C.R. Das were not journalists but they acquired the papers like *Forward* and *Advance* which later attained national status. Jawaharlal Nehru founded *the National Herald* (Chaturvedi, 2013).

Shils (1963, p.195) makes an observation on the political significance of intellectuals in underdeveloped countries. According to him the gestation, birth and continuing life of the new states of Asia and Africa, through all their vicissitudes, are in large measure, the work of intellectuals. He (Shils, 1963, p.196) states that it was the intellectuals on who, in the first instance, developed the task of contending for their nations' right to exist, even to the extent or promulgating the very idea of the nation. He further observes that the intellectuals have created the political life of the underdeveloped countries; they have been its instigators, its leaders, and its executants. Until [Mahatma] Gandhi's emergence at the end of the First World War, they were its main followers as well, but this changed when the nationalist movement began to arouse the sentiments of the mass of the population (Shils, 1963, pp.196-197).

By the time the pioneer Nepali paper arrived, the west and Nepal's immediate neighbour India were far ahead in terms of newspaper journalism. Dutton (2013) argues that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Edmund Burke identified the *Fourth Estate* to highlight the significance of the press as an independent check on the three feudal estates—the clergy, nobility and the commons—and the mob. Burke marked press as the Fourth Estate besides the prevalence of priesthood, aristocracy and commoners in contemporary England (p.39). But, the concept of the Fourth Estate could only be applicable in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century with the advent of modernity in the context of Nepal. After conquering the four principalities of Kathmandu valley, King Prithivi Narayan Shah shifted his capital from Gorkha to Kathmandu and thus laid the foundation of the present Nepal in September 25, 1768 (Gyawali, 1976, p.152). Bista (2008, p.28) argues that Nepal was kept under the worst form of isolation, backwardness and economic exploitation and the country remained a feudal estate controlled by the Ranas. In his view it was only in 1951, in the wake of its liberation from Rana oligarchy that the country emerged from a very medieval form of feudal dominance. Earlier, in September 15, 1846, Jung Bahadur Rana grabbed the power following the court massacre. According to Sharma (2033 BS, p.312) at least 55 persons were recorded confirmed-killed including the then prime minister, however, the number could be much higher.

Against this backdrop, the first periodical in Nepali language was brought out in India by the Nepali youths. Thapa (2009, p.10) quotes Heera Kshetry's work *Bharateli Nepali patra-patrikako shatabdi 1887-1986* published by Shivani Prakashan from Sikkim in July 1993 concerning *Gorkha Bharat Jeevan*. According to Kshetry's writing, *Bharat Jeevan* was published by Babu Ram Krishna Verma in Hindi. Same publication was translated in Nepali and was published as *Gorkha Bharat Jeevan*. It was Motiram Bhatta who happened to had good relation with the owner of a printing press named Bharat Jeevan in Benaras. Paudyal (2027 BS, p. 28) also states that in the initiation of Motiram Bhatta, the first periodical in Nepali language *Gorakha Bharat Jeevan* appeared from Kashi. Mentioning the names of many other periodicals and newspapers such as *Gorkhe Khabar Kagat* from Darjeeling, *Janmabhoomi* from Kashi, *Nepal Pukar* from Calcutta and *Gorakha* from Kalingpong before 1951, Paudyal (2027 BS, p. 30) states that paradoxically the dawn of Nepali language journalism did not take place within the country rather it emerged from outside the

country. He further adds that zeal and awareness among the Nepali nationals who were scattered outside the country seeking employment or education were the catalyst factors.

In the aftermath of the advent of *Gorakhapatra* weekly inside Nepal, the intellectual youths, exposed to the democratic principles, used Indian soil to publish newspapers critical to Rana military oligarchy.

Savada (1991) describes that just after the First World War, Thakur Chandan Singh, a retired army officer, started two weekly newspapers in Nepali language in the Indian city of Kumaon, *Tarun Gorkha* and *Gorkha Sansar*. At the same time, Devi Prasad Sapkota, a former officer in the Foreign Department, founded *Gorkhali* weekly in Benaras. Chauhan (1971, pp.22-23) states that the first demand for civil liberties and responsible government for Nepal was made in India through the columns of a Nepali weekly, *Gorkhali*, founded in Benaras during the early years of the First World War by the efforts of Subba Devi Prasad Sapkota. *Gorkhali* vehemently criticized the oligarchic rule of the Ranas and exposed the cruelties and torture to which the people were being subjected by the Rana regime. Regmi (1952, p.227) mentions *Gorkhali* was banned by the British Indian authorities in 1922.

*Gorkha Sansar* was a ground-breaking effort made by a Nepali intellectual, Thakur Chandan Singh. Singh was the son-in-law of the deposed Commander in Chief of Nepal, General Khadga Shumshere. General Khadga was exiled to Palpa, in western Nepal, by his elder brother, Maharaja Bir (*Gorkha Sansar*, 2015). General Khadga later fled to British India and was settled down in present-day Madhya Pradesh with the help of the British Indian Government. As a son-in-law in exile, Thakur Chandan Singh was also branded a rebel by the Nepal Court (*Gorkha Sansar*, 2015). Singh viewed that in order to uplift the situation of Gorkhas in India, Rana military oligarchy should be uprooted. Because of his stance against the Rana regime Chandra Shumshere conspired to close *Gorkha Sansar*. However, he managed to start *Tarun Gorkha* independently on August 8, 1928, merely 10 days after leaving the editorship of *Gorkha Sansar* (Gautam and Pagal, 2006, pp. 158-159).

Digital South Asia Library has archived its issues that appeared between November 4, 1926 and March 12, 1929. Its first issue appeared on November 4, 1926 as the official

mouthpiece of Gorkha League under the editorship of Chandan Singh. Later, it continued its publication under the editorship of Nanda Ram Thapa. On March 12, 1929 it notified that then onward it would be published by another printer.

*Gorkha Sansar* focused itself for the welfare of the Nepali Gurkha diaspora community. The paper was banned inside Nepal but remained a popular (and in fact the only) medium of expression for the diaspora community. The archives suggests that newspapers also used to carry advertisements and notice for the advertisers. One such notice assures the advertisers of "sure influx of customers" and states that it is "great, grand and golden opportunity for the advertisers" to place their advertisement on *Gurkha Sansar*. The notice also claimed that the newspaper has "wide circulation amongst Nepali all over India and Burma (Nepal inclusive)". Providing rate for the advertisements, the manager of the newspaper appealed advertisers to try out at least once and be satisfied. It even announced 15 per cent commission for the agencies (*Gorkha Sansar*, March 12, 1929).

Gautam and Pagal (2006, pp.157) mention that *The Himanlayan Times* English weekly that started on November 4, 1926 along with *Gorkha Sansar* were circulating across the big cities of Indian provinces Uttar Pradesh, Bangal, Maharashtra and well as South and North East India such as Deharadun, Culcutta, Bombay, Madras, Delhi, Banglure, Banarash, Merath, Darbhanga, Bhagsu, Darjeeling and Asam. It also had reach in Bhutan and then Nepal, however, in clandestine fashion.

Whelpton (2005, p.80) states that political consciousness would develop among the communities established by ex-servicemen and their families near army barracks and resulted in the founding of All India Gorkha League in 1924 at Dehradun and the publication of the paper, *Tarun Gorkha* [Young Gorkha], later renamed *Gorkha Sansar* [Gorkha World]. Whelpton (2005, p. 82) further says that national feelings on lines already displayed in the nineteenth century was the starting point for yet another member of the Nepali community in Benares, Devi Prasad Sapkota. He had been dismissed from the Foreign Office by Chandra Shumsher for arguing that Nepal was violating its 1856 treaty obligations to Tibet by supporting Young Husband's 1904 expedition. Chauhan (1971, p.23) states that Chandan Singh in 1927 established the League of Gurkhas at Dehradun. He published two weekly papers— *Gorkha Sansar* and *Tarun Gorkha*. Through his papers, Singh tried to inculcate political

consciousness among the Gorkha residents in India and to mobilise them against the Ranas.

According to Gautam (2046 BS, p. 66-67), in 1936, a political party, Nepal Praja Parishad, was established clandestinely by Tanka Prasad Acharya, Dasharath Chand, Jeevraj Sharma, Ramhari Sharma and Dharmabhaka Mathema in Kathmandu. He notes that the first task the Parishad undertook was exposing the Ranas and unmasking their despotic rule before the people—the Nepalis, Indians and others. For this purpose, the party attempted to run a Press. Owing to lack of finances, it succeeded in getting a column in *Janata*, a weekly journal published by R.B. Benpuri from Patna, in India. Regmi (1952, p.239) notes that the articles published in this column were vehemently critical of the Rana regime.

Devkota (2051 BS, pp.53-54) states that *Yugbani* weekly was started on January 26, 1948 from India by Laxmi Prasad Devakota, Narayan Prasad Upadhaya, Balchandra Sharma and Krishna Prasad Upadhaya. It was the first newspaper in Nepali, fully loaded with awareness materials against the Rana regime. It was conceived after the establishment of Nepali Rastriya Congress. That weekly had a mission to spread awareness among the commoners in Nepal. On November 6, 1948, *Nepal Pukar* weekly was launched in Kolkata, the mouthpiece of Nepal Prajatantra Congress, which became the mouthpiece of Nepali Congress afterwards. It went ahead even further than *Yugbani*. Before 1950, the government had banned *Nepal Pukar* in Nepal. But it used to be circulated in clandestine manner. After the establishment of democracy in 1951, it was restarted in the country. *Nawayug*, mouthpiece of then CPN, and *Yugbani* were again banned in Nepal after the 1960 royal takeover that banned all political parties.

Shils (1963, pp.198-199) defines intellectuals as all persons with an advanced modern education and the intellectual concerns and skills ordinarily associated with the term. Presenting occupational structure of the intellectuals, Shils (1963, p.199) states that the professions of the intellectuals in underdeveloped countries are civil service, journalism, law, teaching particularly college and university, but also secondary, school teaching, and medicine.

Sketching the media landscape during the time when the democratic rights were absent, Shils (1963, p.201) states that journalism, as a result of generally widespread illiteracy, was a stunted growth and provided only a few opportunities, which were not at all remunerative. He describes that journalism under colonial conditions was much more of an unprofitable political mission than a commercially attractive investment, and most of it was on a rather minscale scale.

Shils (1963) also observes the first effervescent of the modern intellectual in the under developed countries (p.220). When the civil and political rights did not exist in society, the intellectuals played pivotal role to advance political communication. According to Shils (1963) such effervescent occurred roughly between the years when India was recovering from the trauma of the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857 and its repression and the First World War. He states that this was the stage of the politics of lawyers and journalists (pp.220-221).

He describes:

Since they were largely lawyers, they developed the rhetorical skills and the self-confidence in dealing with authority which are an indispensable part of the equipment of the modern politician. The structure of legal practice also gave them the time and the resources to absent themselves from their professional activities. As the occasion demanded, they were able, while still continuing to practice their professions, to devote themselves to public agitation, to attend and address meeting, to write books, pamphlets, and articles for the press, to meet representatives of their rulers from time to time in order to argue their claims, and to participate in consultative and representative bodies. (Shils, 1963, p. 222)

Side by side with this form of lawyers' politics, a daily and periodical press struggled to come into existence, largely in the metropolitan language but also in the indigenous languages (Shils, 1963, p.222). According to Shils (1963) the journalists were not professionals. They were often political lawyers who had either left their profession or practised it alongside journalism; there were also amongst them, men who had been teachers, or who had aspired to join the government service, or had actually been governmental employees. He states that they were usually well-educated men, with the gravity of the Victorian and Continental bourgeois liberals whom they admired.



All this, according to Shils, gave dignity and decorum to the political life of that stage of political development (p.222).

Shils (1963) states that as journalists, they were not following a career in the material sense of the word. They were not trying to become rich. Shils further views that they were not interested in being purveyors of news and diversion. They were not seeking a livelihood in journalism. Where they could not gain their livelihood from journalism or from their auxiliary professions, they unquestioningly relied on the support of their kinsmen and patrons. They were journalists because there was a small literate public which could be reached and rendered coherent and articulate on behalf of the ideal of constitutional government in which the best-qualified of the ruled would have some hand (p.223). Thus, in a society where even the basic rights of the people were not existed freedom loving intellectuals struggled to conduct political communication through journalism. However, journalism was not their vocation. Baral (1975, p.170) states that as the development of a healthy journalism was not possible without political consciousness, the press was a non-entity in Nepali socio-political life in pre-Rana period.

### **2.3 The Early days of Newspapers in Nepal**

Nepal witnessed its initial step towards the beginning of newspapers in 1901 with the publication of *Gorkhapatra* as a weekly. Although it was not an agreeable step among his peers, Dev Shumshere, 4<sup>th</sup> Rana Prime Minister, started Nepal's first newspaper. The country then was under despotic Rana rule that had begun with a massacre in palace in 1846. Bhandari (2046 BS, p. 447) interprets the history presenting Jung Bahadur as the central figure of the Kot massacre. However, according to him, the massacre, which gave birth to Rana rule, was plotted by the British rulers in India. Since then until 1951, the *Kunwar* family, later given the heroic appellation Rana by King Surendra, monopolized all governmental authority in Nepal, and the royal family was reduced to the role of a figurehead. Chauhan (1971, p.9) describes how the Rana rulers (1846-1951) preferred to pursue the policy of isolation. He states that the acquisition of knowledge by a commoner was regarded as an act of sedition. Chauhan (1971, p.9) further describes : Apart from discouraging the people to come in contact with the Western liberal education, the rulers also prohibited them from making use of newspapers and radio—the media of communication through which people might

become aware of the political and social developments that were taking place around the country.

Chauhan (1963, p.16) also briefly mentions the reforms made by a relatively liberal Rana ruler Dev Shumshere. He comments that Dev Shumshere (March-June, 1901) gave impetus to the development of education when he established many vernacular schools. Bista (2008, p.119) notes that he started opening up primary schools throughout the country. Bista further states that numerous schools were initiated, before his younger brother Chandra Shumshere would exile him after four months in office.

Devkota (2051 BS, pp.30-35) discusses 10 print media outlets that appeared during 104-year-long Rana rule. Along with *Gorakhapatra* weekly (later bi-weekly), *Sudhasagar* monthly, *Sharada* monthly, *Udhyog* monthly, *Sahitya Srota* monthly, *Gharelu Ilam* fortnightly, *Kathmandu Municipal Patrika* fortnightly, *Ankha* monthly, *Purusartha* monthly, *Nepal Shiksha* monthly were the periodicals that appeared during the Rana period. *Gorakhapatra*, the first Nepali newspaper, was started in 1901 and remained only weekly until 1951. At the beginning it was a weekly appearing every Monday, before appearing twice a week. Subsequently on 18 February 1961, it became a daily newspaper (Press Council, 2049 BS, p. 444). Most of the papers that appeared during the Rana period were sponsored or associated with either of the government agencies. The official end of Rana rule was declared on 18 February 1951. This particular day was a historic turn in the development of Nepali journalism. Three days before the declaration of democracy, the government approved Hridaychandra Singh Pradhan to begin *Jagaran* weekly in Nepali language which, according to Devkota (2051 BS, p. 35), happens to be the first Nepali newspaper with political viewpoint printed within the country. Since, *Gorakhapatra* had also been presenting political viewpoint, *Jagaran* could be termed as first newspaper from the private sector. Similarly, Siddicharan Shrestha started *Awaj* daily which is, according to Devkota (2051 BS, p. 35), was the first Nepali daily. Malla (1970, p.13) considers it as Nepal's first public-owned Nepali language daily. He observes that the *Awaj* was followed by a spate of dailies, weeklies, monthlies and other party periodicals and literature in Nepali and other languages.

During the Rana rule seeds of publications, including *Gorakhapatra*, were seen in the country. However, Rana rulers tried to close down even *Gorakhapatra*. Press Council (2049 BS, p. 444) notes there instances when merely five copies of it were published.

From the inception of *Gorakhapatra* up to the demise of Rana rule, altogether 10 periodicals categorized as *Patrika* were registered officially. Apart from the *Gorakhapatra* those *Patrika* could be incorporated in the category of the magazine. However, all those publications were not independent from the government. Like in today's China all most all of them were affiliated with either of government institutions. Along with radio and television, private ownership of newspapers is not permitted, for instance, in China. McKenzie (2006, p.106) notes that, in China, Newspapers must be registered and attached to a government ministry, institute, research facility, labour group, or other state-sanctioned organization.

So far, no further information has been recorded as to whether anyone tried to start a newspaper during the Rana period. Shyam Prasad from Birgunj had tried to register a monthly magazine named *Seva*. The administration rejected his application. Earlier, according to Devkota (2051 BS, p. 34), on November 15, 1948 a written permission was granted to Shyam Prasad Sharma and friends from Birgunj to publish *Seva* monthly. However, the monthly was published from Birgunj but printed at Banaras in July 1951 under the editorship of Sharma.

Although, Shyam Prasad Sharma received permission in 1948, the monthly appeared after three years. It is an exemplary case of denial of permission to bring out any publication during the Rana period. It is evident that even after the central authority had provided the permission, the local authority would create hassles to the publisher and editor of *Seva* Monthly. Shyam Prasad, who became a noted progressive writer later, had approached the Rana administration for the registration of *Seva* monthly literary magazine before the political changes of 1951. Shyam Prasad (2006, p.2) describes that *Seva* was finally brought out to public only in August 1951 and was perceived as a publication strongly adhering to communist ideology.

Political freedom eventually resulted in proliferation of newspapers. Freedom to express is the soul of journalism. An open society where democratic rights prevail is imperative for democracy. Since discourse on socio-political issues were strictly

prohibited in Nepali society during the Rana rule, publication of newspapers was impossible within the country. Moreover, during the period printing technology was not a common phenomenon. Such being the case for any publication, the staggering risks in even trying to launch newspaper were the decisively restraining factor.

Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1972, p.3), while describing the theory of authoritarianism as the oldest theory of the press, state that the press being a servant of the state responsible for much of its content to the power figures in charge of government at any given moment was universally accepted in the sixteenth and most of the seventeenth centuries. In the context of Nepal, this theoretical model started to decline after mid of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Credit for two significant steps in the history of the Nepali mass media sector goes to Rana rulers. First, the establishment of printing press, and second, initiation of Nepal's first newspaper, *Gorakhapatra*. However, as Baral (1975, p.171) states from a journalistic point of view, this profession made little or no contribution whatsoever to the political change of 1951.

## **2.4 The End of Rana Rule**

The newspapers from private sector started in Nepal in the year 1951 with the end of Rana regime. Shaha (1978, p. 10) states that the 1951 political change witnessed a mushroom growth of newspapers and news magazines in Nepal. Nepal remained closed for western liberal education until 1950-51. Bista (2008, p. 103) holds the views that at the time of the Rana overthrow, the country was still in many ways a medieval oriental state. According to him, the literacy rate was two per cent in 1951 (2008, p.127).

Malla (1970) states that the post-1950 decade in Nepal is characterized in the first place, by a sense of release and emancipation of the intellect from a century-old political and priestly yoke, and in the second place, by an unprecedented expansion of intellectual and cultural opportunities. According to him the decade can aptly be called a decade of extroversion. For it was a decade of explosion of all manner of ideas, activities and organized efforts. He states that it was a decade when the pre-existing narrow stratum of the intelligentsia was frantically active and vocal-socially,

culturally and, most important of all, politically (p. 12). Baral (1975, p.180) also opines that the history of the press in Nepal actually begins with the revolution of 1950, even though some humble start was made earlier.

Malla (1970) argues that in the post 1950 decades, journalism flowered considerably in quantity (p. 15). The political change of 1951, paved the way for an era of private newspapers in Nepal. The late fifties witnessed the proliferation of papers in the form of party organs.

Shrestha (2017 BS) states that since the year 1955, Nepal witnessed a flood of daily newspapers. He further says that newspapers were considered more essential during the first general elections in 1957. According to him by the year 1959, the number of dailies went up to 15 (p.6).

Along with the weeklies, post-1951 Nepal witnessed the advent of daily newspapers. Though they were primitive in terms of presentation of contents, size and appearance, the newspapers of 1950s were the pioneers in the field. After the end of Rana rule, the democratic government considered the press as an important public entity. In this context, eight years after the restoration of democracy, the first press commission was formed in 1958. The commission was assigned the task of investigating the development of the press in Nepal following the 1950 revolution. Its report made an attempt to present an historical survey of Nepali media, mainly the state of newspapers. The report made some of the recommendations and suggestions in order to provide subsidies for the newspapers struggling to survive in the infant democracy.

The Press Commission, formed by the government on February 11, 1958, submitted the report within three months. The report presented a comprehensive evaluation of the state of newspapers and the evolution of the Nepali newspapers. It states that while there were only one newspaper run by the government before 1950, the newspaper landscape thereafter had changed drastically within the period of 8 years (Press Council, 2049 BS, p.354). The Commission inspected the offices of 7 Nepali, 2 English, one Hindi and one Newari dailies to observe the situation of the newspapers. It visited the offices and held discussions with editors of *Nepal Samacharpatra*, *Janata*, *Naya Samaj*, *Samaj*, *Kalpana*, *Haalkhabar* and *Swatantra Samachar* Nepali dailies. It also visited the offices of *The Commoner* and *The Motherland* English

dailies and held interactions with them. The Commission inspected the offices of *Gorakhpatra* tri-weekly and Newari daily *Nepal Bhasha Patrika*.

The Commission identified five problems of Nepali dailies and weeklies: inadequate sources of news, lack of culture of information dissemination of official sources, lack of communication facilities, inadequate technological equipment and financial crisis. It recommended for the modification of Press and Publication Act and Press Registration Act as per the liberal democratic policy adopted in 1951. It stated that journalism is public service and means of employment. The Commission also acknowledged that at the early days it is difficult to establish journalism as a means of employment. Journalism in Nepal, in real sense, is merely a means of service (Press Council, 2049 BS, p.430).

The report of the First Commission (Press Council, 2049 BS) mentions that despite logistics supports and subsidies there was a serious need to cultivate human resources in the field of journalism. The commission urged to establish a journalism school and provide scholarship to study abroad (pp.370-373).

Bhattarai (2011, pp. 66-67) states that his elder brother Gopal Prasad completed Bachelor's level in journalism from Kashi Bidhyapeeth in 1946. Later Gopal Prasad became the editor in chief of *Gorakhpatra* in the aftermath of 1960. As per the publicly available information, he is the first Nepali citizen with the university degree in journalism.

Newspapers that emerged between 1951 and 1960 were spiced with political partisanship. Devkota (1988) states that after 1955, number of newspapers grew significantly. He observes that the cause of such growth was political instability and unhealthy competition among different political parties. He states that newspapers during that period would begin with the sole aim to propagate a particular person, party or party-interest and the virtue of the paper would be connected with the political personality of that person. The fate of a paper would depend on political success or failure of particular person (p.67). Thus rise and fall of a political personality would result in the birth and demise of a newspaper.

Proliferation of partisan press in Nepal is not different from that of India. The tradition of partisan press started in Nepal after the political change of 1951 and newspapers started to proliferate with the emergence of the political parties. The political parties started using newspapers as tools for propaganda. However, not all the newspapers were mouthpieces. Many apparently independent newspapers would also receive economic support and directions covertly. In the course of time, as parties emerged and phased out, those newspapers would start and closed down accordingly. The existing papers were obviously closed down after the imposition of ban on political parties. According to Devkota (2051 BS, p.102), apart from *Nepal Pukar* of Nepali Congress, *Navayug* used to be a weekly mouthpiece of undivided CPN between 1950 and 1960.

Some argue that the period between 1951 and 60 was actually an unfavourable time for the long-term development of the Nepali press. Nepal (2057 BS, p.5) argues that Nepali press is still unable to take the institutional set up due to the prevailing political atmosphere. Many newspapers would be born and born with an aspiration. However the continuity of those papers was not the matter of anybody's interest. They would be launched because of the necessity of political parties, their ambitions and interest to begin with. As such, these papers would be published to project party aspirations. But they were never institutionalized.

Ghimire (2000, p. 56-57) states that the 1950s saw the emergence of several dailies in the country. The emergence of weeklies, however, predominated. Although efforts were made towards practising professional journalism, institutional development could not make any notable headway. Many journals became political mouthpieces. The years between 1950 and 1960 were initial boom period for Nepali press and the partisan press took the lead. Looking in to retrospect, mouthpieces of the political parties were the representatives of the then Nepali mass media.

Ghimire (2000, p. 57) mentions that there were 47 independent weeklies and 25 weeklies that were mouthpieces of political parties, during this period. None of these weeklies is seen to have provided for themselves the necessary professional continuity. Nevertheless, the trend during this period favoured the free and fearless dissemination of news and views and a tilt favouring the freedom of expression in the course of legal and other complications. Journalism in this decade was moving

towards independence and the assumption of social responsibilities and duties. Nepali journalism during this period was limited to the capital city.

Pokhrel and Koirala (1995) mention that during the period of eight years (1951-1959) until when Nepal had the first general elections based on adult franchise, a host of newspapers of all kinds came into being. They state that some were the mouthpieces of political parties while others were in the form of private enterprises. According to them by the year 1959 the percentage of literate people being very low as much as seven per cent, publication of newspapers was more of an adventure than the enterprise with commercial viability. They state that except for the official newspaper, *Gorakhapatra*, the average life of a newspaper was about two and a half years (p. 26).

As Baral (1975, p.172) observes the period between 1951 and 1960 was also the period of strained relationship between the government and the press, not because the latter was under heavy pressure from the government but because it lacked sobriety or perhaps failed to comprehend the limits of its rhetoric. Shaha (1978, p.10) mentions that before the General Elections of 1959, every pressure group or vested interest in Nepal attempted to influence government decisions in its favour through publications, since they could be produced without much cost.

Shaha (1978, p.10) views that the most unfortunate characteristic of the new political communication system was that newspaper contents were seldom based on facts or events but consisted of editorial opinions and subjective interpretations of events. He states that the tendency was slightly checked during the nineteen-month interlude of parliamentary government, but after the royal take-over on December 15, 1960 the previous pattern of subjectiveness and irresponsibility returned unabated, subjected only to restrictions on criticism of the activities of the palace.

Shaha (1992, p.22) states that students, journalists and civil servants emerged as the most influential pressure groups in the post-1951 era. He observes that journalists, particularly the so-called independents, turned out to be the impassioned critics of the activities of the government in power but voiced mainly ultra-nationalist and jingoistic sentiments with the covert financial support in the interest of the land lords. Press Council Nepal (2049 BS, p.437) states that during the period of 72 years until 1958, around 200 Nepali newspapers and periodicals were initiated within and outside



the country. Out of them about 125 were published from the capital and 20 from the other parts of the country.

Kharel (2015) notes that when the state owned *The Rising Nepal* was launched in December 1965, there were at least two other English dailies that were regular and had made their presence felt in the capital, namely: *The Commoner* and *The Motherland*.

The Nepali newspapers in post-1951 were basically political organs. Most of the newspapers during that period covered reflective or planted news. Joshi and Rose (1958, p.246) cite such an example. According to them on July 7, 1958 a Kathmandu weekly, *Jhyali*, created a political sensation in the capital by publishing an allegedly authentic copy of a government aide-memoire that had been submitted to the government of India in New Delhi by an unnamed Nepali minister on May 8, 1954. Joshi and Rose state the text of the document, published under the caption, "Aide-memoire submitted by the Nepali Mirzaffar in Delhi." The fifth point of so-called aide-memoire as reported by *Jhyali* was as follows: the two countries will hold special discussions on matters of mutual interest in the area of foreign policy and relations. *Jhyali* allegedly reported that aide-memoire also maintained that on matters of Nepal's relationship with China special advice will be sought from the government of India. *Jhyali* was the mouthpiece of the dissident Nepali National Congress led by Jiva Raj Sharma separated from DR Regmi.

Upadhaya (Dahal, 2070 BS, p. 32) argues that, professionalism in the Nepali newspaper landscape began on September 9, 1954 with the initiation of *Samaj* daily. Initially its founder editor and publisher was Pashupati Dev Pandey, and later in April 1955, Upadhaya took over the charge of its editorship and publisher. Upadhaya views (Dahal, 2070 BS, p. 32) *Samaj* daily was the pioneer professional newspaper in Nepal, in three aspects. First, it was not in allegiance with any political stream. Second, it had not emerged with the financial support from the government. Third, it had no vested interest. However, in another context, Upadhaya (2054 BS, p.250) notes that he had placed a fabricated news to test the US opinion with the suggestion of then Prime Minister Tanka Prasad Acharya. He mentions that the PM had prodded him to kite flying.

Kwak (2012, p.2) states that South Korea provides an excellent entry point into the developing academic debates on the role of media shift in transitional states. He adds that since 1987, when the Korean people achieved partial democratization, the country moved from authoritarianism to liberalism as a mode of political control.

Similar to the Nepali press, the Korean press too struggled to socialize democratic values during the authoritarian regime. Kwak (2012, p.7) states that it is oversimplification to say that the Korean media prior to 1987 was under the strict control of the government and functioned only as a mouthpiece of the government. He says that prior to 1961, when General Park successfully led a military coup, the Korean media was relatively free from state control. Kwak (2012, p.8) presents the historical background as follows: One of the important contributions the Korean media made after the Korean War was to help socialize the Korean people to democratic values, and convey to the poverty stricken population the importance of modernization. He presents example: In the 1950s, the media also played a watch dog role by criticizing some wrong-doing of the Rhee Seung-Man government (1948-1960). During the anti-Rhee-government demonstrations led by students in April 1960, the Korean press supported the demonstrations, and eventually President Rhee was forced to resign.

The case resembles the 1980s student movement of Nepal and the announcement of referendum. Young Hie Kim (The Media Environment in Korea, 2014), a senior journalist in South Korea mentions that the birth of modern newspapers starts as elite journalism, run by typical intelligentsia who had blue-blood family backgrounds and a sense of mission to lead and enlighten the people. Kim says that these elite leaders of the "enlightenment movement" saw the newspaper as the most effective means of instructing the people, and eventually enabling them to stand on their own feet politically, economically and culturally.

Historical parallels lie in terms of an evolutionary process of a market-driven newspaper landscape in these two countries. During the immediate aftermath of the 1951 political change, Nepal also witnessed basically a form of elite journalism.

Mainstream Nepali print media have always advocated for progressive change within the national politics. Ghimire (2000, p.53) states that democratic aspirations for unhindered civic rights were reflected in the controlled and directed journalism prior

to 1951 and then between 1960 and 1990. The gateways were opened to independent journalism after the change of 1951. The liberal democratic environment of the 1950s also saw relations between the press and the government as tense and friction prone. It is nevertheless seen that journalism in that decade was committed to the freedom of expression and aspired for this. Ghimire notes that the mainstream Nepali journalism in this period was none other than the weeklies.

The post-1950 decade inadvertently created a breeding ground for pluralism in Nepali mass media. However, diverse range of content, encompassing socio-economic issues, did not surface in these publications. Rather, the newspapers were divided in different political camps. Clarifying the situation Department of Journalism at Tribhuvan University and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (1997, p.80) states that most of the publication activities in the country during the period of 1951 to 1960 were related to political parties. Publications had begun to be seen as the mouthpieces of certain political parties. Some of them emerged as strong advocates of Communist parties and most of the newspapers started to claim themselves capable of propagating the politics of Nepali Congress. Small parties concluded that if they could not start campaigns with a mouthpiece, their existence would be jeopardized. They started to register and launch newspapers. Events were presented with their own perceptions and views. In this state of confusion and lack of impartiality, it is not possible to say that readers at that time were not affected by disinformation and biases fed by the press.

However the growth in the number of newspapers came to a sudden halt in 1960 when King Mahendra dissolved the parliament and assumed affirmative power. Nonetheless, public discourse continued on various social issues. Malla (1970, p.13) states that by the end of the decade, at least in a city or two in the kingdom, the intelligentsia had made their presence felt in the community. Regmi and Khanal (2002, p.6) sum up that the state of the Nepali newspapers between 1951 and 1960 as a period of free press. However, they also observe that partisan inclination was distinctly seen in the Nepali newspapers during this period.

## 2.5 Emergence of Partyless Political System

King Mahendra abolished the party system and banned many newspapers on 15 December 1960. Bista (2008, p.104) observes that in 1960, the late King Mahendra, who remained the ultimate power in Nepal, declared all parties illegal, dissolved the parliament, arrested and imprisoned all cabinet members then in Kathmandu. Dhungel, Adhikari, Bhandari and Murgatroyd (1998, p.143) state that press freedom, along with others, was the first casualty of the step taken by King Mahendra.

Shaha (1978, p.11) describes the post-1959 Nepal communication scenario as "all lines of communication vital to the system must flow through the palace at some key point". He states that the result of this over centralized communication system is that of the noblesse oblige concept of the previous systems of Shah and Rana rule once again gained ascendancy over a system of popular pressures and support, serving as a basis for public policy.

Ghimire (2000, pp.57-58) argues that the termination of the multi-party system in 1960 and the emergence of the party less Panchayat system profoundly created an impact on partisan political culture of the 1950s and the journalism that followed it. Regmee (2001, p.29) argues that the political change in the early 1960s injected entirely new values such as partylessness in politics-non-party polity and guided freedom of expression. He states that because the Nepali newspapers between 1960 and 1990 were not allowed to question the validity of the party-less polity, they had to struggle to ventilate the voices of the opposition, which resulted in the tension between the newspapers and the government. The conflict resulted in the two faces of the media: one entirely pro-system and the other entirely anti-system.

The permission granted for the registration of newspapers for a short period in 1970 provided some outlet for the representation of the view points of banned political parties through the papers. Baral (1975, p.175) argues that in 1970, the press heaved a sigh of relief when the flamboyant Home and Panchayat Minister Shailendra Kumar Upadhaya tried to prove his liberal bonafides. Ghimire (2000, p.58) argues that the papers registered that year played a major role in the preparing the background for the political agitation of 1979. The papers of the period were crucially active in exerting continuous efforts at raising awareness about the usefulness of democratic rights.

They played a major role in favour of the freedom of expression, freedom of the press and the establishment of human rights despite the possibility of persecution, restrictions in publication and even imprisonment. Again, it was the weeklies that represented the mainstream of the Nepali journalism during the period. During the period of referendum on the choice of political system, the media again gained its power to initiate and maintain dialogues and discourses.

Describing the situation of newspapers in the 1970s, Baral (1975, p.180) states that the anti-status quo papers held the view that the "goal of an exploitation less society cannot be established without political freedom". He states that among the dailies and weeklies, *Nepal Times*, *Nabin Khabar*, *The Motherland*, *The Commoner*, *Dainik Nepal*, *Samaj*, *Swatantra Samaj*, *Samikshya*, *Rashtrapukar* and a few others seemed critical of the then present sterile political and economic conditions.

On December 12, 1975, the Constitution that was enacted in 1963 was amended for the second time. The second amendment made cosmetic changes in the constitution and the Panchayat system, which only increased its rigidity. Nepal (2070 BS, p.156) argues that the national politics was driven towards ultra conservative stream and ignoring the potentiality of any democratic reforms, King Birendra had followed King Mahendra's path of authoritarianism. Nepal recalls, amidst such upheavals the government imposed ban over altogether 11 dailies and weeklies that were in favour of democratic reform. *Nepal Times*, *Nabin Khabar* and *Dainik Nepal* were among the dailies which were victimized by the ban. Likewise, *Rastrapukar*, *Samikshya* and the *Matribhumi* were the major weeklies affected by the ban. Nepal recalls that the editor of *Dainik Nepal*, Indrakant Mishra could not bear the shock and went into comma for a long time, immediately after being unconscious.

Aryal (2003) argues that in the aftermath of the King's authoritarian step, the Nepali newspapers were divided into two factions: one loyal to the King and another against the King's move. The newspapers in the former category were involved in propagating King's party-less Panchayat system. Even their activities contributed immensely towards fostering and communicating anti-Panchayat politics. In a way, royalist newspapers also demonstrated apathy to the contentious politics in the country. Despite the political hegemony of the Panchayat, Nepali weeklies between 1951 and 1990 created a space for contentious political issues (p.109).

Shaha (1978, p.48), describing the Panchayat period, states that the different political forces were at work in Nepal then—the democratic socialist elements, the pro-Chinese and the pro-Russian communists—used the news weeklies, *Rastrapukar*, *Matribhumi* and *Samiksha* respectively to propagate their views and also to bring their pressure to bear on the government within the limitations imposed by the Panchayat system. Baral (1975, pp.176-77) states that *Matribhumi* weekly, representing a section of political persuasion, reached out many people outside of Kathmandu valley. He mentions that *Samikshhya* weekly too was a political paper but had some distinct standing of its own.

In the absence of constitutional and legal guarantee for the freedom of expression, newspapers published and edited by the persons close to NC and Communist Parties between 1960 and 1990, created a kind of public domain on their pages (Aryal, 2013, p.108). Stating that the weekly newspapers between 1960 and 1990 overtly served political interests, Aryal (2013, p.109) argues that the Panchayat period (1960-1990) witnessed the rise of the Nepali weeklies as part of the democratic struggle and the manifestation of two tendencies in the press: One was to support the Panchayat system and its politics, the other was a line of criticism and the politics of opposition.

Pokhrel and Koirala (1995, p.56) state that in 1961, the government introduced a system of awarding subsidies to the private sector press. The subsidy was negligible and its distribution was arbitrary depending on the likes and dislikes of the administration. They further state that the party less regime was all the time preoccupied with its stability and security and any criticism of the system would invite severe punishment including the permanent closure of the publications. Baral (1975,p.178), regarding the state's discriminatory behaviour, states that it was common for papers close to the administration to get a handsome subsidy, while the deviant papers had a sense of deprivation, even though they too received assistance.

In the course of time, a few attempts were also made to bring about market-driven newspapers. Baral (1975, pp. 176-177) stated, in 1970s, that *Naya Sandesh* seemed to be popular because of its sensational news items, sex columns and other features of common interest.

Nepal (2070 BS) describes the situation of newspapers in Nepal between King Mahendra's take-over [in 1960] and the referendum [1980]. He states that weeklies used to publish articles without paying remuneration to the writers and columnists. He recalls that the newspapers of those days were not widespread. That there were certain consumers of those dailies and they would be printed as much as one to one hundred and fifty copies. Among the printed copies as many as 25 copies would go to the Palace, 40-50 copies to prominent personalities, 20-25 to business houses, and rest to the hawkers who would sale them at Pipalbot of New Road in Kathmandu. He views that apart from *Nepal Times* and *Dainik Nepal*, other dailies would not dare to criticize the establishment. Nepal argues that *Nepal Times* was a largely circulated daily among the intellectuals in the capital (p.147).

In contrast to the current daily newspapers, Nepal (2070 BS) states, almost all of the daily newspapers used to publish in tabloid size and used to fill the front page with news from RSS. He mentions that apart from a double column editorial, the second page also used to be filled with the news from RSS. The third and fourth pages used to be filled with advertisings of cinema and more RSS news. So, first, newspapers before the referendum were not able to present diversity in terms of contents. Inaugural ceremonies in the presence of the king and queen as well as speeches of the prime minister and other leaders in defence of the partyless Panchayat polity were the frequent subject matters of the news in those four-page dailies (p.146).

Nepal (2070 BS) states that since the newspaper at that time were printed in letter press with the letters in lead and zinc block for the photographs, and the printing process was manual on the sheet of papers, mass production was not possible. In his view, newspapers were politically influential, but they were not pervasive and the market was limited. Secondly, newspapers at that time were not produced with advance technology and they looked primitive in terms of appearance. Third, they were confined within a limited circle of urban intellectuals. Fourth, unlike today, financial conditions of the newspapers of those days were vulnerable (p.154). Advertisements were not dependable sources of income during the 1960s and subsequently up to 1990. The Nepali newspapers started to publish a few advertisements only after 1955. However, the sources of the early advertisings were cinema-theatres, whose advertisings were the regular source of income for

*Haalkhabar* daily. The government advertisements became a regular source of revenue after 1960 (Shrestha, 2017 BS, p.6). Fifth, the political atmosphere was entirely different. It was not possible to run newspaper smoothly carrying a critical point of views. For instance, in May 1961, *Samikshya* weekly was banned and its editor was jailed because of the news on irregularities concerning rope-way construction.

Prior to the referendum that was held in 1980, Nepal (2070 BS, p.190) states that *Gorakhpatra* was the only alternative option for information and news. According to him, by the late 1970s, the existence of private sector dailies and weeklies was confined to two column editorials and that they hardly carried their own staff-produced reports. So, one of the major differences that post-1990 newspaper landscape marked in Nepal is the emergence of the private sector newspapers in large size and investment.

In the post-take-over period, apart from *Nepal Times*, *Dainik Nepal* and *The Motherland* other dailies did not publish thought provoking matters. Though one English daily *The Motherland*, was considered to be tilted to the ruling elite, it was a bit critical (Nepal, 2070 BS, p. 147). Nepal (2070 BS, p.28) states that even though there were a number of newspapers in the country in the post-takeover period, the editorial materials started to shrink after the royal takeover. He recalls that apart from two column editorials all most all newspapers had gradually started to print similar news from RSS. He states that among the dailies of that period, *Nepal Times* was famous for its straight and clear point of views. In his view, its editor Chandra Lal Jha was the first journalist who, armed with well crafted writings and offensive style, started an experiment in journalism with mission. In a short period, according to Nepal (2070 BS, p. 28), *Nepal Times* became the symbol of liberal democracy, because of the editor's studious and courageous personality.

Chandra Lal Jha, according to Nepal (2070 BS, p.153), did not want to see news from government owned news agency in the front page. Nepal states that Jha himself used to collect news. Nepal (2070 BS, p.148-149) states that pages of *Nepal Times* used to be explicit with his ideological aggressiveness. In his view, editor Jha was an expert on criticizing the royal rule using symbols and metaphors and no other journalist have ever met his standard in this matter.



Though the king's take-over had created difficult circumstance amongst the Nepali newspapers, they continued their advancement. Devkota (2051 BS, p.178) records that the government rated *The Motherland*, *The Commoner*, *Naya Samaj*, *Matribhumi* and *Nepal Samachar* as highly circulated newspapers, i.e. 1000 copies per issue, and awarded each of them by sum of Rs. 700 to 1000 immediately after the King's takeover in 1960.

*The Commoner* used to place its corporate slogan 'An independent daily' on the masthead. In the aftermath of the take-over in 1960, the paper generally positioned itself as a daily without politicized materials. It presented news about the government's action against demonstrators carrying black flags. But, it mostly compiled the international news and opinions about apolitical foreign issues. For instance, on April 4, 1961, it put foreign news from Laos as the main news. In the same issue was an opinion write up by a foreign scribe on Hovercraft, deemed as a futuristic vehicle. The heading of the editorial was "Words", carrying a philosophical expression.

The next day, out of total 13 items, *The Commoner* published 5 foreign news items on its front page. The main news was about the resolution of the withdrawal of Belgian military personnel and political advisors from Congo. It presented its editorial on the situation of South Africa. The opinion was by a foreign writer on the Colombo Plan.

On September 1, 196, *The Commoner* in its editorial discussed another apolitical issue—superstitions. The opinion was also about foreign affairs concerning 'Save Abou Simbel' campaign. The daily, on September 29, placed a financial survey of the Middle East, as opinion article. On December 1, the main news covered an incident of killing of UN soldiers in Africa and its editorial discussed on the Congo crisis. The opinion piece was entitled "Plastics in the USSR."

Gopal Das was also one of the initiators of the *Prajatantra* Weekly that emerged immediately after 1990, in which he was actively involved. However, he continued *The Commoner*, until his last breath. The swan song of the paper appeared on November 4, 1998, the day of his demise.

Expression of a sense of diversities and alternatives were not allowed during the Panchayat system. During the Panchayat period (1960-1990), the government tried to command direct control over the newspapers in a bid to acculturate people to the Panchayat policy. The then prevailing media regulations were severely rigid and stifled press freedom. However, newspapers between 1960 and 1990 played a pivotal role in order to air contentious political views. They created discourses on the alternatives to the Panchayati politics. The newspapers had to struggle to survive as the communicator of contemporary politics (Aryal, 2013, pp.106-107). To cite an example, the editors came up with the creative idea of tagging a prefix such as *Pra* and *Pu* before the name of the political parties. The vernacular newspapers, during that period, started to tag prefixes *Pra* or *Pu* prior the name of the outlawed political parties, *Pra* denoting *Pratibandhit* [banned] and *Pu* implying *Purano* [old]. Between 1951 and 1960, Nepal witnessed multi-party system. Thus tagging *Pu* before the name of a political party was the strategic technique used by the newspapers, mostly the weeklies, to maneuver through legal hassle (Aryal, 2013, p.106). Nepal (2070 BS, p.273) says that after the 1980 referendum, the government prohibited even the word *Pratibandhit*, arguing that the parties were rejected by the people. Thereafter, he claims, he began to write *Purano*, and eventually the entire press followed that.

Although the political parties were forbidden during the partyless Panchayat system in effect from 1960 until 1990, weeklies developed strategic techniques to ventilate the political activities and view point of the banned parties through news stories (Aryal, 2013, p.105). Describing the situation of newspapers in pre-referendum period, Nepal (2070 BS, p.147) states that *Naya Sandesh* was the largest selling weekly. He describes *Samikshya*, *Matribhumi* and *Rastapukar* as popular among political readers. *Samiksaya* and *Matribumi* both were on the left stream. Audience had a clear outlook on both. In his views, it was general conclusion that in terms of political point of view *Samikshya* was inclined to then USSR and *Matribhumi* was close to the People's Republic of China. Both the weeklies were well-off in terms of printing and presentation in comparison to others. Baral (1975, pp.176-177) states, in the 1970s, *Matribhumi* weekly represented a section of political persuasion [stream], reaching out to many people outside of Kathmandu valley.

Though the newspapers tilted to NC used to carry material propagating party ideology, not all the editorial staffs were associated with the political party in an organized fashion. The editor, obviously an activist of the party, used to be all in all. Aryal (2004, p.14) argues that *Rastrapukar* was considered as one of the crusaders of democracy during the Panchayat regime. But it was not run directly by the party. Neither was it the official mouthpiece of the party, nor controlled by the party. However, all the staffs responsible for its publication were party cadres. It was devoted to spreading the politics of Nepali Congress. The newspaper was well-known for its editorialized news conforming to the Nepali Congress perspective. On several occasions the Panchayat rulers made it a victim of its wrath. Nevertheless, the newspaper remained committed to its mission to support the struggle for the broader political freedoms.

*Rashtrapukar* weekly published and edited by Homnath Dahal, always tried to create a discourse on Nepali politics around Nepali Congress and B. P. Koirala (Aryal, 2013, p.108). For instance, in one of the issues of 1978, a front page news reads: In course of returning to Nepal from the US after the medical treatment B.P. Koirala is going to stay in India for a couple of days (*Rashtrapukar*, July 6, 1987). It tags B.P. as a former prime minister and leader of banned Nepali Congress. *Rashtrapukar* supported NC amidst political turmoil for about 30 years, before and after the referendum. Nepal (2070 BS, p.252) states that apart from *Rashtrapukar*, very few newspapers that adhere to democratic thoughts, were in existence in Kathmandu in post-referendum Nepal. He states that it was very difficult to obtain newspaper licence for persons who did not have good police record.

Explaining the media landscape of the year 1970, Aryal (2004, p.14) quotes Dahal, who recalls that there were only 3-4 noticeable weeklies in Nepal. Registration process of the newspaper was tightly controlled by the government. In such a background the officials interpreted the name of the weekly by assuming that the word *Rashtra* was borrowed from *Rastrabadi*- the mouthpiece of then *Gorakhparishad* and *Pukar* from *Nepalpukar*- the mouthpiece of Nepali Congress. So even when the registration was open for a brief time, it took one and a half months to register *Rashtrapukar*. In the beginning it was close to B.P. Koirala. But it used to provide sufficient coverage to the soft line led by Subarna Shumshere. In fact, that

made it somehow easy to function. It became a common forum for both the fractions of the Nepali Congress. In 1975-76, it was banned along with other newspapers *Samiksha* weekly, *Matribhumi* weekly, *Nepal Times Daily*, *Nabin Khabar* daily, *Naya Sandesh* weekly and *Nepal daily*. By the decree of the government, the police even removed the signboard of the *Rastrapukar* from its office. Later they were revived. Records at Press Council Nepal show that as many as 10 dailies and 37 weeklies were registered between 1965 and 1970.

*Rastrapukar* published copious news and views related to Nepali Congress. Homnath Dahal states that it was essential to create a medium for the message of movement; the intellectuals were against the system, and it was the necessity of the time to provide an outlet for their expressions. As the editor, Dahal was arrested more than five times during the Panchayat regime (Aryal 2004, pp.14-15).

Aryal (2004) quoting Homnath Dahal maintains that in his capacity as the editor and publisher, he did not have any motive to run a newspaper other than the mission to support the democratic movement. At the time he was basically a freedom fighter. He carried the party version and took the voice to the public domain as a fighter for the democratic movement. However, according to him, he had total autonomy in the process of editing. The parties never dictated him in this regard. He was free to select the materials for the paper. Decisions concerning the material were on the hands of the editorial team (p.15).

During the initiation of the paper, Dahal was in the party organization. But the party used to be unaware of the editorials. He believes that there was a certain amalgamation of professionalism and partisan practices in his paper. However the professionalism he practised was in accordance with the party principles. Occasionally the party would object to some published materials. Obviously he felt psychological pressure to change the paper to cover more than partisan politics after the emergence of new broadsheet dailies in the 1990s (Aryal, 2004, p.15).

Pandey (1998) opines that *Rashtrapukar* was a front runner of mission journalism. Since ideologically it had inclination towards Nepali Congress, its columnists were intellectuals and political activists such as Daman Nath Dhungana, Radheshyam Adhikary, Surya Dhungel and the late CK Prasai. All of them were popularly known

as democrats. At the time when political activities were outlawed and suppressed by the state, *Rashtrapukar* was the light bearer of democracy (p. 69). The first issue of *Rashtrapukar* appeared on July 23, 1970. Apart from the reading materials it became well known for its cartoons by Duraga Baral especially during the period of referendum in 1979-80 (Aryal, 2001, pp. 62-63).

Nepal (2070 BS, p.182) argues that with the second amendment of Panchayat constitution King Birendra made partyless system one-party system. He observes that the government, in this line, at once banned all together 11 dailies and weeklies that were well known for their stand in favour for democracy.

The Nepali press between 1961 and 1980 were in a deep sleep. Nearly half a dozen newspapers dared to stand for change and democracy. However, in totality the state of newspapers during the period was stagnant (Nepal, 2057 BS, p.5). The situation changed after the announcement of the referendum. Nepal (2057 BS, p.9) further states that after the announcement of the referendum, monologues of editor-publishers of the Nepali newspapers began to replace by dialogue. Here, it could be summed up that the Nepali newspapers during this period came to prove itself a catalyst towards raising awareness about the political freedom, specifically freedom of expression and opinion. Lippmann (1995) states that for the newspaper is in all literalness, the bible of democracy, the book out of which people determines its conduct. According to him, it is the only serious book most people read. Lippmann says that it is the only book they read every day. The Panchayat rulers and the oppositions were both aware of the power of the newspaper and they tried to propagate their own cause through the newspapers (p.45).

Khanal (2001, p.93) observes that after the 1979 public disturbances, in which university students played a prominent role, disrupted the equilibrium of the system to allow a variety of measures to be introduced. He states that different political parties, though banned, were able to function in relatively more open manner in convincing people to vote against the Panchayat system during the referendum. The so-called partyless Panchayat system competed with the political parties giving an impression to the people that the system belonged to the King.

Since there was only one broadsheet newspaper publishing house, *Gorakhapatra* Corporation, and one radio service, both owned and controlled by the government, the carriers of alternative voice, were the weeklies prior to 1990.

Nepal reached yet another turning point in 1979, when the popular movement compelled King Birendra to call for a referendum with an opportunity to provide an alternative to the Panchayat system. Bista (2008, p.104) recalls the event and states that in 1980 there was a referendum to determine whether the Nepali government should operate with a partyless Panchayat system with appropriate reforms or a multiparty system. As a result of the referendum, the party-less system was endorsed, primarily as a means for avoiding institutionalized factionalism and the inter-party hostility.

Sharan (1983, p.116) observes that during the period of 1979-80 Nepali newspapers along with leaders of the Panchayat and multiparty camps and the press launched a lively debate on the possible impact on Nepali politics. Describing the political situation of Nepal during 1979-80, Hoftun, Raeper and Whelpton (1999, p.99) state that the independent press then carried much more extensive reports of party activities than had been possible previously, though the bracketed words "banned" or "outlawed" had to be added to the party name. They observe that after the referendum, however, the government very quickly reintroduced press censorship. They state that when the government cracked down, whole editions of newspapers would be seized and editors and journalists would be arrested. With regard to the state of newspapers in post-referendum Hoftun, Raeper and Whelpton (1999, p.99) note that the situation was confusing; the methods used by the government were crude. They mention that one common way of silencing a newspaper was for the government to buy it. This was hardly effective as the same newspapers sprang up barely a week later under a different name with much of the same kind of critical articles as before.

In the aftermath of the announcement of the referendum, the wider extent of impact of political change over the Nepali media landscape was obvious. Nepal (2057 BS, p. 9) observes that after the declaration of referendum qualitative changes were seen in the Nepali press. Till then the press was a matter of concern for the limited periphery of elites. Nepal says the historical event of referendum brought the basic change in the map of Nepali journalism. Nepali press which had been presenting editors-publishers

monologues for a long time initiated the dialogue with the mass. Papers started to present verity and their credibility and reliability began to increase.

However, soon after the referendum the government again began to tighten its grip on the Nepali newspapers. It was an effort in search of a way out to defeat ideological attacks against Panchayat. Press Council (2038-39 BS, p. 4) recommended that to face the political ideological attack after the resumption of the registration process of newspapers there should be a group comprising pro-establishment political individuals and pro-establishment political analysts. In retrospect, the idea was to counteract the ideological attacks made on the establishment.

An emblematic case is worth mentioning here to evaluate the extent of aggression of Panchayat rule after the referendum—the government's action against the editor Gautam. He demonstrated tireless effort to bring out the paper every Wednesday under different mast-heads. According to him (Gautama, 2000), short-lived versions of the Nepal Post were the *Current*, *Khasokhas*, *Rasayan*, *Kusum*, *Yojana*, *Naya Upahar*, *Janamarg* and *Mayalu*. The last of Gautam's publications to fall victim to the censor's axe was *Mayalu* which was banned within one year of the closure of *Nepal Post*. *Mayalu* published in line with its previous cousins in aid of *Nepal Post* was banned, and its press was shut down on August 14, 1981 (Gautama, 2000, pp.195-209). Journalists criticized the government for imposing ban on the newspapers. Even the newspapers allegiant to Panchayat condemned the government's action against the newspapers.

After less than a year, the same editor faced another action against his *Current* weekly in July 1982. Gautam (2000) writes that his reporting of the funeral of NC leader late B.P. Koirala, particularly the picture of the dead body shrouded in the four-star party flag, was found objectionable by the authorities. He was summoned to the office of the Bagmati Zonal Commissioner. He states that the examining officer asked him why he should not be prosecuted for printing a picture that displayed the banned Nepali Congress party flag. Gautam recalls his response: if his illustrated reporting was unconstitutional, the thousands and thousands of people following the cortege should also be arraigned and interrogated. Thereupon they let him go without much harassment (Gautam, 2000, p.114).

In the aftermath of the referendum, *Jana Bhawana* weekly was one of the strong supporters of Panchayat. *Jana Bhawana* weekly, with the declaration of "dedication towards the nation, king and people", started by editor and publisher Nirodh Raj Pandey in October 1982. It has remained a regular publication having completed its 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary in 2015. Fully committed to Panchayat and the king until 1990, it remained committed to monarchy until its abolition in 2007. The paper was initiated by pro-monarch politicians who were in favour of reforms in Panchayat. After the national referendum verdict in 1980, its editorial (*Jana Bhawana*, December 20, 1982) stated that, as every citizen of the nation who has integrity, after some reforms, the weekly stood for the new political change. It stated that Panchayat is deeply rooted in Nepali society (*Jana Bhawana*, November 25, 1985). It viewed that the movement of 1990 does not deserve the much hyped importance (*Jana Bhawana* February 12, 1990). Just a week before the announcement of the demise of Panchayat and advent of multiparty system in the country, it stated that imagining multiparty system in the name of the change is not possible (*Jana Bhawana*, April 2, 1990).

The referendum had already led to the threshold of the liberalization of politics. During the take-off period of dialogue in Nepali journalism, even the government officials started to acknowledge the changing phenomenon of the Nepali newspapers. After the announcement of referendum, the Nepali newspapers were legally allowed to present diverse range of opinions and different point of views on contemporary politics till the date of polling. With the presentation and interpretation of different point of views on socio-political affairs, the newspapers created an atmosphere which would induce dialogue between the factions of pro-establishment and anti-establishment. In this regard, according to a publication written by Khatri (1983, p. i), the then Minister of State for Communication, states that with the gradual implementation of the Royal Press Commission's Report, 1981 and enactment of the new liberal press legislation, the Nepalese press, it was hoped, will contribute to promoting constructive approach and attitude towards building a better society.

Amidst a deep conflict between a quest for liberalization and a conservative royal regime, Royal Press Commission was established on February 22, 1981 (Press Council, 2039 BS, p. 4). It was also the result of minor political reform manifested in



the third amendment of Panchayat constitution. The Commission submitted the report on July 27, 1981. As per the demand from the private secretariat of Minister of State for Communication, Press Council provided some advice on September 22, 1981. The Council decided to urge the government to open registration for the publication of newspapers. At the same time, it recommended a controlling mechanism. It suggested that after the opening of the registration of newspapers to control the flood of illegal publication strict implementation of Press and Publication Act is necessary. The Council suggested that it would be necessary to seize unauthorized publications, conduct search and impose penalty.

Khatri (1983, p.2) states that taking into account all these facts, the Royal Press Commission's Report of 1981 strongly recommended several measures to ameliorate the overall conditions of the Nepalese press. The report showed the necessity of overall revision and amendment of the Press Act, recognition of newspaper publication as a service industry and establishment of a special fund to finance the newspaper industry.

Khanal (2001, p.93) is of the view that after the referendum, the banned political parties assumed the role of civil society institutions and started to function accordingly. They were not the part of the system but still carried the view of a large number of people. During this time, some private newspapers played a prominent role in exposing corruption scandals, political criminalization and political suppression within the Panchayat political system.

Against this backdrop, the crackdown on the newspapers was condemned by journalists. A privately owned daily, despite its allegiance to Panchayat, was explicitly vocal against such an attitude on the part of the government and that it makes a mockery of its avowed objective of bringing about a healthy growth of journalism in the country (*The Motherland*, August 19, 1981).

Even the editors who were in favour of Panchayat, were critical of the draconian press law of that time which observed "...we would like to note that the concerned provision under which the registration of these journals have been cancelled violate the principles of natural justice in that in effect, they contemplate two punishments for one offence (*The Commoner*, October 8, 1980)". The comment further reads, "When a

paper is subject to fine, it has already been penalized once. To make it obligatory that registrations too would get revoked as a consequence of such fines is tantamount to legalizing two punishments."

Khatri (1983, p.6) argues that the new liberal Press Act, establishment of new printing plants, increase in literacy percentage, etc. had helped increase the number of papers and periodicals in the country. Educational and economic development naturally contributed to the growth of the Nepalese press. Hundreds of printing presses have been installed in the Kathmandu valley. Several printing plants were established in the various parts of the country. According to Khatri (1983, p.6) up to January 1983, some 40 dailies, 209 weeklies and 14 fortnightlies were registered in Nepal for publication. Some 31 dailies, 103 weeklies and 3 fortnightlies were registered in the valley of Kathmandu alone. Like the newspapers of other Third World nations, the average daily circulation of Nepalese newspapers ranged from 1,000 to 20,000.

In post-referendum Nepal *Chhalphal*, *Deshantar* and *Drishti* were some of the weekly newspapers that could be considered as newspapers with political allegiance to the major political parties. Most others were also perceived to be close to one political party or others.

*Chhalphal* since the 1980s, *Deshantar* between 1984 and 1990 and after, *Rashtrapukar* between 1970 and 1979-80, and the *Drishti* between 1983 and 1990 and after can be considered as examples of partisan newspapers in Nepal. Similarly, the *Matribhumi* weekly was tilted to the left and it openly supported the pro-democracy movement in 1990. Among these weeklies, *Deshantar* and *Rashtrapukar* were inclined towards Nepali Congress whereas *Chhalphal* and *Drishti* are known for their allegiance with one of the Communist Parties.

The first issue of weekly *Chhalphal* appeared in the market on October 6, 1982. Its first editorial mentions that the government is incapable and its decision to cut the number of civil servants is only a drama. While not focused on subject matter it rather deals with lay off decision, starvation, injustice, and is an unaccountable government, it noted.

It was the time when the registration provision for the newspapers was relatively relaxed. *Chhalphal* started to appear every Wednesday with the guidance and leadership of the party. It was associated with the then CPN (ML), popularly known as *Maley*.

*Chhalphal weekly* was running with the partisan leaning to a major Communist Party of Nepal popularly known as *Maley*. The publisher and founder editor was Gopal Thapaliya. On the issue of March 9, 1984 it carried a news story related to the government-sponsored attack on Girija Prasad Koirala, then General Secretary of Nepali Congress (Aryal, 2013, p.108). A Nepali Congress cadre, Yadav Nath Aalok was murdered by the police in civil dress and government-sponsored vigilantes. *Chhalphal* tagged *Pu* before the Nepali Congress in a front page news related to the incident (*Chhalphal*, March 9, 1984).

Madan Bhandari, a senior communist leader, writing to one of his comrades during the Panchayat period, stressing on publicity, says that to make *Chhalphal* weekly regular it was essential to make five hundred subscribers from each walk of life where the party was active. He states that the annual cost for subscribing the newspaper was Rs. 80.00. However, he was equally concerned about the satisfaction of the subscribers. He insists that the subscribers should be assured about the reimbursement in case the newspaper is closed down and they should be refunded and should be informed in this regard (Singh, p. 70).

As per the recollection of a school teacher named Dilli Prasad Sharma, who was in close contact with then CPN (ML) in clandestine manner in his college life in the 1980s, the organizers of the then CPN (ML) used to instruct their cadre to follow the newspaper consumers on the streets. According to them, the readers who buy the weeklies leaning to the party such as *Drishti* and *Chhalphal* could easily be motivated and then they would be organized in the party.

*Deshantar* was flag holder of Nepali Congress. However the party was not directly running it. It was registered by Kishore Nepal, the founder publisher and editor of the publication. Nepal (2070 BS, p.336) recalls that the weekly was firm in its principle. He states that the newspaper was aiming for the reinstatement of democracy. The first issue of *Deshantar* weekly appeared in the market on February 13, 1984. Its editorial

in the first issue deals on the worst situation of the country. The editorial seems vague, but stresses on the national consensus to defeat the pro-instability, extremists and anti-national elements. Nepal (2070 BS, p.336) states that revenue-collection from the sales was hardly adequate to buy the newsprint. Part of the revenue used to go to district representatives. Occasional advertisings used to support a little bit. Apart from these feeble sources, they used to publish sponsored pages occasionally. He recalls that even though many a time he had to face uncertainty regarding the cash to purchase the newsprint for publication.

Aryal (2004, p.17) quotes Kishore Nepal, editor of *Deshantar*, who views that there was a link between *Deshantar's* professionalism and partisan leanings to some extent. Nepal states that he carried a party version because he was a part of the democratic movement. *Deshantar* was successful in presenting news in favour of NC. The editorial team would define it as its professionalism. However, it had a clear partisan leaning. It played a role of a flag bearer of NC to a large extent. Nepal argues that the professionalism he was practising was in accordance with the principles of journalism. Thus he does not remember any incident where he had any rift with Nepali Congress over any published materials. He felt compelled to change the paper to cover more than partisan politics after the emergence of new dailies in order to respond to market forces.

Pandey (1998, p.74) states that *Deshantar*, which took off after the peaceful movement started jointly by the Left Front and Nepali Congress in 1985, evolved a new dimension to Nepali journalism. It started as a 12-page newspaper in a big size for the first time in Nepal. The newspaper not only geared up the pro-democratic movement, but also linked international activities with Nepal's political movement. It introduced the use of photographs and made a nationwide network of reporters. By backing a political movement it established a sound foundation for professional journalism.

*Drishti*, initially, was launched to substitute *Chhalphal*. When the government imposed ban on the latter, the former was introduced to serve the purpose. Aryal (2004, p.18) quotes Pradeep Nepal, the chief of the Central Department of Publicity of CPN (UML) then, that the Party Central Committee would form the editorial policy according to the Leninist organizational principles.

*Drishti* has a long history of struggle for the right to expression. Pandey (1998, p.76) observes that when Bagamati zonal administration imposed censorship on the field reports of the earthquake in August 1988, *Drishti* innovated an idea to denounce it. The censored texts were replaced by the word "censored" to fill the vacant space of the censored material. It was really an effective way to expose the authoritarian attitude towards the press.

The Communist parties would utilize newspapers to propound their politics in accordance with what they called Leninism. The party would adopt Leninist organizational structure as is seen in other parts of the world. Kunczik (1995, pp.74-75) states that there are four principles of the press that are said to stem from Lenin: Partiality, truthfulness, commitment to the people and mass character. The partisan press backed by the Nepali communists was also the organizer and political promoter. However, it was different from those of the then Soviet Union's publications. They used to collect a good income and were popular among the commoners. Marx, rather than the Lenin, in terms of presenting variety, influenced them. In the context of Nepal, too, several factions of the communists followed Lenin's path.

The political newspapers in the Panchayat era were polarized into two camps: for and against the regime. Quite a number of Nepali newspapers were loyal to the government. Khanal (2001, p.92) states that during the Panchayat period (1960-1990), most of the newspapers were either controlled by the state or patronized by political parties in a clandestine fashion. Those newspapers, which did not adhere to either of the categories, had a very hard time surviving and their registration would get revoked even for a small comment against the system.

During the repressive days of Panchayat, the political parties took a leap forward in adopting newspapers as an effective means to disseminate their ideologies in a pace that was never seen earlier in Nepal. Aryal (2004, p.34) quotes Pradeep Nepal, a senior communist leader who states that running party newspapers was the part of a political strategy of then CPN (ML) party. He reveals that after the referendum in 1980, the party started to run weeklies. He opines that among the several communist parties, his party was quite successful in running its own weekly newspapers under its direct control.

According to Nepal (2070 BS, p.269) Padam Thakurathi came up with *Saptahik Manch* when the government led by Surya Bahadur Thapa was sliding downhill. He recalls that the size of the weekly was larger than those of other newspapers. *Saptahik Manch* and subsequent weeklies widely covered Surya Bahadur Thapa's view-points. Nepal recalls its short gossip column *Sulsuley* that was widely read and quite popular. *Sulsuley* used to cover unverified but interesting information. Nepal (2070 BS, p.269) evaluates *Saptahik Manch* as the advocate of the liberal faction within Panchayat. He recalls that its main objective was to defend Surya Bahadur Thapa's government. Nepal (2070 BS, p.270) also recalls lantern that with the demise of Surya Bahadur government, the role of *Saptahik Manch* was switched. According to him the weekly, then, concentrated its efforts to oppose the new Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand. According to Nepal (2070 BS, p. 275) *Saaptahik Manch* was the unofficial mouthpiece of Surya Bahadur Thapa faction.

Nepal (2070 BS, p.270) recalls that *Saptahik Manch* distorted his investigative reporting on extrajudicial killings of civilians in the name of suppressing communist. He argues that the editors distorted his reporting based on field visit, in order to save the image of the Prime Minister Surya Bahadur.

Aryal (2013, p.108) mentions that on January 20, 1984, *Chhalphal* published a statement of Maley Communist Party. The statement was issued in response to the police attack on a cultural festival at Piskar village of Sindhupalchowk district where two villagers were killed. *Chhalphal* tagged *Pu* in the front page news story based on the statement (*Chhalphal*, March 9, 1984). Consequently, the police arrested its editor Gopal Thapaliya.

Nepal (2070 BS, p.271) states that, after the referendum, when the registration procedure of the newspaper became relaxed, he applied for the process with well wish of NC leader Krishna Prasad Bhattarai. The district administration conducted a month long rigorous investigation before he finally managed to obtain the licence to run *Deshantar* weekly. However, he also had to sign a commitment letter assuring that the paper would not publish anything against the sovereignty and integrity of the nation, and monarchy, constitution as well as the laws of the land. Nepal (2070 BS, p.441) defends the role of *Deshantar* weekly as supporting the peoples' movement of 1989-90 and its cause. According to him, Kamal Thapa, then communication minister,

aspired to reduce his role in *Deshantar*. He reveals that the government was trying to isolate him from the newspaper with many lucrative offers. Kamal Thapa, once, proposed him that if *Deshantar* does not support the government, he expects that it should not support the opposition either. Bagmati Zone Office seized its copies from the printing press on January 28 and February 3, 1990. Two consecutive issues were thus off the market (*Matribumi*, February 6, 1990). Nepal (2070BS, p.369) states that during the local election of 2043 BS, the *Deshantar* overtly supported NC.

Nepal (2070 BS, p.274) states that *Deshantar* used to publish news that would expose the anomalies committed by the government under Panchayat polity and would cover even a very small news favourable to NC and the Leftists. He (2070 BS, p.271) states that *Deshantar* had obvious inclination towards the policies of NC. Nepal (2070 BS, p. 271) also mentions that he had had discussions with NC leader Krishna Prasad Bhattarai before inception of *Dehsantar*.

Prior to 1990, Nepali newspapers were geared towards their goal of achieving democratic rights, especially the freedom of expression and opinion. One of the sources of inspiration for them was the Quit India Movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in neighbouring India. As the leader of the movement, Gandhi had described the objects of a newspaper in these words, "to understand the popular feeling and give expression to it, another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments, the third is to fearlessly expose popular defects." Parthasarathy (1997, p.121) describes that as an editor, Gandhi laid down strict standards for himself, which was difficult for others to follow. He would not accept advertisements and he believed that a newspaper or journal had to survive on the revenue from subscribers. He would not accept any restrictions on the paper and he would rather close it down than submit to the government's invasion of the liberty of the press.

*Rashtrapukar*, *Distri*, *Chhalphal* and *Deshantar* were the weekly newspapers representing the political mainstream during the different time frame of the country's political history. These weeklies were the forums for alternative voice during the *Panchayat* regime. Baral (1975, p.180) terms these political newspapers as the anti-status-quo papers. He counts *Samikshya*, *Rashtrapukar* and *Matribhumi* as the major anti-status-quo weeklies before referendum during the Panchayat period.

A faction of the Communist Party of Nepal reorganized itself and its presence began to be felt in Nepali politics by the time of the student movement of 1979 and referendum of 1980. Around that time, the then CPN (ML) started its weekly publication. It started with *Chhalphal* and ran *Prakash* and *Drishti* as a substitute for *Chhalphal* at different times. Dhakal (1995, p. 13) states that for the first time, the then CPN (ML) started its own newspaper in order to reorganize the movement with a new spirit. The party's first publication was *Chhalphal*.

Dhakal (1995, p.13) states that in those days CPN (ML) took *Chalphal* as its own newspaper. The party appointed Raghu Pant as its editor. When Pant was arrested and was sent behind the bar under the Security Act, the party launched *Prakash* weekly in 1985-86. Its editor was Prakash Kafley.

A substitute would appear once the circulating paper would be banned by the local administration. The CPN (ML) would run the weekly newspaper under its direct control. Dhakal (2052 BS, p.13) describes the proceedings of a meeting of the party faction within *Prakash* weekly which was held in the presence of "comrade Bibek" [pseudonym of Madhav Kumar Nepal, a senior communist leader] in January 1987. It was his last meet as an editorial staff of that weekly where he had worked for 10 months. Apparently the human resource management was the agenda of this meeting. Dhakal (2052 BS, p. 14) mentions that there were five staff members to run the weekly. Praksah Kafley was editor, Gopal Guragai and Narayan Dhakal were in the desk and working also as the reporters, Harisaran Phuyal was its distributor and Bishnu Prabhat Aryal was looking after administration.

The party was responsible for *Prakash*'s content and finance. A small unit was a lever to the controlling mechanism. The unit's meeting used to be conducted in presence of the in-charge from the party. Dhakal (2052 BS, p.13) states that "comrade Bibek" and "comrade Subarna" [Pradeep Nepal] used to be present at the meeting of the "fraction" of the paper. The decisions would be made in their presence. He (2052 BS, p.42) mentions in another context that once Modnath Prasrit was in-charge of the "fraction". Dhakal (2052 BS, p.44) also states that comrade Pankaj [pseudonym of Jhalnath Khanal, a senior communist leader] was in charge of *Prakash* or *Drishti* till his appointment as agriculture minister of the interim government after the popular movement in 1990.



Dhakal (2052 BS, p. p.32) states that one Wednesday, the editor of *Drishti*, Raghu Pant was arrested for publishing a pamphlet brought out by CPN (ML) that accused Panchayat for its diplomatic failure relating to India in 1989. *Drishti* had published the pamphlet contents in the front page. Modnath Prashrit, the then in charge of the party's publication sector, urged Narayan Dhakal to be the executive editor of the upcoming substitute, *Prakash* weekly. The party appointed him as the executive editor. Prashrit also informed that the Party has decided to close *Drishti* and launch *Prakash*. The paper was registered by Jagrit Bhetawal as the publisher cum editor.

Dhakal (2052 BS, pp.32-33) recalls that there was fraction in the paper and the post of the secretary was important. The secretary was a bridge between the party high command and the editorial staff. Along with the executive editor, Narayan Dhakal was appointed as the secretary of the fraction. Dhakal (2052 BS, p.34) recalls that in the first preparatory meeting of the party fraction of *Prakash* "comrade Bibek" was present along with "comrade Prashrit". He directed the team with guidelines for the editorial policy. "Comrade Bibek" emphasized that the party was in favour of progressive nationalism. Subsequently, the paper started to get published again every Wednesday. The next Wednesday, April 16, 1989, *Prakash* hit the market replacing *Drishti*.

Dhakal (1995, pp.38-42) recalls that Raghu Pant continued as a columnist of *Prakash* weekly after being released. But after some time he was transferred to another responsibility as a retribution for writing against the party's ideological line regarding the student movement in China. He (2052 BS, p.42) states that in a fraction meet, Modnath Prasrit informed that party had taken action against Raghu Panta for writing against party's view. Prashrit clarified about his other misdeeds at the fraction meeting. The editor corrected its opinion in that article through an editorial.

The CPN (ML) viewed its newspaper as its political tool. Generally, these newspapers used to publish an ideological article on page 3. The article used to be written by the leaders but in pseudonym. Dhakal (2052 BS, p.38) recalls that apart from modifying some words prone to compromise the party lines as editors they did not have anything to do with those articles. They used to make the write ups legally feasible by tagging *pra* suffix to the party's name. Finance and editorial policy were not formed at the

“fraction” level or amongst the editorial staff. They were there just to implement the instructions. The policies were formulated by the party leadership.

After the closure of *Drishti* and the initiation of *Prakash* on the same track there was a new enthusiasm amongst the party cadres. Dhakal (2052 BS, p.37) recalls that some of them even started to claim that Communists are made of iron and no ordinary temperature could melt the iron. The shutting down of the newspaper makes no difference. What happened when an editor was jailed? One newspaper was closed and another one has sprung up. One editor was jailed, immediately another was born.

After *Drishti* was closed, the administration was sure that henceforth the group would be subdued. However, CDO and the Zonal Officers were taken by surprise by the new publication. A wave swept across the government rank and file, recalls Dhakal (2052 BS, pp.39-40), eventually *Prakash* weekly hit the market on April 16, 1989.

Dhakal (2052 BS, pp.32) states that after six months of the publication of *Prakash*, the party decided to restart *Dishtri*. Pankaj [the pseudonym of Jhalanath Khanal] informed the team during the meeting of the party fraction about the decision. He was appointed the editor of *Drishti* on October 1989. Dhakal (2052 BS, p.44) mentions Comrade Pankaj informed that the party had decided to restart *Dristi* replacing *Prakash* and he was appointed its editor.

Dhakal (2052 BS, p.63) states that *Drishti* was at the forefront of the information flow during the 1990 pro-democracy movement. He views that the role of *Deshantar* and *Bimarsha* was also appreciable. However, *Drishti* was in the frontline of the political movement. Dhakal (2052 BS, pp.64-65) recalls that after February 18, 1990, amidst the popular movement, the Zonal Office seized one-fourth of the published copies of *Drishti* and warned that if they deliver the paper in the market without first clearing it from the Zonal Office, the newspaper's office would be closed. Dhakal (2052 BS, p.66) further states that during the pro-democracy movement, agitators took the paper as a great weapon.

Though, political parties were banned between 1960 and 1990, newspapers, especially the weeklies, kept political discourse alive in the country. Aryal (2013, p.111 ) states that even though free expression was not in existence during the Panchayat regime,

the weekly newspapers dared to provide space to opposition's voice and overcome various obstacles. In the course of discussion of the role of newspapers during the Panchayat period, Ghimire (2000, p.53) observes that as the state weaponry, the media generally performed a number of jobs for the state. They generate public consent to state policies and create a conducive, cultural climate for the ruling class to accumulate capital. Although Nepali journalism prior to 1990 was largely under government control, it was committed to its mission. Ghimire reasserts that it was the weekly newspapers that formed the backbone of journalism in that period.

The weekly newspapers, even if partisan in character, were the popular medium for news and views during Panchayat days. Ghimire (2000, p.53) observes that indeed, the historical role assumed by weekly newspapers during that period through the dissemination of both information and ideas for the restoration of multi-party democracy and the creation of an environment guaranteeing press freedom is remarkable. By means of the flow of information, Nepali journalists have for long made efforts towards the creation of awareness about democratic rights among the people. They worked to encourage common people in order to seek their participation in the struggle for due attainment of citizen's rights. They were, moreover, personally involved in the struggle for democratic rights. Ghimire (2000, p.53) reasserts that weekly newspapers constituted the undercurrents of mainstream Nepali journalism in the three decades prior to 1990.

The King's Panchayat fought its last battle in 1990. Huftun, Raeper and Whelpton (1999, p.140), in this regard, describe that for a month after the commencement of the revolution on February 18 there was blanket censorship in Nepal of a kind not seen since the days of the Ranas. They state that *Newsweek* and *Time* were confiscated the moment they arrived at the airport and virtually all of the private newspapers had been banned. They describe that the newspapers that survived the wraths of the state continued to carry out subversive news and attacked the government, but in such a subtle manner that it was impossible for the government to strike back.

However, the wave of public movement continued. A very late night, on April 8, 1990, the state owned Nepal Television announced that the King had lifted the ban on political parties. Thus, Nepal entered into the democratic era for the second time.

## **2.6 Restoration of Democracy and New Media Landscape**

By the year 1990, Parajulee (2000, p.77) argues that despite the restrictions imposed on political freedoms, Nepali society did undergo a transformation during the Panchayat regime. He views that existence of the newspapers was one of the reasons of the success of pro-democracy movement in 1990. Out of his count of six reasons he states that independent press had emerged. Despite the government's efforts to ban the newspapers, confiscate their copies, or arresting of the journalists, the Nepali press continued to be critical of the regime.

Although, heavily confined to the Kathmandu valley during the 1960-90 decades, Nepali journalism begun to spread its wings to various parts of the country after the 1990 restoration of democracy.

Press Council of Nepal does not have the record of newspapers before 1986-87. Since the year 1986-87 to 1988-89, the trend of newspaper registrations was almost stagnant. Immediately after the restoration of democracy in 1990, there is a palpable increase in the trend of registration. There were 448 newspapers in the country. By the year 2003-4, the number of newspapers reached 2038. Compared to the year 1996 and 2004, there is a big spurt in the number of newspapers.

During the period of struggle for democracy Nepali press played a role of opposition. Pandey (1998, p.65) observes that after the royal takeover in 1960 Nepali press begun to assume a role of legitimate opposition. The vacuum was filled in by journalists and students who kept the role of the opposition alive by denouncing government's policies. In fact, the press played a unique role as an agent for change and social awareness in Nepal. It is quite rare an example to be found even in other countries. Amidst the political suppression and legal ban, Nepali Journalism also ventured outside the valley during this period.

As Pandey (1998) notes, despite being comparatively easy target of the administration outside the valley, journalists played a crucial role of informing people even from remote villages. By doing so, it helped to spread the Nepali journalism nation-wide. Because of peoples support, credibility and power of the pen it became possible to

cross the suppression from the Panchayat. He argues that it was definitely a mission journalism (p.65).

## **2.7 Period of Transition after the 1990 Political Change**

A country in transition is a country which is negotiating its course against an authoritarian regime towards democratic polity. Rafti (2007, p.7) states that a normative theoretical framework based on the fundamental assumption, that any country which shifts away from authoritarianism, is a country in transition to democracy. Huntington (1991) presents tripartite division of transition process: transformation, replacement, and transplacement. He argues that transplacement occurs when democratization resulted largely from joint action by government and opposition groups and the regime adopt a strategy of negotiation. Almost all transitions, not just transplacements, involved some negotiation—explicit or implicit, overt or covert—between government and opposition groups (p. 114). In terms of its nature and feature Nepal's political transition of 1990s can be identified as transplacement.

In fact, the mode of media consumption in urban Nepal, especially in Kathmandu valley, has been considerably influenced by modernization. In the course of outlining the history and sociology of consumption of the mass media in Kathmandu, Liechty (2003, p.151) states that by the early 1990s, Kathmandu had unmistakably entered the mass media age. He (2003, p.151) further states that in the 1990s many people in Kathmandu increasingly interpreted their lives, locations, and systems of value through the ever expanding frames of reference offered to them in print media along with television, cinema, international music, and the new realm of commodities from around the world.

During the early years of the restoration of democracy, the partisan trend was still visible in the Nepali newspapers. Rao and Koirala (2000) opine that because newspapers in the private sector are not independent of partisan politics or business interests, they too lack credibility. A majority of the newspapers support the Congress Party or one of the divided wings of the Communist Party. Currently, no newspaper can be considered independent (p.148). However the situation changed day by day.

During the early years of democracy, IIDS (1996) observes that after the reinstatement of multiparty system, the Nepali press was demonstrating pluralistic and partisan characters simultaneously. It also notes that during the nascent stage of the 1990 political change, newspapers of a particular party would publish news in favour of that party or even the fraction of the party. It further observes that even though the newspapers claim themselves as independent they are not free from the party control (p.30).

However, amidst a democratic euphoria the Nepali newspapers were undergoing a transition from small size economically managed politics-laden weeklies to the broadsheet dailies with diverse range of reading materials. Press Council Nepal, World View Nepal and Nepal Press Institute (1998, p. 2) states that the beginning of 1996 also augured a new era of broadsheet daily newspapers in the private sector creating an immense impact on media industry. During a period of three months, between March and May of that year, four dailies in Nepali and one in English language were initiated from the capital.

Pandey (1998, p.78) evaluates the state of newspapers in the early years after 1990s. He observes that unlike the developed world, newspapers were not impartial in presenting information and papers were seen directly or indirectly affiliated with one or other political parties. He states that a huge number of weeklies were not seen to be distancing themselves from partisan politics. He observes however that not all existing newspapers were engaged in partisanship. And that by that time Nepali journalists were already familiar with the democratic environment, where the journalists must abide by professional norms and values.

The CPN (Maoist) also used the newspaper as a weapon in order to publicize its insurgency, what it named *Janayudhaa [People's war]*, after 1996. *Janadesh* weekly, managed and run by the party demonstrated extreme examples of partisan leanings. On January 5, 1999, the banner news of *Janadesh* glorified the violent attack over a police station in the rural part of Lalitpur. It reported that Maoist army platoon attacked a police station in the evening on January 2, 1999. The headline reads: "Courageous Attack over Bhattedanda Police Station." In the second deck headline,

"Bravery Day a Historic Success", "Two Policemen Dead, Four Injured" and "Four 3-0-3 Rifles and Two Hundred Bullets Captured". *Janadesh* weekly was registered at Kathmandu district administration office bearing the registration number 41/047/48. The next day, the police raided and locked the paper's office at Bagabazar. However, the newspaper continued to get print from some other location. Govinda Acharya, assistant editor of the newspaper, recalls how they established clandestine offices at Teku and New Road. He reveals that, thereafter, the printer Kamal Joshi, a pro-king party activist, started to print *Janadesh*.

The emergence of large publishing house in the post-1990 period was a major factor contributing to the decline of weekly newspapers of Nepal. Negrine (1994, p.49) presents similar example from the UK when he writes that by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was steady pressure towards a more 'business-like' attitude to newspaper publishing: newspapers, like all other commodities, would have to succumb to the market and to the logic and practices of business enterprises. Later, after hundred years, similar pattern emerged in Nepal. As in the UK and the whole world, including the US, this change in attitude towards the newspaper had many important repercussions. Despite the differences in time and space, in both the cases, newspapers and journalists were, in later period, much more aware of the needs of the market and of commerce.

As in UK in 19<sup>th</sup> century, as mention by Negrine (1994, p.57), Nepal witnessed the growing importance of advertising revenue and the development of the large-circulation daily newspapers in the last decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Acharya (2070 BS, p.48) quotes Kharel that after 1990, the competition among the newspapers was escalating, political slant in the papers was decreasing and diversity in the contents was growing. He states that after 1990, the numbers of reporters in the districts have increased, the trend of beat reporting has started, quality of photographs, layout and cartoon has improved significantly, and editorial-opinion pages have become rich.

Like in the other parts of the world, Nepal's newspaper journalism took a new direction with the market-driven trend after 1990. Severin and Tankard, Jr.(2001, p.358) argue that some critics labelled the new directions taken as "market-driven" journalism in western world, which argues for providing content that will get and hold

an audience in order to sell more advertising space or time. Thus, news operations are becoming too market-based.

Dominick (1999, p.112), in the course of analysing newspapers' economics, states that newspapers derive their income from two sources : advertising, which provides 75 to 80 per cent of the total, and circulation, revenue from subscriptions and single-copy sales, which accounts for the other 20 to 25 per cent. He states that advertising revenue is closely related to circulation since papers with a large circulation are able to charge more for ads that will reach a larger audience.

According to 40<sup>th</sup> annual report of Press Council Nepal (2071/072 BS, p. 145-149) 191 dailies are registered within Kathmandu valley and 439 from outside the valley. Out of the total 630 registered dailies around the country, 190 dailies were published during that fiscal year. However, even the published dailies were not regular. The report says that 135 dailies are regular around the country. Likewise, according to the same report, there are 21 dailies published regularly from the Kathmandu valley. However, not all the newspapers, which are rated as regular by the Press Council Nepal, are available at newsstands. Besides 7 national dailies, 2 weeklies (along with 2 weekly magazines), that are rated in A plus categories, a few more dailies and weeklies are slightly visible in the market. *Kantipur* daily is followed, at distance, by a couple of dailies from the capital which shows the trend towards ownership concentration in Nepal's newspaper landscape.

Since Nepal's communication system was in the age of transformation from dominant model to pluralistic model, it was obvious to see the existence of mixed model after 1990. Within half a decade of the adaptation of liberal media policy, time was getting tougher day-by-day for the partisan press.

Street (2001, p.58) states that media coverage of politics differs between countries and political systems. He states that mass media obsession in the minutiae of campaign tactics, or in the private lives of a political leader is the product of a system of news reporting. It is, according to Street, shaped by commercial, political, professional and other factors. Parry (2012:138) states that newspapers have historically been the most partisan of the media. According to him newspapers have frequently been owned by people who wanted to get their own political views across.



Neveu (2004, p.342) states that private media ownership has never been a perfect shield against state and government influence. However, in the context of Nepal, emergences of private sector newspapers reduce the government's earlier dominance in the media world. Rather, in newspaper landscape public sector's dominance is prevalence. Whelpton (2012, p.226) evaluates that while the most influential daily publications were not directly tied to specific parties, weekly publications often did to a party line and, as before, remain views-papers in post-1990 Nepal.

On March 8, 1995 some of the journalists from *Drishti* splinted and started *Janaastha* weekly, voicing that they were against the policy of limiting journalism to a limited circle. They claimed that they were trying to make journalism pro-people. Another such occasion was the launching of *Budhabar* weekly. Editorial of the first issue of *Budhabar* stated that it would carry the voice of the party. The first issue of *Budhabar* published a stamped letter of the party leader, chief of central publicity department Raddha Krishna Mainali. The letter was an evidence to show that now the party was with *Budhabar* rather than *Drishti*. Its editorial stated that "Now onwards every Wednesday morning we will come as the *Budhbar* weekly." It also stated that now the name had changed, but "we remain the same".

In fact the initiation of *Janaastha* was an indication of the beginning of de-linking newspapers from direct political party control. Newspapers that were controlled by UML, except *Budhabar*, were made autonomous after 1995.

In the course of adopting new strategy for survival, some of the weeklies started to be disassociated with the party. *Janaastha*, a weekly started by journalists associated with CPN (UML), began to appear as a sensational tabloid. Although, its editorial staffs were of CPN (UML), the paper distanced its relationship with the party. It started an alternative way of establishing market. It was the result of that effort that it started sensational presentations regarding UML. But the battle for circulation produced journalistic excesses in many instances. Whelpton (2012, p.226) states that the most notorious instance so far was the publication in 2002 of a photograph of a well known film-star, taken without her consent and showing her in the nude. He notes that caught between the seedy realities of the film industry and the expectations of a still relatively conservative society, the actress shortly afterwards committed

suicide. In order to develop coping mechanism, *Drishti* also started to present a few news items critical to the party.

During the early years of democracy (1994-95), the country had 36 such districts where the newspapers were not registered and published (Press Council Nepal, 1994-95). By the year 2000, within a decade of democracy, official registration showed that the number of districts without the newspaper registration and publication reduced down to as many as 12 in a country with 75 districts.

Media Foundation (2012, p.8) argues that the political reforms of the 1990s, as well as rising literacy rates, entrepreneurship, and the adoption of new media technologies, among other factors, finally led the way to the growth of the Nepali media. Obviously, the growth of the Nepali media kicked off with the establishment of the broadsheet dailies with large investment.

Annual Reports of Press Council Nepal from 1986-87 to 2003-4 show that the new political climate led to the growth of newspapers. The number of newspaper proliferated dramatically in the year 1991-92. The number was almost stagnant up to the year 1988-89. Press Council of Nepal does not have the records of newspapers before 1986-87. Between the year 1986-87 and 1988-89, the number of newspapers registered was almost stagnant. Immediately after the restoration of democracy in 1990, the trend of registration escalated. By the year 2003-4, the number of registered newspapers reached 2038. Compared with the years between 1996 and 2004, a distinctly visible change has occurred after 1990 in terms of quantitative growth of the Nepali newspapers.

The number of newspapers, especially daily newspapers, grew significantly in post-1990 Nepal in comparison to the figures from the year 1989-1990. The total newspapers registered till mid-July 1990 were 481, of which 62 were dailies, one bi-weekly, 370 weeklies and 48 fortnightlies (PCN, 2006-007). Today, the total number of newspapers and magazines, comprising of dailies, bi-weeklies, weeklies, and fortnightlies, registered in respective district administration offices is 3731. However, the regular newspapers and magazines use to be very less in number in comparison to the registered newspaper. The number of regular newspapers and magazines is 592 in 2015 (PCN, 2072 BS, p.155).

First, the quantitative, then gradually, qualitative growth of the Nepali newspapers surfaced significantly after 1990 when the constitution paved the way for large investment in print media and printing technology. Ghimire (2009, p.23) argues that there is no doubt that the Nepali media has struggled hard to make to this stage of professionalism. The credit largely goes to the constitution of Nepal 1991 that stood the guarantor against annulment of permits once granted to the media to be in the business.

Whelpton (2005, p. 226) states that innovations such as the internet and mobile phones, as well as further growth in the electronic media, have naturally affected Kathamndu and other major centres more strongly, but the spread of electrification and the road networks have made them available to some in the more prosperous villages. The same can be said of the continuing growth in print and electronic media. The establishment of private sector national dailies, in particular *Kantipur* and *The Kathamndu Post*, together with the arrival of private FM radio and TV channels, put an end to the dominance of the government owned media institutions. Newspapers of any sort are still slow to reach outlying areas, but many of these are now served by a vigorous and growing regional press. Nepal (2070 BS, p.459), recalling the mid-1990s, states that by that time the foundation of *Gorakhapatra* had crumbled down and *Kantipur* from private sector emerged as the victor.

Birahi (2060 BS, p.152) views that the Constitution of Nepal, 1990 recognized professional rights of media practitioner for the first time in the country. Since then, media organizations and journalists themselves have been discussing professional standards in wider spectrum. Before 1990 codes of ethics for Nepali journalists prepared by the Press Council were the guidelines to serve an authoritarian political system. In fact, Press Council was established to mobilize as a tool to serve the prevailing political system of that time.

Because of the political changes, the relation between politics and the media altered after 1990 in Nepal. Consequently, newspapers with overt partisan leaning started to lose their earlier position as mainstream press. Street (2001, p. 4) observes such relationship in global scenario. He states that the relationship between politics and the media is that of power one, and there are two dimensions to this: there is the power over the media—what gets shown or reported—and there is power of the media—

what gets changed by the media. According to him, if the media does not simply mirror or distil reality, if it imposes particular biases or stories upon the world, it is necessary to investigate as to who is the beneficiary and who is to be blamed for the result. One obvious response is to look to those with a direct interest in the outcome, those with most to gain: the governments, parties and politicians.

The changed political context, planted the seeds of commercialism in Nepali journalism. The trend paved the way to provide wider coverage for the business people and to serve their interests. Nepal (2070 BS, p.342) recalls that, up to the last days of Panchayat, in the 1980s, trade and industry were the subject matter for the formal news. He further recalls that newspapers did not fashion to publish informal and human interest news on business people.

In half a decade, the results of 1990 change were visible. The changes in domestic polity as well as worldwide wave of liberalism created significant impacts on media landscape during the 1990s. A study report that was published six years after the restoration of democracy concludes that much has happened since the restoration of multiparty system on the media front. Within a few years after the restoration of democracy, according to IIDS (1996, p.3) study, freedom of expression became an established value and censorship was curtailed. It summarizes that by then right to information was recognized and seizure of the press was forbidden. According to the study, news readership was going up during that time. Describing the situation of the Nepali media in post-1990 period, IIDS mentions that issue apathy was down. Opinion journalism was thriving. According to IIDS survey, state control was slackening and privatization had picked up. Stating that the stifling press laws were curbed, IIDS mentioned the awareness movement that flowered up and all the ills and evils of a closed communication system appeared to be on the way to banishment.

Basic professional rights such as right to criticize the officials in power and the government were established in 1990 subsequent to the restoration of democracy. Thereafter, the variety of newspapers emerged with relatively sound financial back-up. Liechty (2003, p.188) states that a visit to any of the hundreds of storefront or open-air newsstands in Kathmandu brings one face to face with an amazing array of newspapers and magazines representing every political viewpoint, a variety of languages, a wide range of print quality (from glossy to shabby). Amidst the

"dramatic medley of reading materials" around Kathmandu, the newly emerged dailies gradually started to secure their position after 1990.

In the year 1996 Nepali politics was still under the process of transition towards a functional democracy. Parajulee (2000, p.15) divides the period of democratic transition, of 1990s, in Nepal into two phases. He states that the first phase includes the period of 1990-1992. It comprises the end of the partyless Panchayat regime and the absolute monarchy, the installation of a multiparty democratic regime, the drafting of a new democratic constitution based on parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy, and the holding of elections at the national and local level. He (2000, p.15) notes that the second phase covers the period of 1992-1998 and includes Nepal's effort in consolidating democracy. Newspaper industry gradually consolidated its foundation with the process of institutionalisation of multiparty democracy.

Parajulee (2000, p.120) summarizes the political changes of 1990 as follows: it was a gradual transition to a democratic polity, characterized by a struggle between the traditional forces represented by the ruling elites and the modern forces represented by the political parties and the middle-class.

Media, mainly the newspapers were also under going through transitional phase. In this regard, the IIDS (1996, p.4) study rightly mentions that the issue of the media at that time was "to trigger a mechanism of developing a self-sustained, dynamic media system". IIDS (1996, p.5) study reported that even a casual look into its existing state of affairs showed that it was afflicted by two basic maladies: one is the long-felt absence of a truly independent and competitive media in the private sector; another, the dominant role of the government-owned media.

After six years of restoration of multiparty democracy, during the transition of the Nepali newspapers from partisanship to commercialism, IIDS (1996, p.69) report states, the mass media of Nepal suffered from a chronic dearth of financial resources and capital investment. That situation has not improved much since 1990. The report notes that the annual budget estimate for communications hardly exceeds two per cent of the total development budget, most of this amount earmarked for expansion and maintenance of telecommunication facilities and development of government media.

The report states that this leaves very little for the development of information services, including inputs for the private sector.

IIDS (1996, p.69) study report mentions that the private sector press were at disadvantage from the viewpoint of getting the share of advertisement revenue, since the three largest government media—Gorkhapatra Corporation, Radio Nepal, and Nepal Television—bag almost the whole bulk of the advertisement revenue leaving very little for the private sector press. The report also states that it will be futile to imagine the private print media to prosper and expect them to do full justice to their watchdog and other roles in a functioning democracy. However, contrary to IIDS observation, visible changes surfaced in Nepali media landscape by the new millennium.

IIDS (1996, p.105) reports reveals that regarding government association with media an insignificant 3.1 per cent opted for full government ownership, a clear majority 53.8 per cent lumped for wholly private ownership, with a significant one-third 35.4 favouring joint government-private sector control. However, in contrary to public opinion, even by the time of the promulgation of the new republic constitution by the constituent assembly in September 2015, Radio Nepal, Nepal Television and Gorakhapatra Corporation remains under the direct control of the government.

IIDS (1996, p.111) mentions that responding to the question whether they had any special preference among the newspapers, people had an equal rating for both *Gorakhapatra* and *The Rising Nepal* at the tail end (2 each). The report reveals that whereas in the private sector at least ten entries were won by *Kantipur* (the highest), followed by the others including *Bimarsha*, *Deshantar*, and *The Kathmandu Post*. Twelve other publications claimed only one reference each, including *Drishti*, *Nepalipatra* and *Suruchi*.

By the year 1996 Nepali newspaper landscape was as follows:

Truly independent and neutral press is more a myth than a reality, it seems. Ideologically, the newspapers are widely divided and in their approach to practical politics, they are further sub-divided. Though, theoretically the need for objectivity is always stressed, the Nepalese press hardly matches that

expectation. There are more aligned papers than non-aligned or independent ones. (IIDS, 1996, p.137)

Before 1990, Nepali newspapers were almost entirely unaware of their own economy. It was virtually run with the aspiration to bring change in the society. It was not the profession; rather it was a mission for the journalists. Acharya (2013, p.51) argues that newspaper industry became a competitive profession in post-1990 Nepal and enhanced professionalism has been reflected in the contents. Newspapers' capabilities to create impact have been amply demonstrated in exposing political corruption and abuses of the power. On the contrary, with the emergence of big dailies the traditional weeklies have been losing their ground.

Pathak (2013, p.70), in this regard, shows the necessity of fixing a goal by the traditional weeklies in the present scenario. Analysing the genesis of the Nepali weeklies, he says that they have to decide whether they wish to run as mouthpieces of the political parties or establish as independent newspapers.

Dixit (1997, p.41-42), in the course of classifying the Nepali journalists in the post-1990 scenario, describes the journalists working for party organs as either belonging to the official state-run media institutions or are mouthpieces for political parties. According to him they toe the party line and ignore all other viewpoints. He argues that they need to be in control of things and as a rule are not boat-rockers. According to him they downplay dangers, spike criticism, and give the impression everything is under control and the future is as glorious as the past. He concludes that in the eyes of such journalists only the party is right, everyone else is wrong.

At the early times, in absence of democratic environment, running a newspaper was not considered as running an industry. But it is not only a Nepali phenomenon. McQuail and Siune (1998, p.7-8) share the view that even in Europe, in the early years of newspaper development, no huge financial investments were necessary to start a newspaper. This led to a system comprising many newspapers, each aiming at a small segment of society, defined perhaps by geography, social class, language, and religion or party politics. Many small newspapers aiming at their own well-defined audience created diversity and pluralism. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, improved printing and typesetting technology made mass production possible.

Improved distribution expanded the market for newspapers all over the country, so that several newspapers achieved a national reach. At the same time, new production processes led to a reduction of production costs, an increase in circulation and a widening of social consumption by newspaper readers.

During the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century USA, where "As pressure for government regulation of media mounted, industry leaders responded with efforts to professionalism". Baran and Davis, (2002, pp.98-98) state that it was proved that professionalism required professional standards. The industry lobbied for and subsidized the establishment of professional schools to train media practitioners. Rather than ceding control of media to a government agency, media managers went on record with pledges to serve public needs

Professional practices have been weakening the party political newspapers. In fact such trend is universal. Declining trend of party political newspaper has been witnessed in different societies. McQuail (2000, p. 21) observes that one common form of the newspaper is the party political paper dedicated to the task of activation, information and organization. The party newspaper (published by or for the party) has lost ground to commercial press forms, both as an idea and as a viable business enterprise.

It is general perception that commercialization of media in the post-1990 Nepal has paved the way for professionalism. Khanal (2001, p.113) argues that the recent trend in the Nepali media seems to be going towards professionalization, it has been promoting people's tendency of being informed and educated. This is a positive sign in general because it helps increase mass awareness about various national and international issues.

O'Malley and Soley (2000, p.17) are of the view that mass circulated newspapers are modified by the financial independence achieved by owners of commercially successful papers. The decades of 1990 were also significant in global political history. The phrases such as civil society and transnational advocacy networks emerged in the 1990s. Steiner and Philip (2000, p.938), in this regard, state that until the fall of the Berlin Wall, the concept of civil society was little more than a heading



in the history of ideas, addressed by those looking at the work of Hegel, Locke and Adam Ferguson.

Semetko (2004, p.352) says that special concern about the potential consequences of contemporary media environment for democracy building in societies in transition, in which the party system is still at its infancy, news organizations and journalists are often in precarious positions, and there are low levels of party identification and electoral experience among citizens. He (2004, p.352) quotes Dalton (1996) and Norris (2000), "In these societies in transition as well as in established democracies, analysis of survey data can often show a positive relationship between media use and satisfaction with democracy, trust in institutions, and other measures of political attitudes."

According to Parry (2011, p.138) as nations moved from being monarchies to aristocracies and then to open democracies, the newspapers played a crucial role in supporting or rejecting elected politicians. He states that as the first mass medium with huge influence, they became the early battleground for issues of moral and political censorship and faced the challenge of balancing editorial independence with commercial considerations. The report of the Hutchins Commission (1947, p.131) quotes Charles Beard as follows : "In its origin, freedom of the press had little or nothing to do with truth telling...most of the early newspapers were partisan sheets devoted to savage attacks on party opponents....In Beard's view, freedom of the press means the right to be partisan or non-partisan". Nepal is not an exception to such US experience.

In the context of matured democracy and vibrant media of the US, the Hutchins Commission (1947, p.21) states that society needs, first, a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning. According to the commission, a democratic society requires, second, a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism; third, a means of projecting the opinions and attitudes of the groups in the society to one another; fourth, a method of presenting and clarifying the goals and values of the society. Fifth, the commission states that a society needs a way of reaching every member of the society by the currents of information, thought, and feeling which the press supplies. Nepal lacked such initiatives in the changed political context after 1990.

## **2.8 Way Forward: Newspapers in Post-Transition Phase**

In 2007, Nepal entered another phase of political transition. The country presents an emblematic case to Huntington's (1991) definition of interrupted democracy. According to Huntington, such democracy involves countries that develop democratic regimes that exist for a relatively sustained period of time. He states that at some point, however, instability, polarization, or other conditions develop and lead to the suspension of democratic process (1991, p.42).

As the political history of the country, the history of Nepali press is comprised of regression and progression. Rai, Kharel and Khanal (1998, p.17-18) suggest that situation of mass communication in Nepal could be seen in five phases. Those are: prior to 1951, 1951 to 1960, 1960 to 1979, and 1980 to 1990 and after the year 1990. During the period of 1951 to 1960 multiparty political system was in existence. Thus Nepali press was comparatively free during that period. But the situation created by the constitutional guarantee after 1990 is remarkable. After 2007, the country emerged as a republic with stabilizing political freedoms in new elevation.

Aryal (2012, p.122) argues that when the single bench of the then judge of the Supreme Court Anup Raj Sharma issued an interim directive to the government on August 10, 2005, stating that the process of cancelling the licence of Nepal FM should be stopped, the verdict nullified the government's effort to stop Nepal FM as a penalty for running news oriented programme. The court's verdict eventually encouraged the Nepali media to be critical of the King's government. Consequently, the privately owned broadsheets started to be supportive in the coverage of the anti-King movement.

An expectation for a new media policy was inevitable after 2006. Later, in the same year, the government formed a High Level Media Recommendation Commission that presented a report on contemporary media issues. It dwelt on the issues related to FDI in media industries and media concentration. Nepal has not opened up FDI in print media. But the issue of investment transparency in the media houses has surfaced. Nepali media people expressed divided opinions on the issue. Nepal (2070 BS, p.455) states that he was in favour of FDI in media. His opinion is that a certain per cent of

FDI should be legalized in technology and management aspects. Later, the High Level Media Recommendation Commission, 2063 BS recommended that in National level, FDI needs to be opened within certain criteria where majority share should be owned by Nepali citizens, and Nepali owners should be given a significant role for editorial freedom and management.

Emergence of broadsheets dailies in private sector geared up the process of proliferation of radio and television in the country. McLuhan (2003, p.78) states that media interact among themselves. The newly emerged broadsheet dailies enhanced such interaction and paved the way for diversity in communication channels.

By the time of emergence of private Radio, the second mass media after the print, the runway for journalism was already built. Hough (1991, p.297) opines that broadcast journalism has its roots in newspaper journalism, and the stars of radio news from the early 1920s until very recently were first newspaper journalists, then broadcast journalists. And the radio journalists who got their first training in newspapers later pioneered television journalism. Similarly, print journalism traced the path of journalism for Radio and Television, and later for online journalism in Nepal.

Since Nepal's media system has not been managed in keeping pace with the political transformation, the consequences have surfaced in a natural way. As the Constitution of 1990 envisaged a pluralistic society with free flow of information, Nepal should have developed concrete plan, policy and legislation accordingly. But, contrary to the concept of diverse mix of media channels and diversity of the media ownership, the country is headed towards the natural consequences of inadequate policies and policy lapses. A state should make policy efforts in order to improve the extent of diversity of the media outlets. For instance, France has protective policy for the newspapers. Neveu (2004, p.337) states that French law prohibits any advertising for alcohol, books, and supermarket chains on TV, so that these advertising revenues can be channelled to the press, considered as vital for its financial health.

Based on 30 editions spread over one-month-period content analysis of 12 dailies and 13 weeklies in 2010, Kharel (2010, p.235) reveals that all Nepali weeklies come out in tabloid, both in appearance and content. According to him the general criticism against these papers is that they are heavily biased in favour of the political party or

ideology of their choice, or even business house in some cases. He states that most papers are known for the party or group backing them rather than the quality of journalism or the political independence they maintain.

However, in absence of the policy to enhance pluralism and diversity, media industry takes an obvious route to commercialization and then hyper commercialization. According to Hardt (1979, p. 99), Karl Bucher (1847-1930), a German philosopher, discusses the role and function of journalism in such society in the context of his economic theory of development. He states that Bucher was afraid that the result of economic pressures would convert newspapers to mass production enterprises that compiled information packages for the public.

Commercialism that appeared in post-1990 Nepal apparently boasted professionalism. However, in essence hyper commercialism obstructs the way for professionalism in newspaper journalism. Sharma (2001, p.29) evaluates the performance of newspapers by stating that the dailies have made significant improvement in reporting but remain weak on editorial, and commentary and analysis. In the course of time, prominent writers and thinkers were attracted by the circulation and monetary return made by the broadsheet dailies. They started to contribute for the dailies frequently. The dailies gained popularity for also their editorials and opinions and they side-lined the traditional weeklies. In India (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1966, pp.22-23), an inquiry into small newspapers found six proprietors who ran their publications at a loss "as a missionary work" in 1965. The Nepali newspapers too had reached the similar state in the aftermath of 1990.

Dominick (1998, p.108) states that the US witnessed concentration of ownership in the newspaper business after 1970. According to him, in 1990s the two most significant facts about newspaper ownership are a) concentration of ownership is increasing as large group owners acquire more papers, and b) there has been a decline in the number of cities which have competing papers.

A wider discussion presented by Becker and Vlad on democratic corporatist model and liberal model is equally relevant in the Context of Nepal. Becker and Vlad (2011, p.82) argue that in the United States and elsewhere where the Liberal Model was followed, the journalist's voice and point of view were largely absent. Journalism was

information-based rather than opinion-oriented. Journalists were neutral observers rather than involved activists.

Becker and Vlad (2011, p.81) point out the trend of economic harassment as one of the causes of weak media system in emerging democracies. Economic harassment or incentives are sometimes used by the government or business groups to control the media content. Government officials or big companies can manipulate the advertising of state-owned and private organizations to either reward or penalize media outlets for their favourable or critical attitudes. This type of manipulation is often found in emerging democracies, where the advertising market cannot sustain the large number of media organizations competing for those limited advertising revenues. The consequence often is low-quality journalism, compromises in terms of objectivity, and corruption within the media system.

Becker and Vlad (2011, p.81) opine that media concentration can affect media freedom. Businesspeople who have amassed fortunes during the transition from a state economy to a market-oriented economy (often known as "oligarchs") have created media groups. To do that, they established or purchased existing media organizations. In many cases, these media reflect the economic and political agendas of these oligarchs, rather than address the issues that are relevant for the general public and for the society.

Siebert (1972, p.70) states that the history of the libertarian theory of the function of the mass media in a democratic society has paralleled the development of democratic principles in government and free enterprise in economics. He (1972, p.52) further asserts that the libertarians opposed government monopolies of the avenues of communication. Libertarians argued that anyone, citizen or alien, who had the inclination should have the unrestricted opportunity to own and operate a unit of mass communication. Under the libertarian concept, Siebert (1972, p.51) states the functions of the mass media of communication are to inform and to entertain. A third function was developed as a necessary correlate to the others to provide a basis of economic support and thus to assure financial independence. This was the sales or advertising function.

Empirically developed models of media system presented by Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini are worth mentioning to understand the transitional phase of media system in Nepal. "Scholars Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini (2004) provided the first empirical analysis of press models in their book, *Comparing Media Systems*" (Becker and Vlad, 2011, p.68). Two models out of their three models, i.e. Polarized Pluralistic Model, Democratic Corporatist Model and Liberal Model the latter two models are relevant to discuss in the context of the transition of newspaper journalism from partisanship to commercialization in post-1990 Nepal.

Until the 1990s, weekly newspaper proprietors would proudly boast that they did not go looking for advertisements. The weeklies would published Soviet-style texts seeking to brainwash people about politics. Becker and Vlad (2011, p.69) state that the Democratic Corporatist Model has a high level of newspaper circulation, meaning that much of the population is reached, rather than only the elite. Press freedom came early to these media systems and coexists with strong state support for the media and regulation of them. These media systems have a history of strong party newspapers and newspapers aligned with organized social groups, so that, in general, significant elements of the media reflect the political divisions of society. At the same time, components of the media system are commercialized. While commentary-oriented journalism exists, there is a growing emphasis on professionalized, neutral journalism focused on the reporting of information. Journalists tend to be highly organized. Parties and organized social groups play a role in broadcast governance that is counterbalanced by professionalism within those institutions.

Becker and Vlad (2011, p.69) opine that the Liberal Model has had high levels of newspaper circulation reaching the masses rather than only the elite. Press freedom also developed early in the countries that helped formulate this model. Commercialism dominates, and there is only a weak link between the media and the political parties and divisions of the society. Professionalism of journalism is of higher standard, but the journalists are only weakly organized. Information-oriented journalism is predominant, though commentary exists as well. Becker and Vlad (2011, p.69) state that overall, the market plays a stronger role than the state, and journalism is more influenced by commercial than political motives. Meyer (2009, p.17), in this regard, states that the erosion of professional values might be a useful

frame for examining what is happening to newspaper journalism. He (2009, p.15) concludes that the newspaper owners, partly out of a sense of social responsibility and partly with an eye on the long-term health of their companies, were more interested in influence than in maximizing their fortunes.

Immediately after restoration of *Lokatantra*, an Asia Pacific study report analyses the challenges of the editorial independence within the Nepali media. The report presents corporate interest of the owners as one of the challenges of the Nepali media in the days to come. For instance, on October 20, 2003 "Both *Kantipur* and *The Kathamandu Post* did a profile of one Dr. Rashendra Bhattarai on their front pages. Under normal circumstances, a story on an individual would have been placed in the inside pages" (Mainali, 2006, p.158). However, "The stories claimed that Bhattarai was an exemplary Nepali. He was, according to the write-up, one of the very few successful Nepalis who had worldwide fame in both business and industry and social service" (Mainali, 2006, p.158). The then editor of the publications resigned after the incident. Mainali (2006, p.158) quotes the then editor as follows: the management of *Kantipur* violated the concept of editorial freedom.

Prajapati (2013, p.1) argues that open market policy, commercial interest and corporate interest of media ownership has now led media owners to control and influence news media content that was previously controlled by the state. He (Prajapati, 2013, p.33) adds that media ownership law in Nepal is necessary to prevent unwarranted influence of investors over media content. Based on the frame analysis from two cases concerning the Nepali newspapers confrontation with the labour union and Dabur Nepal in 2007-8 and 2010 respectively, he (Prajapati, 2013, p.26) concludes that ownership influence is vivid when it comes to corporate interest of the news media. *Kantipur* Publications along with Kamana Publications and APCA was involved in conflict with UCPN (Maoist) supported labour union. However, his argument is that the publications manipulated the readers while presenting the news regarding the episode. They presented the grievances regarding the labour issues as the issues of the press freedom. Likewise, he argues that *Kantipur* along with *Naya Patrika* manipulated the readers to serve their corporate interest during their conflict with Dabur Nepal in August-September 2010. Hence, Prajapati (2013, p.1) argues that

with the rise in private news media ownership, private owners of media are influencing news content and this trend is slowly manifesting into public domain.

Neveu (2004, p.346) argues that analysis of sociology of news production, combining the study of sources, journalistic work, and the impact of business imperatives are one of the pertinent approaches in order to evoke a serious debate on the political role of media.

There is a strong positive correlation between the growth of GDP and advertising. Jeffrey (2010, p.9), while discussing the ad revenue, says that capitalism in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century liked large markets and the newspapers are compelled to focus themselves in order to secure the advertising that brought financial success. Jeffrey (2010, p.9) states that it was very difficult to maintain a newspaper on sale alone. Thus, according to him, pressure of both status and economics encouraged successful newspapers.

Kharel (2013, p.14) observes that the image of the Nepali journalism has been changing after the restoration of political pluralism. However, he expects professional fairness in more consolidated way. He senses prejudice even in the mainstream Nepali dailies. Kharel (2010, p.235) argues that conventional journalism wisdom is that the dailies pursue a more serious journalism than their weekly counterparts, which however are more sensational than serious. Furthermore, Kharel (2013, p.14) adds that the quest for the professional journalism has been struggling not only against the policy makers but rather also within the profession itself. International Alert, Federation of Nepali Journalists and Equal Access (2013, p.13) state, that in Nepal even journalists are aligned to partisan unions, a factor that also has the potential to influence content.

Jeffrey (2010, p.xvii) shares the Indian experiences of the growth of Indian-language newspapers, which had begun well before the 1990s. According to him the growth signifies the spread of Indian capitalism and its organizing principles and values. The need to show larger audiences to national advertisers drives the aggressive expansion of these newspapers. They need rising circulation figures to retain their advertisers to face the challenges from television and other newspapers, to capture ads from rivals and to entice new advertisers into their territory. McQuail and Siune (1998, p.7-8)



state that the introduction of advertising lowered the price, but at the same time made newspapers dependent on advertising. As newspapers expanded their target group, the content was widened and their ties with political parties were reduced. Jeffrey (2010, p. xiv), terming the phenomenon as newspaper revolution, observes that in the five years between 1993 and 1998, daily newspaper circulation doubled in India. Jeffrey (2010, p.xvii) further adds that in the 1990s, as the Indian economy was shorn of government's various controls, capitalism came out of the closet. Most newspapers grew and profited.

Taking advertising under capitalism as a three-handed game, Jeffery (2010, p.57) states that at one corner are the people who produce newspapers and media are in other corner. In India in the 1970s, many of them, particularly in the Indian-language press, were disdainful of capitalist advertising, unsure about how urgently they needed it and uncertain about how to go about getting it. Jeffery maintains that at the second corner are the people with things to advertise-manufacturers of products and purveyors of services. Discussion the Indian context in the 1970s, he adds that they did not have to advertise a great deal: Indian advertisers...cut out advertisement expenditure first if any economy is to be effected. Demand for most things exceeded supply, and "everyone knew" that anyone with significant purchasing power read English. At the third corner were advertising agencies. Jeffery further states that long ago, advertising agents had originated as touts hired by canny newspaper owners to drum up advertising. Becoming independent of newspapers, the agencies acted as go-betweens. They analysed a provider's product, advised about the most effective places to put ads and created the pictures and the phrases for advertisement.

Neveu (2004) says that a market-driven press and media system creates no incentives to strengthen and reward the values and behaviours of citizenship. Most media and magazines target audiences as consumers interested in information concerning the stock exchange, soccer, fashion, and travel. He states that it is dedicated to the satisfaction of human beings and considered as market slots, not as responsible members from a polity (p.342).

Political changes such as the restoration of the multiparty system and then enhancement of pluralism altered the media landscape contributing to the inception of broadsheet dailies from the private sector. However, the changes did not bring explicit

policies and regulations in order to cultivate vertical and horizontal diversity among communication vehicles. Kunczik (1993, p.158) concludes that some authors assign private-enterprise media the dominant function of entertainment; by contrast, these authors argue, democratic, quasi-governmental media have primarily informing functions. Thus any society needs diversity of media ownership in order to serve the public with diverse content.

Watson (2004, p.109) states that diversity applies to channels as well as contents and style; and that would mean a diversity of channels as well as a diversity of ownership and control. To ensure diversity of channels there must be regulation. He poses the question as to who controls the airwaves, the print works, the distribution networks, the telecommunications systems, who commands the fibre-optic cables and the satellites, exerts power over choice? He (2004, p.110) further states that in addition to the benefits of channel diversity "best" performance would be to require diversity of sources—that is, where information originates; where newspapers, radio and TV get their information from. Much raw material for news emerges from sources that are essentially in the business of news management aimed at putting over the source's position in a favourable light. Watson also adds that governments are the most substantial suppliers of information in any society.

Both vertical and horizontal diversity are to be assessed in order to determine the level of media diversity in any country. Vertical diversity means the one being the number of options offered by a single channel. Likewise, horizontal diversity implies the options available at any time across the range of channels. Watson (2004, p.109) opines that normative or best media performance can be identified as diversity of sources and outlets and accessibility on the part of the whole public to information, both of these contributing to a plurality of opinions in society. Examining a number of principles that seek to define normative or best media performance, he states that at the macro-level these can be identified as diversity of sources and outlets and accessibility on the part of the whole public to information. Both of these contribute to a plurality of opinions in society.

Watson (2004, p.109) states that to give diversity a priority is to make different, to give variety. Media provision should, then, be both diverse and capable of divergence. Defining horizontal and vertical diversity, Watson (2004, p.110) sees the need to

assess both vertical and horizontal diversity, the one being the number of options offered by a single channel, the other, options available at any time across the range of channels.

Newspapers in a democracy ensure and enhance the political communication by pursuing diverse range of contents. Craig (2007) argues that the media are the sites where politics and public life are played out, the sites where the meanings of public life are generated, debated and evaluated. Wolfsfeld (2011, p.95) states that understanding the dynamics of political communication is also the end of a cycle that begins in the political world that provides the initial inputs that are then filtered, interpreted, and packaged by the media and is consumed by these individuals who follow the news. Craig (2007, p. 4) defines modern public life as a mediated phenomenon. UNESCO (2010) recognizes that the media, in order to fulfil its democratic potential, reflects the diversity of society. It presents gender, age, race, ethnicity, caste, language, religious belief, physical ability, sexual orientation, income and social class as different facets of social diversity. It believes that media organizations have considerable power to shape a society's experience of diversity by conducting public discourse (p. 51).

UNESCO (2010) believes that media organizations have considerable power to shape a society's experience of diversity. The media can report upon the concerns of every group in society and enable diverse groups to access information and entertainment. UNESCO reasserts that media can provide a platform for every group in society to gain visibility and be heard. Yet the media can also engender suspicion, fear, discrimination and violence by strengthening stereotypes, fostering inter-group tension and excluding certain groups from public discourse (p.51).

Kharel (2012, p.267), based on a study of 6,534 news items, concludes that about 45 per cent of the news was found to be Kathmandu-dated. He examines the news that appears on the front pages and on relevant inside pages(s) of 11 national dailies, over a period of one month, in September 2011. It shows a decline in Kathmandu-centric news in Nepali newspapers in the aftermath of 1990.

The state of the Nepali newspapers in post-1990 Nepal and even further in post-2006 Nepal could be examined with the imperatives that UNESCO has set forth in order to ensure diversity in content. UNESCO (2010) maintains that a pluralist media is one (but arguably not the only) prerequisite for obtaining diversity. It believes that community-based media have an especially important role in serving minority or marginalized groups, and state and civil society support for community media is thus vital to ensuring that the media represents social diversity. UNESCO reasserts, however it is also important that minority group issues be reflected in mainstream media as well (p.51-52).

According to UNESCO (2010), media conduct in relation to social diversity is also a matter of formal regulation, e.g., requirements on public service broadcast media to serve all sectors of society and to give fair access to political parties. Media conduct may also be regulated by laws in the civil or criminal code, such as those against hate speech (p.52).

The Media Foundation (2012, p.125) presents some of the visible trends in the media landscape of post-2006 Nepal. The Foundation tests hypothesis that there was no lack of skilled and capable journalist, the media could play a significant role in the country's political transition, journalists did not have as much of political affiliation now as in the past, journalism content was getting better and journalists are playing pivotal role in exposing corruption. Likewise, the Foundation tests other hypothesis that media are gaining more freedom in the recent days and journalism had emerged as the most desirable profession.

The study (The Media Foundation, 2012, p.125) reveals that regarding the public views on the availability of skilled journalists in Nepal, more than two-thirds agree that there was no lack of skilled and capable journalists in Nepal. The study shows that regarding the role of Nepali journalism in the country's political transition, more than one-third said it was somewhat true that it had a role and nearly the same number said that it was true.

Hachhethu (2008, p. 6), presenting one of the ten key findings of the Nepal Democracy Survey 2007, views that one of the manifestations of the process of social

capital formation was the increasing media exposure in post-2007 Nepal. According to him the process ensures the sustainability and consolidation of democracy in the country. He states that people's political awareness and participation are on the rise. People have greater media exposure and greater association/involvement with formal organizations. He states that many are keeping themselves informed about recent political developments and participating in political discussions and political activities.

Transparency International Nepal (2014, p. 15) sketches the Constitutional provisions for establishing, registration, and freedom of media entities as key strengths of the Nepali media. Legal frame work for media operation as well as diversity in prevailing media-landscape are other key-strengths of the Nepali media.

Considering mass media as one of the 11 pillars of National Integrity System, Transparency International Nepal (2014, p. 15) states that the Nepali media are performing their role as a watchdog relatively freely. However, because of a lack of financial independence they have not been able to scrutinize the government and inform the public in a balanced manner. Summarizing the important strengths and weaknesses of the Nepali media, it states that they are moderate in capacity, governance and role in general.

Stating that one common form of the newspaper is the party political paper dedicated to the task of activation, information and organization, McQuail (2000, p.21) views that the party newspaper, published by or for the party, has lost ground to commercial press forms, both as an idea and as a viable business enterprise. His observation generally reflects the situation of the Nepali newspapers. However, the Nepali newspapers have yet to achieve the required magnitude. National Integrity System survey, 2014 (2014, p. 15) reveals that lack of financial and editorial independence as well as transparency in ownership are the key weaknesses of the Nepali media. Inability to expose corruption and inform public on governance as well as to exert pressure to hold the government accountable as a watchdog are other key weaknesses of the Nepali media. Thus, the Nepali newspapers are yet to emerge as a vibrant public sphere in real sense.

In the global context, as the newspaper industry grew, it created a remarkable size of market. Mass newspapers began to depart from partisanship. History shows similar trends also in other parts of the world. In England the rise of a mass circulation daily press in the first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century disrupted the direct political ties of papers to political parties; the old direct forms of subsidy and party-based partisanship.

By the new millennium Nepal witnessed a mediated society where peoples' ideas about the world, knowledge of what is happening and, perhaps most pertinently, values coming from beyond the individual's daily or immediate experiences, through the media. Rayner, Wall and Kruger (2001, p.67), in this regard, state that these processes of selection may heavily mediate the original event that took place. They (2001, p.65) define mediation as the process by which a media text represents an idea, issue or event.

Andersen and Strate (2008, p.77) state that besides other media, newspapers have always had to balance their commercial and intellectual roles against the overlapping and conflicting needs of readers and advertisers, proprietors and editors, sources and governments. They argue that the essential requirement of freedom has always been available only on qualified terms, never absolutely; the level of press freedom at any moment is greatly dependent not only upon constitutional and legal arrangements and the state of mind of prevailing governments but also on the way that the medium as an enterprise is being managed. Applying their argument on the rudiments that shape the media system, they state that freedom from constraint by government is but one of the necessary ingredients of an effective media system: those responsible for content require an overall environment that encourages the good qualities and discourages the bad. Andersen and Strate further state that the battles between the great media empires formed in the past few decades will be decisive in shaping the general culture of societies.

Burton (2010, p.45) discusses the relationship between media and society. He states that on the one hand, western beliefs in democracy and freedom of choice support ideas about a free market and about visions of a plurality of media and their materials. On the other hand, the freedom of institutions to produce what they like does not fit

into other ideological imperatives—to endorse a particular system of social morality and to protect certain social groups, for instance. Nor do such freedoms as are now allowed seem to add up to a genuine freedom of choice for all sections of society. He (2010, pp.45-46) further states that the power of relatively few media institutions to determine what appears in the marketplace equally endorses critiques offered by both neo-Marxists and political economists—the society is not best served by the media, least of all in terms of a free market of ideas.

Severin and Tankard (2001, p.362) state that media ownership determines media control, which, in turn, determines media content, probably the major cause of media effects. Media ownership is an important concern of communication theorist dealing with media effects. In the context of Nepal, changing patterns of media ownership have created the effect as well in Nepali society.

Rayner, Wall and Kruger (2001, p.170) state that because of ownership control, newspapers in UK are slowly shifting into the hands of fewer companies. In such condition monopoly is inevitable. McQuail (2000, p.245), in this regard, views that ownership and control influences content or that any kind of standardized or mass production process involves some systematic influence on contents. He states that content is systematically and distinctively influenced by organizational retunes, practices and goals rather than either personal or ideological factors.

Herman and Chomsky (1988, p.1) state that in countries where the levers of power are in the hands of a state bureaucracy, the monopolistic control over the media, often supplemented by official censorship, makes it clear that the media serve the ends of a dominant elite. They argue, though it is difficult to see the multilevel effects of the inequality of wealth and power on mass media interests and choices where the media actively compete, the "manufactured consent" has long been recognized in liberal democracies. It is not easy to recognize the premises of discourse fixed by the powerful in such a society where the newspapers periodically attack and expose corporate and government malfeasance, and aggressively portray themselves as spokesmen for free speech and the general community interest. However, their (Herman and Chomsky, 1988) critiques of the US media expose the normally

invisible discrepancies underneath a system where private and formal censorship is absent.

Herman and Chomsky (1988, p.2) state that money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their message across to the public. According to them inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects shape the mass-media interests and choices. They further state that the essential ingredients of propaganda model or set of news filters fall under five headings. First, the size of concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; second, advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; and third, the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and so called experts funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power. Fourth, according to them, is flak that is used as a means of disciplining the media. Fifth, Herman and Chomsky list, anticommunism is taken as a national religion and control mechanism in the US.

Watson (2004) states that hegemony is rule by won consent. Of all the agencies of hegemonic control the media are generally perceived to be the most powerful, hence the requirement for the Power Elite to exert pressure if not control over the media: better still, to own it. Watson says that hegemony is working when there is general consensus, that is when the mass of the population or most of it accepts the controlling influence and decision-making of that part of society termed, by the American writer C. Wright Mills, the Power Elite—those members of a community who hold or influence the reins of power (p.18).

Hegemony manifests in various different ways at different times and in different circumstances, but what is common to all of them is the governing influence of ideology, the public expression of what in personal terms we describe as values. Ideology is ever present; and every form is suffused by it. From a position of dominance it is impatient of competitors. Watson views that it provides the conceptual "cement" that upholds the structures of the powerful, defends their interests and is instrumental in helping to preserve the status quo-the way things are; the way they are ordered (Watson, 2004, p.19). Examining through the lens of the



theory of cultural hegemony, the Nepali newspapers underwent a new state of the governing influence of ideology after 2007.

Today, in Nepal, publication of a newspaper is considered as an industry. As in other parts of the world, the party newspapers are lagging behind the commercial press. McQuail (2000, p. 21) states, that the party newspaper, published by or for the party, has lost ground to commercial press forms, both as an idea and as a viable business enterprise. The trend is also visible in the context of Nepal. At macro level, diversity is visible in Nepali newspaper landscape. There is a cut-throat competition among the newspapers to grab the market. Hence, the newspapers are bound to present diverse range of content. For them survival is not possible without the liberal attitude and diverse contents. However, they are also bound to take care of the core interest of their companies. Editorial contents along with circulation, advertisements and overall management are the different aspects of the competition among the newspapers. But they all need to be aware on their boundaries of autonomy.

McQuail (2000) states that the central issue concerning media practice emerges out of the complex relationship patterns amongst media owners, the media contents and its clients. He argues that the issue is the extent to which media organizations can claim to exercise autonomy in relation, first of all, to their owners and, secondly, to other direct economic agencies in their environment, especially those which provide operating funds: investors, advertisers, sponsors. McQuail concludes that the answer is fairly clear and also consistent with the principles of free press theory in its market version (p.259). After the growth of market-based newspapers in Nepal, the major obstacle against the autonomy of the newspapers shifted from political powers to media owners and direct economic agencies such as investors, advertisers and sponsors.

McQuail (2000) sees there is usually some scope for autonomy on the part of communicators employed by media owners, especially freedom based on professionalism or the requirements for creativity, and there are many different kinds of media and several different kinds of paymasters. Of the later, according to McQuail, the most important, leaving the paying audience aside, are media owners and advertisers (p.259).

Bennett and Entman (2001) state that access to communication is one of the key measures of power and equality in modern democracies. People communicate both to make their values and interests (preferences) known, and to learn about the status of government activities affecting those preferences (p.2). The newspaper landscape in post-1990 Nepal has certainly expanded considerably. The constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression and free flow of information resulted in proliferation of broadsheet dailies and emergence of giants in newspaper business. Subsequently, proliferation of dailies empowered the citizens and encourages them to get involved in political decisions. Here, it is worthy to note as maintained by Bennett and Entman (2001) that communication can shape power and participation in society in negative ways, by obscuring the motives and interests behind political decisions, or in positive ways, by promoting the involvement of citizens in those decisions (p.2). The Nepali newspapers played both of these roles in the aftermath of 1990.

Bennett and Entman (2001) suggest the area of enquiry related to the larger political communication environment. First of all, they suggest probe into the range of diversity of information and sources of information. Second, they suggest monitoring of the frequency of various issues and themes. Third, they suggest the formats in which politically relevant information is presented, including the depth or detail of presentation, the employment of tabloid and entertainment styles, and the relative uses of narrative, analysis, and ideology. Fourth, they show the necessity of examining the ways in which members of the public engage with and communicate their reactions to political messages they have received from the media (p.6). These areas of enquiry are equally relevant to the post-1990 newspaper landscape in Nepal. In this regard, Bennett and Entman (2001) opine that political content patterns may vary according to the ownership of news organizations, the competition patterns among them, the professional norms that affect how journalists think about their reporting, and the ways in which audience's lifestyles and identifications affect patterns of information consumption (p.6). In the post-1990 Nepal, the newspapers present varieties of political content patterns reflecting the skewness of the owners

McQuail (2000) states that there has been no shortage of vocal critics of the media themselves, from the early years of the century, especially in relation to their commercialism, low standards of truth and decency, control by unscrupulous

monopolists and much more in western developed democracies (p.49). In the context of Nepal, commercialism in newspapers flourished after 1990.

Curran, Iyengar, Lund and Salovaara-Moring (2009) state that market pressures coexist with a commitment to social responsibility in journalism. Discussing the situation of the newspapers in the US, they further maintain that in sum, the American market model is more nuanced than it appears to be at first glance (p.7). Based on the experiences from other parts of the world, it could be anticipated that if the other conditions, i.e., lack of concrete media policy, remain constant, Nepal will continuously head towards the age of entertainment-centred, market-driven newspapers.

McQuail (2000) quotes Tunstall and Palmer (1991) in order to describe the universal phenomena of media ownership. He presents three categories of ownership as commercial companies, private non-profit bodies and the public sector. He states that within each of these three there are significant sub-divisions. Elucidating that media ownership shapes the content, he states that it does matter that whether a company is public or private, a large media chain or a conglomerate or a small independent enterprise. He views that it may also matter whether or not a media enterprise is owned by a so-called "media tycoon" or "mogul", typified as wanting to take a personal interest in editorial policy. McQuail states that public ownership also comes in many different forms ranging from direct state administration to elaborate and diversified constructions designed to maximize independence of decision-making about content (p.198).

Beer and Merrill (2011) state that although it's a part of a worldwide trend, the fear that media empires will envelop Europe and suppress free expression is frequently voiced. According to them in both Western and Eastern Europe, state-controlled or at least subsidized media monopolies were dominant until late in the twentieth century (p.186). By the late 1990s or beginning of new millennium, with the advent of market-oriented media, the situation was changed.

Nepal's new political order needs to be capable enough to cater to the media system in the country. Einsiedel, Malone and Pradhan (2012, p.18) observe that the poorly performing democracy significantly contributed to the radicalization of the left in the

early 1990s and the emergence of the Maoist Party, whose lineage can be traced back to the 1940s that culminated in the foundation of the Communist Party of Nepal in 1949. Referring to the first ten years of violent conflict and then nearly a decade long peace process, after which Nepal institutionalized the federal republic in September 2015, Aditya (2011) points out that one of the major findings of a survey of Socially Mobilized Communities regarding the role of Civil Society Organizations was that considerable groundwork is needed to activate the common citizens to enhance their civic competence and civic participation and engagement which is possible through stronger media. He also mentions another finding of the survey that the country faced low civic communication, interaction, and limited access to media (p.64). Kharel (2012), in this regard, state that the Nepali media need to connect new voices, offer also niche contents that are neither coloured nor decoloured. He reasserts that information and access to media strengthen citizen empowerment while information gap leads to inequality. His opinion is that a democracy, which is expected to represent popular will, consolidates itself on the basis of majority assent, minority dissent and amiable consent. He further states that minority dissent can, at times, induce a revision in majority decision (p.165). However, fair journalism is one of the prerequisites in order to represent popular will and represents new voices. Here, Kharel (2012, p.166) opines that fair journalism broadens the base and scope of media sphere. He (Kharel, 2012, pp.167-168) warns that if the population of independent media in electoral democracies shrinks and gets marginalized, citizens will find their voices distorted or ignored altogether.

Nepal stepped into yet another political transition in 2006 with the formal abolition of monarchy in 2008. The transition began officially with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) between the then rebel Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) and the then alliance of seven major political parties, including Nepali Congress and CPN (UML). After the failure of the first constituent assembly, an interim government was formed under the chief justice of the Supreme Court in March 2013 and another CA election was scheduled for June 2013. The declaration of another election for the CA was anticipated as a second ray of hope for the country's transition to a stable democracy.

Besides the greater political agenda such as state restructure and federalism, political parties started the election campaign with the commitments concerning different walks of social life. Regarding the mass media system in the changed context almost all the parties came up with their points of views and commitments through their manifestos. A comprehensive and agreed policy on the newspapers could be developed out of the views expressed by the different political actors and the local realities.

Nepali Congress (2013, p.43), under the heading Mass Communication and Journalism states that the party is committed to provide all kinds of security in order to make mass media independent, impartial, fearless.

UCPN (Maoist) (Kendria prachar prasar samiti, 2070 BS, p.45) expresses commitment to provide subsidies and grants to the low-investment-newspapers, community radio, media from remote areas and media run by women, Madheshi, Dalits, Janajatis and other marginalizes groups. The party states that it will recognize media as national service industry and special discount will be provided in equipment buying, electricity bills and other expenses.

CPN (UML) (Kendria committee, 2070 BS, p.39) mentions that the party is committed to establish an atmosphere where the mass media would be independent from political as well as commercial interests. It emphasizes on the necessity to ensure through law editorial freedom, transparency of investment on media institutions and freedom of thought and expression. UML stresses the guarantee of pluralism and diversity, and envisages diverse mix of mass media institutions.

Nepal's transition to a new political system that emerged in 2007 is institutionalized by the new constitution promulgated in September 2015. Thus, Nepal is in quest for a new media policy within the umbrella of new polity. A discourse on comprehensive media policy compatible to new political order has strongly emerged in recent years.

## 2.9 Comparative Study of the Constitutional and Legal Provisions

Willams (1982, p.183) states that political systems and communications systems are the two sides of the same coin. He mentions that for most of history, limits of political influence were defined by the limits of the communication system.

Tuladhar (1966, pp. 3-4) states that the Government of Nepal Constitution, 1948 was intended as part of the strategy of the reactionary government to forestall the revolution. According to him the Act, which is also known as Government of Nepal (Constitution), 2004 BS was promulgated when the Ranas suddenly realized that, apart from naked and brutal measures of repression, they too must have a doctrine to conduct the slow, insidious spread of what they regarded as blasphemy or heresy. Shaha (1992, p.75) argues that it was only during the rule of Maharaj and Prime Minister Padma Shamsher Jang Bhadur Rana in 1948 that a written constitution appeared for the first time in Nepal.

In part II, Article 4, under the heading Fundamental rights and duties, Government of Nepal Act, 2004 BS (1948) states that subject to the principles of public order and morality the Constitution guarantees to the citizens of Nepal the liberty of the press along with other freedoms as defined by the laws of the State. Shaha (1992, p.75) states that as this constitution failed to reflect the existing state of power relationships in the country, it was never seriously implemented and soon disappeared. Regmi (2063 BS, p.189) states that Fundamental Rights Act, 2005 BS (1949), for the first time in Nepal, provided the definition of a book, a newspaper and printing press. Arguably, this was the first legal document in Nepal that recognizes the rights of the mass media, specifically the print media. Fundamental Rights Act, 2005 BS (1949) developed during the period of Rana Prime Minister Padma Shumshere, was enforced only after one year by his successor Mohan Shumshere.

Press Act, 2005 BS (1948) was issued on April 14, 1948. Later, Nepal Interim Constitution, 2007 BS (1951), put an end to the Rana regime and institutionalized a new polity. The constitution in Article 17, under the heading Fundamental Principles of Law, states that all citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression. Subsequently, Press Act, 2005 BS (1948) was repealed by Nepal Press and Registration of Publication Act, 2009 BS (1952). Then the government brought

Press and Publication Act, 2009 BS (1952). The objective and reasons of the promulgation of the Act was to monitor the press and to maintain law and order. The objective and rationale, it maintained that at that time the press persons were in a dubious situation and confusion and had been publishing different articles frequently in the printed forms such as bulletin, booklets, newspapers and pamphlets. As per the objective and rationale such acts might endanger the law and order of the country.

Pokhrel and Koirala (1995, p. 26) also states that the new government replaced the former Press Act of 1948 with a new Press and Publication Act of 1952. This Act was an improvement over the previous Act in that it provided liberty to the newspapers for the registration with or without furnishing sureties. The rest of the contents were similar to the Act of 1948 AD.

Section 5 of the Press and Publication Act, 2009 BS (1952) stated that no press shall publish, directly or indirectly, a word, sign or direct shape which may encourage hatred or disrespect not only to the king and royal family, but also the government and its activities. Report of the First Press Commission mentions that journalists opted for liberal press laws; especially they asked to scrap the section 36 of the Press and Publication Act, 1952. As per the article the government is authorized to stop any news, critical materials or the publication in the name of public welfare. They also demanded to cancel the provision to seize the printing press in case the material gets printed that is deemed illegal (Press Council, 2049 BS, pp.370-373).

Nepal Interim Constitution 2007 BS (1951) was designed to institutionalise and consolidate the outcomes of the revolution of 1950-51. On March 30, 1951 the Council of Ministers adopted with the approval of the monarch the Interim Government of Nepal Act 1951 which came to be known as the Interim Constitution of Nepal. Pokhrel and Koirala (1995, pp.26) compiles the history of media laws in Nepal stating that Article 16, part II sub-clause (d) of the Interim Government Act, 1951 dealt extensively with human rights including press freedom.

Sharan (1983, p.17) observes that the Interim Constitution was a complete contrast to the preceding Government of Nepal Act, 1948. While the earlier document protected and safe-guarded the privileges of the autocratic rule of the Ranas; the Interim

Constitution honoured the cherished democratic rights and liberties of the people all over the country and acknowledged the declaration of King Tribhuvan as a charter of liberty. Sharan (1983, p.17) opines that under the Interim Constitution, the people of Nepal, for the first time, were granted all democratic rights and liberties, the enjoyment of which was not subjected to restrictions.

On February 12, 1959 the King Mahendra promulgated a new constitution. Dhungel, Adhikary, Bhandari and Murgatroyd (1998, pp.24-25) mention that to help him frame the new constitution, King Mahendra invited Ivor Jennings, the British expert on constitutional law, to come to Nepal in March 1958 as an external expert. They (1998, p.27) state that the Constitution guaranteed various fundamental rights modelled on the provisions of the Interim Act (including rights to personal liberty, equality, religion, property, and political freedoms). Dhungel, Adhikary, Bhandari and Murgatroyd (1998, p.27) state that in reality, however be the appearance of the Constitution, an American-style "Bill of Rights" was undermined by the desire to protect the monarchy and to limit judicial enforcement in situations where there might be a conflict with what the legislature conceived to be the needs of society.

King Mahendra proclaimed Panchayat Constitution on December 16, 1962 that lasted for next 30 years with three amendments. Several laws and regulations were operational to serve the restriction approach of the constitution. Article 17 of the Panchayat Constitution had provisions to exercise control over the freedom of expression and publication. Singh (2046 BS, p.126) states that State Affairs (Crime and Punishment) Act 2019 BS, Organization and Association (Controlling) Act, 2005 BS; Public Security Act 2018 BS, Espionage Act 2010 BS, Press and Publication Act 2019 BS and some more acts were there to restrict the freedom of expression and publication in the Panchayat period.

Ghimire (2000, p.57-58) views that the Press Act of 1962 followed the course chartered by the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal 1962. Restrictive clauses of the Act curtailed free expression and independent journalism. Nepali press was once again enmeshed in the tangle of authoritarian concepts. The annual report of the Press Council Nepal (2049-51 BS, p.3) states that the duty and responsibilities of the Press Council was to develop journalism as a vanguard of the Panchayat system.



National perspective and nation's interest would be kept in mind to create an environment for development of kind of journalism that would be entirely faithful to the King and the Panchayat system.

King Mahendra's new political system, termed Panchayat, was formalized in the new Constitution promulgated in December 1962. Sharan (1983, p. 31), regarding the promulgation of Panchayat Constitution, states that constitutional monarchy was thus given a basically different interpretation, which was quite unlike from the system projected by King Tribhuvan and the leaders of the revolution of 1950. King Tribhuvan had preferred to keep the Crown as free as possible from day-to-day political and administrative duties. Sharan (1983, p.31) observes that King Tribhuvan's primary objective always appeared to create conditions which would enable him to play his role of a constitutional monarch whereas King Mahendra viewed a passive role as akin to dereliction of duty, and considered the Crown to be the one institution capable of providing the dynamic leadership required, if Nepal was to maintain its national integrity and achieve rapid economic and political progress. Shaha (1978, p.125) states that King Mahendra's Panchayat Constitution was introduced with the justification that parliamentary democracy was not suited to the objective conditions in Nepal and to the genius of its people.

The Panchayat constitution, on the one hand, guaranteed freedom of expression as a basic right, and, on the other, the right was severely curtailed. Pre-publication censorship, cancellation of registration for publication, and other similar restrictive measures severely debilitated the freedom of expression and the press freedom, and journalists operated under constant threats of harassment, including imprisonment. Shaha (1978, pp.64-65) considers the Panchayat politics as the hangover of the Rana period. He writes that to look for a historical parallel for the Panchayat system in Nepal, one need hardly go beyond the 1948 Constitution. According to him what was envisaged in 1948 came quite close to the post-1960 Panchayat rule, especially in its inspiration and its attitude towards political parties. Shaha (1978,p.65) states that King Mahendra's denunciation of political parties sounded like a distant echo of what the second-last Rana Prime Minister, Maharaja Padam Shumshere, had said while promulgating the 1948 Constitution.

Sharan (1983) states that the constitutional amendment of 1967 apparently a transition towards a responsible government with at least some semblance of a semi-parliamentary procedure, as it endorsed a provision for a cabinet under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. He says that on the surface, all this gave the impression that the system had moved "a step forward towards a fully responsible government" and as such it was "a worthwhile experiment towards the transfer of leadership and responsibility to the elected members of the National Panchayat. He adds that despite these developments of increased role of the people's representatives at the central level, the Panchayat system was observably in a fix (p.125). It is worthy to note that the first amendment of 1967 had also made partyless Panchayat system for which no alternative is to be found.

As Pokhrel and Koirala (1995, p. 56) observe, the press laws and regulations underwent frequent changes pertaining to the political expediency of the rulers. For instance, the Press and Publication Act, 1963 had the following provision in Section 30: His Majesty's Government may issue an order directing the suspension of any news, criticism or publication in case it is deemed reasonable to do so in the public interest. No appeal or complaint shall be entertained against such order. Latter the Act was amended in 1970. The amended section of the Act incorporated the provision for appeal to guarantee judicial protection of the press.

Baral (1975, p.178), terms the trend as the mushrooming of papers registered from the middle of 1970. The Panchayat constitution was amended for the second time in 1975. Press and Publication Act, 2032 BS (1975) incorporated a provision in section 20 (1) a that stated that the government can stop the printing press and publication if they deemed harmful to national security, public interest, peace and order or sovereignty or partyless Panchayat system in August 1975. According to Press Council (2049 BS, p.529) by using that provision, government took action against the dailies: *Dainik Nepal*, *Nabin Khabar*, *Nepal Times* and weeklies: *Samikshya*, *Rashtrapukar*, *Naya Sandesh* and *Matribhumti*. Later, at the end of the year the action was revoked by the government.

On May 30, 1979, King Birendra announced through a communiqué, full freedom to supporters of either form of the government to hold meetings, canvass, support, and

propagate their views. Sharan (1983, p. 114) states that according to the Royal Palace communique, the constitutional disability regarding formation of political parties and politically motivated activities and associations remained but it would be held in abeyance until the referendum. The communique further stated: In spite of whatever has been written in Part III article 2(A) of the constitution, people will be free to hold mass meetings, comment or criticize and propagate their views fearlessly but with restraint. Sharan (1983, p. 114) views that this again meant another amendment carried out by the King to the constitution. Shaha (1992) argues that the entire political atmosphere immediately and dramatically changed for the better after the royal proclamation about the referendum and another proclamation on May 30 granting freedom of public assembly and expression. He further states that people began to breathe more freely and to deliberate on their future course of action with the sense of responsibility that comes only with freedom (p.54).

On December 15, 1980, King Birendra announced the third amendment to the Panchayat constitution. The amendment did not lift the ban on political freedom. Dhungel, Adhikary, Bhandari and Murgatroyd (1998) state that the 1962 Constitution, even after its third amendment, proved to be an inadequate document, and prior to this third amendment it was little more than a façade, utterly incapable of regulating any area of national life which really mattered. They further state that in theory, the Constitution was (as it declared itself to be) the fundamental law of the land. They state that in practice, the Palace, with or without the knowledge of the king, assumed massive powers (p.27).

King Birendra formed royal press commission to undertake a study concerning the problems of the Nepali press and their solutions on February 22, 1981. It mentioned that with the penalty imposed with the administrative action administration against the published materials results in cancellation of the publication is not justifiable (Press Council, 2049. P.487). The Commission (Press Council, 2049 BS, p.477) stated that since the newspapers close to the government are getting facilities and critical newspapers are deprived of such benefits, the press has become tools for government's propaganda.

Hoftun, Raeper and Whelpton (1999) state that after the third amendment to the constitution there was some cautious optimism towards the Panchayat government

among broad segments of the population. According to them these people maintained that some reforms had been implemented even if they were not significant or far-reaching. People hoped for a kind of evolutionary democracy within the Panchayat system (p.100).

However, the Freedom of Speech and Publication Act, 2037 (1980) that was enacted on August 13, 1980, four months after the referendum, was not in line with the quest for political reform that people were hoping for. Rather the Act, imposed restriction over publication of any material that would hint the existence of any political party. In fact it withdrew the rights to publish the activities of political parties enshrined by the Freedom of expression and publication Ordinance (Kanun kitab byabastha samiti, 2037 BS, p. 6).

The euphoria erupted after the announcement of the referendum proved to be short-lived. Pokhrel and Koirala (1995) state that following the promulgation of the new Press and Publication Regulation in 1983, over 50 newspapers were declared suspended or their registration revoked on the grounds of irregularities, inconsistencies, etc. But the court nullified the executive order on grounds of inconsistencies contravening the provisions of the Act (p.56).

Press and Publication Act 2039 BS [1983] provides a greater extent of freedom in comparison to its predecessors.

First, it puts an end to a provision of monetary deposit for the initiation of a newspaper. Earlier, as per the Press and Publication Regulations, 1977, a sum of Rs. 100 thousand needed to be deposited as government revenue. To start a weekly, the deposit amount was Rs. 25 thousand and Rs. 5 thousand for a fortnightly publication. Second, the act reduces the restrictions in four areas. Aside from writing against the king and monarchy, Panchayat system and the nation, as well as support for political parties, the newspapers were granted the right to criticize any institutions and people in power. Third, it put an end to the draconian provision that would automatically cancel the registration of a newspaper once any amount of monetary fine was imposed against an editor or a newspaper.

Subsequently, the relatively improved provisions of the law resulted in increased number of newspapers. Within a year, the number of dailies registered at the local administration reached more than double from 21 to 48 whereas the number of weeklies recorded a dramatic rise to 256 from 52 that year.

During the Panchayat period, Constitution of Nepal had mentioned Right to Freedom in Article 11. Under that article there was freedom of speech and expression in sub article (2) a. But Article 17 maintained that laws could be made for the sake of the public good to regulate or control the exercise of the fundamental rights.

As the outcome of the people's movement, the 1990 Constitution came into force on November 9, 1990 in order to institutionalize the multiparty system. Dhungel, Adhikary, Bhandari and Murgatroyd (1998, p. 43) present one of the unique features of the 1990- Constitution as follows: it is the first constitution in Nepal's history to have been drafted by the leaders of a mass movement with popular consent and with the acquiescence of the monarch.

Under Article 12 (2) (a), the Constitution guaranteed freedom of speech. Dhungel, Adhikary, Bhandari and Murgatroyd (1998, p. 133) state that freedom of opinion and expression under the Constitution was based on the First Amendment of the US Constitution which states that Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech or of the press.

The 1990 Constitution guaranteed press and publication rights under article 13. The Article stated that no news item, article or other reading material shall be censored. Dhungel, Adhikary, Bhandari and Murgatroyd (1998, p. 133), in this regard, state that the specific intentions of the framers of the constitution when drafting Article 13 were to make any system of advance censorship of the press, or prior restraint, unconstitutional. Article 13 (2) stated that no press shall be closed or seized for printing any news item, article or other reading material. Similarly, Article 13 (3) stated that the registration of a newspaper or periodical shall not be cancelled merely for publishing any news item, article or other reading material.

Ghimire (2009, p.23) observes that the political change of 1990 addressed the quest for the establishment of press freedom in the country. He states that the provisions regarding Press and Publication Right were included in the 1990-constitution especially in response to the demand of journalists who were hounded and whose licences to operate newspapers were revoked by the regime (1960-90) for their offensive writings against the government of the day. Department of journalism at Tribhuvan University and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (1997, p.89) state that the laws related to press and publication that were enforced before 1990, were in fact a part of administrative propaganda. They were not meant for the press or publication.

After another nation-wide people's movements the Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007 was framed by the political representatives comprising mainly Nepali Congress, UML and the rebel Maoist. Its article 13 guaranteed right to freedom. Art 13 (3a) guaranteed freedom of opinion and expression of every citizen.

Article 15 of the Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007, guaranteed the right relating to publication, broadcasting and press.

The framers of the Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007 continued the spirit of 1990 constitution in Article 15 (3). The Article reads as follows: No means of communication including the press, electronic broadcasting and telephone shall be interrupted except in accordance with law. Article 15(4) states that no means of communication including the press, electronic broadcasting and telephone shall be interrupted except in accordance with law (UNDP Nepal, 2008, p.66).

The Constitution of Nepal, guarantees right to communication, clearly implying mass communication, under article 19 (Law Books, 2015, p. 13-14). The constitution, which came into effect on September 20, 2015, provides the right against censorship. Article 19 (1) stipulates that no publication and broadcasting or dissemination or printing of any news item, editorial, feature article or other reading, audio and audio-visual material through any means whatsoever including electronic publication, broadcasting and printing shall be censored.

However, it inherits some restrictions also. The related clause reads that nothing shall be deemed to prevent the making of Acts to impose reasonable restrictions on any act which may undermine the sovereignty, territorial integrity, nationality of Nepal or the harmonious relation between the Federal Units or the harmonious relations between various castes, tribes, religions or communities, or on any act of sedition, defamation, contempt of court or incitement of an offence, or on any act which may be contrary to public decency or morality, on any act of hatred to labour and on any act of incitement to caste-based untouchability as well as gender discrimination.

Article 19 (2) of the constitution provides unfettered freedom of expression to all kinds of mass media. It states that no radio, television, on-line or other form of digital or electronic equipment, press or other form of digital or electronic equipment, press or other means of communication publishing, broadcasting or printing any news item, feature, editorial, article, information or other material shall be closed or seized nor shall registration thereof be cancelled nor shall such material be seized for the reason of publication, broadcasting or printing of such material through any audio, audio-visual or electronic equipment.

However, it has concerns over potential abuse of the right. Thus the restrictive clause states that nothing contained in this clause shall be deemed to prevent the making of an Act to regulate radio, television, online or any other form of digital or electronic equipment, press or other means of communication.

Article 19(3) states that no means of communication including the press, electronic broadcasting and telephone shall be interrupted except in accordance with law.

Against this backdrop, it could be summed that the history of the Nepali press in terms of constitutional and legal provisions shows the history of struggle and advances. In the course of time, the legal provisions have been changing in accordance with the political changes.

## **2.10 Relationship between Political System and Media System**

McKenzie (2006) uses the metaphor of a tree in order to explain the media system. He considers the element of philosophies for media systems as analogous to the root network of a country's media system. He considers the element of regulation as analogous to the trunk of a media system (p.36). Hence, the political system shapes the media system.

McKenzie (2006) presents several reasons for using the image of a tree to depict a media system metaphorically: A tree is an organic system that is constantly changing its shape as new parts grow and older parts die off. A tree is surrounded by a local environment that presents unique conditions-such as air quality, wind speed, soil nutrients, and so on-all of which significantly affect its growth and overall shape. Finally, as McKenzie describes, trees interact with other trees through root systems and pollination, just as media systems from some countries interact with media systems from other countries (p.36).

Like a tree, as described by McKenzie (2006), not all elements that comprise a media system are visible at first glance. Underground, there are two inconspicuous but important elements that impact the functioning of a media system as a tree. First, there are local soil conditions containing nutrients that significantly affect the growth and health of the tree. He views that is the element of cultural characteristics. Second, the element of philosophies for media system as being analogous to the root network of a country's media system. According to him, other elements of a media system are regulation, financing and accessibility of media. Another element is media content. McKenzie suggests that because leaves are the most observable and changeable part of a tree, one can think of leaves as analogous to content in a media system. Continuing this imagery, one can think of the standout leaves in a media system as being analogous to the element of news reporting. Similarly, one can think of seeds as being analogous to the element of import or exports in a media system. Finally, one can think of living creatures that observes a tree as being analogous to an audience for a media system. McKenzie states that drawing on this imagery, audiences interact with media content through the accessibility of the content (p.36).



Thus, cultural characteristics, philosophies for media system and regulations of any country emerge out of the political philosophies embedded in the constitution. The financing modality adopted by the media institutions is an outcome of political order. People's reach and accessibility to media outlets is the manifestation of the state of infrastructure and polity. Likewise, contents including the news stories, state of import or export of media products are the elements of any media system. The media system of a country also comprises of audience as the beneficiary or victim of the respective political system. In Nepali context media system can be compared on the basis of these imperatives.

A comparison of the functioning of media in pre and post communist era in former USSR reflects the similar state of transition of Nepali newspapers from authoritarianism to democratic polity.

Armour, a Reuters correspondent in Moscow from 1969 to 1973, compares the state of the media prior to and post-1993 media in the USSR and Russia, which was the larger republic in Soviet Union. He (Armour, 1993, p. 27) writes that in the old days, the communist party effectively controlled everything, and its monopoly was guarded particularly in matters related to information. Today the press which were once under its control have been either privatized, or taken over by local soviets (municipal or district councils-the word in itself does not necessarily imply something communist). So in many cases, local authorities have replaced the party as the controllers of the media. But in others, journalists have taken over their newspapers and run them as co-operative. Similarly, Beer and Merrill (2011, p. 242) observe the changed media landscape of post-Soviet Russia as follows: One of the major characteristic of post-Soviet Russian media is its human and material resources. New Russian media did not have to start from scratch: a journalism tradition and infrastructure were already available.

Armour (1993, p.28) describes that they have to rely on advertising and the cover price to meet costs. But some newspapers or magazines, especially those set up in the post-communist era, are controlled by new private financial interests. It is possible to get good advertising revenue, even in today's economic conditions. But some papers simply get subsidies straight from their private owners. He (Armour, 1993, p.27) states that new market forces created new risks. Where once there was a subsidy—

controlling newspaper, but also helping them to survive—freedom from control meant new challenges to freedom of information from the very new freedom that had replaced the old ideology.

On the transitional period of Russia, Armour (1993) further says that the newspaper stands are among the more spectacular manifestations of the new age, for better or for worse. Not only have newspapers become lively, with real information as against the propaganda of the past, and not only are journalists now emancipated people. There is also a very marked down side. He observes that the new freedom has seen kiosks flooded with pornography and a new yellow press, depressing standards of journalism in the interests of commercialism and sensation. He states that freedom has meant freedom to scale new heights of journalism or to plumb new depths (p. 29).

Armour (1993) states that the press has, of course, improved overall because ideological censorship is now history. But standards of accuracy have dropped. He views that under communism factual accuracy was rigorously checked. Tendentiousness, slanted material, polemical treatments were undeniable. But devotion to checking hard facts for accuracy was generally of a higher standard than in most media organs in the West (p.29-30).

Beer and Merrill (2011, p.242) state that journalism in Russia has changed rapidly in the past three decades, reflecting the country's political, social, and economic changes. Like Armour, they (Beer and Merrill, 2011, p.242) observe the change of media landscape as a consequence of the changes started from politics. Beer and Merrill (2011, p.242) describe that today Russian journalism has a new philosophy that is heavily rooted in the long tradition of this profession. They explain that the major turning points of Soviet and post-Soviet history of Russia as well as this country's political and economic turnaround have directly influenced the character of journalism in Russia at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

### **State of literacy rate and number of newspapers in different political phases**

The table below presents the state of literacy rate, quantitative growth of newspapers and the polity in Nepal in different time frames. As Nepal entered the modern age in 1951 the year has been recognized and accepted as the major benchmark in the history

of the newspaper journalism in the country. The table shows the relationship of the quantity of newspapers with the literacy rate and the state of polity. It presents such relationship up to the year 2011, when Nepal had already entered in an era of republic.

Table I: State of literacy rate (both male and female) and number of newspapers available by different political phases in Nepal

Year	Literacy Rate (%)	No. of Newspapers/Papers	State of Politics
1952-54	5.3	In 1951, there were 1 daily and 3 weeklies	Early days of Democracy
1957	NA	13 dailies in Kathmandu**	Democracy
1961	8.9	By 1958, there were 39 newspapers including 14 dailies* By 1960, there were 32 dailies and 65 weeklies.	Demise of Democracy
1971	14.3	By 1965, there were 65 dailies and 101 weeklies	Party less Panchayat
1981	23.5		Panchayat after referendum
1991	39.6	In 1991-92, Total number of fortnightly, weekly, bi-weekly and dailies reached 665	Restoration of Democracy after the success of peoples movement
2001	53.7	In 2001-02, Total number of fortnightly, weekly, bi-weekly and dailies reached 1756	Democracy with constitutional monarchy
2011	65.9	By the year total number of registered dailies, bi-weeklies, weeklies and fortnightly reached 3195. But in the year 2011, 148 dailies, 3 bi-weeklies, 622 weeklies, and 34 fortnightly were published.	Republic

(Field study; 2015) Sources: Annual Reports (1986-87 to 2003-4, and 2068 BS) Press Council Nepal. \* Pokharel and Koirala (1995, p. 26). Mass Media Laws and

Regulations in Nepal. Singapore: AMIC. \*\* *Haalkhabar daily*, editorial, June 18, 1957.

In the course of describing the newspaper landscape of Nepal between 1951 and 1975, Baral (1975, p.169) states that an inquiry into the plight of the press would also mean an inquiry in to the level of intellectual development, literacy growth, communicational advancement, and above all, the attitudinal change of the people at large.

## **2.11 Nepali Newspapers with Reference to Habermas Public Sphere Model**

Habermas discusses about communicative action, in which actors in society seek to reach common understanding and to coordinate actions by reasoned argument, consensus, and cooperation rather than strategic action strictly in pursuit of their own goals (Habermas, 1989, p. 86). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* is Habermas's examination of a kind of publicity that originated in the eighteenth century, but still has modern relevance. He defines the public sphere as the sphere of private people who join together to form a "public." He traces the history of the division between public and private in language and philosophy.

Habermas (1989, p.81) states that it is characteristic of the development of modern states that they change over from the sacred foundation of legitimation to foundation on a common will, communicatively shaped and discursively clarified in the political public sphere. He (Habermas, 1989, p.82) views that to the degree that the basic religious consensus gets dissolved and the power of the state loses its sacred supports, the unity of the collectivity can be established and maintained only as the unity of a communication community, that is to say, only by way of a consensus arrived communicatively in the public sphere.

Habermas (2005) states that public sphere means a domain of social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed. Access to the public sphere is open in principle to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere is constituted in every conversation in which private persons come together to form a public. To elaborate his idea, Habermas visualizes three political epochs in modern Europe. In each epoch, media were crucial to the system of government (p.92).

The first of Habermas' models was of a feudal society in which lords of land and lords of the church controlled the means of survival, the path to an afterlife and communications. Thus, the representative publicity existed before the bourgeois public sphere from the middle ages until the eighteenth century.

Habermas (2005) notes that it is not possible to demonstrate the existence of public sphere in its own right, separate from the private sphere, in the European society of the High Middle Ages. He states that at the same time, however it is not a coincidence that the attributes of authority at that time were called 'public'. He mentions that for a public representation of authority existed at that time (p.93).

It involved the king or lord representing himself before an audience; the King was the only public person, and all others were spectators. The public and private realms were not separated. Historical parallel of such model could be witnessed in Nepal prior to the 1951.

Habermas' second stage began with the development of a fully political public sphere occurred first in Britain in the eighteenth century. The public sphere became institutionalized within the European bourgeois constitutional states of the nineteenth century, where public consensus was enshrined as a way of checking domination. The fully developed public sphere was therefore dependent on many social conditions, which eventually shifted. Economic developments were vital in the evolution of public sphere. Habermas emphasizes the role of capitalist modes of production, and of the long-distance trade in news and commodities in this evolution. The most important feature of the public sphere as it existed in the eighteenth century was the public use of reason in rational-critical debate. This checked domination by the state, or the illegitimate use of power. Rational-critical debate occurred within the bourgeois reading public, in response to literature, and in institutions such as coffee-houses. Habermas sees the public sphere as developing out of the private institution of the family, and from what he calls the "literary public sphere", where discussion of art and literature became possible for the first time. The public sphere was by definition inclusive, but entry depended on one's education and qualification and one's status as a property owner. Habermas emphasise the role of the public sphere as a way for civil society to articulate its interests.

Habermas argues that the self-interpretation of the public sphere took shape in the concept of public opinion, which he considers in the light of the work of Kant, Marx, Hegel, Mill and Tocqueville. It is also an era that Habermas idealizes. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, he argued, a genuine "public sphere" came into existence, notably in England, which was based on a growing bourgeoisie and the printing press. This "democratic public realm" was based on "cafes, newspapers, journals...involving general discussion on public moral and political issues."

According to Laughey (2008, p.49), Habermas argues that a bourgeois (middle-class) public sphere of intellectuals that helped to supplant medieval aristocracies and served an important political function in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in countries such as Britain, France and Germany has become obsolete during the phase of late modernity or advanced capitalism. No longer is it possible for a public sphere made up of private citizens to engage in critical debate likely to have repercussions for contemporary politics, art, and so on. However, in the coffee houses and social clubs of the eighteenth-century London and Paris, among other centres of power and struggle-such critical debate and its political consequences were wide-ranging.

Laughey (2008, p.49), in reference to Habermas says follows: political debates still receive airtime across today's media but such debate has lost its critical edge and no longer speaks to public concerns because the umbilical cord that formerly connected private individuals to the public sphere has been severed. Habermas (2005, p.92) says that this type of press can be observed especially in revolutionary periods, when papers associated with tiniest political coalitions and groups spring up, as in Paris in 1789. In the Paris of 1848 every halfway prominent politician still formed his own club, and every other one founded his own journal: over 450 clubs and more than 200 papers came into existence between February and May alone.

This "communicative network of a public made up of rationally debating private citizens", which brought "the political exposure of political domination before the public use of reason", was, however, short lived. It was superseded by the third stage.

The third stage of Habermas's public sphere emerged with the initiation of mass media in mass industrial society. Habermas refers to the "the structural transformation of the bourgeois public sphere", in which "the institutions of social-convivial

interchange", which allowed "the public (to make) use of its reason, lost their power or utterly collapsed". They were replaced by the "commercial mass circulation press" and the transformation "from a public critically reflecting on its culture to one that merely consumes it". In mass society, the mass media serve less as "organs of public information and debate than as technologies for managing consensus and promoting consumer culture".

Habermas (2005) quotes Karl Bucher in following manner: from mere institutions for the publication of news, newspapers became the vehicles and guides of public opinion as well, weapons of party politics. The consequence of this for the internal organization of the newspaper enterprise was the insertion of new function between the gathering of news and its publication: the editorial function. For the newspaper publisher, however, significance of this development was that from a seller of news information he became a dealer in public opinion. Habermas says that publishers provided the commercial basis for the newspaper without, however, commercializing it as such. The press remained an institution of the public itself, operating to provide and intensify public discussion, no longer a mere organ for the conveyance of information, but not yet a medium of consumer culture (p.95-96).

Habermas (2005) argues that in the course of this transformation from the journalism of writers who were private persons to the consumer services of the mass media, the sphere of publicness was changed by an influx of private interests that achieved privileged representation within it (p.96). The broadsheet dailies started "operating to provide and intensify public discussion, no longer a mere organ for the conveyance of information, but not yet a medium of consumer culture" in post-1990 Nepal.

Habermas (2005) notes that the bourgeois public sphere can be understood as the sphere of private process assembled to form a public. He states that they soon began to make use of the public sphere of informational newspapers, which was officially regulated, against the public power itself, using those papers, along with the morally and critically oriented weeklies, to engage in debate about the general rules governing relations in their own essentially privatized but publically relevant sphere of commodity exchange and labour (94-95).

McNair (2011, p.18) argues that Habermas locates the development of the public sphere in the eighteenth century Britain, where the first newspapers had already begun to perform their modern function of supplying not only information but also opinion, comment and criticism, facilitating debate amongst the emerging bourgeois and educated classes.

McQuail and Siune (1998, pp. 2-3) argue that although democracy can be defined in different ways, the basic elements of all definitions concern the interplay between the political system and the citizens. The participation of citizens, primarily their role as voters, has been the most important object of study in democratic societies. They state that the role of a citizen as voter is not enough in a democratic society. The interplay between ordinary citizens and the political system is essential. Here, McQuail and Siune (1998, pp.2-3) notes that Habermas has shown a broader view of the interplay between citizens and the political system or systems. They argue that Habermas, as well as many other political sociologists, still expects the media to play a central role.

Habermas (1989), mentioning socially integrative and expressive functions of communicative action that was evolved from ritual practice, states that the authority of the holy is gradually replaced by the authority of an achieved consensus. He notes that this means freeing of communicative action from scarily protected normative context (p.77). He (Habermas, 1989) states that in terms of communication theory, specifically in communicative action, reaching understanding in language becomes the mechanism for coordination. Since, by the early years of 20<sup>th</sup> century, newspapers have been established as the sphere for discourse, Habermas's public sphere is being manifested in the forms of news and views. Habermas believes in reaching consensus through public dialogue rather than exercise of power. Thus his communicative action implies an individual action designed to promote common understanding (p.26).

Boyd-Barrett (2002, p.338-39), states that Habermas contributed the concept of public sphere as an ideal type, by which one can judge the extent to which media nurture public dialogue. He interprets that Habermas's main criteria were equality of access, relevance of content to the public good, freedom from the intervention of state or capital, and the role of rationality as the final arbiter of value.



The notion of public sphere draws attention in terms of politics and democracy as a kind of substitute for direct interaction between citizens. The newspapers that are free from both political and commercial interests could function as public sphere for the discourse on public issues and generation of ideas. Thus, pluralism in polity and diversity in media content ensure the emergence of public sphere in newspaper domain. Pluralism could be ensured by institutionalization of competition between political parties and interests. Likewise, diversity in newspaper contents could be guaranteed by the diversity in ownership. As McQuail (2000, p. 198) cites Altschull's second law of journalism: the contents of the media always reflect the interests of those who finance them, there should be diverse mix of different forms of ownership among the newspapers in order to create public sphere.

Street (2001) mentions the idea of Habermas on the role of political press in order to create public sphere. For Habermas, the emergence of a public sphere, created through the circulation of a political press and facilitated by coffee house and democratization. But it was a moment that was contingent upon many factors, and as those factors changed, so did the public sphere (p. 42).

After 1951, the Nepali newspapers started to create publics where in the past only word-of-mouth transmission of information prevailed. Such public spheres need not be gentle, cosmopolitan or benign. Much depends on the people who control the media and the people who work there. But the spread of newspapers opens possibilities that, even a generation ago, many people could scarcely have dreamed of.

Even though free expression was not in existence during the Panchayat regime, newspapers, especially the weeklies, were able to raise the voice of the opposition by struggling hard. The political climate during the Panchayat period was not compatible in order to recognize the citizens as public. Habermas' (2005, p.92) idea, in this regard is of relevance here. Habermas states that citizens could be considered as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion; thus with the guarantee that they may assemble and unite freely, and express and publicize their opinion freely. After the restoration of multiparty political system in 1990, Nepali citizens entered an era of freedom of expression and opinion.

Watson (2004, p.113) says that in modern society the media may be regarded as a contemporary equivalent of the ancient Greek agora, usually the city or town square in which the population gathered to discuss the affairs of state. This public space or sphere has been, down the centuries, fought over and latterly built over. In some circumstances, that space was a physical one.

Holub (1991, p.4) argues that party politics and the manipulation of the mass media lead to what Habermas calls a refeudalization of the public sphere, where representation and appearances outweigh rational debate. The bourgeois public sphere eventually eroded because of economic and structural changes. The boundaries between state and society blurred, leading to what Habermas calls the refeudalization of society. State and society became involved in each other's spheres; the private sphere collapsed into itself. The key feature of the public sphere - rational-critical debate – was replaced by leisure, and private people no longer existed as a public of property owners. Habermas (2005) notes that the ground was cleared for this development from a press of viewpoints to a commercial press at about the same time in England, France, and the United States, during the 1830s (p.92). By the 1830s, North America witnessed the rise of the Penny Press, a new class of newspapers targeted to lower and middle-class audiences.

Habermas' argument is that the world of the mass media is cheap and powerful. He considers that it attempts to manipulate and create a public where none exists, and to manufacture consensus. This is particularly evident in modern politics, with the rise of new disciplines such as advertising and public relations. These, and large non-governmental organizations, replace the old institutions of the public sphere. The public sphere takes on a feudal aspect again, as politicians and organizations represent themselves before the voters. Public opinion is now manipulative, and, more rarely, still critical. He sees a need of a strong public sphere to check domination by the state. Habermas (2005, p.92) perceives that a variety of factors resulted in the eventual decay of the public sphere, including the growth of a commercial mass media, which turned the critical public into a passive consumer public; and the welfare state, which merged the state with society so thoroughly that the public sphere was squeezed out. It also turned the public sphere into a site of self-interested contestation for the resources of the state rather than a space for the development of a public-minded

rational consensus. Habermas (2005, p.96) states that not until the establishment of the bourgeois constitutional state were a press engaged in the public use of reason relieved of the pressure of ideological viewpoints. Since then it has been able to abandon its polemical stance and take advantage of the earning potential of commercial activity.

Habermas (2005) states that the term public opinion refers to the functions of criticism and control of organised state authority that the public exercise informally, as well as formally during periodic elections (p.93). Marris and Thornham (2005, p.15) notes that broadcasting and the press are adulterated by consumer advertising and the public relations industry: the public is thus corrupted and decaying

McQuail (2000, p.157) links the concept of a public sphere with the role of the mass media in political life. He (2000,p.158) mentions Schulz's media-constructed public sphere and states that according to his model, under contemporary conditions, the mass media take on a central role in the working of the political system. He (2000: 159) mentions that the positive expectations from society in relation to media have for some time predominantly expressed in the form of much criticism of the declining journalistic standards of mass media, mainly as a result of commercialization. McQuail (2000, p. 158) argue that in general, the public sphere idea fits in the wider and also current notion of a civil society, where diverse intermediate institutions of a voluntary involving nature provide a zone of protection for citizens in their relations with that state.

Thus the newspapers, as a substitute of direct communication of the 18<sup>th</sup> century coffee shops in London, need to be plural and full of diversity in order to serve as public sphere. Public sphere is essential for public debate and subsequently for the formation of public opinion. However, the newspaper landscape where diversity of ownership and subsequently the diversity of contents are absent a public sphere can not emerge in real sense. Holub (1991, p.2) explains that potentially everyone has access to public sphere, no one enter into discourse in the public sphere with an advantage over another. In the context of Nepal, the newspapers started to adopt the charecteristics of public sphere after 1990. As Holub (1991, p.2) notes that the public sphere is a realm in which individuals gather to participate in open discussions, the media outlets need to serve the society by providing them open platform.

Burton (2010, p. 96) states that Habermas defines a public sphere in terms of a "space" where information could be exchanged and public debate could take place. According to him media can provide such space. He (2010, p.96) considers Habermas's idea as an attempt to redefine the functions and activities of the media. Expanding Habermas's point of views, he states that if the media could become more interactive and more genuinely plural, then something like a public sphere would be created.

Transformation in politics in 1990 created an atmosphere of free flow of information which could be equated with the development towards modern forms of public sphere in Nepal. However, the trend towards hyper commercialism refrain the newspapers to serve as public sphere. Bennett and Entman, (2001, p.3) state that in the ideal public sphere, all citizens have equal access to communication that is both independent of government constraint, and through its deliberative, consensus-building capacity, constrains the agendas and decisions of government in turn. They further opine that the ideal has never been achieved, and it probably never will. Marris and Thornham (2005, p.15) opines that Habermas' ideas have proved to be a rallying point for those concerned with democracy and the media, the extension of freedom of information and the curbing of commercial interests in the press.

## **CHAPTER-III**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Data have been collected in Kathmandu valley through sample survey. The rationale of the selection of the research site is that the growth of the newspapers mostly concentrated in this geographic area from the beginning. This chapter incorporates approach of the research. It tells about the research design, universe and sample data. Likewise it explains techniques of data collection such as key informant interview, FGD, case study, content analysis and survey. It also presents about the limitations of the study.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research has adopted the descriptive and exploratory approach, designed on different bases for selecting the appropriate data and techniques to be used in gathering data. As per the approach suggested by Young (2010, p.30) the research seeks to find explanations to unexplained social phenomena. It has also taken to quantitative and qualitative approaches by using specific research techniques such as survey, key-informant interview, FGD, case-studies and content analysis.

As described by Neuman (2006, p.14), in this study, a quantitative approach has been employed in order to collect and record the data in the form of numbers. Likewise, qualitative approach has been adopted, as prescribed by Neuman (2006, pp.14-15), employing self-assessment and reflections in a socio-historical context. In the case of qualitative research, Neuman (2006, p.15) refers to the theoretical-philosophical paradigm in an inquisitive, open-ended setting in process. During the study, qualitative tools such as focus group discussions (FGD) and key-informant interviews were conducted in order to collect the necessary qualitative information.

The study discusses the state of newspaper journalism in the Nepali language that dates back to late 1800s. It covers the time frame up to the year 2015. The Nepali newspapers started from India in the late 1800s. In September 2015, Nepal's Constitutional Assembly framed the new constitution that institutionalized the federal

republic. Though the study incorporates the time frame between the late 1800s and 2015, it specifically focuses on the state of newspapers in post-1990 Nepal.

In order to present the overall status of newspaper journalism between 1960 and 1990, and then between 1990 and 2015, major weeklies and dailies have been selected and studied through the lens of professional standards. The study has also been implied to see the state of political communication based on the newspapers. In the course of the study, transition of newspaper journalism from partisanship to professionalism in post-1990 Nepal has been examined and the impact of political changes of 1990 has been presented as a major conclusion.

A number of litterateurs have been proved to be instrumental in order to gather information and insights with an exploratory approach. Historical survey research design approach is implied in order to review constitutional and legal provisions related to newspaper journalism prior to and post-1990 Nepal. Thus, in the course of the study, related books, journals, websites and other literatures were examined.

To evaluate the policy of government regarding the print media, the evolutionary process of legal framework, regulations, and related documents for policy analysis have also been analyzed with an exploratory approach. Primary, secondary and tertiary data have been used for the study. More than one method of investigation of the research questions have been adopted. Based mainly on exploratory approach, the research, thus applies triangulation method.

The quantitative and qualitative data collected by different methodologies have been organized systematically. Findings are presented after the analysis and interpretation of meaningful information.

After the collection of filled up questionnaires, a data entry application known as the Census and Survey Processing System (CSPPro) was used in order to enter the data obtained from the surveys. Developed in the US and popularly used around the world since 2000, CSPPro is a public domain software package useful for data entry and analysis.

SPSS has been used for the organization and the analysis of quantitative data. The Window based programme is instrumental for creating tables and graphs for this research.

### **3.2 Universe and Sample Size**

As Kerlinger (2009, p.118) defines sampling as taking any portion of a population or universe as representative of that population or universe, two parallel surveys based on the stratified random sampling were conducted among journalists and professional intellectuals respectively for this study. The number of respondents in each survey was 125. At present, out of total 3,731 papers including dailies, bi-weeklies, weeklies, and fortnightlies registered in the country 795 papers have been publishing out of which 592 papers are regular and 203 papers are irregular. Out of total 3,731 papers registered in the country 1608, i.e., 43 per cent are published in the Kathmandu valley (Press Council Nepal, 2072 BS, p. 145-55).

### **3.3 Techniques of Data Collection**

To achieve aforesaid objective, the study has implied the following techniques of data Collection:

#### **3.3.1 Key Informant Interview**

Key informant interviews were conducted with 16 personalities from different walks of life including journalism, who had witnessed different phases of the Nepali newspaper journalism. In-depth interviews were conducted in order to get insight into the evolution of the Nepali newspapers, their struggle for survival and their advancement over the time.

As Kerlinger (2009, p.524) states, reporters, editors, and publishers themselves are rich repositories of information about social issues, key-informant interviews proved to be instrumental in gathering different perceptions and points of view on transformation of the Nepali newspapers in the aftermath of 1990. Besides, journalists and media educators, intellectuals from different walks of life were interviewed in order to collect diverse opinion.

### 3.3.2 FGD

Altogether six FGDs were conducted among media educators and practitioners as well as academics to explore the problem of newspapers after 1990 such as state of undue concentrating of ownership in newspaper industry.

FGDs were organized among the faculty members of Central Department of Journalism and Mass Communication of Tribhuban University at Nepal Press Institute, Thapatali on November 15, 2014; among the members of Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of Kantipur City College, Purwanchal University, Putalisadak on November 16, 2014; among the editors of the political weeklies on November 21, at Dhokaima Cafe, Patan Dhoka; among the professional journalists from different media houses on November 23, at Kantipur City College; among the media researchers and professional journalists at Centre for Media Research, Min Bhawan on December 18, 2014; and finally among the teachers at the Department of Media and Languages of Kathmandu University; Hattiban, on January 18, 2015.

The purpose of organizing different FGDs was to gather diverse range of opinion on the research questions. The participants of the FGDs were university teachers from different disciplines, media educators, newspaper editors and reporters, senior editors of politics-laden weeklies and media researchers.

### 3.3.3 Case Study

A number of case-studies have been developed to support the qualitative aspect of the study. The case studies offer empirical evidences on the state of newspapers prior to 1990, specifically prior to the royal take-over in 1960 and afterwards, prevalence of commercial and corporate interests within the privately owned dailies in post-1990 Nepal, and state of commercialism in the broadsheet dailies after 1990.

As Yin (1994, p.1) states that case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" and "why" questions are being posed, the study incorporates case studies in order to comprehend the complex social phenomena.



### 3.3.4 Content Analysis

Content analysis of selected issues from selected newspapers was conducted. Front page news and editorials of eight consecutive issues of *Rashtrapukar* weekly during May and July of 1979 were analyzed in order to assess its political slant. Likewise, the front page of *Matribhumi* weekly editions spread over one month time frame during the pro-democracy movement in 1990, was analyzed to detect its partisan coverage of the movement. To examine the state of diversity of contents after 1990, the front page of as many as 30 issues of *Kantipur* daily were analyzed.

Kerlinger (2009, p.524) states that newspapers maintain files that are useful sources of data. The content analysis is equally effective for validation of data. It is required during the triangulation of data acquired from different sources employing various methodologies.

### 3.3.5 Survey among Professional Intellectuals

Questionnaire survey among 125 journalists was conducted in order to obtain a comparative insight of the state of newspapers prior to 1990 and post-1990 Nepal. Comparison between newspaper journalism of the two periods had been made in terms of freedom, diversity, information quality, and presentation skills and standards.

The respondents were intellectuals who are not only exposed to newspapers or who do not only consume newspapers, rather they read newspapers to shape opinions or to excavate ideas and information in order to perform their professional jobs. Such opinion leaders comprised administrators, former administrators, university teachers, school teachers, doctors, engineers, lawyers, social activists and researchers.

The questionnaire for survey among professional intellectuals was also divided into seven sub-groups so as to collect the following information.

First sub-group: General queries on Nepali newspapers.

Second sub-group: Daily newspapers in post-1990 Nepal.

Third sub-group: Editorial independence in the daily newspapers after 1990.

Forth sub-group: Ethical standards and fairness in dailies.

Fifth sub-group: Business interests in the current Nepali dailies.

Sixth sub-group: The Nepali weeklies prior to 1990.

Seventh sub-group: The current Nepali weeklies.

### **3.3.6 Survey among Journalists**

Among the 125 professional intellectuals who filled up the questionnaire were medical doctors, lawyers, media educators, university and school teachers and social as well as human rights activists and engineers.

The survey includes a few political activists and leaders who have been participating in intellectual discourse. The survey aimed at collective views on the state of Nepali newspapers prior to 1990 and after. Comparison between newspaper journalism of the two periods, prior to 1990 and post 1990 have been made in terms of freedom, diversity, information quality, and presentation skills and standards.

All the respondents in the survey were journalists working for print media. The questionnaire for survey among journalists was divided into seven sub-groups in order to collect the following information:

First sub-group: General queries regarding Nepali newspaper landscape.

Second sub-group: Current Nepali dailies.

Third sub-group: Current Nepali weeklies.

Forth sub-group: Ethical standards and fairness in the dailies of Nepal.

Fifth sub-group: Ethical standards and fairness in the Nepali weeklies.

Sixth sub-group: Independence in the Nepali dailies.

Seventh sub-group: Business interest in the dailies.

### **3.4 Limitation**

The study generally takes reference of the political history of the Nepali newspapers until 2015. In the course of examining the state of transition of newspapers from partisanship to commercialism in post-1990 Nepal, the study is focused on following aspects:

- Emergence of a new form of ownership in the newspaper landscape and the state of editorial independence and policy of newspapers prior to and post 1990 Nepal.
- Economy and plan for survival of the weeklies prior to 1990 and the beginning of commercialization of newspapers after 1990.

Since the study is focused on the state of partisanship and commercialization in Nepali newspapers, this thesis presents in-depth analysis on the declining trend of partisan press in post-1990 Nepal. In the course of the research, the historical perspective of the Nepali newspaper is presented as the reference. It does not present the political history of Nepali journalism in chronological order.

## **CHAPTER-IV**

### **TRANSITION OF NEWSPAPERS FROM TREND OF PARTISAN LEANINGS TO AGE OF COMMERCIALISM**

This chapter comprises presentation of qualitative and quantitative data gathered from the field applying six different methodologies in order to examine the state of transition of newspapers from partisanship to commercialism. Following are the findings obtained through methodologies: key informant interviews, FGDs, case studies, content analysis of newspapers as well as survey among professional intellectuals and journalists respectively.

#### **4.1 Views of Key Informant Interviewees**

The key informant interviews (see Annex V) were concentrated to find the answer to three questions. The first was general evaluation of newspaper landscapes prior to 1990 and post-1990 Nepal. Second, interviews were concentrated to get acquainted with the instances of professionalism. The third question was to acquire the views on widespread topic of prevalence of commercial interest in the newspapers in post-1990 Nepal.

Questions for scheduled key-informant interviews aimed at cultivating observations, definition and evaluation of the state of transition of the newspapers from the period prior to 1990 to the post-1990 Nepal. The interviews were also intended to find the differences that can be identified between the newspaper journalism prior to 1990 and after. The quest was also to identify the visible changes in terms of institution and ownership, form, human resources and content of the newspapers in post-1990 Nepal. Subsequently, the question was designed to signal some examples of professionalism in the period prior to 1990 and post-1990 Nepal.

The key-informant interviews aimed at observing the changes in the newspapers along with the country's transformation to the republic. The question was also designed to get an indication concerning commercial interest of the Nepali newspapers after 1990. The key informants were requested to provide their suggestions to uplift the professional standards of Nepali newspapers. Interviews were

undertaken in order to identify the components that the new media system the country requires. The objective of the last question was to acquire ideas regarding the vision for a new media system the country requires after the advent of the republic.

#### **4.1.1 Newspapers Prior to and Post-1990 Nepal**

Journalists from earlier periods perceive that Nepali newspapers have lost their critical approach these days. Their observation is that the newspapers are in declining position in terms of influence in the society.

Ram Krishna Regmee argues that the issue of transition of the newspapers after 1990 is, concurrently, a media, political and national issue. So it should be mapped in three different dimensions. He views that comparison between the newspapers prior to 1990 and post-1990, is also the comparison between the dimension of the free domain and the dimension of the non-free domain. Since Nepal had a jump from partyless Panchayat to multiparty system in 1990, and subsequently from monarchy to the republic in 2007, the entire media, and off course the newspaper journalism, has been directly affected. At the earlier stage the newspapers, which had a long tradition to be mobilized for a definite political purpose, are confused about their role in a changed environment of freedom.

Regmee states that prior to 1990 the newspapers had to function in a non-free domain and they had to perform like underground papers. In the aftermath of 1990, the issue of free press and non-free press affected the transition. On the one hand, the newspapers that termed 1990 as the freedom movement pursued the path of anarchism to some extent. Consequently they could not thrive in the market and they veered towards losing their influence. On the other hand, those who were running newspapers since the Panchayat period, using whatever degree of freedom that was available to them at that time, continued their job following the same path of anarchism. Because they did not believe in the press freedom and intended to defame the nascent democracy, they undermined professional norms and standards of journalism. They could not keep pace with the changed context. They simply could not survive in the period of transition, and disappeared after 1990.

Regmee argues that after the pro-democracy movement in 1990, there were three political streams. One political stream had just fallen, that is, the Panchayat stream. The Panchayat had been directing the media for its own purposes for 30 years. But even after the 1990 political changes the erstwhile pro-Panchayat newspapers wanted to do the same thing in a different style using the freedom. Obviously they could not be effective. The other two streams could not define their relationship with the media. For example, the political actors of the 1990 movement became successful, but after achieving power, could not prepare a road map for the media.

### **State of Newspapers in Nepal in Different Periods**

The table below presents the summary of comparative study of the state of newspapers within the different political systems in different time frame in Nepal. It summarizes state of newspapers in terms of ownership, professionalism, content and dominant interest in the 1950s, 1960s and 1990s.

Table II: Comparison and contrast of the state of newspapers in Nepal in different periods

S.N.	Between 1951 and 1960	Between 1960 and 1990	After 1990
1	Institution/ownership: Single person organization	Institution/ownership: Small institutions with low level of investment	Institution/ownership: Large scale capital investment
2	Examples of professionalism	Examples of professionalism	Examples of professionalism
3	Content: Political activities	Content: Political activities and ideologies	Content: Diverse range of subject matters
4	Changes with the country's transformation to multiparty system	Changes with the royal take over and restrictions over political activities	Changes with the country's transformation to the republic
5	Dominant interest : Political	Dominant interest: Political	Dominant interest: Commercial

(Field study, 2015)

According to Regmee, during the transition period after 1990, some political forces thought that media should operate as per their direction. Others also did not actually agree in principle but they made the media follow their line, which meant they could not create a line of demarcation between the role of media and the role of political parties. Even those parties which believed in press freedom did not know how to use press freedom. They should have allowed the press to act freely, free from the banners of political parties. Thus the transition was not smooth for newspapers.

Regmee argues that absence of journalistic initiative in building the press as an institution was another visible trend after 1990. He adds that journalistic initiative to develop newspapers as compatible institutions to the changed context, i.e., the structure of the newspaper institutions. An adequate level of discourse on the structure of the national as well as the local or the district level press would have paved the way for the conceptual clarity on the new media system. Unfortunately, post-1990 Nepal missed an opportunity to utilize democracy for a long term sustainable press structure. Regmee further argues that for the last two and a half decades, despite discussing press freedom, Nepal has failed to build a structure for upholding the journalistic career in the country.

He concludes that the transition of newspaper journalism after 1990 had been affected mainly on three accounts. First, the transition from a state of non-freedom to freedom. Second, the political actors and media were not able to define their territory. Third, the absence of journalistic initiative towards building the press as an institution. In order to develop press as the fourth estate in real sense the transition that started in 1990 was not smooth.

Indra Kant Mishra states that before referendum there were limited newspapers but they had prestige. He says that in comparison to the present the journalists were more influential earlier.

Mall K. Sundar argues that prior to 1990 the government exercised influence on the newspapers. He views that, on the contrary, today, commercial institutions or the business people are influential over the newspapers. He states that the circulation of *The Motherland*, *The Commoner* and *Samaj* was lower in comparison to the current newspapers. However, he argues, their credibility was high and the public had a high

level of trust in them. He argues that credibility of the today's newspapers have considerably declined in comparison to the newspapers prior to 1990.

Barbara Adams states that there was much more government control over the newspapers prior to 1990. Because it was Panchayat era prior to 1990, and they did abide by what was written in the laws of that time. However, after 1990, the Government control is almost absent and the Nepali newspapers have become more commercialized. Prior to 1990 reporting was a difficult task. Adams recalls a news item from June 15, 1963 entitled "Khampa's become restive Indian help alleged" published in *The Motherland*. It followed the story through a subsequent editorial. The next day on April 18, 1963 the Kathmandu Magistrate Office instructed to stop the newspaper, accusing it that the news and editorials were against the sensibilities of public welfare. *The Motherland* resumed its publication again on August 22, 1963, when the government was tendered a written apology from Manindra Raj Shrestha, the editor. Adams, while citing the example of the government control recalls how the government would harass the editors of those days. She argues that the royal government did not want Manindra Raj Shrestha to talk about the plight of the common Mustang people, because the combatants were backed by the Americans. She concludes that there was a lot of political control over the newspapers prior to 1990.

Lal Deusa Rai states that in his mediascape three prominent features stand out from the era of the pre-1990s newspaper journalism. First, the monotonous, flat and authoritarian newspapers under the authoritarian regime were in existence right down the 1950s and 1960s. Second, the immature partly free newspaper journalism of *Gorkhapatra* competing with emasculated but nevertheless struggling daily newspaper journalism from the private sector, under the conditions of nascent democracy of 1950s. Third, the decades between the 1960s and the 1980s stand out because of the transformation of *Gorkhapatra* into a daily newspaper, inception of another State-owned daily in English *The Rising Nepal*, standardization of these dailies' format in conformity to international standard and application of computer technology in producing this daily.

Rai further states that newspaper journalism in the private sector assumed aggressive adversarial role in content presentation, and in production strategy and management



style. Some of the private newspapers took on the form of corporate business enterprise. He spells out five features of post-1990s newspaper journalism: First, the rise of privately-owned, competitive, market-oriented newspaper journalism running side by side with traditional State-owned *Gorkhapatra* and *The Rising Nepal* English daily in response to the restoration of multi-party parliamentary system, with constitutional monarchy, that followed the promulgation of the Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990. Second is the declaration of unprecedented joint Code of Journalistic Ethics 2003 (revised and amended in 2008) by Press Council Nepal and the Federation of Nepali Journalists. Third, enhancement of the quality of newspaper journalism writing, participation of journalist-writers from a wider field of media world, reproductions of materials from renowned newspapers of the world in collaboration with international newspaper companies. Fourth, an unprecedented improvement in makeup and design of newspaper with telling effects on presentational value of news story, and advertisements. Fifth, the growth in clientilism in advertising business in the country, and monopolization of advertising market by the mainstream newspapers including state-owned *Gorkhapatra*. Such cartelling has been affecting the practice of newspaper journalism and is an obstacle for the healthy growth of the newspapers at the local level.

Devendra Gautam recalls that, prior to 1990, the editors, due to extreme fear, used to reveal limited information in the news. He explains that the editors used to publish fifty per cent in the news, and used to disclose another twenty five per cent during the dinner with the diplomats. Then rest twenty-five per cent was never revealed anywhere. On July 28, 1982, he published a photograph of the late B.P. Koirala covered with four-star-flag of NC during the funeral at Pashupati Aryaghat in *Current* weekly, a newspaper that he started after the ban imposed over his *Nepal Post* weekly. Subsequently, the Zonal administration office summoned him to record his clarification over the use of the photograph of flag. The officials termed the publication of the photograph as an illegal act stating that the flag of the banned political party was not allowed to be printed.

Gautam recalls that newspaper during the Panchayat rule were overtly partisan. He finds today's dailies are bit different. He site an example from 1980, during the referendum campaign *Rashtrapukar* published its several issues in blue ink, the voting

symbol for multiparty system. He states that it was natural and site another example, during the same period Queen Aishuarya wore yellow sari on some occasions during the campaigning period of the referendum. Yellow was the election symbol for modified Panchayat.

Malla argues that after 1990, because of constitutional and legal protection the newspapers started to be institutionalized. Prior to 1990, the newspapers were running under unorganized low-budget management. As the political changes of 1990 established the value of freedom of expression and opinion, the journalists were allowed to express freely and contents began to be diversified.

Dhurba Hari Adhikary views that prior to 1990 the regime had imposed a normative theory that believed in controlling the newspaper in a bid to employ them in service of the Panchayat polity.

However, as Adhikary states, the dissent voices were impossible to mute. There were courageous editors like Chandralal Jha who never supported Panchayat. Journalists of that time were skilled to maintain political communication amidst the restrictions over the civil and political rights. He argues that seeds of professionalism in the newspaper journalism were planted even before Panchayat period. Later, after the restoration of the multiparty democracy it resulted in the era of broadsheet dailies.

Hom Nath Dahal states that aside from the political freedom, usage of technology made the Nepali newspapers in post-1990 different from the newspapers prior to 1990.

Kishor Nepal argues that the history of the Nepali newspapers from 1950 to 1990 comprised three streams. The first stream started with the sprouting of the mouthpieces of the political parties such as *Nepal Pukar* and *Nawayug*. The history of his second stream date backs to the initiation of partially independent newspapers like *Aawaj* during the political transition in the 1950s. His third stream of newspapers includes the government owned newspapers. Obviously, *Gorakhapatra* and its sister publication *The Rising Nepal* represented that stream. After the advent of democracy in 1990 the Nepali newspapers witnessed a sea change with the emergence of commercial broadsheet dailies in the private sector.

Mishra views that in terms of appearance the newspapers prior to 1990 were different from the post-1990 newspapers. They used to bring out four-page smaller size newspapers. He recalls that in the year 1960, he told Bhagawan Sahay, Indian ambassador in Kathmandu, that in Nepal all the editors are the owners of their newspapers. Then Sahay told him that the scenario had been changing in India. He viewed that the large newspapers in India have been run by the business people to earn money. Then he commented journalism is free, but the journalists are not independent in India. Obviously, he was conveying that the Indian journalists are controlled by the business interests.

Mani Raj Upadhaya states that prior to 1990 journalism was in existence in real sense. He views that journalism was not polluted at that time. The newspapers used to get response to their coverage. Politicians were under the surveillance of the newspapers. He views that current newspapers are less influential and they are less able to create impact in comparison to earlier newspapers. He states that the newspapers have lost their offensiveness and have also lost their trust.

Bhim Neupane maps the differences in newspaper landscape, between pre-1990 and post-1990 years, in three aspects. They are market, business and media. He opines that the horizon of newspapers has been expanding with the growing market and the most significant phenomenon that occurred after 1990 is that the private sector newspapers are the profit making institutions. He views that it was natural for that period to be less professional. He states that considering the low literacy rate there was professionalism in the newspapers to some extent. He mentions the name of *The Commoner* and *Naya Sandesh* as the examples of professional newspapers of the period prior to 1990. In his view liberalism has created competitive market for the newspapers in post-1990 Nepal.

Ramesh Nath Pandey views that before 1990 the Nepali journalism was in preliminary stage. He argues that in the post-take over period since December 1960 the newspapers started to lose their vibrancy and the earlier newspaper began to disappear. *Samaj* and *Naya Samaj* were continued, but the differences between *Gorakhpatra* and these newspapers started to get blurred. At that moment, the weeklies came forward to fulfil the space. Pandey argues, the takeover was a turning point for Nepali newspapers. Before that incident, journalism was a kind of pass time

activity without any risk. Thereafter, it was established as the mission and employment simultaneously. He opines that in post-takeover period when almost all the dailies were turned into the pro-government paper, a space remained vacant for the critical voices. When he started *Naya Sandesh*, one of the prominent weeklies, *Samikshya*, was closed down by the government.

He recalls that within six months of initiation of *Naya Sandesh*, he was arrested under the security act and released on January 18, 1963, after three months of imprisonment. According to Pandey, he started to run *Naya Sandesh* with the strategy of mission as well as professionalism. He recalls that he made Friday as the day of *Naya Sandesh* and the paper would get distributed on the streets. According to Pandey, *Naya Sandesh* used to have prominent columnists and during the student movement of 1979 he stood against the government. He thinks that after the referendum, the Nepali newspapers entered the age of professionalism from the age of mission coupled by the gradual improvement in technology. The Nepali journalists of that time were seriously committed and passionate to their vocation. They had high level of self-respect and prestige.

Pandey argues that after 1990, the newspapers evolved as an industry. They started to run under institutional framework and have demonstrated a qualitative growth. According to him the newspapers from 1960 to 1980 had a mission to achieve democratic rights. Then between 1980 and 1990, the Nepali newspapers indulged in party politics with visible allegiance. Subsequently, after 1990 commercialism paved the way for professionalism.

Prem Kumari Pant argues that prior to 1990 Nepali newspapers were sharply polarized. Chiranjibi Khanal adds that newspapers were divided in anti-Panchayat and pro-Panchayat streams.

Hira Biswakarma recalls that in terms of quality as well as quantity, newspapers in the aftermath of the political changes of 1990 are different from the newspapers prior to 1990. He recalls the period before referendum and states that *Naya Sandesh*, *Samikshya* and *Matribhoomi* were functioning in hardship.

#### **4.1.2 Differences between the Newspaper Journalism Prior to 1990 and After 1990**

In the course of analyzing the differences between the Nepali newspaper journalism prior to 1990 and after 1990, Regmee emphasizes on investment. People felt free because there is one provision in the constitution that the press will not be shut down. Such strong provision resulted in the difference in the newspaper landscape within the country. When it was guaranteed that the newspapers would not be shut down for whatever they print, people felt that their investment would be safe. Then a new course of thinking and practice was developed from 1990 with the private sector investment in the newspapers.

Regmee says that one could argue that there were private sector investments during the Panchayat period also. However, the basic difference was that investments from the private sector in the newspapers were small in comparison to post-1990 Nepal and such investments were only for academic purpose. Thus, the differences in the newspapers between these two periods could be distinctly identified. Regmee argues that in terms of investment the newspaper journalism prior to 1990 and post-1990 are different. He says that the newspaper journalism after 1990 took another turn, that is, a turn of competition. Competitive news flow is now a reality. Prior to the 1980s there were newspapers, there was also a radio, but there was no television channels in Nepal. Afterwards, during the political changes of 1990, there was only this five-year old Nepal Television in the country. Obviously the amount and nature of the flow of information depends also on the availability of media outlets. From the point of view of the news flow television was dependent on the available media outlets of that time. The Nepali newspapers found a most competitive atmosphere in terms of news flow after 1990.

Regmee says that after 1990, the privately owned broadsheet dailies started to spend own resources in search of news. Newspapers such as *Kantipur* and others started news reporting in a very professional matter. He views that the newspaper journalism in post-1990 has encountered an era of competitive news collection. He states that competition also has been witnessed in the way of news dissemination.

The history of the Nepali newspapers has demonstrated that political change always reflects in the contents. Madan Mani Dixit, in this regard, says that during the Rana rule *Gorakhpatra* used to publish the news such as an ox fell down from the cliff. Political activities and information or comments over political affairs were strictly controlled by the rulers at that time. Latter, changes in polity continuously paved the way for diversity in the contents of the Nepali newspapers.

Ram Krishna Regmee argues that the Nepali newspapers after 1990 started producing contents for the market. He states that sense of producing papers for the market started after 1990 because they had to collect money from the audience. Since the newspapers after 1990 are market oriented they need to send them to the street. Because sending the papers to the street for the market is one thing, and planning the newspaper products for the market is another.

Newspapers were started to be sold by street vendors in a larger extent after 1990. The Nepali newspapers had been sent to the street before 1990 also. However, preparing papers for the market is absolutely different than just sending to the street. Nepal entered the age of competition for information with the initiation of policy and legal reform in order to allow private radio after 1993, and subsequently initiation of the first private radio in 1997. With the advent of radio in the private sector the newspapers started to face a big challenge in the field of news and were compelled to upgrade their news materials. Two years after the advent of the democracy, the government paved the way for non-state players in the radio sector with the promulgation of *Rashtriya Sanchar Niti, 2049* [National Communication Policy, 1993]. However, it took another three years to develop the effective provision for the same in the regulation. Then it took another two years to translate the provision of the *Rashtriya Prasharan Niyamawali, 2052* [National Broadcasting Regulations, 1995]. Indeed, by the year 1997 the government itself broke the monopoly of government owned radio by allowing licenses for the FM band to the private sector. The development rapidly affected the newspapers in terms of news and news related materials, and the newspapers entered another phase of the competitive environment.

Malla argues that in terms of technology and financial base the Nepali newspapers have entered a new age. He states that prior to 1990, the newspapers were feeble in

terms of financial support and today the big newspapers have survived qualitatively better in the market.

Prem Kumari Pant argues that prior to 1990, the people in power used to give greater attention to the writings of the newspapers. On the contrary, as she views, the ruling class today ignore the writings in newspapers. She opines that the influence of newspapers in Nepali society has been declining.

#### **4.1.3 Institution, Ownership and Form**

Regmee states that a number of changes took place in terms of the institutions also. The big newspaper-institutions that emerged after 1990 are based on modern management. Prior to 1990, newspaper management was primitive and one-man management was prevalent. Women participation was almost absent at that time. Thus the organized institution took shape to replace the old set up and immediately the institutions got corporatized.

Ram Krishna Regmee notes that the issue of ownership is another aspect that distinguished the state of newspapers prior to 1990 and after 1990. Prior to 1990 the editor used to be the publisher. The editor was all in all in a newspaper and obviously the editor did not have any restrictions from the part of publisher. Thus from the part of editor, a sense of ownership was used to be felt.

Comparing the newspaper ownership after 1990, Regmee argues that the newspapers that started after 1990 belonged to a corporate house, a sense of structured institution can be found after 1990. He argues that the issue of ownership has been a problematic since a long time as to who actually invested or publish. The confusion persists even in the legislative measure. The legal measures regarding publications, is not very clear about the ownership of the institution. Regmee states that in terms of institutional setup, visible changes can be found in the aftermath of 1990.

#### **4.1.4 Human Resources: Prior to and After 1990**

Kishore Nepal views that there is an adequate human resource in Nepal these days. However, he views that the editors today do not take care about the use of language. He states that even the people who have taken formal courses in journalism lack

adequate level of language skills. He notes that in journalism human resource groomed through good practices is considered a good practitioner.

Regmee states that as far as human resources are concerned the need for trained human resources was felt after 1990. Prior to 1990 there was a notion that anyone can become a journalist. That notion prevailed for a long. During the Panchayat period if the people did not have to do anything, they could join journalism. In contrast, after the restoration of democracy, with the emergence of privately owned broadsheet dailies the competition among the trained human resources began to escalate. The big houses started to seek quality human resources to run their newspapers. Because they were organized, and they invested, they demand that human resources should be skilled. Hence the need for quality human resources was felt and the journalists who could compete continuously moved forward. Regmee opines that as far as the content of the newspapers is concerned, content in the post-1990 period is different in terms of professional treatment and diversity.

Recalling the newspapers prior to 1990, Indra Kant Mishra states that the editors of that period used to work for long hours. One or two people had to complete all editorial tasks.

Chiranjibi Khanal argues that importance of media education has increased. Prior to 1990 journalism was a profession which did not need higher education. In contrast, after 1990, people started to take journalism training and education seriously and the newspapers started to hire trained human resources to some extent. He argues presentation quality have been upgraded in the newspapers after 1990.

Malla argues that large investments in the newspapers have opened a new avenue for labour and skills. Consequently, the demand opened the way for development of essential human resources.

#### **4.1.5 Reading Materials and Appearance**

Malla K. Sundar views that earlier, compared to the government owned *Gorakhpatra* and *The Rising Nepal*, private sector dailies such as *The Commoner* and *Nepal Times* were feeble in terms of resources, size and appearance. He opines



that compared to earlier newspapers, content of current dailies are diversified. He states that trend of beat reporting has begun, quality of photographs, layout and cartoon has improved and editorial opinion pages have become more attractive and readable.

Regmee views that diversified contents started to appear after 1990. The newly emerged newspapers started to serve the diverse range of audience. On top of that, he recalls, whereas the contents were only meant for the Kathmandu people earlier, now they are catering to the villages also. There is quite a large visible coverage from outside Kathmandu now. He also notes that there are a distinctly visible number of reporters outside the Kathmandu valley that has increased substantially and the trend of beat reporting has started. According to him, these days the concept of content can be found in the pages of newspapers outside of Kathmandu too. Thus, in terms of the diversity of content one is confirmed that the newspapers are being run in an institutionalized way. Form or structure of newspaper institutions are also institutionalized after 1990. As far as human resources and the quality of contents are concerned, there is still big room for improvement.

Regmee argues that due to the nature of the political system, same things used to be repeated in the name of reading materials in the Panchayat period, and there was pressure to follow protocol in news presentations. The pressure used to be exerted in order to provide first priority to the king, second to the queen and so on.

After 1990 the royal palace-centred protocol continued in the form of the government and the political parties. Panchayat legacy was not necessary and it needs to be scrapped altogether, but the newspapers have been indulging in the protocol-sequelled format in news presentation. It was obvious during the Panchayat regime, because the king had a direct leadership. Because of the political system the newspapers of that period had to cover the king anyway. But even after 1990 and also in the republic there are political party leaders who have to be given protocol-based coverage. Thus the protocol coverage of news is an unprofessional practice developed in Panchayat and continued to some extent today.

But Regmee holds the view that other aspects of the content of the newspapers today have evolved in a creative fashion. He is critical of the analysis portion of the content.

But he thinks, the content has become richer. However, he states that the journalistic quality in the content is yet to emerge to cover the general expectations.

According to Regmee, the organizational forms of the newspapers that were in existence before 1990 were used to be guided by the dictatorship of the editor, and controlled by an individual. In terms of layout the newspapers did not have a design in real sense. Now the designing, layout, get up and makeup sense prevails in the market of the Nepali newspapers. In the aftermath of the political changes of 1990, a sense of forming a newspaper was introduced. He states that after 1990, the newspapers started to hire designers in order to make the newspapers attractive. So designing a paper was something uncommon before 1990. And designing a newspaper after 1990 became a fashion. Therefore, the Nepali newspapers have achieved a standard form in terms of design also. The form as appearance of the Nepali newspapers before 1990 differs from newspapers after 1990.

Barbara Adams states that there is much more awareness in practice of freedom of expression after 1990. She argues that diversity in content has increased and newspapers have reflected the differences in Nepali character, Nepali politics and Nepali awareness. Newspapers have started talking more about the problems of *dalit* and more about the problems of *Janajati*. She views such phenomena as a major difference between Nepali newspapers prior to and after 1990. She feels that the current newspapers in Nepal are politicized. Prior to 1990, most of the newspapers were persistently anti-government. In terms of covering politics there is obviously a great difference between the newspapers prior to and after 1990.

Rai states that newspaper journalism prior to 1990 carried the baggage of *Gorkhapatra* tradition; but after 1990 this tradition was rendered ineffectual by the emergence of a new tradition of newspaper journalism which was influenced by multiparty democracy, and new trends in newspaper production. He states that media system visibly began to take a new shape as the market thrust of private sector newspapers overshadowed the public interest of the public sector newspaper. All the characteristics of free market economy began to define the contour of pluralistic media system in the country. Private sector mass media emerged as a new dimension of media institution.

#### 4.1.6 State of Professionalism

Regmee observes that there were as many as four editors who served as professional editors during the Panchayat period. He notes that there were issues that *The Commoner* took up. Likewise, for the bold editorial of that time one needs to check *The Motherland*, *Nepal Times* and *Samaj*. Gopal Das Shrestha, Manindra Raj Shrestha, Chandra Lal Jha and Mani Raj Upadhyaya demonstrated free thinking through editorials even during the difficult days of the Panchayat period. Regmee recalls that prior to 1990 the newspapers were not scared of the administrators. Their editorials used to be very bold and were challenging to the authority. Many a time they employed metaphors and well crafted sarcastic skills to criticize the people in power. They were ready to face the consequences and were imprisoned by the establishment many times.

Malla argues that prior to 1990, the news were confined mainly within the political sphere unlike in the state of professionalism that heightened after 1990. After 1990, news stories have been incorporating the social aspects such as entertainment and sports in the course of widening the sphere. He opines that prior to 1990, after the referendum, *Bimarsh*, *Deshantar*, *Daily Dairy* were the some of the names of the weekly newspapers that attempted to be professional in all aspects. He states that *Ma Ma Go Go*: Mani Raj Upadhyaya, Madan Mani Dixit, Gopal Das Shrestha and Govind Biyogi once tried to restart *Samaj* with their common effort. However, the venture was not successful because of inadequate resources.

Regmee argues that there was professionalism in the Nepali newspaper in terms of editorial analysis and comment prior to 1990. But there was no professionalism in the getup of the newspapers. They lacked professionalism in dealing with the news. They mostly used RSS news and put the name of their own correspondent most of the time by ignoring professional norms. Thus in terms of the news, professionally they were weak. They did not have any anchor news but simply the long news stories.

Regmee recalls that the modes of presentation of some of the newspapers of Panchayat era were brilliant. They used to work very hard in covering the events. So the style of covering the events and writing in favor of the public was quite different than today. Generally, in a political reporting there was hardly any effective public

voice before 1990. Nevertheless, because of professionalism some public voice was there even during the Panchayat regime. Many a time the Panchayat rulers had to listen to public voice aired through the reports of the newspapers.

Regmee, mentioning the Hypodermic Needle Theory, states since there was professionalism, if the paper wrote something, it would affect the politics of that period. Prior to 1990, reporting on sensational issues was a culture. Such issues would unmistakably affect the Panchayat rulers. There were many events that took place as the consequence of a newspaper's reporting. Because newspapers reported it, the politics of that period had to respond to that issue.

Regmee names *Bimarsha* recalling an example of a very sensitive editorial during the late 1980s. He observes that during that period *Bimrsha* and some other newspapers demonstrated some sort of professionalism, especially in political thinking and political write-ups. He concludes that in terms of technological aspect professionalism was absent prior to 1990, but in terms of other social issues there was professionalism. He reasserts that in terms of analytical content professionalism was there in the newspapers prior to 1990.

After 1990, Nepal entered into a different phase; diversity was there to be covered, the whole of Nepali territory was in waiting to be covered. Regmee recalls a small research conducted for Nepal Press Institute. The finding was astounding. During that time, reporting Nepal meant only reporting 36 districts. For many months the 37<sup>th</sup> district did not appear in the newspaper. Over the period of more than 6 months in 1990s, the 37<sup>th</sup> district in the newspapers remained absent. Thus in post-1990 a sea change took place in terms of the content, management, marketing, and dissemination of the news.

Prior to 1990, the writers and columnists working for the papers had rarely received remuneration. They were at the mercy of the editors. Most of the writers and columnists had to accomplish their task of writing without remuneration or with very small remuneration.

Mostly the journalists were not employed with regular salary in the private newspapers before 1990. Whenever there were some festivals, the editor cum

publisher used to offer a small amount as festival expense. The publisher themselves used to collect advertisements on the occasion of the festivals. There was no structured remuneration system in the newspapers in Nepal except the government media.

After 1990 remuneration for journalists became structured in the newly emerged dailies. Thus, as Regmee argues, remuneration for the writers and journalists, and the diversity of the content are the results of the political changes of 1990. Stating that a newspaper is a reflection of the society, Regmee argues that today Nepali newspapers do not properly reflect the society. He concludes that although remuneration has structured, the contents still need to be structured.

He opines that a newspaper does not have to please those who are in power. However, he sees that the power-centric approach of the newspapers made them less diversified. Since they are market oriented, they should diversify the contents. So whoever was in *Singh Durbar*, the newspapers would be directed to them. Regmee concludes that the contents are driven by the power structure even after 1990.

Adams argues that professionalism was always there, journalists were professional during the Panchayat years. Manindra Raj Shrestha of *The Motherland* was such a journalist, so was Gopal Das Shrestha, the editor of *The Commoner*. It was just a different historical period and of a different political background. But she argues, in some way they tried to be professional. Even today, journalists are found operating as a tool for political parties, a practice that goes against the professional norms. To be professional means to be *nispakcha* [impartial], report all the news impartially. She views that the definition of professionalism varies; in essence the newspapers in post-1990 Nepal are not much different from their predecessors prior to 1990. Adams views, Nepali journalists should not be guided by gossip, rumour, commercial interest or personal benefits so that higher professional standards are maintained.

Rai states that prior to 1990 the emergence of democratic press between 1951 and 1960 demonstrated some early signs of professional journalism. However, merely within a decade it was nipped in the bud. *Samaj* Nepali daily, *The Commoner* English daily, and *Nepali* Hindi daily were some of the newspapers of the time that attempted to practise professional journalism within their context.

Pandey argues that even though *Gorakhapatra* was started by the government and has been running under the direct control of the government, it backed newspaper professionalism. It connected the general public to the state. Its reach was wider. It protected the newspaper journalism in its own way.

Kishore Nepal argues that journalists need to be aware of the quality and variety of news in order to enhance professionalism. He states that first of all, editors are to be empowered. Second, journalists are to be intellectually sound. Third, the journalists are to be professionally safe.

#### **4.1.7 Commercial and Corporate Interests in Newspapers After 1990**

Hom Nath Dahal mentions the ongoing discussion of the role of newspapers in India today. He states that genuine Indian journalists began to comment that the editors are dead and corporates are ruling inside the newsroom. In the context of Nepal, big newspapers have emerged after 1990, but no journalist can prepare a report beyond the primary interest of the publisher. Prior to 1990, the journalists had created their limits as per the political conviction, whereas today the market has been deciding the contents. In fact to achieve commitment and professionalism in a single go the Nepali newspapers need to have conducive media system.

Bhim Neupane argues that all the major political parties in Nepal are committed to social welfare state and it has mentioned in the preamble of the present Constitution. Therefore we cannot make education, health, drinking water and media marketable commodities. We need to define the nature and feature of media system in Nepal. Media in Nepal need to be oriented towards welfare broad-based capitalism rather than concentration capitalism. He maintains that in juxtapose to the State's guiding principle to protect marginalised people, Nepali newspapers are gradually heading towards hyper commercialism.

Ramesh Nath Pandey argues that the quantity of advertisings has increased tremendously, for instance out of 24 pages as many as 14 pages are devoted to advertisements. He views that because of the excessive amount of the paid space, advertisers have raised their influence. He states that the editorial sense has not yet started to become the selling commodity in Nepal.

Mani Raj Upadhaya argues that in comparison to the newspapers prior to the 1990 political changes, current newspapers have little tendency to follow up the news stories. According to him, after 1990 as the newspapers are controlled by business people, the journalists are not free to go against the investors' interests. He states that in his days, the editors were free to run their newspapers as they wished since they themselves were the publishers and free to take decisions on the contents. He argues that the editors of that period were more responsible and accountable to what the newspapers carried, whereas, the owners today can suppress news that are not favourable to their business interests. Upadhaya argues that the newspapers are being less interpretative these days.

Lal Deusa Rai argues that one of the significant outcomes of revolutionary political changes in 1990 was the emergence of the mass media as an industrial institution which by its very nature and rationale tended to be profit-motivated business enterprise rather than social service institution. He views that earlier proliferation of tabloids had harked back to the practice of newspaper journalism of the 1950s.

Ram Krishna Regmee views, commercial interest is the prime motive with the private investment around the world and Nepal is no exception. He states that the newspapers after 1990 are commercially oriented. They are oriented towards the sources of advertisements. In fact they are not taking care of their readers. They are seeking financial base. Thus, the newspapers have been pre-occupied by advertisements after 1990. It is the advertisements that have been driving these newspapers.

Regmee states that in the absence of advertisements newspapers cannot survive. Thus the newspapers in post-1990 Nepal are run by the corporates. It is inevitable for them to be preoccupied by commercial interests. Today the newspapers are engaged in advocacy for political parties for commercial interest. If the political parties do not support them commercially, they will not support them also. So this commercial interest has two aspects. One, directly related to advertisement, and another is the nexus between business sector and political parties and/or power centers.

The newspapers, as Regmee argues, are preoccupied with the commercial interests and do not operate in the absence of the advertisement and political support. The process is ongoing and the newspaper-owners define the trend as a commercial venture. As it is their enterprise, they would do anything for it. He argues it is inevitable that in the absence of the professional management of advertisements and democratic functioning of political parties, newspapers would be owned by corrupt people and mafia. Thus there are two challenges before newspaper professionalism. In the midst of political dependence on the one hand, dependence in business on the other hand, there should be a sovereign space for professional independence. Regmee argues that the dichotomy is that the media institutions have changed and the role of an editor has been transformed into the role of a manager.

Kishore Nepal argues that now the editors are compelled to run in search of market, rather than do journalism. Nepal also opines, now instead of editors the managers are leading the newspapers. Investors are taking decisions concerning the policies and content of newspapers.

Malla K. Sundar recommends the collective ownership pattern as a remedy of hyper commercialism. He states that in order to protect the interests of marginalized and economically threatened groups there should be the necessary legal provisions for the collective ownership of the newspapers. He suggests that the management of the newspapers needs to be inclusive.

Nepal argues that prior to 1990 editors were accountable towards the society, politically honest and independent in the profession. He states that after 1990, there are plethora of information but features of journalism are absent as journalists lack the passion these days and not competent enough to cultivate unique angles of the news stories.

Adams states that the serious malady that is ailing Nepal now is greed and selfishness, and the newspapers are interested in financial gain and in advertisements. There is corruption in the press; there is corruption everywhere in Nepal. Commercial interest means money, money means influence, and influence means corruption.



Hira Biswakarma argues that after 1990, newspapers have been widely covering the economic issues. However, there are widespread grievances towards the papers for the general public perceive that newspaper space is a paid one. As a conscious reader he feels that contents under scrutiny reflect that the newspapers have been indulging in the commercial interests.

Prem Kumari Pant views that the newspapers after 1990 have been indulging in commercialism. She argues that prior to 1990 the newspapers were disciplined and professional. The journalists of that time exercised self-control. She expresses that sensationalism is on the rise after 1990. She argues that since the size of the newspaper institutions have grown tremendously, their needs have also grown to greater extent. The newspapers have huge management cost these days. They obviously need business people.

Kishore Nepal argues that commercial interests manifest in the broadsheet dailies. He sees the nexus between business people and the politicians in power and argues that the same nexus handles the newspapers. The nexus between the government and the business people has been exploiting the general public. He adds that few instant noodles manufacturing companies, few steel rod companies, some cement factories and a few multinational companies are the back bones of the Nepali newspapers. If the business people withdraw their hands the so called large newspapers would be reduced to the size of *Deshantar* and *Drishti* weeklies.

Dhrub Hari Adhikary argues that the commercialism has become more consolidated after the advent of republic. Indra Kant Mishra states that, as an editor, for him journalism was a mission in order to establish democracy in the country. In his view the major difference between the two periods is that journalism today has become business—a matter of profit and loss. Because of the business interests, he argues, newspapers have become commercial.

#### **4.1.8 Changes Surfaced in Newspapers after Republic**

Regmee views that a distinct feature that has surfaced after the establishment of the republic Nepal is that nobody has to function under coercive regime now and this is great. He opines that for any free thinking person, there is no *Sword of Damocles* is

hanging. And that everyone has become a republican after the constitution declared it. People accepted it because it was established by the constitution.

Regmee states that after the declaration of republic, the change has reflected in the newspapers. There happen to be many editors who do not adhere to the republican principle, who were not actually activist for republicanism either, but even for these newspapers transition has been very smooth in Nepal. Actually a leap from monarchy to republic is a great one. The smooth transformation of the newspapers is worth acknowledgment. He feels that there are hardly any newspapers advocating monarchy after 2006 and there are very few political parties that advocate the cause of monarchy. Thus, in Regmee's views, transition to republicanism in Nepal is unique in this sense. Compared to the republican era of other countries, Nepal's media transition from monarchism seems a very comfortable one. For instance, some of these newspapers had been operating during the Panchayat system also. However, they imbibed the spirit of republicanism when the nation transformed into the republic.

Regmee opines that loyalty to the power also shifted along with the spirit of republicanism. Such is the spirit of the people here. The newspapers did transform themselves in the new political environment. However, he argues that evidently, they did not induce change in the behavior pattern of the people in changed context where every citizen is respected. He observes that the Nepali newspapers failed to sensitize people of the new political environment. He argues that the nation lacks a republican way of thinking, a republican way of acting in the government, a republican way of dealing with people in the newspapers. He opines that understanding of the Nepali newspapers has been that the republic is just a system as any other system, and it is not something that has to do with the people.

Regmee argues that the Nepali newspapers do not have to operate under coercive force after 2006 and yet some people say that loyalty has been transferred from the palace to political houses. There has been tremendous change after the republicanism as there are more and more public oriented materials in the newspapers. However, the materials are not very deep. There are changes in the opinion-editorial page. It has become wider and more open. Some voices that were never to be found even during the multiparty system have been aired after the republic. The newspapers carry

relatively more diverse subject and diverse voices enhancing their representation of different sectors of Nepali society after 1990.

Adams states that the period after 2006 is significant in terms of freedom of expression and opinion. She opines that after the advent of republic Nepal entered into yet another exciting period and the newspapers began to report different names and started to reveal different things. However, she sees that conservatism is also growing in the papers. She argues that everyone was let down by the Maoist movement, because they had hope and they were so much concentrated. The newspapers, in some ways, are professional to raise the issue of human rights. However, she argues that most of the newspapers are covering American girly-girly stuff and that she finds them unprofessional. She opines that people read newspapers for the news, not for the pictures of ladies' bosoms.

Rai states that after Nepal was proclaimed Federal Democratic Republic a revolutionary changes in political order ensued, and with it the media system also oriented itself towards the new order. As one of the units of the system, the newspaper inevitably tuned itself to the call of this new order.

Nepal argues that no significant changes have occurred in the world of the Nepali newspapers after the advent of the republic. He views rather that the newspapers are being narrow as the entire political atmosphere is indulged in confusion. He states that the debates are moving around in circles without conclusions. He further adds that the newspapers need to set the agenda in order to lead the nation to right direction. He argues that the Nepali newspapers need to be efficient in order to investigate people's aspirations; they are not being able to guide the politics rather they are being governed by the political forces.

#### **4.1.9 Issues of Professional Standards in Days to Come**

Regmee argues that there should be an emphasis on economic stability first. Economic stability makes advertisers capable to advertise. And that would create a conducive environment for free, fair and vibrant newspapers. They will not have to depend on political parties. The independent newspapers in Nepal will not be left

alone if there are business houses supporting enhancement of professionalism in journalism.

Regmee states that the newspapers need to be established themselves as the voice of the people, not the voice of a particular party. If the newspapers do not incorporate the voice of a single party, people will stand with them. There are evidences in many countries that the party run newspapers are not popular. If people think that a paper is neutral, they actually buy it and read it. Keeping the professionalism intact, keeping off the political parties, keeping off the business houses, would be the best idea, but one can still question whether it will be sustainable? Regmee is confident that the independent newspapers would be sustainable. He views that such newspapers need to be disciplined and confined within professional relations with the political parties and business houses.

Adams stresses that one should really encourage impartial reporting, not allow people to be influenced by anything, not to be influenced by gossip, rumour, and commercial and personal interests. The press has gotten so personal. Investigative reporting need to be given more space. Why do accidents happen and why the government does not take action to improve the situation? Why the investigative reporting are not coming up to stop erratically driving buses on bad roads? Instead, a plenty of totally unnecessary stories are coming up.

Adams states that investigative journalism is required to check corruption as well. The Nepali newspapers lack follow-up stories. The press starts a story and leaves it hanging in a limbo without a follow-up. The question is why the newspapers are not able to present stories with thorough exposure. Why do they not expose that how the busses are allowed to put 20 people on the roof? But such stories do not appear adequately.

Adams says that the need is for impartial newspapers with investigative journalism. Nepal needs serious and impartial newspapers to be more professional. The Nepali newspapers after 1990 have become more professional in comparison to the newspapers prior to 1990. However, the standard of professionalism needs to be upgraded.

Rai suggests that all people concerned with the development of media as a social institution as well as industry should focus on the subject of professionalism in newspaper journalism, and seriously deliberate on the standard required of professional news journalism in the context of Nepali society and culture. They should not entertain the notion that politics and media interests can be truly separated. It is a truism that they openly or in a subtle way always influence each other.

#### **4.1.10 Components of Newspaper Landscape in New Media System**

Regmee expects a comprehensive policy in order to address three areas of newspaper industry that are pertinent components of newspaper landscape in the days to come in Nepal. He suggests modification in the structures, improvement in human resource condition and introduction of advance technologies.

First, Regmee envisages two different structures of newspaper institutions at the national and regional or local level. He foresees two-tier structure of the media institutions as per the coverage area, a national structure and the regional or local media institutions. He views that there should be a national stream of media system, covering Mechi, Mahakali, *terai* [low-land] and mountain regions. If any section is left out, it will not be a system. His first tier would be at the national level. He argues that the media system comprises all kinds of media outlets from radio and television to newspaper and online. Newspapers' extension to online has raised its importance.

Regmee sees a prime need to concentrate on the localized media. He views that no matter how effective the content is, no matter how widespread the media are, the newspapers should be functional to the audience. He argues that a 16-page-newspaper cannot cover the entire country. After all it is news. So there should be competitive local newspapers within the national media system, it could be at the provincial level in the upcoming federal system. However, he views that dividing media system into 75 districts will not be a good idea. He argues that it could be divided into eastern, central, western, mid-western, and then far-western. Thus, in terms of structure as per the reach and access to the audience, Regmee envisages a national and then local structure of newspapers, nothing in between. It is local because local things should be covered by local newspapers.

Second, Regmee stresses on the human resource component of the newspapers. He views that trained human resource should be recruited in the different media outlets and there should be a sufficient number of the technicians in different media outlets. He estimates that a journalist to come into the field of media and remain for 20 years; he starts as a reporter and climbs up the ladder to be an editor.

Third, Regmee points out a prime need to enhance the technological aspect of media system coupled with a conducive environment to adopt modern and advanced technologies.

Regmee concludes that if a comprehensive media policy could merge all the aforesaid three components, there will be a vibrant and instrumental media system in the country. However, he views that everything depends on two things: the economy and the politics. The political will of those who are in power should be in line with the quest for a comprehensive media system. He argues that merely mentioning press freedom is not adequate and the media system will not be developed. This is exactly what has been happening for last 25 years after 1990.

Regarding the components of a new media system in the country, Adams suggests that the media need to be involved much more in education. In her opinion, the newspapers need to be instrumental in order to uplift the dull situation of far western Nepal. The numbers of news stories in newspapers are growing and they are diversified in comparison to the past. However, they are not in-depth and they lack investigative approach and skills.

Adams argues that if the newspapers talk more about people's problems and give solutions and ideas, the government could be sensitized. However, she views that the Nepali press seems to think about the people in a sensational way, they report beatings or murder or rapes. They do not report thoughtfully and they lack long-term thinking. She opines that the newspapers need to concentrate on yielding the positive change in the society.

Adams opines that the newspapers can contribute for overall development in Nepal by not reporting rumours. And that they need to bring out more in-depth, truthful and fair reports. She also emphasizes the need for trained human resource in journalism in

order to have accurate and balanced news stories. The different parties of a story should be questioned and quoted in order to give the public a fuller understanding of an issue. She stresses on ethical reporting and expects a conducive atmosphere where the newspapers will fully abide by the ethical standards.

Adams suggests that the role of the government should be that of a defender of freedom of the press and the government needs to be strong in order to take action to protect the newspapers. She expects the government to resist pressure and be able to take actions against any kind of threats to freedom of expression and free flow of information. The government should expose the culprits and put an end to impunity on the cases of attacks upon journalists. She stresses that there has to be set rules in this regard. She opines that there should be fair amount of strong and enforceable laws that help to create an atmosphere compatible to vibrant newspapers.

Rai states that unlike the traditional media of print and broadcasting the new media incorporates print, broadcasting and film media, and distributes them through push technology all over the world, and thereby provides instantaneous interactive global contact. Thus, he emphasizes that the Nepali newspapers need to adopt new and advanced technologies.

Considering its key characteristics of interactivity, sociability, autonomy and privacy, Rai opines that the news media in Nepal requires well trained human resources for developing in a planned way the essential pre-condition of media literacy to ensure efficient use of new media by the majority of the population. He views that concerned authorities should apply themselves to formulation and implementation of appropriate legislation and ethical consideration, and to enunciation of appropriate cyber policy in the context of Nepal. Rai views that in the academic sphere, new media studies should be promoted and enriched by research efforts for long term benefits of Nepali society and culture in the new millennium.

Regarding the question on the components that the new media system in the country requires, Pandey views that the government should not handle the mass media institutions. He stresses that the government should not have any vision to run the media, it needs to create a competitive and fair atmosphere where the fittest will survive. Newspapers need to depend solely on the people for the qualitative growth

and economic strength. The State should be indifferent in this regard. Whenever the government comes up with flowery plans for the development of the mass media, freedom gets victimized. Since the country is in a backward state of economic development, the subsidies on paper, ink, machines and other equipment could be justifiable from the part of the State. However, the government should not use the subsidies to control the mass media.

Adhikary argues that there should be an atmosphere to encourage fair competition among the newspapers. He states that credible newspapers sustain, and unprofessional newspapers drop out. In his view, monitoring and control should not impede the way for the healthy professional competition. The government needs to be indifferent in this regard.

Adhikary argues that government have not paid attention to the reports that were presented at different times. He states that the role of the private sector is pivotal in a democracy, but there should be government regulations in order to ensure benefits for the weaker sections of the society. He stresses on the need for a comprehensive policy and subsequently the mechanisms to promote and enhance the public welfare aspect of newspapers in the days to come.

#### **4.2 Views Expressed during Focus Group Discussions**

A number of consecutive FGDs (see Annex IV) were conducted among academics, media academics, media researchers and media practitioners, including the editors of the political weeklies and the journalists working for dailies. The FGDs were concentrated on three issues: comparison between the newspaper landscapes prior to 1990 and post-1990 Nepal; a historical survey of the state of newspapers prior to 1990 in order to examine the level of professionalism; and the state of commercialism in newspaper industry in post-1990 Nepal.

The comparison between the two periods, before and after the restoration of democracy in 1990, demonstrates a number of differences. A survey of the evolution of newspaper journalism in Nepal shows a number of examples of professionalism even before 1990. Newspaper journalism, in the aftermath of 1990, is preoccupied by commercial interest of the big of corporate houses.



#### 4.2.1 General Outline

Prior to 1990, even though most of the weekly newspapers were overtly allegiant to the political parties, they were the life line for the alternative source of information. They were equally instrumental in raising awareness about freedom of the press and human rights. Besides the state-sponsored information provided by *Gorakhapatra*, the weeklies were the channels that used to create public communication in wider range. *Gorkhapatra* had been established as an official brand. Its political contents were never taken as trustworthy. However, in private sector the newspapers were not institutionalized.

Nevertheless, the weeklies of Panchayat period had well played the role of the surveillance and they were successful to expose the anomalies and corruption by the people in power. The newspapers, basically the weeklies, were the forum where one can find the stories about misery of working class people and dissatisfactions over the restrictions by the middle class intellectuals. At the same time they were loaded with a heavy message in a bid to attract people towards certain political ideology and to pursue the people against Panchayat polity.

Editors of weekly newspapers are of the view that history of the Nepali newspapers prior to 1990 need to be divided in three phases: between 1950 and 1960, prior to the referendum, and after the referendum held in 1980.

As King Mahendra took over all the state power and put an end to the fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution, the newspapers were deprived of the freedom of expression and opinion. However, as the editors recall, the Nepali journalists continued to devote themselves to public communication even during the difficult political circumstances. The newspapers during Panchayat, regardless of the periods prior to referendum or after, had to struggle against the State's suppressive measures. Nevertheless, the newspapers had been expressed keen concerns over the democratic movement. Most of them had ideological stance. The political newspapers were associated with political parties and were close to their activities. In most of the cases, political activists ran the newspapers with the backing of a particular political faction with the sole objective of public communication. Their political communication was aimed at communicating general public about their vision, mission and goal.

After May 1979 announcement of the 1980 national referendum, political restrictions were relaxed with the enactment of the Freedom of Speech and Publication Ordinance in August 1979. However, when the results came out in favour of Panchayat, the country witnessed regression once again. In the referendum voting took place to choose between a multiparty democracy and a modified Panchayat system.

In the aftermath of the referendum, the political parties consolidated themselves to run newspapers for political communication with their objectives. Though newspapers were in weak financial conditions, they began to take root as an entrepreneurship and newspaper journalism started to take shape as a profession. The newspapers gradually started to create an impact on relatively wider range of the population.

Among the pro-Panchayat newspapers, the division between liberal and conservative factions became deep after the referendum. *Saptahik Manch* and subsequent weeklies published by Saptakoshi Prakashan represented the liberal faction.

After 1990, the big dailies emerged and the several alternatives of *Gorkhapatra* arrived in the market. Consequently the weekly newspapers could not retain their hold in the market. Within a few years most of the newspapers running since the period before the referendum, right from *Samikshya* and *Rastrapukar* to *Matribhumi*, vanished. In the changed context, the political weeklies started to lose ground.

Amidst an in-depth discussion in a bid to conduct a historical survey of the Nepali newspapers, the prominent editors of the weeklies state that after the establishment of multiparty democracy in Nepal in 1990, the impact of weeklies was overtaken by the presence of daily newspapers.

Media academics state that after the restoration of democracy in 1990, the trend shifted from political or partisan press to business oriented press. The newspapers moved from what the editor decides to what the owner decides. If the owner sees benefit in covering issues like food festivals, then editors assign reporters to cover such issues if such events generate revenues. Editors have become more of a brand manager. Corporate interests started to dominate the rest of other interests. However, the nexus between business and politics resulted in political interests.

The editors of the political weeklies argue that the state of the political movement is directly related to the existence, circulation and influence of the political newspapers, specifically the weeklies in the context of Nepal. Whenever, the political movement decline, the political newspapers lagged behind. According to them during the 15 months of King Gyanendra's rule between 2005 and 2006, the political weeklies gained speed. Eventually, when the country entered the republic, the weeklies again lagged behind the commercial newspapers.

Journalists working for the dailies say that newspaper journalism after 1990 can be divided into three phases: initial years after 1990, after 1997, and after 2006. By the year 1996, the publication and successful continuation of *Kantipur* daily had demonstrated functioning of the big dailies from the private sector is possible in Nepal. However, there were stories about other big daily newspapers such as *Lokpatra* and *Sagarmatha* that failed to sustain in the market. Moreover, by that year newspapers faced competitive media environment with the advent of FM radio channels in the private sector.

#### **4.2.2 Partisan Leanings Prior to and After 1990**

Most newspapers prior to 1990, used to carry political views with partisan leanings to the respective political parties or the establishment. Political parties were banned and newspapers concentrated on serving the political ideology in a bid to fulfil their aim to establish multiparty system. The Nepali newspapers in post take-over period were the representatives of three ideological stances. First, the newspapers representing the ruling class views. Second, the newspapers holding NC's point of views, relatively leaning towards India. Third, the newspapers faithful to leftist point of view that represented mostly the issues related to patriotism. The main purpose of these outlets was imparting political ideology in order to serve the interest of their respective parties. Thus before 1990, people who were involved in politics were also involved in journalism.

Media academics view that some of the newspaper after 1951 political change, tried to stay in the market by catering to the relatively larger number of readers. However, most newspapers during that time were indulging in partisan leanings. The academics argue that *Samaj* daily was relatively professional. However, it also had a clear slant

towards a particular political party. In order to prove their argument the media academics cites the following incident:

One day, the then Prime Minister Tanka Prasad Acharya called on Mani Raj Upadhaya, editor of *Samaj*, and briefed him that when the PM urged US officials for the development aid, they responded by saying that they will discuss this with India. They intended not to support directly rather with the consent of India. The Prime Minister was not happy with this policy of US. In such a context, the PM told Upadhaya to "fly the kite high" in order to see their reaction. The next day, Upadhaya claimed in the front page news with the headline that read: Soviet Union proposed 100 million rupees for development works. Consequently, the US ambassador made an appointment with PM and expressed the willingness for direct economic support from US Government.

In fact, newspaper journalism was a part of politics for most of the journalists and they were involved in journalism in order to carry the mission to spread the ideology of the respective parties. Before 1990, journalism was basically for politics, and act of politics and journalism were profoundly interlinked. The prime objective of most of the newspapers prior to 1990 was to make a favourable public opinion on their respective political parties. For instance, some of the newspapers had a normative tradition to receive main news from party headquarters. Till the time of restoration of democracy in 1990, the weeklies were instrumental in propagating political ideology for the major political parties. Before 1990, journalism and politics were closely linked. Party leaders and cadres used to push their cadres in the field of journalism.

The editors and political parties had an understanding that the newspapers were effective instruments to make people aware of politics. Their understanding was that such awareness would pave the way for the dissolution of Panchayat constitution. Media academics view that prior to 1990, the newspapers were shaped either to serve the government or to be the vehicle for carrying the mission of a particular party. Journalism in the Panchayat period is characterized as era of mission journalism.

Journalists working for the dailies state that after the referendum, during the relatively liberal political atmosphere, some prominent weekly newspapers such as *Deshantar*, *Drishti* and *Chhalphal* close to NC and communist parties appeared. Before 1990,

cadres of parties were involved in the publication of newspapers. During this period, they used to cross the limitation of the professionalism because journalists were also the cadres of certain political parties. But the mission journalism practised during Panchayat era played a vital role in the development of present day journalism. During the Panchayat regime, according to the journalists working for the dailies, newspapers prior to 1990 needed political protection, and it was very difficult to sustain sans the protection and support from the political parties. The political newspapers served as a vehicle to impart information and pursue with ideology of the political parties.

The major criteria for selecting the main news of those pro-movement weeklies was not other than the most offending issues against the government. Journalists who were in favour of multiparty system had been carrying the mission to restore the multiparty system in the country. Anti-Panchayat newspapers were polarized into leftist and rightist camps. Their coverages were monotonous and they were confined within the limited political rhetoric and jargons.

On the one hand the government had been running its own newspapers under Gorkhapatra Corporation. On the other hand, there were a number of weeklies inclined to the Panchayat system, and they benefited from advertisements and other kinds of subsidies given by the government.

Media academics argue that with rise of literacy level in the country, the overall quality of media contents have also been upgraded. According to them the contents in post-1990 newspapers comprise a diverse range of socio-political and economic issues.

Journalists working for the broadsheet dailies state that there was a perception amongst them that newspapers cannot sustain due to the lack of readership and market. After the killings of CPN-UML leader Madan Bhandari, the circulation of *Kantipur* significantly increased. In the course of time a gradual shift from mission to professionalism took place. However, the unprofessional linkage between politics and journalism still exists.

The editors of the political weeklies share their experiences that during the period of referendum the polarization of newspapers in terms of allegiance was more vivid. They view that even today, only the politically mission-oriented newspapers established before 1990 dared to conduct political communication by providing political contents in the time of crisis. For example, during the Royal takeover in 2005, weekly newspapers such as *Deshantr*, *Drishti* and *Chhalphal* vocally opposed the move which is not the case with so called professional newspapers.

Journalists working for the broadsheet dailies argue that, prior to 1990, newspaper journalism was considered as a crucial front to speed up the democratic movement from the opposition side and tool for political persuasion from the side of the establishment. It was considered as a mission rather than a profession and politics was at the centre.

Academics from diverse disciplines other than mass communication argue that even after 1990, partisan leanings have surfaced in the newspapers. For example, even *Kantipur* had taken political stand for the movement in 2005-6. However, the high-handedness of the political parties on the newspapers does not exist. On various occasions, the existing newspapers are seen backing a party, or a particular leader of vested group.

Journalists working for the dailies argue that with the publication of broadsheet newspapers of professional nature, it became difficult to sustain party-funded newspapers. Many daily newspapers solely funded by the parties did not sustain after 1990. From the mission, the newspaper journalism is heading to professionalism. The newspapers have changed from the main orientation of opinion to the prime orientation of information. Before 1990, journalism was regarded as a field of prestige and recognition in the society. The major similarity before and after 1990 is that many journalist are still inclined to certain political party or ideological group.

Professional journalists argue that even after 1990, the weeklies continued their political affiliation, but the newly emerging daily newspapers kept themselves away from direct political allegiance. However, they were guided by commercialism. They, occasionally, demonstrated political bias. However, the hidden motive is commercial interest rather than politics. The support given by broadsheet to political parties

depends upon the commercial benefit they can extract from such parties. Thus, rather than serving one party, broadsheets support different political parties at different times as per their commercial convenience.

#### **4.2.3 Reading Materials: Before and After 1990**

Media academics argue that opinion-focused media were high in number during Panchayat. The discussion on professionalism arose only after 1990. Before 1990, opinion-based weeklies were very popular, but after the 1990 revolution, dailies became more popular.

Previously, weeklies were considered mostly for opinions, but now dailies too cover opinions extensively. There has been a visible change in terms of the contents of the newspapers. The angle is diversified and beat journalism commenced after 1990.

Media academics argue that prior to 1990 various political restrictions had affected the content. If the editors used the term *Prajatantra* [democracy] anywhere in the reading material, they were taken in for interrogation and had to provide clarification to the administration.

Journalists working for the dailies view that during the Panchayat period the newspapers were dominated by political content. The newspapers, in general, of that time were not professional in terms of presentation, and the contents were not diversified. Before 1990 even though the circulation figures of the newspapers were low, their credibility and impact stood high. In comparison, despite their reach, access and circulation of the newspapers in post-1990 Nepal have low level of impact on policy making level. Despite the growth in the number, the newspapers after 1990 are relatively not as successful in evoking sensitivity in policy making level.

Media academics argue that as media was groomed, diversity was seen in contents and media. More voices came to light, new ideas were generated. However, media was unable to grow qualitatively. Some parameters could be set as evidence: e.g., geo-political sensitivity. They view that gradually diversity in the contents and opinions are being seen. Journalists working for the dailies argue that there was no diverse content like today before 1990, and newspapers were dominated by political

contents. Now, there is a freedom to provide diverse content. Because of a growing level of awareness in the general public and availability of multiple sources of information, the dependence on newspapers has not increased.

After 1990, there are changes even in content flavour. At the beginning of Maoist insurgency, there were news related to Maoist insurgency; similarly, after the people's movement in 2005-6, the issues related to inclusion and voices of marginalized communities have been incorporated in the media. In the aftermath of 1990, the political parties are seen to be successful in running newspapers for a short period. Academics from diverse disciplines other than mass communication state that the newspapers have become inclusive in terms of diverse contents after 1999. NGOs, business houses, trade related organizations, local development authorities and police have been getting a wider range of coverage in the post-1990 newspapers. However, the particular business houses or other institutions or individuals get more coverage in the newspapers, as per the advertising budget the target for coverage has. In the countryside, NGOs and trade related organizations are bigger newsmakers than the political parties. Many a time news have been suppressed or presented with particular advertisers in mind.

In the aftermath of the year 1990, the newspaper landscape gradually started to be marked in the dailies by relatively diversified contents. The weeklies throughout the week are guided and influenced by political ideologies. Journalists working for the weeklies are deprived of professional freedom because of their partisan leanings.

Media academics state that investigative reporting is dismal in current dailies. There are scoops, however. Not much variety in content is seen. Before 1990, political parties were the newsmakers. Now after 1990, multiple centres are in existence to be in the news. The newspapers are basically indulging in event reporting.

Journalists argue that after 1990, the big dailies emerged with a difference in presentation style than the existing weeklies. However, for a short period in 2005-6 both the big dailies and political weeklies were uniform concerning the issues of anti-establishment.



Along with the growth of newspapers, diversity and richness in contents and qualities have also increased. Professional journalists view that newspapers have certainly grown in numbers and variety in content but they have not prospered professionally.

Journalists working for the big dailies argue that the number of newspapers has increased in the aftermath of 1990, but the space for the reading materials has shrunk. Media academics argue that priority is more on advertisements than contents. Excessive amounts of the advertisements and shrinking news space show commercialism in media. The ratio of 60 per cent news and 40 percent advertisings is not followed. Commercialism is widely influencing the content of media. There is considerable room for more in-depth and comprehensive contents, though several separate beats are assigned to reporters in recent times. Promotional content has been dominating the newspaper contents, e.g., the talk between political leaders and even their minor meeting make headlines of newspapers. Newspapers, even after 1990, have not been able to extract the hidden meanings behind issues and events. They do not do much in analysing issues and events. Newspapers are more concerned with promoting political parties, opinion of leaders and business brands.

After 1990, pluralism in numbers and variety in contents has increased. Prior to 1990, people used to assemble at a public place like *chautaro* and listen to someone reading articles aloud from a newspaper written by writers like Modnath Prashrit or someone else who advocated for political changes. At that time, newspapers were scarce, but after 1990, this is no longer the case.

Before 1990, political leaders were actively involved in the production of contents such as opinion pieces and articles for newspapers. In the aftermath of 1990, most big newspapers are either aligned to some political parties or business groups or both. However, even the newspapers backed by the political parties could not survive for long time. Various private organizations or corporate houses are funding media houses covertly and they are using media as a tool to take advantage and succeed in their other business.

Promotional writings, sponsored interviews and advertorials are common in the pages of the newspapers in the aftermath of 1990. Media practitioners state that journalism can be divided into news journalism and opinion journalism. According to them, the

newspaper journalism after 1990 has moved from opinion journalism to news journalism.

Journalists working for the privately owned broadsheet dailies state that one of the major achievements after 1990 is emergence of specialization and beat-reporting journalism, which is a major asset of Nepal's newspaper journalism.

Journalists working for the big media houses argue that the recent trend is that corporate interest in media is overtaking the political influence or interest. Now, the corporate department is taking the upper hand while deciding on the content. Though political news is still dominant and has a market, corporate journalism has badly affected professionalism. Journalists, who are close to certain political parties, fear writing critical stories, resulting in self-censorship.

#### **4.2.4 Distribution Channels Prior to and After 1990**

Prior to 1990, apart from the weak commercial distribution channels, the political parties used to establish their own distribution channels based on the cadres who used to devote themselves as volunteers. As recalled by Parashu Ghimire, one of the members of *Mulyankan* weekly team at that time, the distribution of political message-laden newspapers to the readers was also one of the political activities for them. For instance, in the aftermath of the referendum, as many as 500 copies of *Mulyankan* weekly had been distributed through the party channel by CPN (Fourth Convention) alone. In many cases, the readers had to face trouble when they buy or carry the newspapers that were against the government.

After the referendum, during the secondary period of Panchyat, weeklies like the *Chhalphal*, *Bimarsha*, *Drishti* and *Deshantar* reached rural parts of the nation. The papers were distributed in support of the NC and the different factions of the communist parties. NC-affiliated papers cover only the Congress, and leftist papers cover their own party.

Besides political allegiance, before 1990, some of the individuals invested in the newspapers for prestige. Journalists used to carry their newspaper copies in their bags and show them to people they met. Also, they would ask citizens whether they read

the newspaper. This practice is not seen these days. Newspapers had very small circulation. *Samaj*, a popular daily, used to publish 1000-1500 copies, which was huge at that time. Newspapers like *Samaj* maintained professionalism even at that time.

Circulation of newspaper was dependent on hawkers. After the referendum, a hawker named Krishna Prasad Gautam "Maila" used to suggest, and even write, headlines for newspapers. If his instruction was not followed, he would not take the newspaper to the market.

Contrary to the current newspapers, the newspapers that existed before the referendum had low circulation. Nevertheless, the editors argue that their influence over politics was high. The editors state that the writings of the weeklies had extensive response from the policy making level. Authorities used to send written clarification when a newspaper covered corruption cases. Those newspapers had played the role of surveillance. The editors of the weeklies mention that the weeklies of Panchayat days were credible in comparison to the current Nepali newspapers.

#### **4.2.5 State of Freedom of Press: Prior to and After 1990**

The editors of the weeklies state that the newspapers of that time had to face strict repressive measures such as cancellation of the licence of newspaper and imprisonment of editors. Though there was a short period when the king removed the restrictions after the proclamation of referendum, after the victory of Panchayat over multiparty democracy the journalists were again compelled to put their one leg in the newspaper office and the other inside the jail. Nevertheless they were free from fear. The cause of fearlessness, according to the editors, was the outcome of their political commitment.

Even during Panchayat period, during the referendum, political restrictions were removed for a short period. However, registration of a newspaper could be obtained only after submission of a no-objection report from the police. The police report was compulsory to get press accreditation card as well.

The editors of weeklies recall that the immediate issue after the attempted assassination of the editor of *Bimarsha* weekly had to be printed for a week. It was because the printing technology of that time was primitive in comparison to the current technologies. Even if the technology was primitive, the regular readers used to wait for the particular newspapers of their choice.

The editors of the political weeklies argue that before 1990 the Nepali journalists were attacked mainly by the State machinery. But in the post-1990 era, according to the editors of the weeklies, journalists are equally insecure from the non-state forces. Media academics argue that during the early months of King Gyanendra's direct rule, the political parties played a role as critics. The broadsheet daily newspapers seemed fearful initially, almost influenced the state. Later, the movement against the king gained momentum and they dared to be critical.

The editors recall the period prior to 1990, and state that the newspapers could be stopped on the charge of sedition. However the journalists of that time were well respected.

#### **4.2.6 Level of Capital Investment Prior to and After 1990**

The capital investments as well as the volume of advertisings were low in the newspapers before 1990. However, due to the low circulation, the cost for the news print was also low. In terms of finance, the newspapers were self-sustained. Not only the capital investment used to be insignificant, those newspapers were small in terms of human resources also, in some cases one-man journalism. The publishers used to be not only the editors rather even the distributor. In some cases, the publisher cum editor used to publish newspapers by selling his property. The editors argue that the editors of those political papers were in journalism with a sense of satisfaction. They considered journalism as a battle field rather than an employment with an adequate level of income.

A notable trend of investing huge capital in the newspapers started to surface after 1990. However, not all the newspapers that emerged after 1990, could sustain in the long run. As many as 6 broadsheet-dailies were closed after the introduction of democracy. On the one hand, despite *Gorakhpatra* and *The Rising Nepal*, no other

broadsheet daily was in the market before 1990. On the other hand several dailies from the private sector were in the market to fulfil the gap but closed within a short span of time. It shows that along with political freedoms other requirements also need to be fulfilled in order to run a big newspaper.

Contrary to the earlier situation, the newspapers in post-1990 Nepal emerged as a new business enterprise. Gradually, business interests of the investors started to surface. The editors of the weeklies state that unlike the situation prior to 1990, the current newspapers are institutionalized. However, they argue that prior to 1990, despite the absence of democratic rights the editors were free to enjoy their editorial freedom. Today, on the one hand the constitution has guaranteed the freedom of expression and opinion but on the other hand journalists were deprived of editorial freedom in the big houses. The owners have started to exert opinion maker's strength in order to boost their non-media business.

Thus the editors opine that in the aftermath of 1990 movement, the daily newspapers have been guided by the owner's interest. In the changed context the owners or the publishers have been taking decisions on the content. The investors have grabbed the power and prestige from their venture in journalism. Now the freedom of expression and opinion has become a tool of commercialism.

The weekly editors argue that they used to present solutions with the exposition of the problem during the Panchayat period. They state that currently, the newspapers do not feel responsibility to present solution and concentrated solely on the saleable matters. Prior to 1990, journalists themselves used to run the newspaper. In contrast, after 1990 the business people are running the newspapers. Today the first and foremost duty to run a newspaper is to make money. Investment-friendly atmosphere, guarantee of press freedom, scope for the market, availability of private-sector advertisements and growing readership are the causes of the emergence of the professionalism.

Media academics argue that in the aftermath of the political change of 1990, the newspapers developed as an enterprise and corporate laws too were introduced. Alongside, the sense of corporate responsibility too should have developed, but with strict attention towards available resources. Latter media took an industrial shape with

private sector investment. Instantly, impact of market economy is seen. Papers depended on circulation and distribution, but now they rely on advertisement. Before 1990, the newspapers depended either on political parties or on the government. In the aftermath of the 1990, they have become dependent on advertisements.

Professional journalists argue that the impact of market economy has surfaced after 1990. While in earlier times newspapers were dependant on circulation and distribution for their survival, now they rely on advertisements. Similarly, most of them had to court political power centers for resources. But now, the main stream media mainly depend on business institutions. However, the practicing professional journalists also note some positive development regarding the development of human resources. They opine that by the year 1990 the foundation of the media education had been laid down in Nepal. After 1990, it started to take roots.

Journalists working for the broadsheet dailies think that media have become an effective opinion generating business after 1990s. The newspapers also have emerged as a money-making industry, guided by libertarian model, thus inviting a large inflow of investments.

The editors of the weeklies cite an example of commercialization: that Kantipur Publications has been able to earn Rs. 400-401 million as annual profit, but it was exempted tax worth of Rs. 60 million. In the process of commercialization, with all limitations, the development of media-support system is also equally important. Economic activities in the country have expanded after 1990.

The editors of the weeklies state that during the Panchayat regime, they used to collect advertisements through an individual approach. Cultivation of advertising was equally guided by political influence. Most industrialists were naturally close to the monarchy. A few industrialists who had sympathy for certain newspapers or parties used to provide some advertisement. However, the institutional effort to make journalism a profession was very low at that time.

Journalists working for the dailies view that before 1990, it was easy to work because newspapers were inclined to a particular party or ideology. It was easy because the political line was clear and the newsrooms used to function accordingly. Now, it is

very difficult to identify the various interests of media houses and editors. Now, self-censorship prevails and many a time they face difficulties to work in professional manner. Before 1990, political ideology was the defining element, but after that there are various factors that filter the news fit to be printed.

Journalists working for the dailies argue that after 1990, the newspapers tried to emerge as an industry, and they are heading towards hyper commercialization. Now, the reading materials are scrutinized by the corporate interests basically imposed by the owners. However, political influence also prevails over the editors and reporters who still carry such interests to some extent.

The editors of the weeklies argue that the main motive of the emergence of the big dailies such as *Kantipur* was to gain profit. They opine that the privately owned broadsheet dailies were initiated in an atmosphere where a newspaper business proved to be profitable. Today, they argue, the major motto of journalism has become the making money.

#### **4.2.7 Normative Theory in Changed Media Atmosphere**

The editors view that prior to 1990, journalists had a greater sense of social responsibility than today. They argue that currently the weekly newspapers have been facing severe challenges in terms of market.

Newspapers accomplish their organizational tasks of creating and recreating social relationships through the networks of communication. However, such tasks of newspapers depend on the political atmosphere. In the aftermath of the political changes, the Nepali newspapers started to recreate the social relationships on the basis of the new polity.

Media academics argue that after 1990, press freedom is high and the sense of professionalism has increased. However, use of journalism as a means to carry out unethical works too exists. In the post-1990 period, growth of unethical use of journalism is seen.

Media has not been able to take the shape of an industry. Policy reform has not been initiated. There is an increase in pluralism in media, however. Media academics argue

that there is no practice of media industry. Only the bargaining capacity has increased. When there is any problem for anyone, media is sought after. The numbers of newspapers, investments, variety in content and their role in informing people and forming public opinion have increased exponentially. However, no mechanisms have been forged to check their malfunctioning and unethical practices.

Media academics argue that the pattern of human resource has seen a greater change. Many skilled manpower have taken up the journalistic profession. There has been a qualitative development—skill, professionalism, attitude and technology have all developed to some extent after 1990. They term post-1990 has seen a greater development in journalism education. The qualitative growth of media is, however, still questionable. Post-1990, in the name of transition, media has become more commercialized, mostly seen at work when the media owners force their contents on their media, compromising editorial freedom.

Journalists working for the dailies view that during Pachayat regime, there was no professionalism in the media, and supporting the political interest was the mission of journalism. Fulfilling the interest of political parties was the mission of journalism. Journalism was not a profession; it was like a mission of political parties. The newspapers played a role to bring political disputes into surface and overthrow the monarchy.

Even today, the normative theory of newspapers shows the covert political allegiance. Political factions have created their own journalists. Media academics view that there was partisanship in the past to some extent, but it is still there today. This is seen in the case of newspapers inclined to the political parties and their factions. Because of lack of inadequacy of professionalism they indulge in a high and wrong self-appraisal. The media academics view that the public expects newspapers to be free from political intervention.

Journalists working for the dailies argue that professionalism in journalism itself is a slippery slope and hard to define. There is still a lot of space in government-owned media to maintain professionalism. Journalists are doing politics, journalism and business at the same time.



In the aftermath of 1990, the changes and layout have developed in newspapers, but professionalism has been questioned and most often they do not adhere to the Journalists' Code of Ethics. Journalists working for the dailies argue that after 1990, media emerged as an industry and investors are beyond the media sector. Even today journalists are forming various organizations in terms of caste, community and ideology which have promoted self-censorship in the media. Even now, praises of certain political ideology are made in the name of professionalism. Journalists working in post-1990 atmosphere state that though an extent of professionalism existed even before 1990, there was no institutional framework of professionalism. They argue that it is obvious that before 1990 there was no proper environment for professionalism. Without a strong protection from political parties, it was difficult to run professional newspaper.

#### **4.2.8 Use of Technology in Course of Transition of Newspaper after Political Changes**

Prior to 1990, the newspapers were produced with comparatively primitive technology. However, the weekly editors argue that the newspapers were able to transmit the useful information to the civilians, with the journalists adhering to high moral values and discipline.

Professional journalists argue that the political changes of the 1990 opened the way for the use of advanced technology in printing. Technology is the value added component. Earlier, the technology was slow but now it is efficient and sensitive. In modern days development of technology has made easier to verify facts.

After 1990, high quality printing presses begin to be available in different parts of the country. Likewise, availability of the internet in the country has erased geographical barriers that existed earlier. This technological advancement also accounts for the change in the print media. Arrival of offset printing press made possible the maximum use of pictures, colour pages and attractive designs in newspapers.

Earlier journalists' economic status was very miserable as they could be readily identified by their appearances. Newspapers were also technologically poor. Colour pages or printing a photo was a difficult task and composing used to be clumsy and

time consuming which would take a whole day. Newspapers were smaller in size and earned very little by selling copies.

In the aftermath of 1990, arrival of the latest technology compelled media houses to adopt colour pages so that they can sustain in competition with other competitors, which gave rise to commercialism among newspapers. Printing quality was poor during those days as there was no offset printing press and colour printing was very expensive. Latter, after 1990, appearance of newspapers improved with advanced printing technology. With easier access to technology, the Nepali newspapers started to adopt new technology after 1990.

Media academics state that as the investments in the media sector increased so did the arrival of new technology at a rapid pace. Post-1990 is also strongly characterized by competition—this competition being among the newspapers themselves and also against the presence and expansion of broadcast media, e.g., radio and television. This also marks the end of government monopoly over different forms of media. As more new and advanced printing technology increased, more graphical contents such as photographs and cartoons found space.

#### **4.2.9 Human Resource: Prior to and after 1990**

Participants unanimously expressed their views that after 1990, skilled human resources have begun to take charge inside the newsroom. When such people reached the decision-making position, the change began to surface gradually.

Media academics argue that after 1990 human resources have developed in the course of time. Currently there is a sense of confidence among the journalists that they can survive in this field, that it is becoming a full time profession. According to them, they are still in transition and gradually heading towards professionalism.

When a journalist cannot sustain in journalism for ten years then how can they be described as professionals? Professionalism also means helping the involved manpower in sustaining a journalist's career in the long run.

By the year 1990, one of the positive developments in newspaper journalism was initiation of journalism training and education in the country. Many students have had

good opportunities during their internships with media houses. Their knowledge and academic excellence was challenged by their senior media workers during the internship phase. Many journalists have left their job because of the clash of interest with owners and editors.

The owner or the editor has to don various roles. Many journalists would gather information, write, typeset, edit and also take the papers to the market themselves. Prior to 1990, the same person used to be publisher, editor, reporter and marketing manager. After 1990, the big newspapers have editors even for sectorial pages.

#### **4.2.10 Question of Professionalism**

In the early 1990s, the question of professionalism became a pressing issue for the newspapers in Nepal. The contributors of the FGDs discuss and try to explore many diverse attitudes and opinions on what professionalism meant in the years prior to 1990 and post-1990.

Journalists working for the dailies state that before 1990, journalists were dominated by political leaders and parties. They were not independent to be engaged in investigative or other kinds of specialized practice in order to collect exclusive news stories. Professional journalists argue that partisan leanings are low in big media houses in comparison to weeklies. Since the general public is sensitive, big newspapers cannot carry the agenda of one particular political party for long. In case of continuous propagation of a particular political campaign, a newspaper might lose its credibility.

Journalists working for the dailies that emerged after 1990 state that the newspapers in the post-1990 era ought to be commercialized. They view that without commercialization, the media cannot be sustained. Journalists do not feel secure in this profession. After their mid-career, journalists change their profession for reasons of security. Sometimes journalists serve as spokesperson of certain organizations instead of acting as professional journalists.

They argue that the Nepali media need yet more investment since the profession of journalism is still on the way to professionalism and it has yet to mature. There are

drawbacks of commercialism, but a professional editor can remove the flaws and uphold the credibility of the newspaper. The problem is that journalists still indulge in politics and journalism in a parallel manner. They view that a professional journalist needs to refrain from over commercialism. The need is to establish professionalism within the newsrooms.

Journalists working for big media houses that emerged after 1990 argue that prior to 1990, professionalism was absent in newspaper journalism. They argue that it seems that Nepali newspapers indulge in politics, journalism and business simultaneously. Many a time the journalists of that period crossed the limitations of journalism and served the political interests. In some specific contexts, political leaders used to invest in the newspapers. In some cases political activists joined journalism because of the frustration in politics.

Journalists working for big media houses argue that prior to 1990, journalism was a profession. But later it modified as an occupation. Earlier it was for ideology but now it is considered as a trade.

Academicians from disciplines other than mass communication state that barring some daily commercial newspapers, most newspapers are functioning as the mouthpiece of either the government or those of political parties. Professional journalists argue effectiveness of the newspapers has decreased. Even if an issue is raised 25<sup>th</sup> times, the impact is the same. There is confusion in news provided by the privately owned dailies. A case in point is the example of the news about the so-called billionaire Rashendra Bhattarai, the false claim of Anuja Baniya, the Real Juice episode and many others. They tried to manipulate the readers and created confusion. Newspapers lack investigative reporting as well as the culture of apology and rectifying mistakes. Many a time, they follow populism and indulge in sentiment.

Journalists working for national language papers other than Nepali lingua franca argue that in the aftermath of 1990, along with running newspapers, the publishers are making money out of other businesses by exerting the power of media they own. There is over-commercialism in the name of professionalism. There is a tendency to make money concealing news instead of publishing them. It seems that democracy is

not sufficient for pluralist and inclusive media environment. Thus, there is a hope that, with federalism, newspapers in multiple languages will be published.

The journalists working with big dailies argue that professionalism does not mean only providing or not providing salaries on time; this is just one of the many aspects. Professionalism means giving equal space to different ideologies, and avoiding all types of influences. No newspaper, in the changed context, could sustain with entirely partisan leaning. Thus professionalism is the call of the time; it should be maintained to survive in the market. However, contradictory views are also in existence, as some of the journalists working for the big media houses state that Nepali newspaper journalism is gradually shifting to business not towards professionalism. There are still some efforts in journalism to openly support some political parties.

Media owners are being benefited from their other business if not directly from the media institutions. Journalists working for the dailies state that the foundation of present-day journalism was laid during the Panchayat regime. According to them, the journalists also need to get adequate salary and basic facilities. To achieve that newspapers need to expand advertising market to be commercially successful as well in order to follow higher standard of professionalism. They need to stand on their feet in order to be independent. The working journalists view that the editors and journalists need to check hyper commercialism. At the same time, they stress that a newspaper needs to establish as a commercial entity as well in order to maintain professionalism. They argue that for the owner, commercialism could be an ideal. But for a journalist professionalism is crucial in order to maintain editorial freedom. The dailies are moving ahead in the business model. Professionalism, entrepreneurship and commercialism are the key factors that are playing the role to shape newspaper practices in aftermath of the political changes of 1990.

Professional journalists argue that after 1990, the leadership of newspapers shifted to the investors who run also other business enterprises. They invested in media to gain political influence that would be supportive for their entire business. Since, they aimed at political influence and power through media, editorial independence often gets jeopardized. The issue of editorial independence is one of the major challenges that the media sector is facing. Instead of devoting themselves to investigative journalism, the journalists who lead the media are compelled to act as public relations

officer for the investors. Specialization and beat reporting are the great assets of journalism that emerged after 1990. However, the practice of self-censorship on the basis of political ideology is still high. The formation of various groups by journalists on the basis of caste, ethnicity and other grounds has promoted self-censorship. The power of newspapers has been frequently misused and there are still political influences in the newspapers. The major challenge is to minimize the political and business influences.

The academics from disciplines other than mass communication state that layout, design and appearance of the current newspapers are attractive. Newspapers in post 1990 Nepal are glamorous.

The media academics argue that a quantitative change was seen in Nepali journalism with the introduction of democracy in 1951. However, suppression began with the Panchayat regime. There has been a debate of professionalism. Young journalists working for the dailies that emerged after 1990 argue that there was neither professionalism nor commercialism before 1990. The investors were government, political parties and political leaders. The purpose was disseminating their opinions and visions not running a business like present day. But the editor of the weeklies and senior journalists state that professionalism and political activism in the newspaper journalism are in coexistence since the Panchayat period. Professionalism was in existence even before 1990 along with the political journalism.

Online journalists, emerging as the alternative communicators, argue that in the aftermath of 1990 commercialism has been impeding the way for professionalism. They cite the examples of how the newspapers went mute when the news about certain events could have impaired the image of big advertisers.

Professionalism prior to 1990 was manifested by courageous and skilled editors who were committed to professionalism and were skilled in balancing the sources and subject matter. Media academics argue that the newspapers before 1990 were professional because they abided by the law of the land. In terms of institutionalization and remuneration professionalism in the newspaper journalism emerged in post-1990 Nepal. The professional journalists state that the foundation of

professional journalism was established before 1990. There are commercial interests after 1990, because of the market force, professionalism is the dominant trend.

Media academics state that dedication towards the profession; timeliness and following a proper working system are the different aspects of professionalism prior to 1990. Despite the unfavourable situation during Panchayat, some popular newspapers struggled hard and continued their publication, which is also a form of professionalism as they stood by their responsibility of informing people. Some of the editors of that time were noted for their fearlessness.

Media academics argue that it is useful to find out the reason behind the establishment of awards in the names of noted figures like Gopal Das, Madan Mani Dixit and others and their role in professionalism. Before 1990, nothing can be written against the King, but news criticizing ministers and government had appeared. It should be analysed whether there was professionalism in non-political news stories. Professionalism of that period was compatible with the partisan interests. English dailies had larger circulation in comparison to Nepali language dailies. *The Motherland* and *The Commoner* could be called RSS dailies, as their contents were dominated by RSS bulletins. The market of the newspapers was limited. *Matribhumi* and other Nepali weeklies were sold by hawkers on the streets of Kathmandu. However, these weeklies were not institutionalized. Transportation system and rate of literacy of the country need to be analysed to evaluate the landscape of newspapers at that time.

Professional journalists recall the editors who had professional attitude during Panchayat period and had issued standing instructions to the colleagues to criticize anyone but the King. They faced all sorts of threat as the consequence of being critical to the people in power.

Professional journalists argue that commercialization of newspapers had started before 1990 as some newspapers like *Bimarsha* was registered as a private limited company, which can also be marked as the beginning of institutional development of newspaper in the country. Obviously, there was a political mission, but the time marked the arrival of professionalism into newspaper industry.

Contrary to such view there exists parallel view point which claims that it is kind of irrational to claim that there was commercialism at the time when there was no freedom of expression and freedom of distribution at all even though the newspapers of that time were dedicated to informing people. Undoubtedly, newspapers then struggled hard to impart information, but after the restoration of democracy Nepali newspapers do not stand by public expectations.

Even today, some daily newspapers are being published by a single man who works as reporter and editor. Many newspapers are registered but they are run by the same individual. According to Press Council, such newspapers were found copying and pasting the contents from one another with similar pages. Weekly newspapers have fewer advertisements. Even though *Kantipur* sales more copies and has higher advertisements volume than others, *Gorkhapatra* pays more tax to government as per the record from two years back.

As the number of newspapers grew after the referendum and has seen exponential rise during 1990 movement, more people began to read newspapers to get informed about the ongoing movements. Subsequently, the foundation for commercialization of newspaper was laid before 1990 with the increment in circulation.

The editors of the weeklies state that their newspapers are free and fair. However, journalists working for dailies add that if they opt for opinion journalism, such weeklies should provide enough space for diverse range of opinion with adequate fairness. The editors argue that after 1990, increased circulation, advertisements and sponsored pages in the form of advertorials are the indicators that reflect the commercialism in newspapers.

The professional journalists argue that the role of the newspapers in creating and building opinion is also under scrutiny after 1990. Newspapers have been lobbying for high level appointments, hydropower projects and similar other projects and tenders. Newspapers, editors and journalists stand for business people and their agendas. Newspapers have become information manager and lobbyists and have not moved towards professionalism.



### **Comparison and Contrast: the State of Newspapers in Nepal in Different time frames**

The table below presents the differences between the newspaper landscape before and after 1990. It compares the state of the Nepali newspapers in post-takeover period and in the aftermath of 1990. The period between 1960 and 1990 is known for strained relationship between the government and the press whereas the Nepali newspapers after 1990 have emerged as an independent entity.

Table III: Comparison and Contrast of the State of Newspapers between 1960 and 1990, and post-1990 Nepal

S.N.	Between 1960 and 1990	After 1990
1.	Dominant trend: Newspaper journalism philanthropic works or political activism	Dominant trend: Newspaper as business enterprise
2.	Constitutional and legal provisions for restrictions	Constitutional and legal provisions for freedom
3.	Technologically primitive	Technologically advanced
4.	Dominant interest: Political publicity	Dominant interest: Business and commerce
5.	Small scale institutions with low level of capital investment	Big newspaper institutions with large capital investment
6.	Mainly the political message-laden contents	Diverse range of contents including the apolitical and socio-economic materials such as sports, environment, economics and others

(Field study, 2015)

Though, the partisan interests of political parties are still prevalent, the trend of professionalism is also on the rise. The political slant is not the dominant trend in the newspapers after 1990. Sources of news have been diversified and readership has increased. The impact of newspapers has increased, and layout and design are getting more attractive than before. Today's newspapers sell glamour, although the newspapers have contributed significantly in institutionalizing democracy and maintaining peace, law and order in Nepal.

#### 4.2.11 Conclusions

Professional journalists, academics and senior editors agree that the differences between the periods prior to 1990 and after 1990 need to be seen in five aspects. First, the emergence of corporate ownership. Earlier, media were conceived with small grants and but large investments were made in media sector after 1990. Second, the number. There were very few media earlier but now the number of newspapers has grown significantly. Third, diversity of contents. Before 1990 media were focused on political issues but now the content/issues have been diversified. Forth, changes occurred in information and technology. Printed technology has been changed from letter-press to off-set press. Fifth, socio-economic changes in the Nepali society. Previously, people depended on the information provided by journalists but now-a-days they share or receive information disseminated by themselves with the help of digital devices, most commonly by the use of internet or World Wide Web.

### 4.3 Case Studies

#### 4.3.1 A weekly as a Campaigner for the Party

*Samyukta Prayas* was born with the political activities of Dr. K.I. Singh in post-1951 Nepal. Conceived with the registration number 78 at Kathmandu Magistrate Office, the weekly appeared as a mirror to reflecting Dr. Singh's activities. Gautam (2063 BS) states that *Samyukta Prayaas* hit the market on June 16, 1956 with the Party decision to make it its official mouth piece. It assumed its role as a tool of public communication for Dr. Singh's party. From the second year after its inception and until the last days in 1960, Shibhahar Singh Pagal was its editor and publisher (p.228). Despite its overtly political slant *Samyukta Prayas* was the first newspaper to introduce cartoons in the country in 1950s (Aryal, 2001, p.22).

Performing its obvious duty, the weekly informed that a party named Samyukta Prajatantra Party [United Democracy Party] under the leadership of Dr. K.I. Singh was inaugurated on October, 23 1955 (*Sanyukta Prayas*, February 14, 1957). It tried to uphold and project his image. For example, on July 21, 1957 issue out of total 6 news stories in its front page 4 stories carried the message lobbying to appoint him as the new Prime Minister of the country. The king had then already granted the

audience to Dr. Singh and had consultation for the consensus to form a new government.

Apart from the publicity effort for Dr. Singh *Samyukta Prayas* weekly indulged in rhetoric. For most of time it was engaged in defaming its political opponents. The newspaper was a platform for Samyukta Praja Party to condemn the negative news carried out in other newspapers such as *Diyalo* daily allegiance with NC. It retorted that NC is not the sole agency of democracy and Nepali people have already suffered its bad governance (*Samyukta Prayas*, July 19, 1957). It also accused that the NC has chosen the path of disaster (*Samyukta Prayas*, July 21, 1957). To carve a favourable political atmosphere in order to appoint Dr. Singh as the Prime Minister, it continued criticizing NC and appeasing the king. It further reiterated that the king's step to dissolve the government led by Tanka Prasan Acharya, on July 14, 1957, was essential to improve the situation (*Samyukta Prayas*, July 24, 1957). Although it was a weekly, in order to convey the news about his meeting with the king the other night at 10:00 pm, *Samyukta Prayas* brought extra issue three days ahead of its schedule. It praised Dr. Singh saying that he deserved to be the Prime Minister because he is a tested leader and has a formidable personality (*Samyukta Prayas*, July 25, 1957).

Although Dr. Singh manipulated a weekly newspaper to climb over the post of Prime Minister, he however, could not maintain his reputation as a press-friendly leader. Pageni (2005, p. 403), analysing the achievements of his 110-days, notes that along with other reforms, a Press Commission was formed during his tenure for the first time in Nepal. However, his government evoked some of the prominent newspapers and sanctioned house arrest for the editors for publishing news critical to the government. Pageni (2005, p.375) states that Singh government intolerant towards the press and in turn press also reacted offensively against him. To sum up, the entire press of that time was against Dr. Singh except for *Samyukta Prayas*.

The first Press Commission was formed under the chairmanship of Surendra Raj Sharma during the Singh Government. However, the government was dissolved in a week after the formation of the Commission. Later the chair was replaced by a former judge.

King Mahendra appointed him Prime Minister on July 26, 1957 and it was dissolved on 14th November of the same year. *Samyukta Prayas* was a publicity machinery and a tool of public relations for Dr. Singh during his political upheavals. He used it to mobilize, campaigning and inciting agitation for Samyukta Prajatantra Party.

#### **4.3.2 Effect of Political Restrictions over Newspapers After 1960**

*Haalkhabar* daily, started by its publisher Lekh Raj Satyal and the editor Bindu Kant Pyakurel, covered the transition period of post-1950. Introducing the daily as an independent, it states in its first issue (*Haalkhabar*, November 13, 1956). "Real awareness has occurred and an organized public opinion is yet to be formed in the country." The four-page-newspaper with the price of 5 Pice per copy states in its first editorial that its main objective was to help to raise public awareness in order to create a healthy and organized public opinion. The editorial mentioned that the interest of the nation, independence and fearlessness were the directive principles of *Haalkhabar*.

*Haalkhabar* used to publish advertisements since the day of its inception. There were advertisements of films in its early years and gradually it started to attract other kinds of advertising. Shrestha (2017 BS, p.6) states that after the dawn of democracy newspapers started to depend on advertisings. According to him, newspapers began to publish advertisements of film theatres and government offices from 1955-56 and 1960-61 respectively. He mentions that in a two-page daily, three-fourth part of one page used to fill in with cinema advertisement.

Nepal (2070 BS, p.27) mentions that youths made money from the street-sales of *Haalkhabar* in Kathmandu. He recalls that *Haalkhabar* was a popular daily and it had higher sales in comparison to another major daily of that time, *Swatantra Samachar*. He writes that *Haalkhabar* used to comment in sarcastic style on socio-political situation. He mentions that in terms of principle and ownership it was considered close to the Palace.

On the one hand, the government formed the first press commission, on the other a couple of newspapers faced harassment, including the closure after being unable to pay a heavy penalty in the name of cash deposit. *Haalkhabar* as an independent daily

suffered a lot since its inception. When the multiparty system was terminated in December 1960, the degree of harassment escalated. By the early days of 1963, the newspaper folded forever.

Devkota (2056 BS,p.338) states that editor Sharma was summoned by Kathmandu Magistrate office on March 24, 1963 and asked for clarification regarding a write up entitled *Daibgya-darshan* [An encounter with the supreme god] under the regular column *Hasnu hunchha* [Do you laugh?] published on March 22, two days earlier. Among the several questions, one query was to clarify the meaning of *Terha-sute batti* and *Mahadev* [a ritual cotton piece prepared to be burnt and the supreme god]. He answered that it was a straight writing and no hidden meaning was implied. The officer expressed his suspicion that 13-ply cotton indicates the 13-point programmes released by the His Majesty and *Mahadev* implies His Majesty himself. The editor denied the speculations made by the officer.

After hours of interrogation, he was transferred to Kathmandu District Police Office and taken in the custody with handcuff. He was deprived of pen, dairy and any kind of reading materials during the custody. He was again taken to the Magistrate office on March 28, 1963 and faced more questions. After the interrogation, on the same day, he was released on bail. He was on bail until May 15, 1963, however, thereafter due to various obstacles, including financial constraints, *Haalkhabar* could not continue.

#### **4.3.3 An Editor of Panchayat Period**

Madan Mani Dixit represents the period prior to 1961 to the 1990 in Nepali newspaper journalism. He started his career as the editorial staff of *Haalkhabar* in 1957. At that time readers were limited and the circulation of newspapers was confined within the elite circle of Kathmandu valley.

Dixit, as editor and publisher, started his own newspaper *Samikshya* weekly on May 12, 1960. He reveals that he had asked the then Prime Minister B.P. Koirala for economic support and the PM assured him to provide Rs. 600 per month for six months as government support. The first issue of *Samikshya* weekly stated through the publisher's note that there is an urgency to start an immediate task in order to organize the public opinion and to enhance the political awareness in the general

public. However, as the note states, the weeklies would perform the task effectively rather than the daily newspapers in an organized way.

Latter, for a short time period, from July 18, 1965, he ran the newspaper as a daily, however, only to return as a weekly. Baral (1975, pp.176-177) states, in the 1970s, three weeklies—*Naya Sandesh*, *Matribhumi* and *Samikshya*—topped the list of weeklies in respect of circulation. He mentions that *Samiksha* as a political paper had a distinct identity of its own. He estimated that these papers including a few other weeklies such as *Rashtrapukar* weekly, *Arati* and *Pratidhwani* were apparently in a better position to survive the frequency of mortality.

Nepal (2070 BS, p.28) states that *Samikshya* ran as a daily for some time and it was known as a major weekly that represented leftist ideology.

Aryal (2013, p.107) argues that *Samikshya weekly*, now a history, was a mouthpiece of a wing of the communist party of Nepal that was close to the then USSR. It used to tag *Pra* before mentioning the banned party's name and contributed to publicize the party's view point in public. For instance, Aryal (2013, pp.107-108) states that a news story, published in the front page, was related to the general amnesty for the political prisoners granted by King Birendra. *Samikshya*, in this regard, quoted Bishnu Bahadur Manandhar as the General Secretary of the Communist Party and his statement which said that there was still a doubt on the fairness of the referendum (*Samikshya*, April 14, 1980). The weekly put the name of the same party in a news headline saying that a mass meeting was held. It was the reporting of a mass meeting organized by the *Pra*-Nepali Communist Party in eastern Nepal (*Samikshya*, April 25, 1980).

After 1961, the government closed avenues for critical views. In such a restricted situation, Dixit criticized Tulsi Giri's statement about the Panchayat system. Giri time and again stated that besides two dominating ideas of the world politics, capitalism and socialism, the Panchayat had created a new political ideology. When Dixit criticized his rhetoric, *Samikshya* suffered repressive measures of the state.

He was arrested 40 times by Bagmati Zonal Administrator office and 50 times by Kathmandu District Administration Office during this career. He was taken to the jail

three times. Yet he remained in the profession, as he states, because of commitment to reveal truth in the society.

As per the notion of professional journalism Dixit tried to play the role of surveillance by exposing the wrong doings of the people in power. From April 12 to April 27, 1961 he published three news stories regarding the substandard works in the construction of Hetauda-Kathmandu ropeway by the US contractor Riblet Company. Based on his writings, the Kathmandu Magistrate asked him to present the evidences behind the news stories that he had published. Subsequently, on May 29, after one month, the Magistrate, in accordance with the Press and Publication Act, 2009 (1952), banned *Samikshya*. Section 36 of Press and Publication Act, 2009 (1952) states that the government may, in the public interest, withhold any news, comment and publication. The rationale for the ban, as mentioned in the notice, was that the weekly had published criticism against public welfare time and again, and failed to present evidence as per the written commitment before the Magistrate in some cases (Devkota, 2051 BS, p. 497).

After the ban-notice, the Magistrate office issued a warrant against Dixit and police undertook search operation twice at his residence (Devkota, 2051 BS, p. 497). Then he was arrested on September 20, 1961 and was kept at municipal police station for three weeks without charge and warrant. Then the Kathmandu Magistrate sent him to Nakhhu jail under the Security Law. He was released on February 18, 1962 (Devkota, 2051 BS, p.498).

On first of May 1962, the Home Ministry removed the ban over *Samikshya*, and its publication resumed.

Life of Madan Mani Dixit as a journalist of Nepal prior to 1990 demonstrates an example of a working journalist living on the earning of writing and journalism. His life shows that the profession of journalism was full of struggle prior to 1990. Political restrictions and the hardship created by the state ideology of mass society theory, was put to an end in 1990. But, even today, as observed by Dixit, the prejudices have resurfaced over the newspaper journalism in Nepal. He states that no personal interest should prevail in writings. His lesson is that no one can degrade the dignity of a journalist if he or she strongly stands in favour of truth.

A different dimension of his life is that at a difficult juncture he adopted the strategy for survival. His editorial stand before 1960 and editorials after the king's move shows his political deviation. The editorial of the first issue of *Samikshya* states that the parliamentary system is appropriate one to Nepal and no question can be raised in this regard. It states that we need to pave the straight, easy and quick way to nation building and democratic development with pragmatic application under the system.

After the royal takeover, *Samikshya* was stopped for one week. On the fourteenth day of the takeover, it re-appeared in the market with a banner headline that read, "*Shree panch maharajadhirajbata janatalai biswaspurna aaswasn* [King's confident assurance to people]." Dixit, after the king's takeover, wrote that no matter what would be the consequence of *Push Ek* in near or remote future, its immediate success and rationale have been proved by the nationwide unchallenged welcome by the people. One of the two sub-headlines of the main news was, "*Congressko patanko karan Shakti lipsa* [Power greed is the cause of the downfall of Congress]. It published the banner news with the editor Dixit's own byline. However, in the course of time, before and after the referendum *Samikshya* stood against *Panchayat*.

After two decades of emergence of Panchyat rule, *Samikshya* expressed grievance against the verdict of the referendum. He published double décor news in front page: The king's declaration is defeated, the capital became upset, discrimination won. The news analysis commented that the gateway opened by the declaration is closed. It argued that the will for the multiparty was defeated by the abuse of the state power (*Samikshya*, May 16, 1980).

Nepal (2070 BS, p. 28) states that after 1960, Dixit had high level of influence over the power centres of the establishment.

English newspaper enjoyed relatively more freedom than did their vernaculars counterparts. Journalists involved in government owned English paper enjoyed relatively greater liberty and were allowed to be critical except for few critical political issues. The administration did not care when *The Commoner* published an editorial that used a proverb, "every drunkard is an emperor". But the Magistrate's office took action against the editor of *Samikshya* when he published an excerpt from the same piece of writing. On May 20, 1960, *Samikshya* published an editorial from



*The Commoner* under the column *Sahayogiharuko Bichar* [Others' point of view]. Devkota (2051 BS, p. 488) states that the editorial was about alcohol and there was a sentence which the Kathmandu Magistrate found objectionable. However, it was literal translation from *The Commoner's* editorial. The sentence read, "Every drunkard is an emperor." Consequently on June 5, 1960, Dixit gave clarification at the Magistrate office that his intention was not to degrade Nepal's king and the sentence was translated from an English daily (Devkota, 2051BS, p.489).

In fact, Nepali language-newspapers had much more restriction compared to the English publications. In this context, Nepal (2070 BS, p.195) also states that *Gorakhapatra* had more responsibilities and more restrictions imposed over it, in comparison to its sister publication *The Rising Nepal*. The editors of *The Rising Nepal* used to get more editorial freedom than their contemporaries in *Gorakhapatra*.

#### **4.3.4 Advertising is Mightier than Reading Materials**

International Media Network Nepal (Pvt) Ltd started its four pager weekender amidst a severe challenge in the advertising market. On February 8, 2004 *The Himalayan Times Perspective* was launched with the publisher's note in the front page that reads: We are now the first newspaper to introduce a pink edge in Nepal, a colour which has come to be associated with decision-makers the world over.

Started in November 2001, *The Himalayan Times* gained quick recognition within a couple of years and emerged as the strong rival of *The Kathmandu Post*. By the end of 2003, *The Himalayan Times* and *The Kathmandu Post* were the two English language newspapers that were influential among English speaking non-Nepali community in Kathmandu along with Nepali English readers. Soon, *The Himalayan Times* claimed itself as the largest selling English broadsheet in Nepal, asserting that it had been a late entry into the Nepali newspaper market but it had gained grounds due to high standard of journalism and its broad appeal to the mass. In fact its low price, two rupees as against four rupees for other dailies, had also contributed to its rapid growth.

The smooth journey of *The Himalayan Times* suddenly faced an adverse turn when it published a controversial news on the birth place of Buddha based on a seminar held in Bhuwaneswar, India. On November 15, 2003 *THT* published an anchor-news

entitled "Scholars argue Buddha was born in Orissa." The lead was as follows: Was Lord Buddha born in Orissa and not in Lumbini, as Nepal has always believed?

The news created a ferocious furore among the readers. Kantipur and Kamana Publications grabbed the opportunity to hit at *THT* and its sister publication *Annapurna Post*. On January 24, 2003, amidst the cut-throat competition among the big newspapers, *THT* reduced its price unbelievably at one rupee. In this backdrop, Kantipur and Kamana publications in the cover of Nepal Media Society fuelled the reaction over the news on Buddha's birthplace. On January 29, 2004, the Society issued a full-page advertisement in *Kantipur*, *The Kathmandu Post* and *Nepal Samacharpatra* against *THT* and *Annapurna Post*.

Nepal Media Society also raised the issue of foreign direct investment (FDI) in connection with the functioning of *THT* and the *Annapurna Post*. The then chairperson of NMS Pushkarlal Shrestha retorted that the Society would find the investment source of *THT* and *Annapurna Post* (*The Himalayan Times*, February 2, 2004). NMS alleged that *THT* and *Annapurna Post* were founded by FDI. It was the time when the necessity of a coherent policy on foreign investment in the Nepali media was realized.

After two-month-long difficulties including violent protest and blockade on sales of *THT* and *Aannapuran Post*, International Media Network Nepal (Pvt) Ltd started *The Himalayan Times Perspective* with an attempt to control damage. *THT* had lagged significantly in the advertising market during the period. Thus the management started *THT Perspective* venture to cope with the situation.

The editorial team of *THT Perspective* was strictly instructed that the Nepali entrepreneurs, especially of the hill origin, should be given coverage. The publication did not give coverage for *Marwari* and entrepreneurs of *Madheshi* origin in its initial days. Another policy decision, in this regard, was to provide coverage for the entrepreneurs who had invested not less than Rs. 10 to 20 millions. The profile stories used to be judged in terms of the investment level of the company belonging to the interviewee. Conversation with one of the then reporter of *THT Perspective*, Deepak Aryal reveals that the matters used to be rejected if the interviewee belonged to a relatively small company. The first issue of *THT Perspective* appeared with profile

interviews of the CEO of a multinational bank and the sales and marketing director of a cigarette industry. The subsequent issues provided such coverage in more comprehensive and attractive manner. Presentation style of the materials went on improving.

*THT Perspective* itself was an attempt to rebuild the publication's image within the country, especially among business people. The publisher started its public relations campaign effectively among the national enterprisers. It started publishing material embedded in attractive frames to all its interviewees as souvenir.

*THT Perspective* venture gained speed. It began a column "CEO says" from its third issue, February 22, 2004. The first guest was a CEO of a bank. Another column dedicated to the entrepreneurs was "Himalayan Achiever". *THT Perspective's* unique approach proved to be beneficial to the company in terms of advertising. For instance, on February 29 there was a small piece entitled "Another value addition at Standard Chartered" in the first page of the *Perspective* and a quarter page advertisement of the same bank on the last page.

*THT Perspective* was an outcome of response to the crisis of a business company. It expanded the reach of the *THT*. Eventually, it generated advertising and served the commercial interest of the publishers.

#### **4.3.5 Advertisers Who Rule Newspapers**

On January 5, 2011, the main news of *Kantipur daily* exposed a fraud against the revenue. The headline read: *Lekha parikshak nai kar chhima* [The auditors in tax fraud]. After four days, on January 9, again it provided the space of main news for the same issue, with the headline reading: *Nakkali bilbata arabaun rajaswa chhali* [Tax fraud in billions with forged bills]. The news revealed that a number of reputed business houses of the country were involved in fraud against revenue in relation to cement, rod, construction works, and hydropower plants. However, the news intriguingly kept mum on the identity of the defaulters.

On January 31, 2011, the same daily again covered the same issue as the main news that read: *Nakkali bilbat rajawsa chhali* [Fraud against revenue with forged bills]. The

news revealed that, altogether 15 companies were involved in Rs. 800 millions fraud against tax revenue. However, this news was also mute on the identity of the defaulters and the fraud amounts by the individuals.

Later, on March 4, 2011, with the submission of a detailed report by the investigation committee coordinated by Laxman Aryal, Deputy Director of Inland Revenue Department Value Added Tax (VAT), the scam came to the public discourse to a greater extent. The investigation report presented the fact that some 45 firms involved in import and reselling of vehicles, construction businesses, construction industries, electronic goods manufacturers, sales agents of multinational companies, and local importers were found to be involved in presenting fake VAT bills.

However, despite being found to be involved in fake VAT bill racketing, Nepal's top business houses managed to hide the information inconvenient to them in the major dailies, including both the dailies belonging to Kantipur Publications. Subsequently, in a very short span of time, as it was started to perceive as Nepal's number one daily, *Kantipur* began to try its best to suppress news involving some of the reputed business persons who were the owners of companies with huge advertising budgets.

Even the top government officials were supportive of the tax defaulter business tycoons to hide their names in the public domain. Consequently, the Finance Ministry refused to disclose the list of VAT defaulters even before the parliament's Public Accounts Committee citing defaulters' right to confidentiality. It told the Public Accounts Committee that it was unable to furnish the details as the VAT and Income Tax Act required it to maintain secrecy and would disclose such details only to designated officials. The major dailies, including the newspapers belonging to Kantipur Publications, not only kept quiet regarding the names of the defaulters, rather tried to defend some of the big defaulters.

For instance, on April 4, 2011, *Kantipur* published an article written by Binod Chaudhary, a UML lawmaker, in an attempt to tone up his image. The headline was: *Rajneeti, sattako khel ra mero sandarbha* [Politics, Game of Power and My Context]. Though, all the major dailies made concerted efforts at hiding his name in the VAT scam, the article came as his defence.

Influential among political forces, Chaudhary has been a source of advertising for the big media houses in Nepal. Forbes ([forbes.com/profile/](http://forbes.com/profile/), 2015) mentions that Binod Chaudhary and family, including his two younger brothers, as owning real time net worth US \$ 1.34 billion as of April 2015. It acknowledges that Chaudhary controls the Cinnovation and Chaudhary Group, built most of his fortune overseas and is Nepal's sole billionaire. His biggest asset is a controlling stake in Nepal's Nabil Bank, but CG's better known brands are its *Wai Wai* instant noodles and Nepal Ice beer. These days Chaudhary, whose ancestors hailed from India, is busy expanding his portfolio of hotels, which includes a long-standing joint venture with the Taj hotels chain. According to Forbes the group recently acquired a 51 per cent stake in India's Fern hotel chain and is building new hotels there as well as in Africa and Dubai. Back in Nepal, Chaudhary's recent investments include telecom and hydropower.

Columnist Deepak Thapa, on April 14, 2011, stated that none of the major newspapers, including *The Kathmandu Post*, dared print the list of VAT scammers, seemingly out of fear of offending potential advertisers as it features a veritable who's who of Nepali business (*The Kathmandu Post*, April 14, 2011). Mentioning that Shankaer Lal Golyan and Binod Chaudhary, were among the owners of companies with the highest amounts involved in the fake VAT bills scam, he argued that since the news were absent in the mainstream newspapers, one has to rely on non-conventional sources such as news portals and blogs to find out who has been duping the country at will.

Indeed, on October 30, 2011, the Finance Ministry was compelled to make the complete list public as per the directives issued by National Information Commission based on the right to information petition filed by a NGO Advocacy Forum. The report, obtained by the Forum, revealed involvement of some of the country's leading business houses and firms in the VAT scam.

Consequently, it became public that the report had listed names of 385 firms that issued fake VAT bills, their Permanent Account Numbers and names of companies that used the bills issued by such firms. The report also disclosed 35 companies that used fake bills and their PAN numbers. It included names of 10 companies that were referred to the authorities concerned with investigation.

The next day, *Kantipur* and its sister publication *The Kathmandu Post* published anchor news based on the report with the headline: *Nakkali VAT bil ka-kasaka* [Those responsible for fake VAT bills]. The news revealed the names of some of the responsible companies. However, on the next day, on the first day of November, *Kantipur* published another news story which reads: *VAT chhalney jogiya, kar chhalneylai karbahi* [VAT defaulters are safe, action against tax defaulters]. The news argued that the report has become old and only the suspects were defamed. The news also argued that real VAT defaulters were liberated. The next day, it published another related news with the headline: *VAT nachhaleka pani muchhiye* [Non-defaulters of VAT also implicated].

None of the news in this series mentioned the name of any tax defaulter except that of the contractor Chaina Gejau Water and Power Group Company of Chameliya Hydropower Project and Pepsi. It was evident that one of the news criteria of *Kantipur* was the protection of the advertisers. The names of two companies were revealed, obviously, because the newspaper did not see the prospects of obtaining advertisement from them in the near future.

#### **4.3.6 Conversion for Survival**

Kantipur Publications launched its first magazine in September-October of 1997 targeting youths with the name *Sarvottam*. One of the senior editorial staffs of the magazine, Subash Dhakal recalls, "When the management received the information that *Yuva Manch* of Gorakhapatra Publications has hit in the market with high circulation, our Publications got all set to start a youth magazine." He states that it was started as mass based magazine.

However, it could not attract the advertising market, the management dropped *Sarvottam*, and started *Sarvottam-Nari*. The new magazine was started with a different format, specialized but general consumer magazine. While the editorial staffs of *Sarvottam* were involved in preparation of the next issue, they were informed by the management that they should now be prepared to bring another magazine instead of existing one.

First issue of *Sarvottam-Nari* came in the market in October-November 2002. The last issue of *Sarvottam* which was published in July-August 2002 had not contained any commercial advertising except a few in-house advertising materials. Contrary to the last issue of *Sarvottam*, the first issue of *Sarvottam-Nari* contained nearly 22 pages of advertising.

Size of *Sarvottam* was of around 48 pages excluding the cover pages. But, *Sarvottam Nari* was started with around 100 pages. These days it appears with around 150 pages. Subash Dakal, the editor estimates that its advertising revenue goes up to Rs. 6 million per annum.

Cosmetics are a major expenditure outlet mainly for urban women and the market is expanding with the continuous growth of middle class. Advertising of cosmetic products are being designed to alter women's attitudes towards cosmetics, encouraging them to buy more products.

The cosmetic market in Nepal features products of around 80 cosmetics brands. Approximately, 80 per cent of the cosmetic products sold in Nepal currently are imported from India. They are good source of advertising in Nepal. Dabur Nepal and Unilever Nepal are considered as major sources of advertising in the Nepali media. Both are well known producers of personal care products of women. Nepal has annually Rs. 800 million market size in the market of fairness creams in urban areas only. Apart from fairness creams there are numerous cosmetics products in the market. Shambhoo Guragai, a professional of media marketing with more than two decades of experience, states that the size of the cosmetics advertising in the country is worth of Rs. 50 to 60 million per annum.

Kantipur Publications became successful to grab the advertising market with conversion of a youth magazine into women magazine. The magazine is driven by the market. Between April and October 2014 spread over six issues of *Sarvottam-Nari*, as much as 43 per cent of the total space was occupied by advertisings and 16 per cent of the total space was covered by promotional matters. Rest of the space, 41 per cent of the entire space available in the magazine during six months was allocated to the editorial content.

*Sarvottam-Nari* monthly appeared as a general consumer magazine as a substitute of *Sarvottam*. Consumer magazines are those directed to the consumers. They may be of general interest or specialized and they often follow trends. *Sarvottam-Nari* is also a magazine that can be acquired by anyone, through a subscription or a single-copy purchase or by obtaining a free copy. These magazines are generally shelved at the corner newsstand or local bookstore. It is targeted to middle class women.

These publications are called consumer magazines because readers can buy the products and services that are advertised in their pages. Dominick (1999, p.131) states that one noticeable trend in the content of consumer magazine is the movement away from broad, general appeal to the more specialized.

### **Nepali Newspapers: Struggle for Survival after 1960 and State of Commercialism after 1990**

The table presents some typical cases, their causes and consequences in the history of newspaper journalism. The attributes show that after the king's take-over Nepali newspapers entered into the age of struggle against the deprivation of civil and political rights. It also shows the struggle of the newspapers in Panchayat period. It also demonstrates the transformation of newspapers from small-scale, nearly philanthropic and political mission-oriented journalism to the large-scale, market-based or advertisement-dependent journalism.



Table IV: Attributes from case studies and resultants

S.N.	Title of case studies	Attributes	Resultants
1.	A weekly as a campaigner for the Party	Samyukta Praja Party of Dr. K.I. Singh started a weekly newspaper to gear up its political campaign.	The newspaper demonstrated overtly partisan attitude.
2.	Effects of political restrictions on newspapers after 1960	Restrictions over civil and political rights, including arrest of the editor, resulting in difficult circumstance to run a newspaper.	Ultimately the newspaper could not survive because of political suppression.
3.	An editor of Panchayat period	Struggle for survival of a weekly newspaper amidst various forms of political suppression after the take-over period in the 1960s.	The editor of a weekly continued his paper amidst ban, frequent arrest and other kinds of harassment by the administration.
4.	Advertising is mightier than reading materials	Cultivation of advertisement by providing prime importance and prominence to the advertisers and business people with the application of the skills of public relations.	A daily newspaper which faced severe financial crisis revived its position.
5.	Advertisers who rule newspapers	Almost all major dailies suppressed the news regarding financial malpractices committed by powerful advertisers.	Authentic news about the financial discrepancies committed by business group was suppressed.
6.	Conversion for survival	A publication house converted its youth magazine to women magazine in order to grab advertisements.	The converted model of magazine gathered adequate amount of advertisements.

(Field study, 2015)

#### 4.4 Content Analysis

Three newspapers—two from prior to 1990 and one from post-1990 Nepal—have been selected to study their presentation of the news and other reading materials. *Matribhumi* and *Rashtrapukar* were two weeklies with an allegiance to the Communist Parties and NC respectively. *Kantipur* daily is selected to demonstrate the state of content diversity and example of non-partisan newspapers in post-1990 Nepal. Front-page news published in three popular newspapers in post-referendum period, during the pro-democracy movement and in the aftermath of the political changes of 1990 demonstrates a clear distinction between the content of the newspapers before and after 1990. These three newspapers represent the newspapers from different political environment.

Besides the aforesaid three newspapers, other weekly newspapers such as *Jwala* of 15 October 1981 and 28 July 1983 as well as *Yugdhara* of 3 September 1983, 31 March 1984 and 28 April 1984 were selected to examine the state of partisan leanings. These emblematic issues present examples of anti-Panchayat rhetorics. They present reading materials in favour of the left movement.

##### 4.4.1 A Weekly during Panchayat

Front page news and editorials of eight consecutive issues of *Rashtrapukar* weekly during May and July of 1979, shows that the weekly was a major tool for the political communication of B.P. Koirala, the President of Nepali Congress.

On May 24, it placed banner headline, which read, “*Shree panch maharajadhiraj Birendra jindabad [Long live His Majesty King Birendra]*.” Then it placed a two-column news with a portrait of the king that read, “*Janamat sangrahaiko nimti sahi ghosana [Royal proclamation for the referendum]*.” It also placed a five-column headline, “*B.P. dwara shree panchma kritagyata gyapan [Gratefulness to the king by B.P.]*.” The news was under the byline of editor Dahal himself.

Of the total news published in the two month, between May 24 and July 12 of 1979, *Rashtrapukar* carried, altogether 39 news in the front page. Front page analyses of *Rashtrapukar* of May 24 and 31; and June 7, 14, 21 and 28; as well as July 5 and 12

reveal that out of the 39 published news, as many as 10, that is, around 26 per cent were exclusively about B.P. Koirala, his activities and his views. The newspaper appeared every Thursday. Coincidentally, May 24, the day of the king's announcement of referendum was Thursday. Dahal, the editor, recalls that after the announcement, he went to the residence of Koirala to get acquainted with his views and reached office in order to incorporate that big news in the same day's issue. Subsequently, in the aftermath of the announcement of the referendum, *Rashtrapukar* was fully involved in the publicity of multiparty system. On June 7, it placed a notice in the front page for the readers. The notice says that the readers who wished to send articles on referendum needed to be confined within 200 words. Because the king had given freedom of expression temporarily, newspapers were receiving a number of such articles in favour of multiparty system.

#### **4.4.2 Role of Weekly during Pro-Democracy Movement 1990**

*Matribhumi* weekly, published and edited by Govinda Biyogi, another popular weekly of post-1990 era, was a vehicle for leftist politics in the country. It was overtly allegiant to Communist parties.

Of the total 24 news published in one month, between February 27 and March 20 of 1990, 23 news items were about the people's movement jointly organized by the Left Alliance and NC. Analyses of the front pages of *Matribhumi* of February 27, March 6, March 13 and March 20 reveals that *Matribhumi*, which appeared every Tuesday, used to put double decker headline for the main news. The headline for its February 27 read: "*Pratek ahwaan abhutpurwa safalatatira: bandukko bharma janaandolan dabdain* [Every appeal toward unprecedented success: Guns cannot suppress popular movement]. All of its news were fuel for the anti-Panchayat movement. One of the editorials, out of its two editorials on that issue, made a recommendation for the establishment of multiparty system that read, "*Itihas nirmanko sanghrsa* [Struggle for the making of history].

On March 6, its main news, spread over five columns was, "*Janashaktiko agadi bandukako Shakti nistej: Janaandolan ghar-ghar ra kuna-kapchama* [Power of gun defeated before people's power: People's movement at every household and corner]. The five-column newspaper looked like the publicity material for the ongoing

movement against Panchayat. Editorial was again in favour of multiparty system, whose headline was, “*Aab bikalpa chhaina* [No alternative now]”.

On March 13, its headline was, “*Janaandolan bhaadan shadayantratmak prachar shuru: Aab janabhawana dabaun nasakine* [Propaganda initiated to defeat movement: Now it is impossible to suppress peoples will].” One of its front page news was a reminder for the next day's general strike as part of the ongoing movement. Editorial was again for the multiparty system, that read, “*Bahudalko pakshama janamat mukharit* [People for multiparty system].”

On March 20, *Matribhumi* had in the headline of its main news: “*Chait bis gateko janaekata dibasko bhabya tayari: Aandolan aagragatima* [Grand preparation for Chait 20 people's solidarity day: Movement is in full speed].” Its editorial was about the political prisoners that read, “*Sampurna bandiko rihai aabasyak* [Necessity of release of all prisoners].”

#### **4.4.3 Advent of Privately Owned Broadsheet Daily**

*Kantipur* positioned itself as a newspaper different from the *Gorakhapatra* in terms of informal news, pluralistic approach in covering politics and increment of datelines from out of the Kathmandu valley. Before the advent of *Kantipur*, the broadsheet dailies of that time including *Gorakhapatra* and *The Rising Nepal* had relied on the formal and ceremonial news supplied by RSS.

Between February 18 and March 19, 1993, during the first one month of its inception, *Kantipur* published 17 news every day on its front page on average. Content analysis of front page news during the period reveals that out of the 17 news stories, as many as 7.5 news were published with Kathmandu valley dateline (Anex VI). On an average only 1 news story used to be published with the dateline outside the Kathmandu valley. As many as 3 news stories, on an average, used to be published on domestic political issues. The analysis reveals that on an average 6 news stories used to be presented on the domestic issues other than politics. The examination of the number of quotes placed in different news stories on the front page demonstrates that the view-point of the ruling party was given slightly less space than that of the

opposition political figures. On an average, the quotes from the ruling and opposition political figures were 3 and 3.5 respectively every day.

On February 18, 1993, on the front page of its first issue *Kantipur* published a note stating healthy debate and engagement between the ruling and opposition parties as essential. The note entitled *Bhabisyako Swagatama* [Welcoming days to come], expressed commitment to enhance parliamentary system and healthy competition. The first issue published a portrait photo of pro-people movement of 1990. The newspapers projected its distinct image from its very first issue in terms of informal news. The first issue incorporated an anchor news entitled *Sundarijalma bleaching powder: Sthhaniya kshetra prabhabit* [Bleaching powder in Sundarijal: Local area affected].

On March 6, 1993 the main news in *Kantipur* was on the opposition's protest. It published a photograph that demonstrated a face-to-face encounter with Madan Bhandary, the General Secretary of CPN (UML) and the Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. *Kantipur* reflected the political turmoil on front page with three news items about the protest, parliament boycott and sit-in at the parliament. On the same day, *Gorakhapta's* main news was about the statement of the home minister, who says there was no restriction on demonstrations organized in peaceful manner.

On March 4, 1993 *Kantipur* mentions the name of both the ruling and main opposition parties. The headline tells that NC and UML could not seat for the talk. The news states that in the National Assembly, the treaty act was amended by the majority and the opposition was defeated. Another news spreads over three columns is based on the speech made by the chief opposition leader, Man Mohan Adhikary, in the House of Representatives. He says that his party is making an effort to resolve Tanakpur issue by two-thirds majority.

On March 7, 1993 *Gorakhapta* did not provide any space for the opposition's activities, whereas *Kantipur* published a news item on the preparation of general strike. Despite the news on cadres meet, it published advance news on the left front's upcoming meet the press.

On March 15, 1993, *Kantipur* published a portrait with the caption, "*Upatyaka bandko yo drisya*" [This scene of valley strike]. It placed a two-column main news headlined "*Upatyaka band shantipurba sampanna*" [Valley strike ends peacefully]. The news quotes the coordinator of the *Upatyaka sangharsha samiti* [Valley struggle committee] saying the strike was a real success.

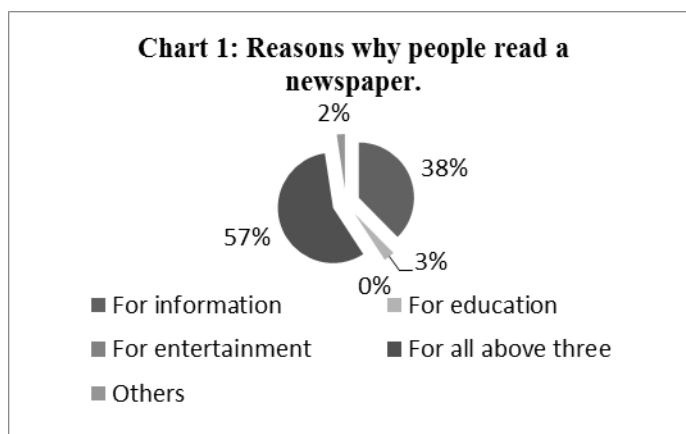
#### **4.5 Findings from the Survey amongst Professionals and Intellectuals**

People read Nepali newspapers for various reasons, such as information, education and entertainment. Adequate researches on this subject have not been carried out in the country. However, this study reveals that nearly 57 per cent readers, representing professional intellectuals, read newspapers jointly for information, education and entertainment.

The professional intellectuals, including administrators and former administrators, university teachers, school teachers, doctors, engineers, lawyers, social activists and researchers, read newspapers in Nepal for information, entertainment, education or all of these three.

#### **Reasons for reading a newspaper**

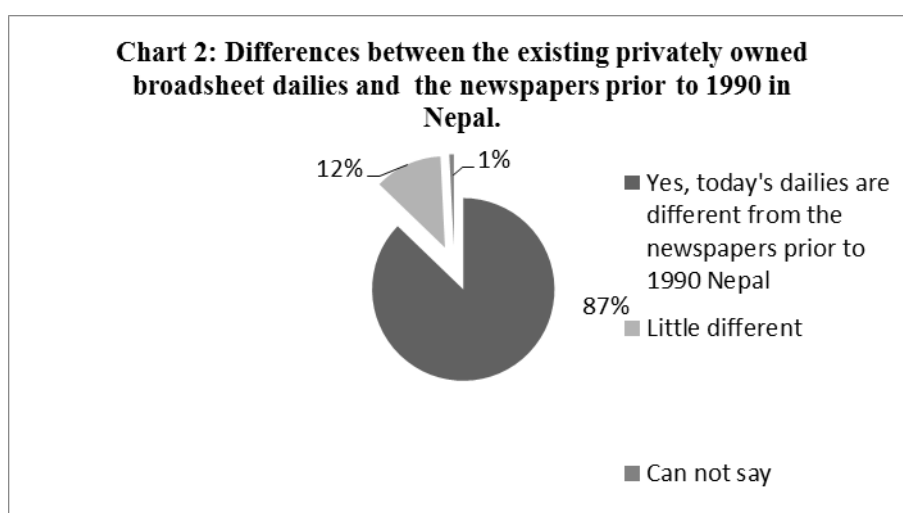
Chart I reveals that around 38 per cent Nepali audience read newspapers for information. However, 57 per cent of the audience read newspaper for all three: information, entertainment and education. This could be one of the reasons for the significant growth of the audience of the daily newspapers that have been presenting reading materials containing a diverse mix. Three per cent of the respondents state that the readers read newspapers for education. No one stated the readers read newspapers for entertainment.



(Field Survey,2015)

### **Differences between current broadsheet dailies and newspapers prior to 1990**

The readers are aware that there are differences in the existing privately owned broadsheet daily newspapers and the newspapers prior to 1990 Nepal. Chart 2 reveals that 87 per cent of the respondents observe differences between the newspapers prior to 1990 and the newspapers after 1990. As many as 12 per cent of the audiences state that there are little differences. Only 1 per cent state that they cannot say anything about the differences between the newspapers of the two periods.

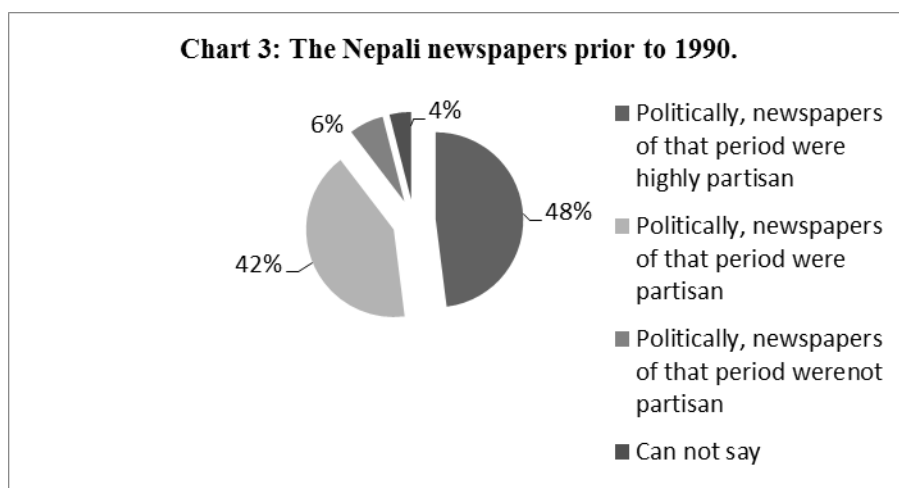


(Field Survey,2015)

### **Nepali Newspapers Prior to 1990**

The major trend of the newspapers prior to 1990 was partisan leaning. As many as 48 per cent of the respondents state that the newspaper prior to 1990 were, politically, highly partisan. Similarly, 42 per cent of the respondents state that politically,

newspapers of that period were partisan. Thus, 90 per cent of the respondents agree that the newspapers before 1990 were allegiant to different political parties.



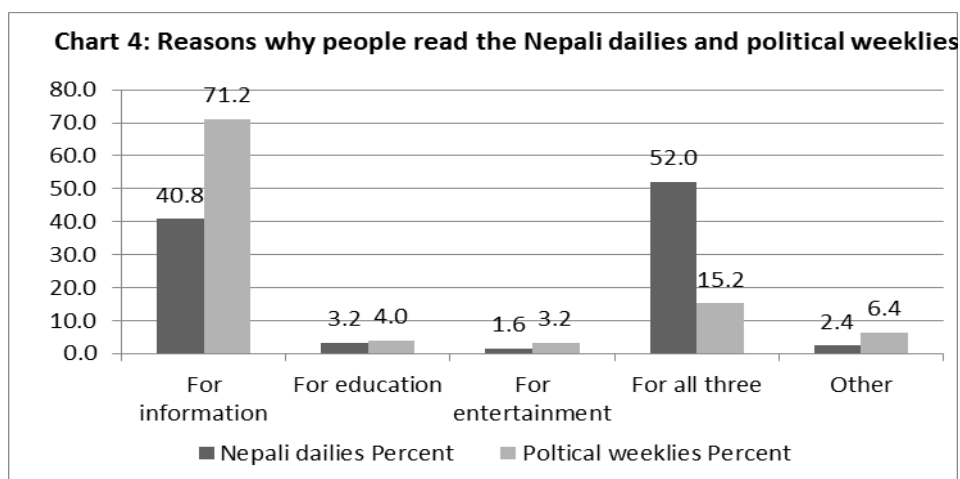
(Field Survey,2015)

### Reasons Why People Read Nepali Dailies and Political Weeklies

People read weeklies and dailies for different reasons. Chart 4 reveals the reasons why Nepali readers read dailies and weeklies.

(Field Survey,2015)

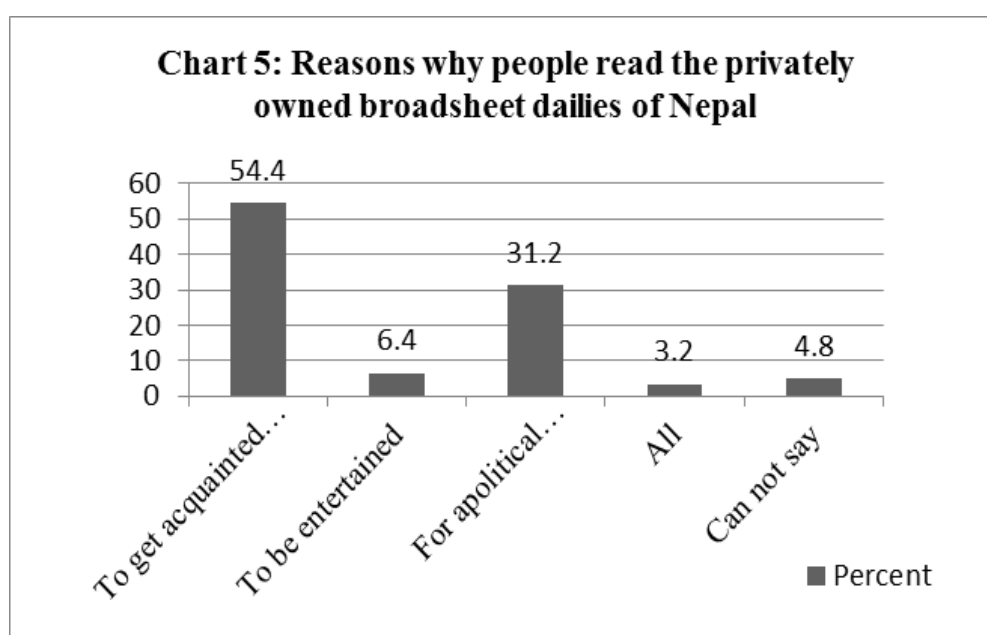
52 per cent the respondents among the readers who read dailies regularly read them for information, education and entertainment. But slightly more than 15 per cent respondents who read weeklies regularly read them for all three purposes. It demonstrate one of the major reasons why the privately owned broadsheet dailies that emerged after 1990 gained popularity and made significant growth in comparison to weeklies.





### Reasons Why People Read the Privately Owned Broadsheet Dailies

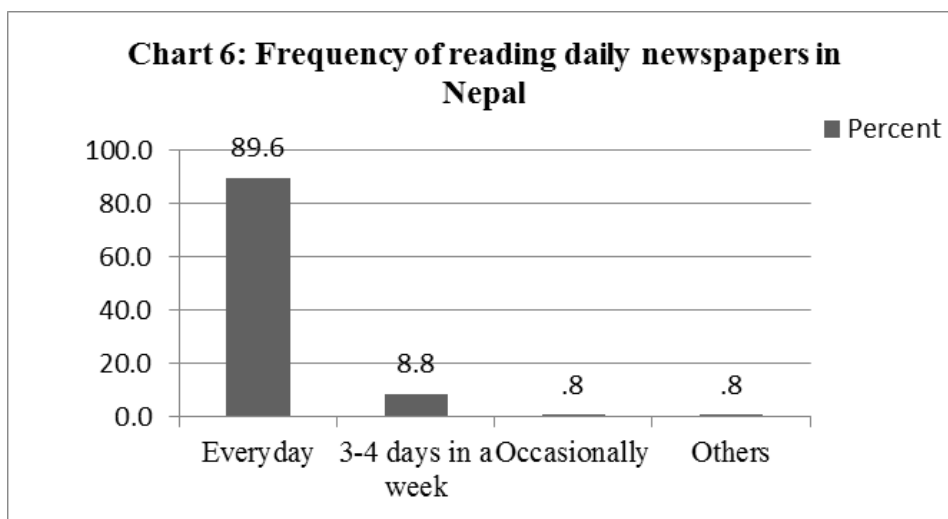
Chart 5 presents the causes of continuous growth of readership of privately owned newspapers. As many as 54 per cent of the respondents state that they read existing privately owned broadsheet dailies, such as *Kantipur*, *Nagarik* or others to get acquainted with politics. Whereas 31 per cent of the respondents state that they read these newspapers for apolitical information relating to sports, environment or others. Only 6.4 per cent respondents state that they read these dailies to be entertained. However, 3.2 per cent say they read the dailies for all the above three purposes. The survey reveals that more than half of the respondents read dailies to be updated on political affairs.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Frequency of Reading Daily Newspapers

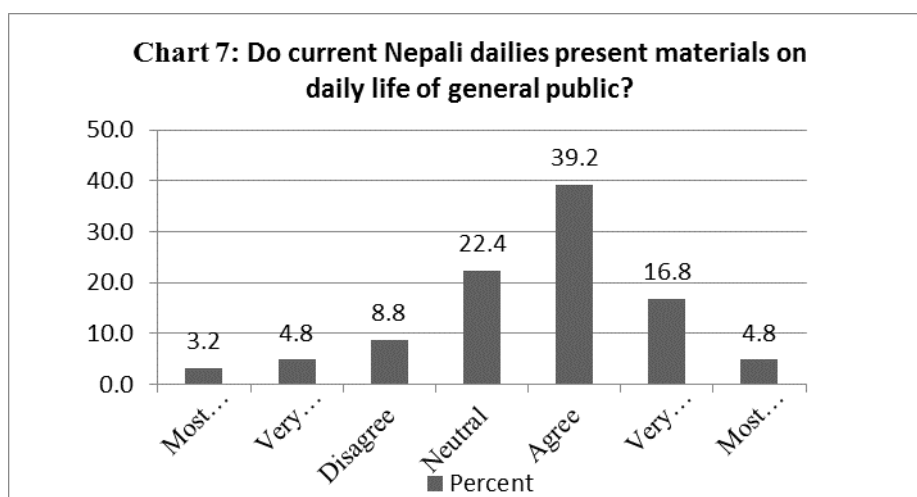
Most of the respondents state that they read the dailies everyday. Chart 6 reveals that almost 90 per cent of the respondent replied that they read daily newspapers everyday. Nearly 90 per cent of the respondents replied that they read the dailies 3-4 days in a week. Less than one per cent says they read the dailies occasionally.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Nepali Dailies and Materials on Daily Life of General Public

Today's daily newspapers in Nepal present the materials that are related to daily life of the general public. Chart 7 reveals that as many as 39 per cent of respondents agree with the statement, whereas nearly 17 per cent very agree and nearly 5 per cent most agree with the statement that the dailies present materials that are related to daily life of the general public. Nearly 5 per cent of the respondents most agree with the statement. Likewise, nearly 9 per cent of the respondents disagree with the statement. Nearly 5 per cent of the respondents very agree with the statement whereas 3 per cent of the respondent most agree that the Nepali dailies present materials on daily life of the general public.

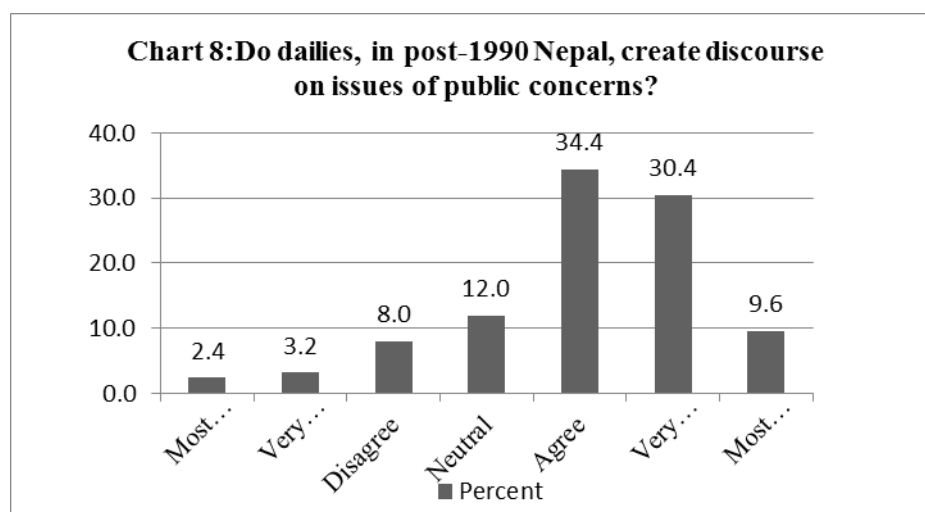


(Field Survey, 2015)

### Dailies in Post-1990 Nepal and Discourse on Issues of Public Concerns

Chart 8 reveals that the privately owned dailies have been creating discourse on issues of public concern. As many as 34 per cent of respondents agree on the statement that the dailies have been creating discourse on the issues of public concerns after 1990. As many as 30 and nearly 10 per cent respondents respectively very agree and most agree on the statement.

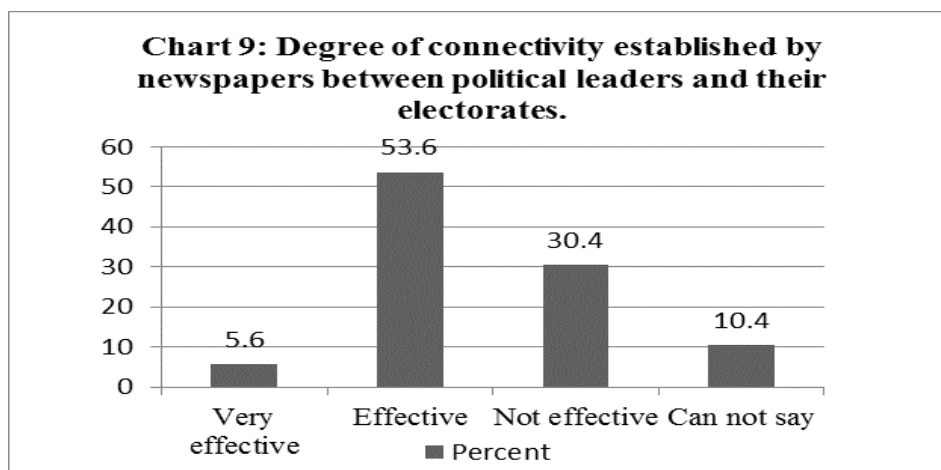
As many as 2 per cent of the respondents most disagree with the statement whereas 3 and 8 per cent of the respondents respectively very disagree and disagree with the statement. As many as 12 per cent of the respondents remain neutral.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Newspapers and Degree of Connectivity between Political Leaders and Electorates

Chart 9 shows how effective these dailies in providing a bridge between the political leaders and their electorates. Nearly 54 per cent respondents state that the degree of connectivity established by newspapers between the political leaders and their electorates is effective. Nearly 6 per cent of the respondents state that the role of the newspapers to create linkage between the political leaders and the general public is very effective. More than 30 per cent of the respondents see the role of the newspapers for bridging the leaders and the public as not effective.

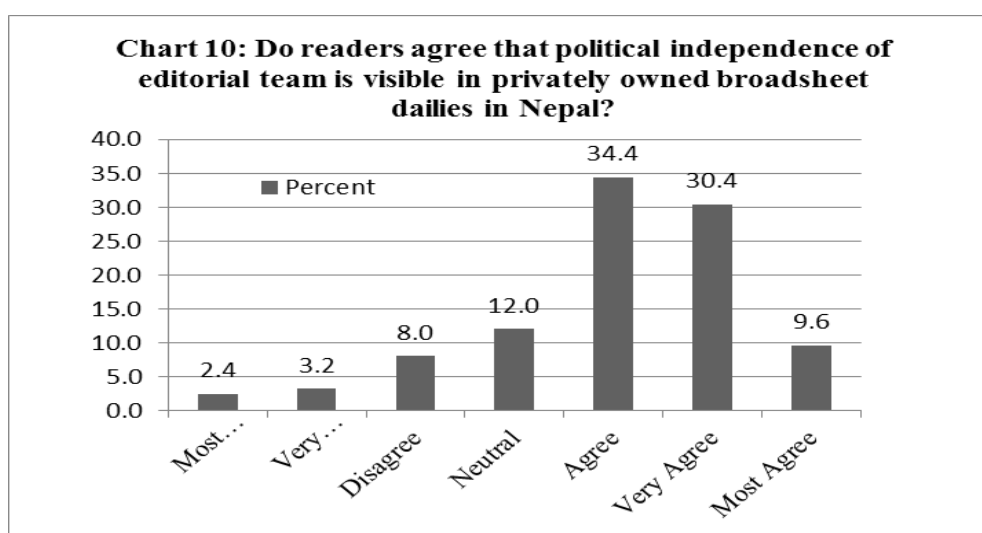


(Field Survey,2015)

### State of Political Independence of Editorial Team in Privately Owned Broadsheets

Political slant or the issue of independence has been a matter of discussion regarding the privately owned dailies. As many as 34 per cent of respondents agree that the editorial teams of the dailies are politically independent whereas 30 and nearly 10 per cent respondents respectively remain very agree and most agree.

Chart 10 reveals that 2 per cent of respondents most disagree that political independence of editorial team is visible in privately owned broadsheet dailies in the country whereas 3 per cent of the respondents very disagree and 8 per cent disagree with the statement, 12 per cent remain neutral in this regard.

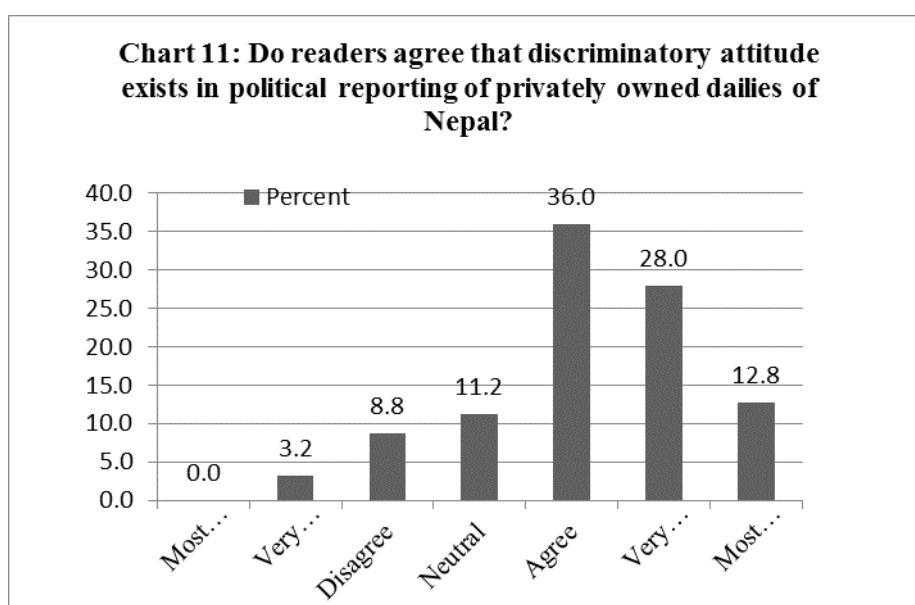


(Field Survey,2015)

### **Discriminatory Attitudes in Political Reporting of Privately Owned Dailies**

Chart 11 reveals that discriminatory attitude exists in the political reporting of privately owned daily newspapers of Nepal, with 36 per cent respondents agreeing that discriminatory attitude exists in political reporting of these dailies. As many as 28 per cent and nearly 13 per cent respondents respectively indicated that they are very agree and most agree with the statement.

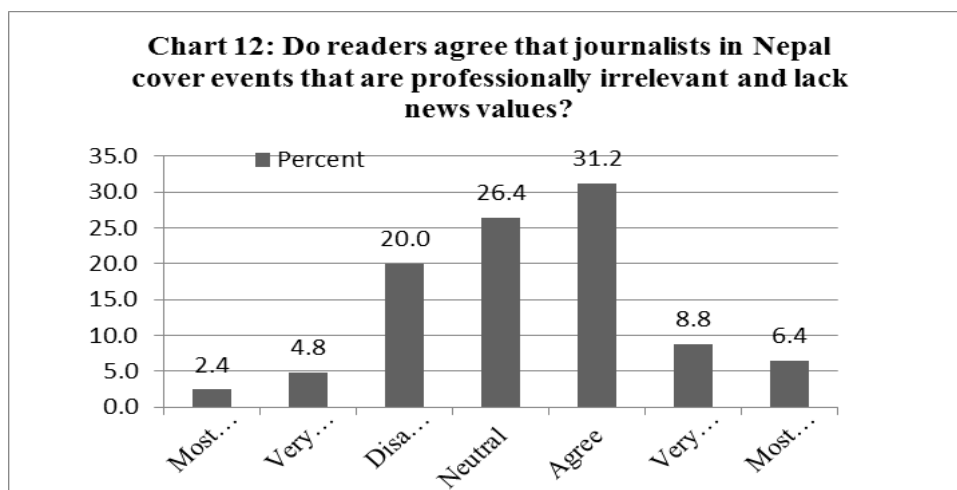
None of the respondents most disagree with the statement. Whereas 3 and nearly 9 per cent of the respondents respectively very disagree and disagree. In this regard, 11 per cent of the respondents remain neutral.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### **Newspapers and State of Irrelevant Coverage**

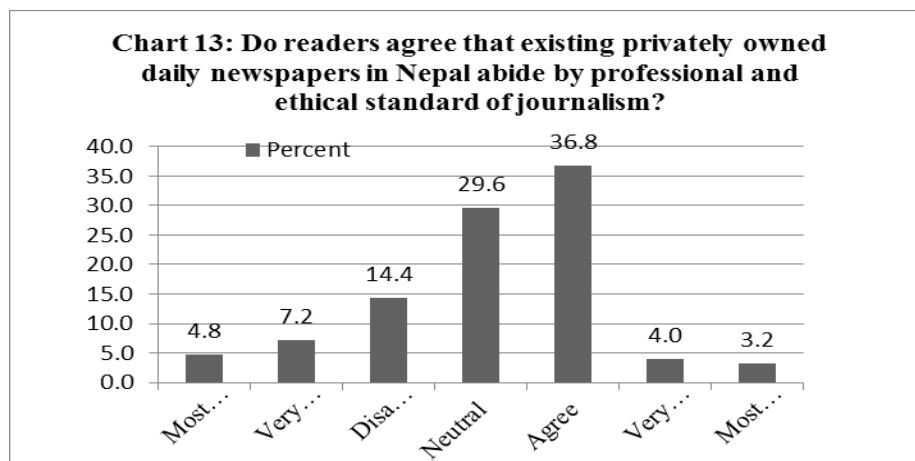
Chart 12 reveals that the Nepali journalists still cover events that are professionally irrelevant and lack news values. Altogether 46 per cent respondents express different levels of agreement on the statement. As many as 27 per cent respondent express different levels of disagreement on the statement whereas 26 per cent remain neutral.



(Field Survey,2015)

### Dailies on Professional and Ethical Standards

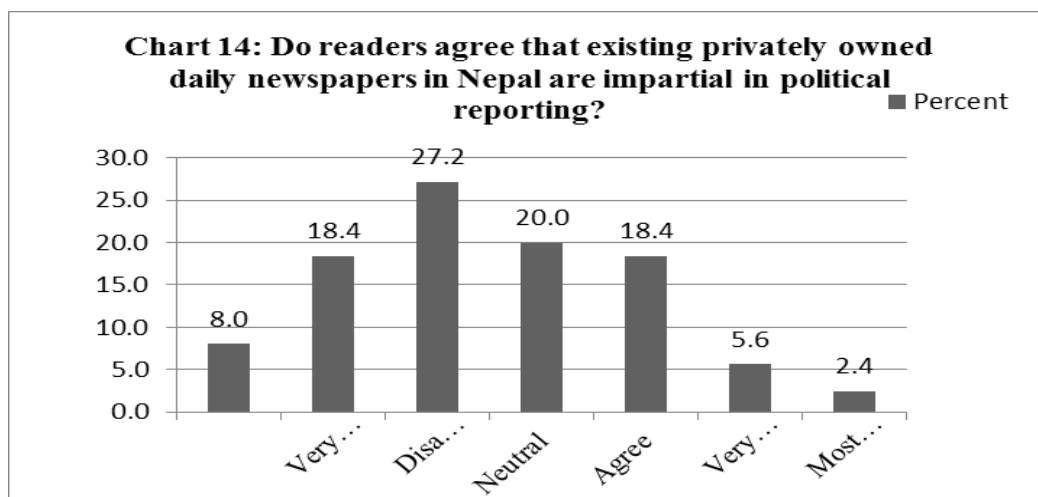
Regarding another query on the ethical standards and fairness in the daily newspapers, 37 per cent respondent agree that journalists in Nepal cover events or news that are professionally irrelevant and lack news values. Chart 13 reveals that 4 and 3 per cent respondent respectively state that they very and most agree with the statement.



(Field Survey,2015)

### Dailies and State of Impartiality in Political Reporting

The active audience are divided on the question whether they agree that the existing privately owned daily newspapers in Nepal are impartial in political reporting. Chart 14 reveals that 8 per cent respondents most disagree that the dailies are impartial whereas 18 per cent replied that they very disagree with the statement and 27 per cent express their disagreement. As many as 20 per cent of the respondents remain neutral.

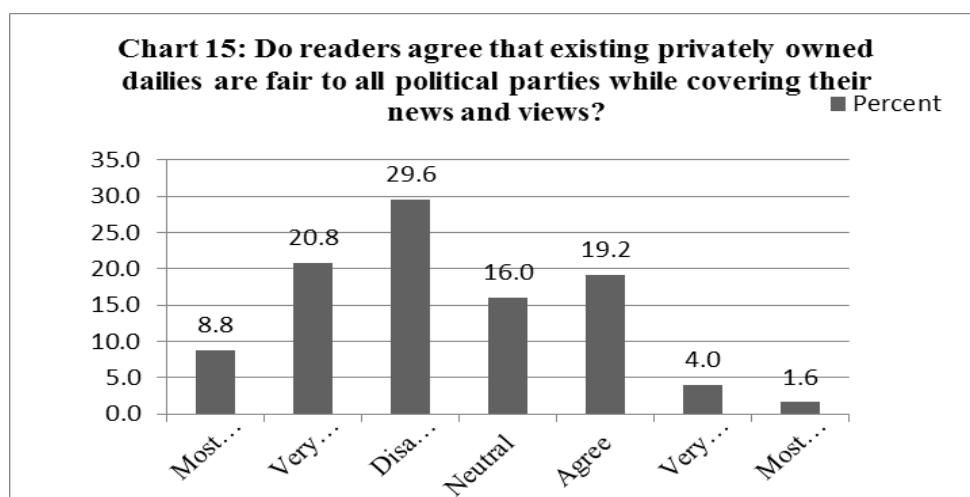


(Field Survey,2015)

### Dailies and State of Fairness While Covering Materials Related to Politics

The audience are also divided on the question whether the dailies are fair to all political parties while covering news and views. Chart 15 reveals that as many as 30 per cent respondents disagree that the dailies are fair to all the political parties. Nearly 21 and 9 per cent of respondents very disagree and most disagree respectively with the statement.

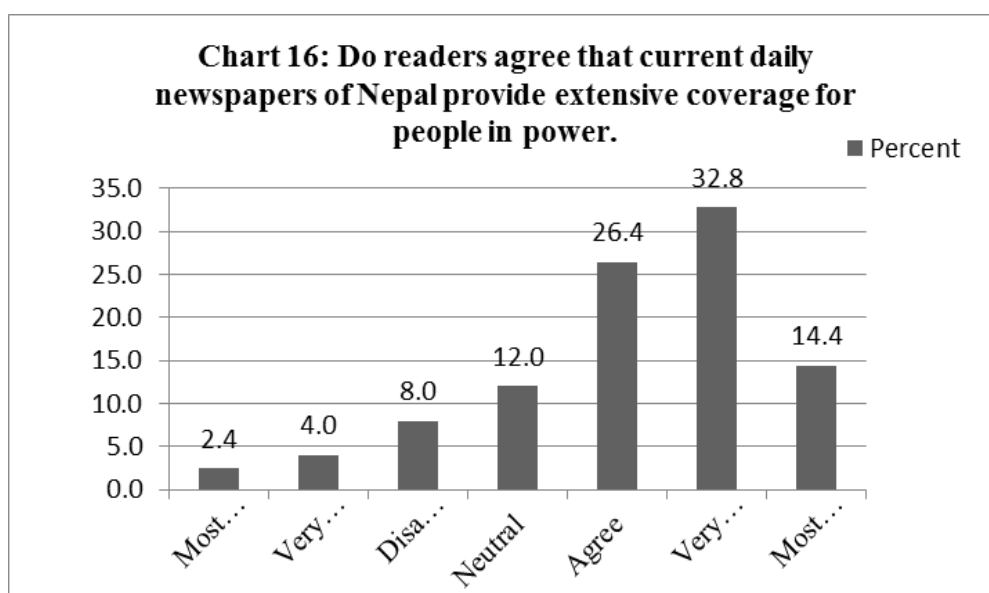
As many as 19 per cent of the respondents agree with the statement whereas 4 and nearly 2 per cent of the respondents respectively very agree and most agree that existing privately owned dailies are fair to all political parties while covering their news and views. As many as 16 per cent of the respondents remain neutral.



(Field Survey,2015)

### Dailies and Degree of Coverage for People in Power

Chart 16 reveals how the audience perceive the privately owned dailies regarding their relationship with the power centres. As many as 26 per cent respondents agree that current daily newspapers of Nepal provide extensive coverage for people in power. Nearly 33 and 14 per cent respondents respectively very and most agree with the statement. Altogether 14 per cent most, very and simply disagree that current daily newspapers of Nepal provide extensive coverage for people in power.



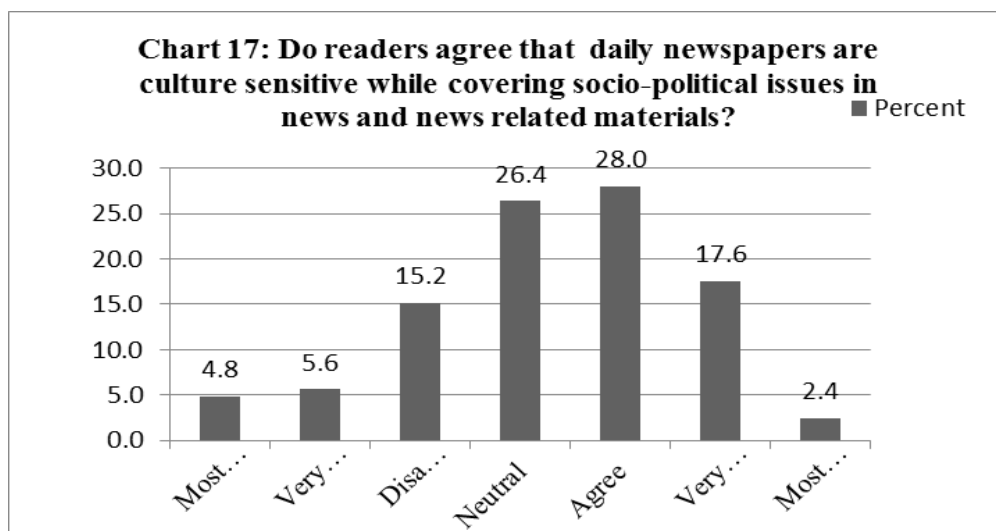
(Field Survey, 2015)

### Degree of Culture Sensitivity in Dailies

Chart 17 reveals that 28 per cent respondents agree that daily newspapers are culture sensitive while covering socio-political issues in news and news related materials. Nearly 18 and 2 per cent of the respondents respectively very and most agree with the statement.

Nearly 5 per cent of the respondents most disagree with the statement whereas 6 and 15 per cent of the respondents respectively very disagree and disagree with the statement. As many as 26 per cent of the respondents remain neutral in this regard.



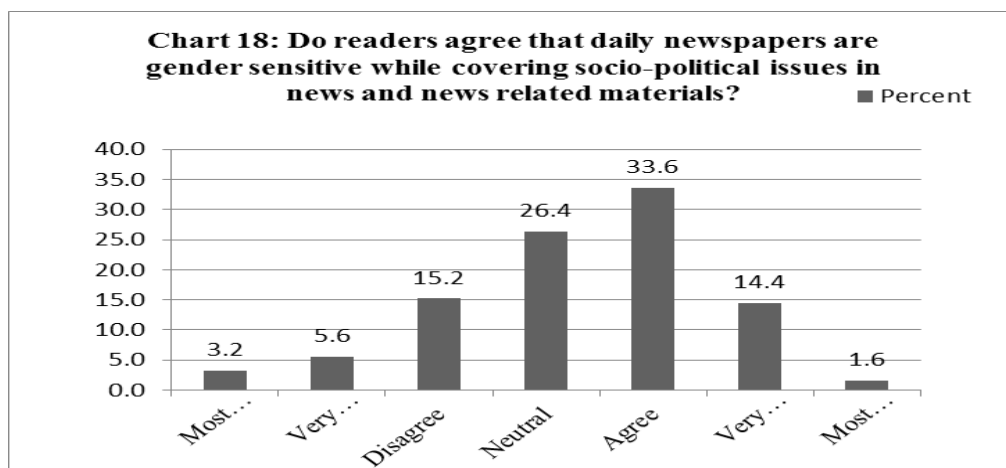


(Field Survey,2015)

### Degree of Gender Sensitivity in Dailies

Chart 18 presents the readers' evaluation of the daily newspapers regarding gender sensitivity. Most of the respondents see daily newspapers as gender sensitive in covering socio-political issues. Nearly 34 per cent respondents agree that daily newspapers are gender sensitive while covering socio-political issues in news and news related materials. As many as 14 and nearly 2 per cent respondents respectively very and most agree that the dailies are gender sensitive.

If 3 per cent of the respondents most disagree with the statement, 6 and 15 per cent of the total respondents respectively very disagree and disagree with the statement. Nearly 26 per cent of the respondents remain neutral in this regard.

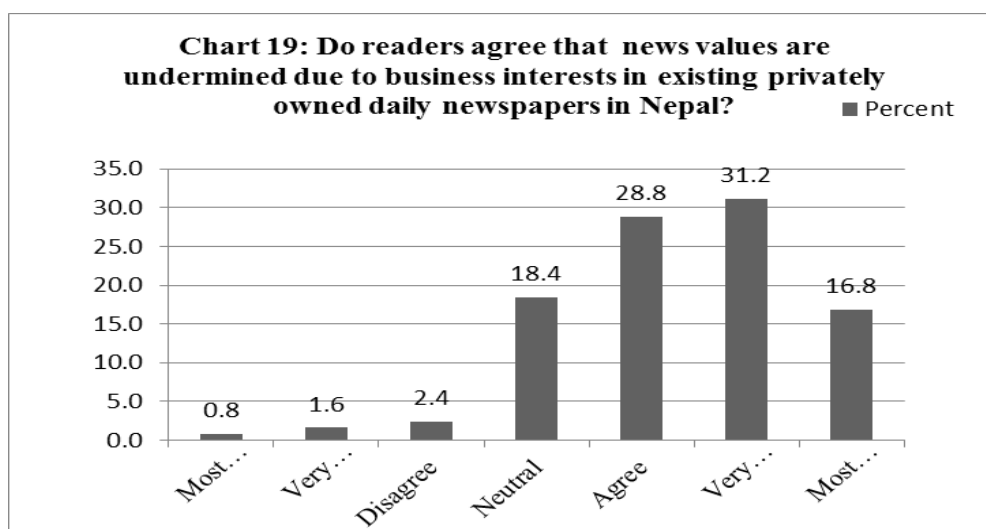


(Field Survey,2015)

### News Values and Business Interests in Dailies

Chart 19 presents different perceptions on the issue of business interests in the current Nepali dailies. As many as 29 per cent of the respondents agree that news values are undermined due to business interests in the existing privately owned daily newspapers in Nepal whereas 31 per cent of the respondents very agree with the statement. Nearly 17 per cent of the respondents most agree that news values are undermined due to business interests in the existing privately owned daily newspapers in Nepal.

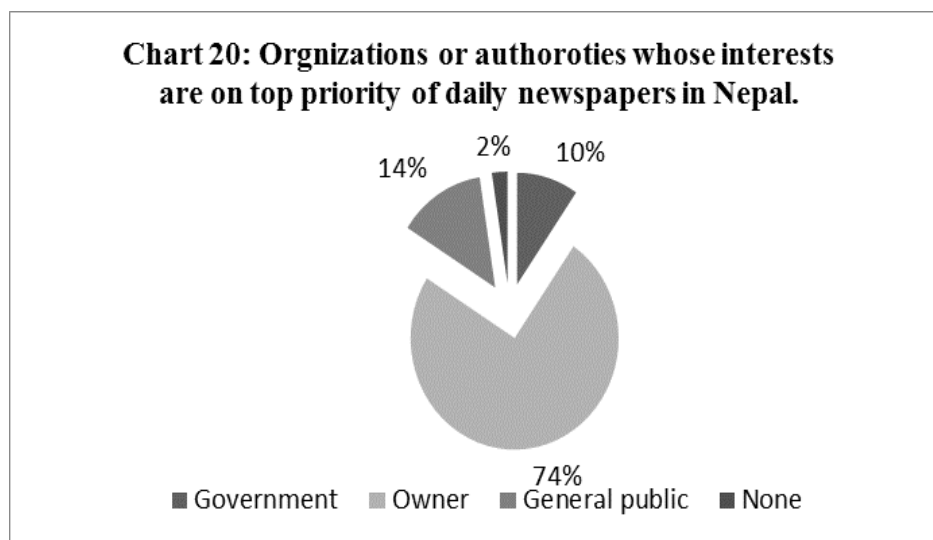
If 0.8 per cent of the respondents most disagree with the statement, nearly 2 per cent of the respondents respectively very disagree and disagree with the statement. As many as 18 per cent of the respondents remain neutral in this regard.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Whose Interests are on Top Priority of Dailies?

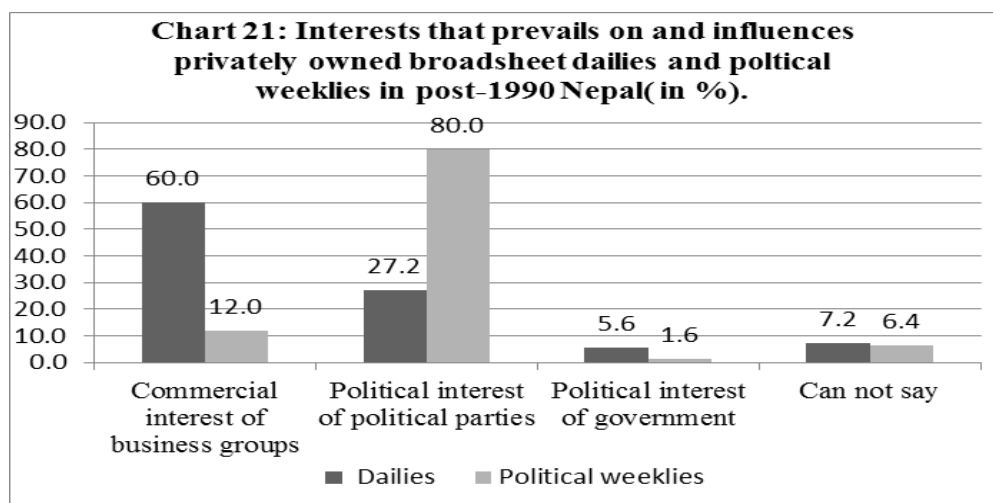
Chart 20 takes the issue of business interests in the current Nepali dailies further, with 74 per cent respondents indicating that owner's interests are the top priority of the daily newspapers. Nearly 10 per cent of the respondents state that government's interests are given top priority whereas 14 per cent of the respondents view that the general public's interests are on the top. Likewise 2 per cent of the respondents indicate that no one's interests are given priority.



(Field Survey,2015)

### Prevailing Interests and Influences in Dailies

Chart 21 compares political weeklies and the dailies in relation to the prevailing influence on them. In the case of dailies, 60 per cent respondents state that commercial interest of business groups prevails and influences, whereas in case of the generally black and white weeklies with political contents 80 per cent respondents opine that political interest of political parties prevails on and influences.

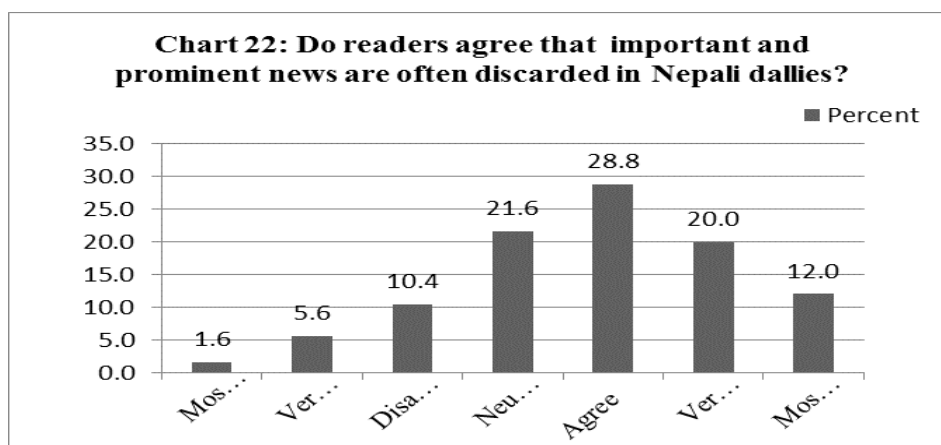


(Field Survey,2015)

### Suppression of Important and Prominent News in Dailies

Chart 22 presents the perceptions of the readers on the selection of news by the dailies. If 29 per cent respondents agree that important and prominent news are often

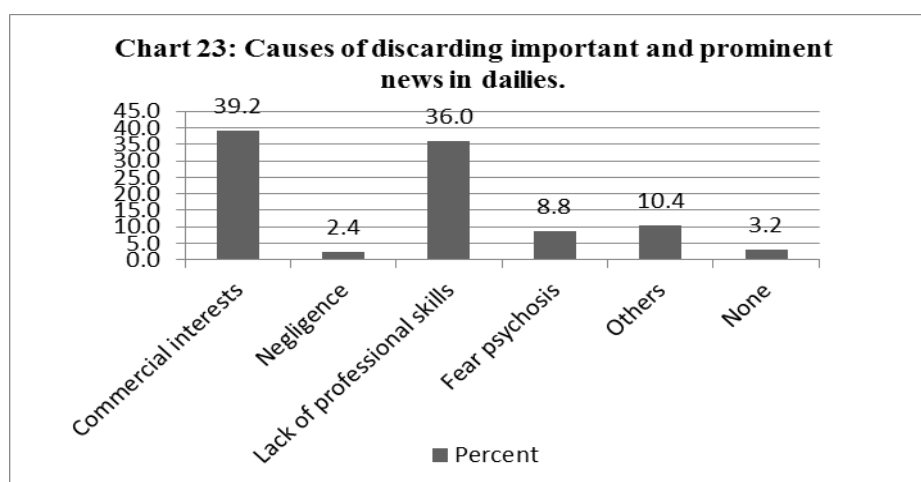
discarded in Nepali dailies, 20 per cent and 12 per cent respondents respectively are very and most agree with the statement.



(Field Survey,2015)

### Causes of Discarding Important and Prominent News in Dailies

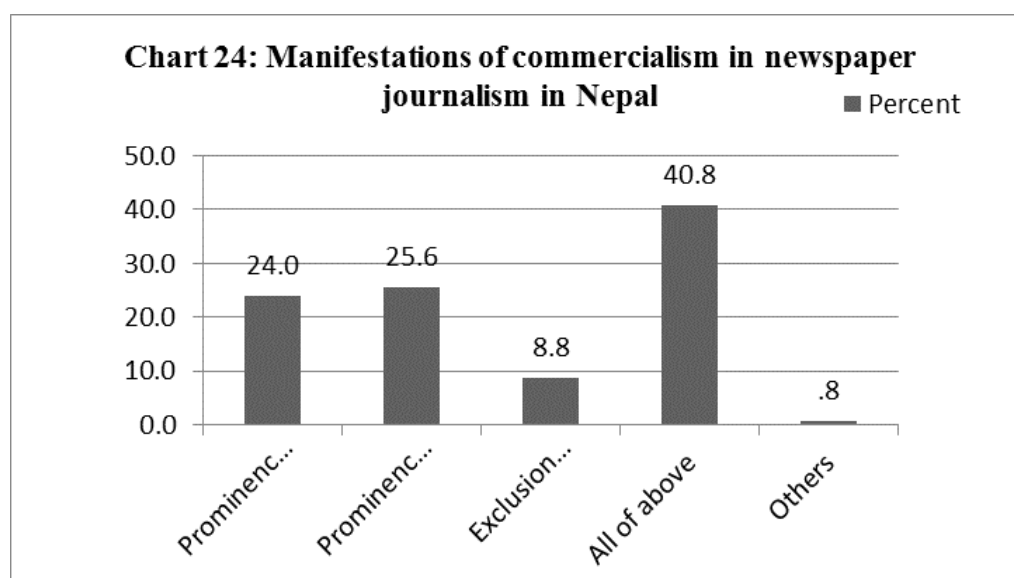
Chart 23 presents the causes of discarding important and prominent news. As many as 39 per cent respondents state that commercial interest is the main cause of discarding important and prominent news in the privately owned daily newspapers. As many as 36 per cent opine that lack of professional skills is the cause of discarding the prominent news. Nearly 9 per cent of the respondents consider fear psychosis as main cause of discarding important and prominent news in dailies whereas 3 per cent of the respondents state that none of the causes is the main cause of discarding the news. Likewise, 2 per cent of the respondents see negligence as the main cause of discarding news.



(Field Survey,2015)

### Manifestations of Commercialism in the Newspaper Journalism in Nepal

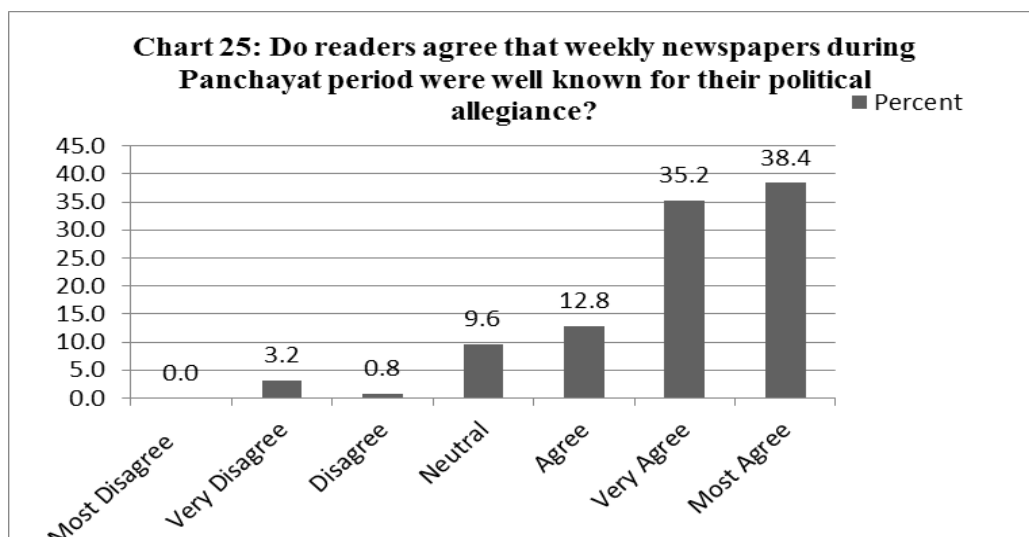
Chart 24 shows reader's perception of the manifestation of commercialism in newspaper journalism in Nepal, with 24 per cent respondents stating that prominence of advertising and nearly 26 per cent respondents saying that prominence of business interests are the manifestations of commercialism. If 9 per cent respondents state that exclusion of public issues is the manifestation, 41 per cent state the all three manifestations indicate commercialism in the Nepali newspapers.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Newspapers during Panchayat Period and Their Political Allegiance

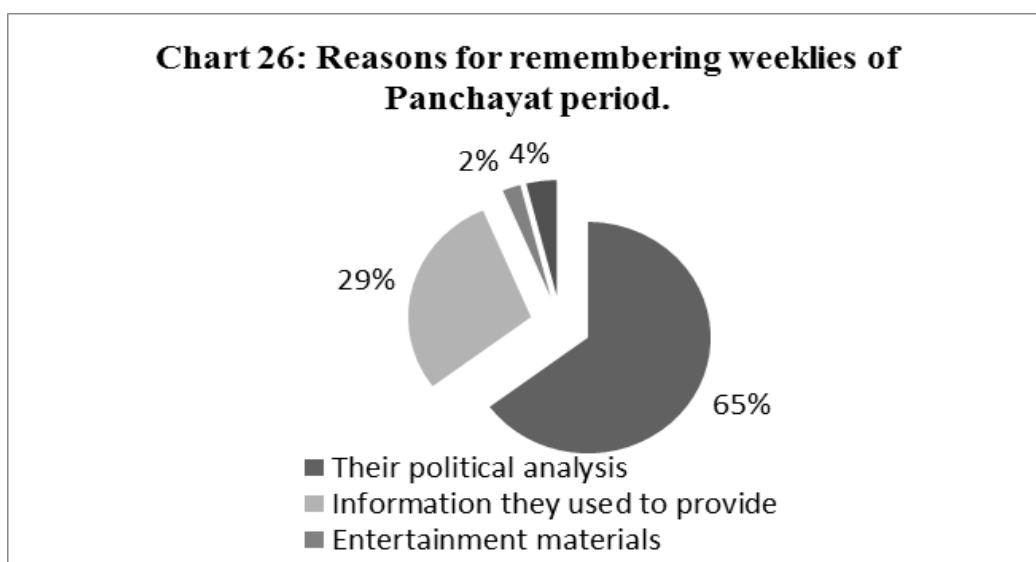
Chart 25 presents the nature and feature of the Nepali weeklies prior to 1990. If many as 38 per cent respondents most agree that the weekly newspapers during the Panchayat period were well known for their political allegiance, 53 and nearly 13 per cent respondents respectively remain very agree and agree with the statement. There was no most disagree with the statement. Similarly, 3 and nearly 1 per cent respectively very disagree and disagree that the weekly newspapers during the Panchayat period were known for their political allegiance.



(Field Survey,2015)

### Reasons for Remembering Weeklies of Panchayat Period

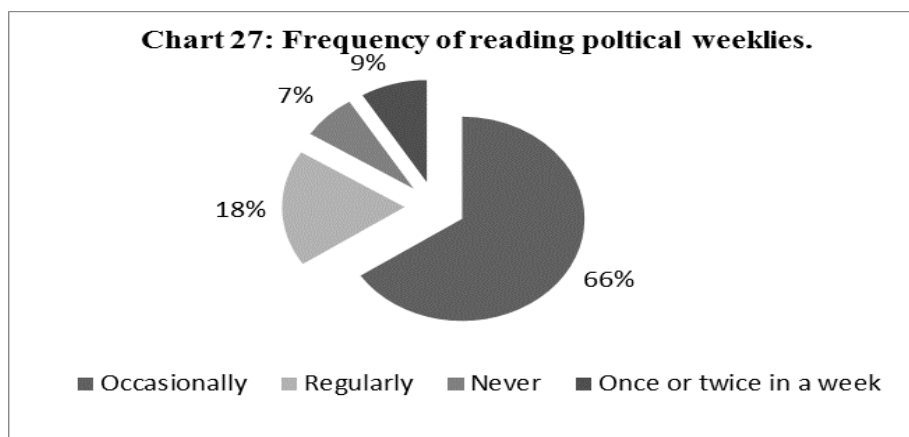
Chart 26 reveals that 65 per cent respondents state that they recall weeklies of the Panchayat period for their political analyses. If 29 per cent respondents remember those weeklies for the information they provided, 2 per cent state that they used to read those weeklies for entertainment materials.



(Field Survey,2015)

### Frequency of Reading Politics-Laden Weeklies

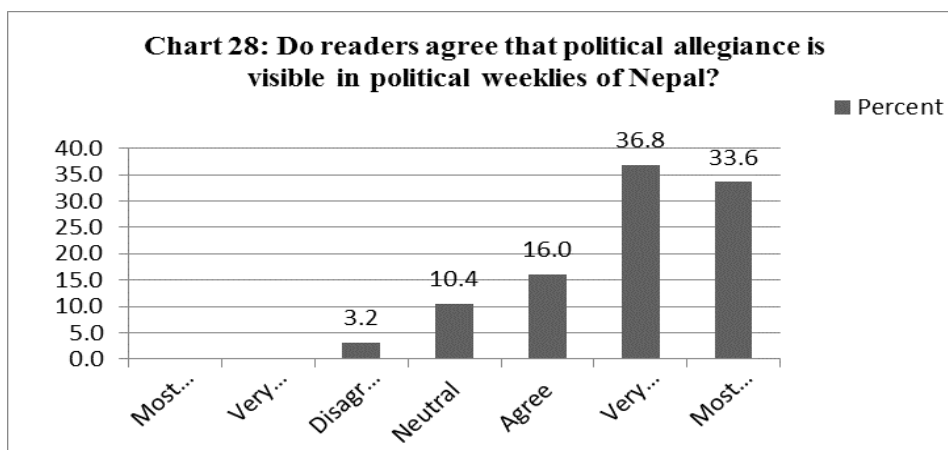
Chart 27 shows the readers frequency of reading weekly newspapers. It demonstrates that 66 per cent respondents read the weeklies occasionally and 9 per cent read them once or twice in a week. If 7 per cent never read weeklies, 18 per cent read weekly newspapers regularly.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Political Allegiance and Politics-Laden Weeklies

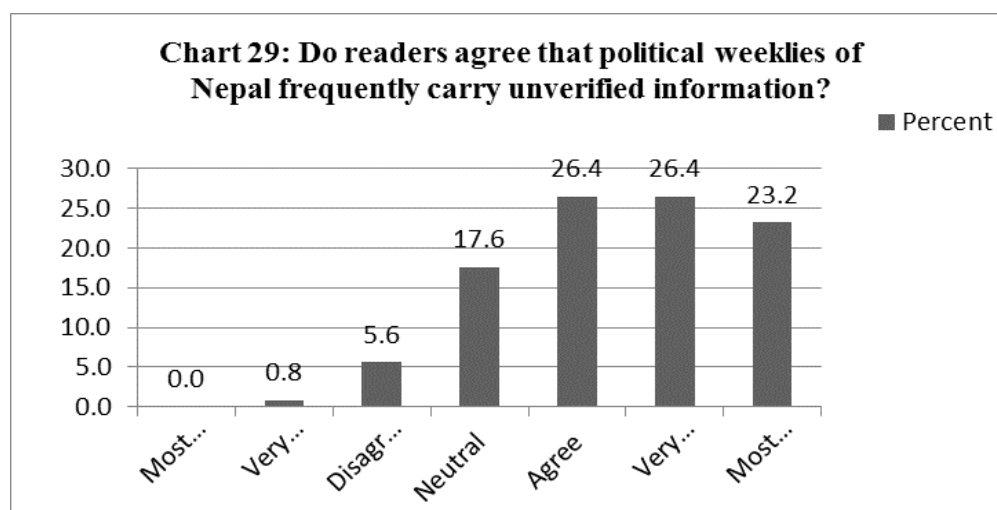
Chart 28 shows that 37 per cent respondents very agree that political allegiance is visible in the mostly black and white political weeklies of Nepal. Nearly 34 per cent respondents most agree with the statement and 16 per cent agree that political allegiance is visible in the political weeklies. There is no one most and very disagree with the statement whereas 3 per cent disagree that political allegiance is visible in the political weeklies of Nepal.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Weeklies and Coverage of Unverified Information

Chart 29 shows that 26 per cent respondents agree that political weeklies of Nepal frequently carry unverified information. If 26 and 23 per cent respondents respectively very agree and most agree with the statement, there is no one most disagree that these weeklies frequently carry unverified information. Nearly 1 and 6 per cent respondents respectively very disagree and most disagree that the weeklies frequently carry unverified information. Nearly 18 per cent of the respondents remain neutral in response to the question.

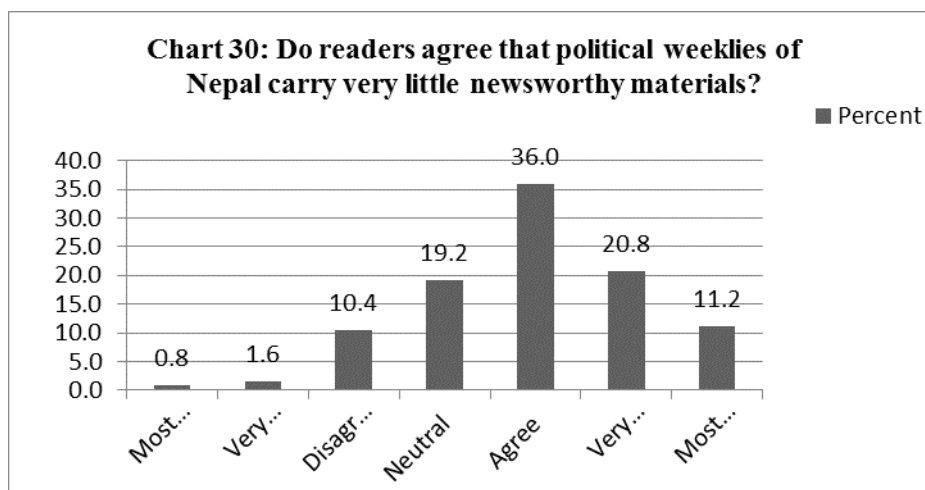


(Field Survey, 2015)

### Politics-Laden Weeklies and Absence of Newsworthy Materials

Most of the respondents think that politics-laden weeklies of Nepal carry very little newsworthy materials. Chart 30 demonstrates that 36 per cent respondents agree that the political weeklies of Nepal carry very little newsworthy materials. Nearly 21 and 11 per cent respondents respectively very agree and most agree that the weeklies carry very little newsworthy materials. Likewise, 1, 2 and 10 per cent respondents respectively most disagree, very disagree and disagree that they provide little newsworthy materials whereas 19 per cent remain neutral in response to the question.

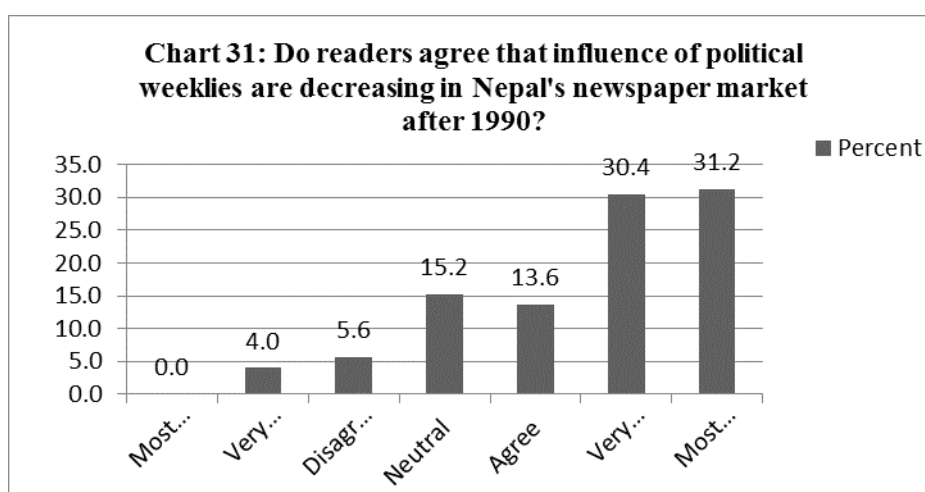




(Field Survey, 2015)

### Decreasing Influence of Politics-Laden Weeklies After 1990

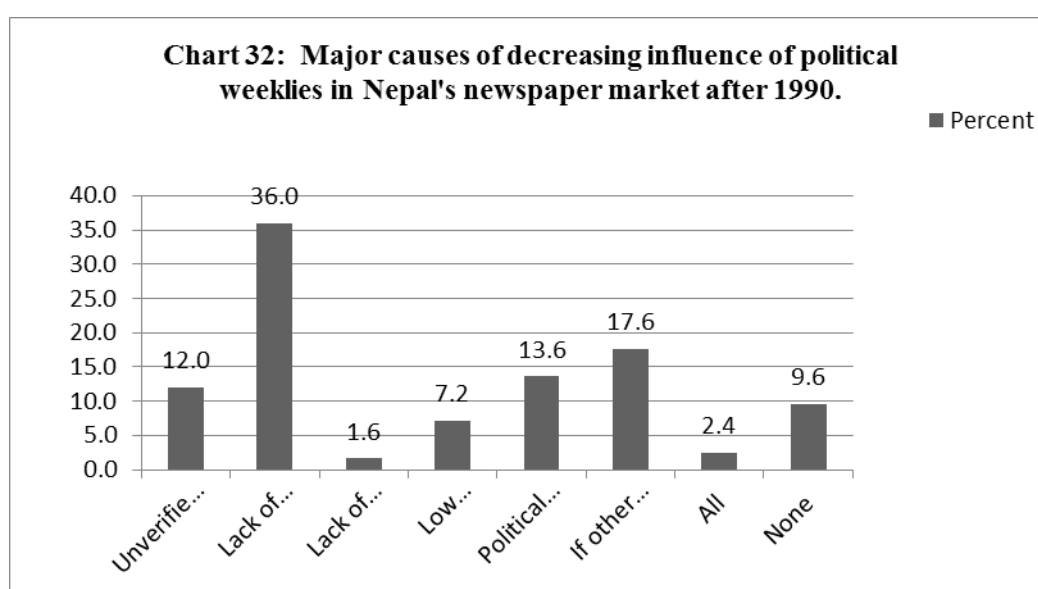
Chart 31 demonstrates that 31 per cent respondents agree that the influence of political weeklies is decreasing in Nepal's newspaper market after 1990. About 14 and 30 per cent respondents respectively agree and very agree that the influence of the weeklies is decreasing. There was no one most disagree with the statement. As many as 4 and nearly 6 per cent respondents respectively agree that influence of the weeklies has been decreasing in the aftermath of 1990. Likewise, 15 per cent of the respondents remain neutral in response to the question.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Causes of Decreasing Influence of Weeklies After 1990

Chart 32 shows that 36 per cent respondents state that the major cause of decreasing influence of political weeklies in Nepal's newspaper market after 1990 is none other than lack of quality in content. If 14 per cent state that political allegiance is the major cause, 12 per cent mention unverified information as the cause of decreasing influence of these weeklies. As many as 7 and nearly 2 per cent term the low level of distribution and circulation as well as lack of attractive layout and design as the causes. As many as 2 per cent state that all aforesaid shortcomings of the weeklies are responsible for their decreasing influence in the aftermath of 1990.



(Field Survey, 2015)

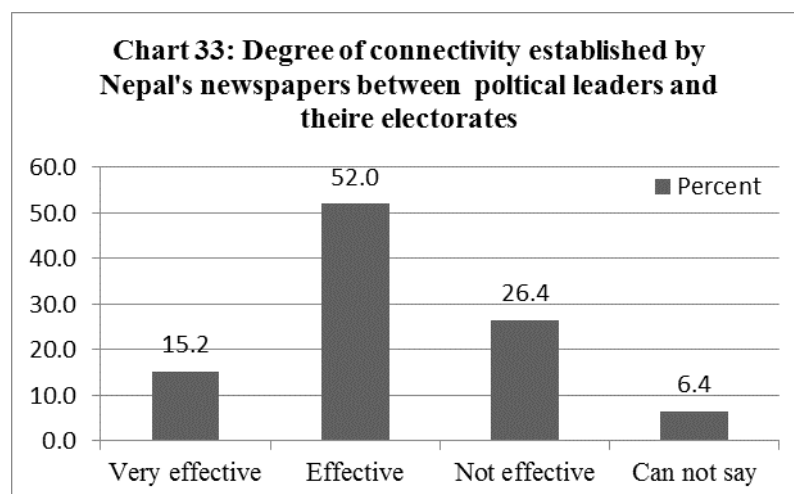
It could be summed up that more than one factors have contributed to the decrease in the influence of the political, generally black and white, 8-page weekly newspapers. They are largely sidelined from the market by the privately owned broadsheet dailies.

### 4.6 Findings from the survey among journalists

#### Newspapers and Degree of Connectivity between Political Leaders and Electorates

Chart 33 reveals that most of the journalists consider the newspaper as an effective bridge between the political leaders and their electorates. As many as 52 per cent respondents state that the degree of connectivity established by Nepal's newspapers

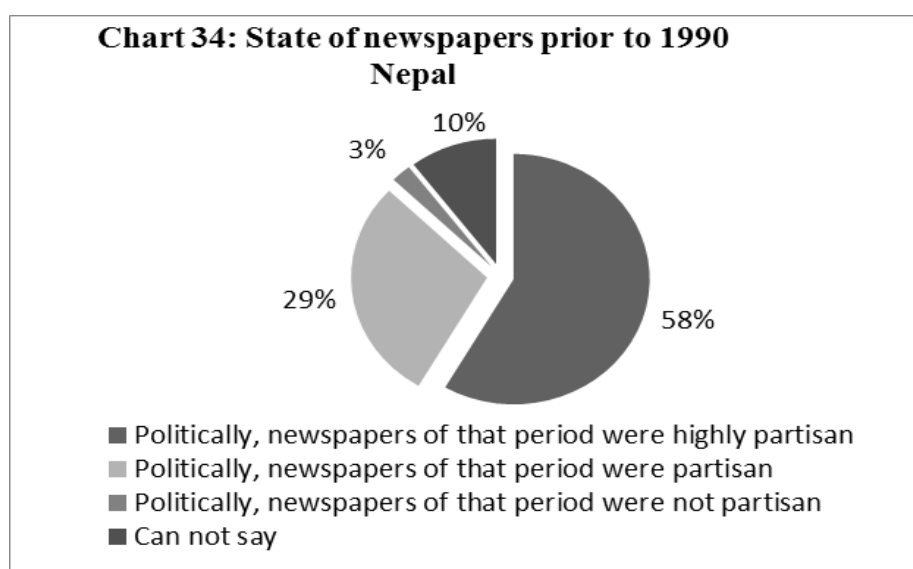
between political leaders and their electorates is effective. Likewise, 15 per cent state that connectivity is very effective and 26 per cent says it is not effective.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### State of Newspapers Prior to 1990 Nepal

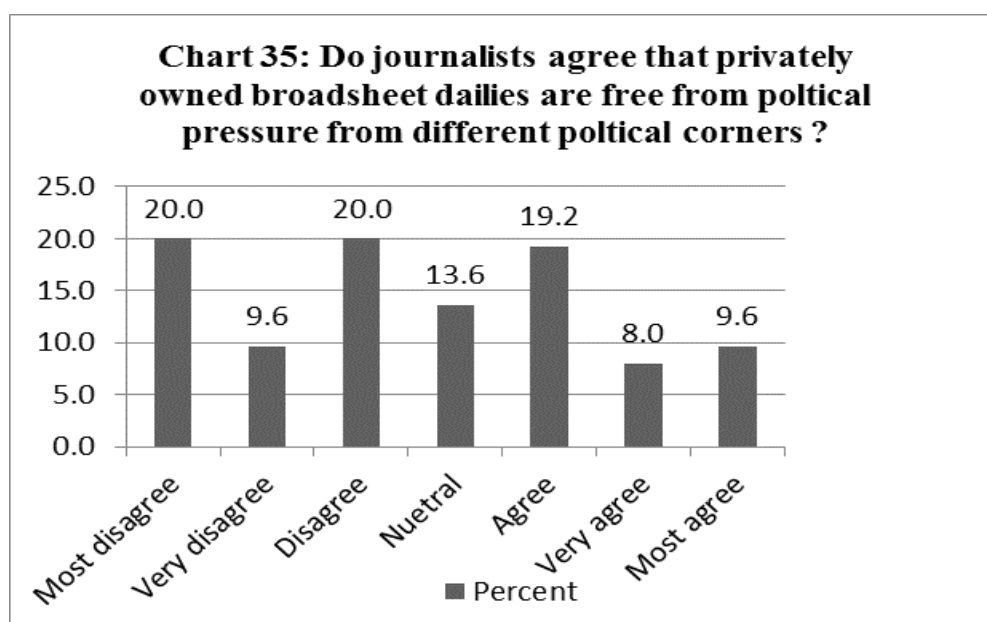
Chart 34 presents the readers' perceptions of newspapers prior to 1990, with 58 per cent respondents stating that politically the Nepali newspapers of that period were highly partisan. As many as 29 and 10 per cent respectively opine that politically the newspapers of that period were partisan and not partisan.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Dailies and Level of Political Pressure from Different Corners

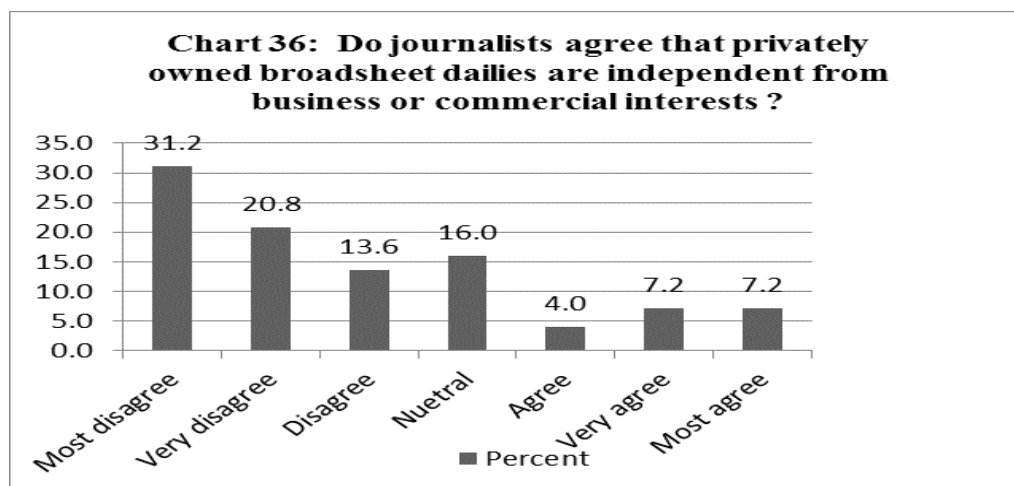
Chart 35 shows that 20 per cent respondents most disagree that privately owned broadsheet dailies are free from political pressure from different political corners. Nearly 10 per cent very disagree and 20 per cent disagree with the statement. Nearly 10 per cent most agree with the statement. As many as 19 and 8 per cent respondents respectively agree and very agree that privately owned broadsheet dailies are free from political pressure from different political corners.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Degree of Independence from Business or Commercial Interests in Dailies

Chart 36 presents the journalists' perception of the prevailing commercial interests in the privately owned dailies, with 31 per cent respondents indicating as most disagree that the privately owned daily newspapers are free from commercial interests. Nearly 21 and 14 respondents respectively very disagree and disagree that privately owned dailies are independent from the commercialism.

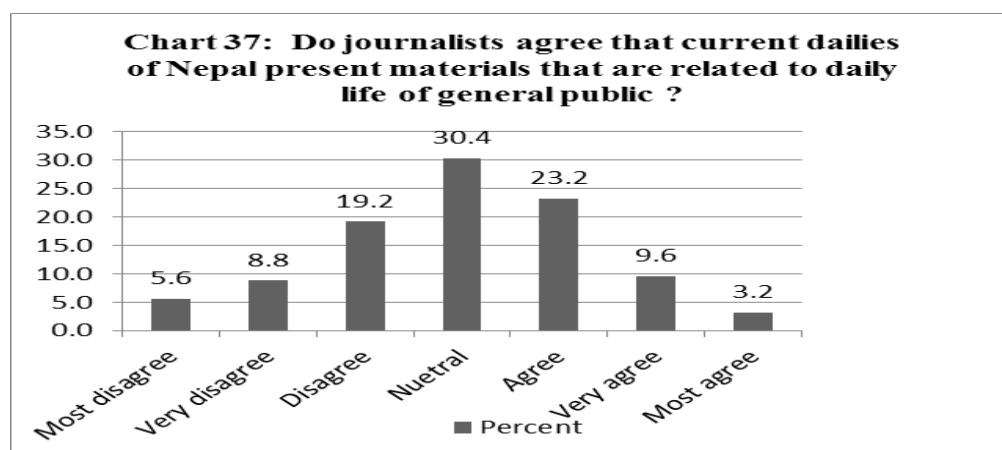


(Field Survey,2015)

### Dailies and Daily Life of the General Public

Chart 37 shows that 30 per cent respondents remain neutral on the question whether they agree that current dailies of Nepal present materials relating to daily life of general public. As many as 23 per cent of the respondents agree and nearly 10 per cent of the respondents very agree with the statement whereas 3 per cent of the respondents most agree with the statement.

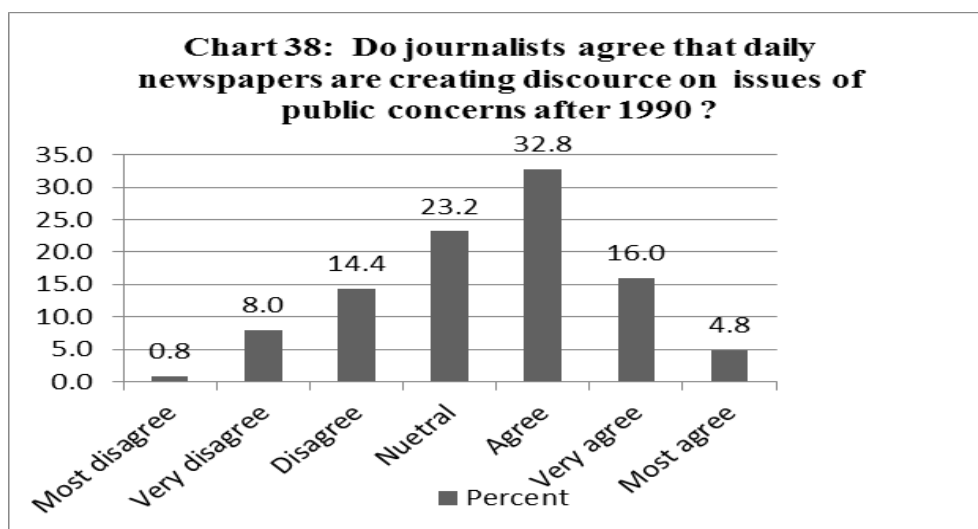
Nearly 6 and 9 per cent of the respondents respectively most disagree and very disagree with the statement. As many as 19 per cent of the respondents disagree with the statement that current dailies of Nepal present materials that are related to daily life of general public. Large number of the respondents remain neutral on the question whether the current dailies of Nepal present materials related to the daily life of the general public.



(Field Survey,2015)

### Dailies in Creating Discourse on Issues of Public Concerns After 1990

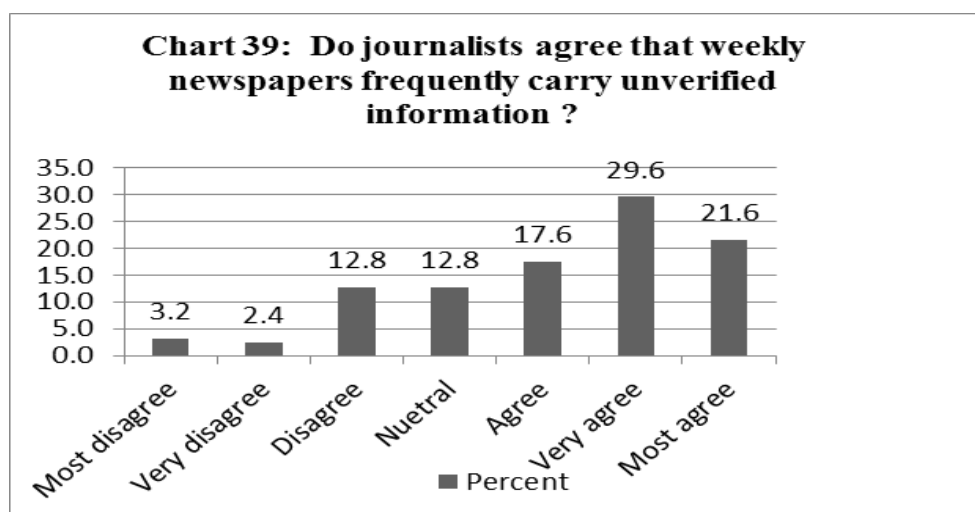
Chart 38 shows that nearly 33 per cent respondents agree that daily newspapers are creating discourse on issues of public concern after 1990. If 16 and nearly 5 per cent respondents respectively very agree and most agree with the statement. Nearly 1 per cent respondents most disagree. As many as 8 and 14 per cent respondents respectively very disagree and disagree that the dailies are creating discourse on public issues.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Weeklies and Coverage of Unverified Information

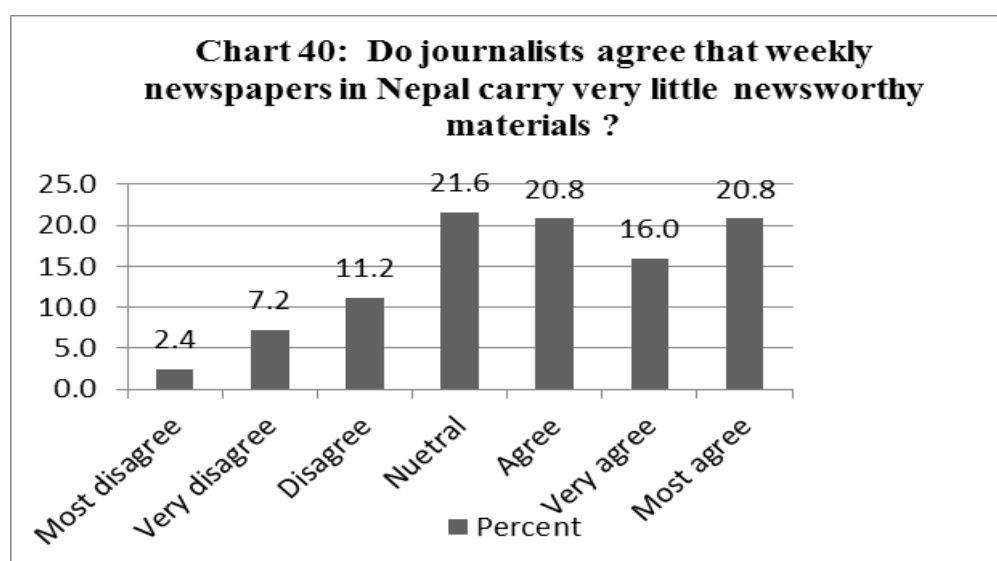
Chart 39 shows that nearly 30 per cent respondents agree that weekly newspapers frequently carry unverified information whereas 18 per cent and 22 per cent of the respondents respectively agree and most agree that politics-laden weeklies frequently carry unverified information. Likewise, 3 per cent and 2 per cent of the respondents respectively most disagree and very disagree on the statement. If 13 per cent of the respondents disagree that weeklies frequently carry unverified information, whereas 13 per cent remain neutral in this regard.



(Field Survey,2015)

### Weeklies and Coverage of Newsworthy Materials

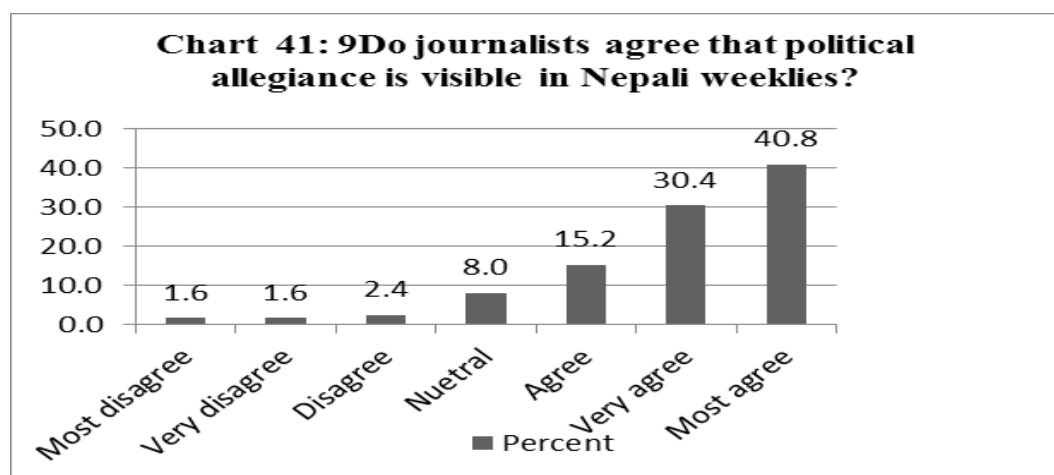
Chart 40 shows that on the question whether the weeklies carry very little newsworthy materials, a higher number of respondents express agreement. Likewise, 21 per cent respondents agree that weeklies carry very little newsworthy materials. As many as 16 and nearly 21 per cent very agree and most agree respectively with the statement. Likewise 2 per cent of the respondents most disagree and 7 per cent very disagree with the statement. If 11 per cent of the respondents disagree that weekly newspapers in Nepal carry very little newsworthy materials, 22 per cent remain neutral.



(Field Survey,2015)

### Weeklies and Degree of Political Allegiance

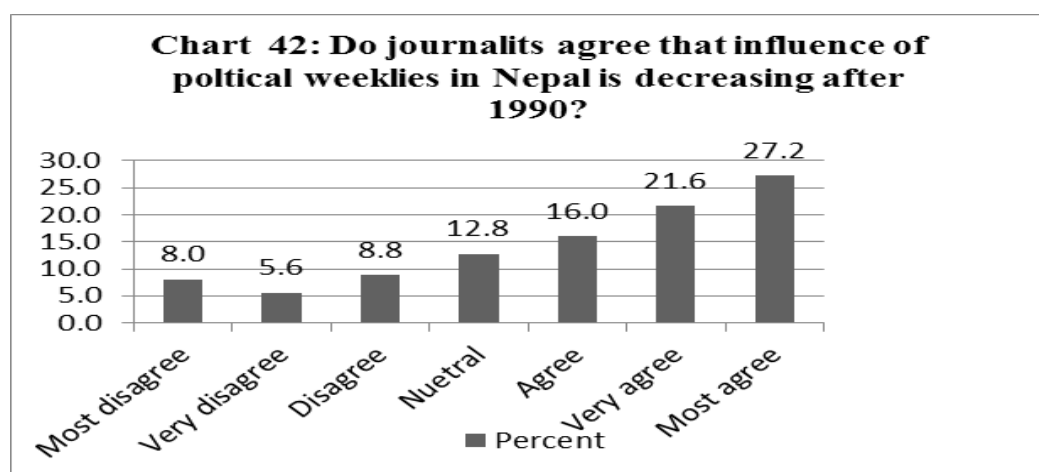
Chart 41 shows that 41 per cent respondents most agree or fully agree that political allegiance is visible in Nepali weeklies. Likewise 15 and 30 per cent respectively agree and very agree. Nearly 2 per cent respondents most disagree that the political slant is clearly visible in the weeklies.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Decreasing Political Influence of Weeklies

Chart 42 shows that majority of the respondent perceived that the influence of the political weeklies has declined in the aftermath of 1990, with 27, nearly 22 and 16 per cent of the total respondents respectively indicating that they most agree, very agree and agree that influence of political weeklies is decreasing after 1990. Likewise, 8 per cent most disagree with the statement.

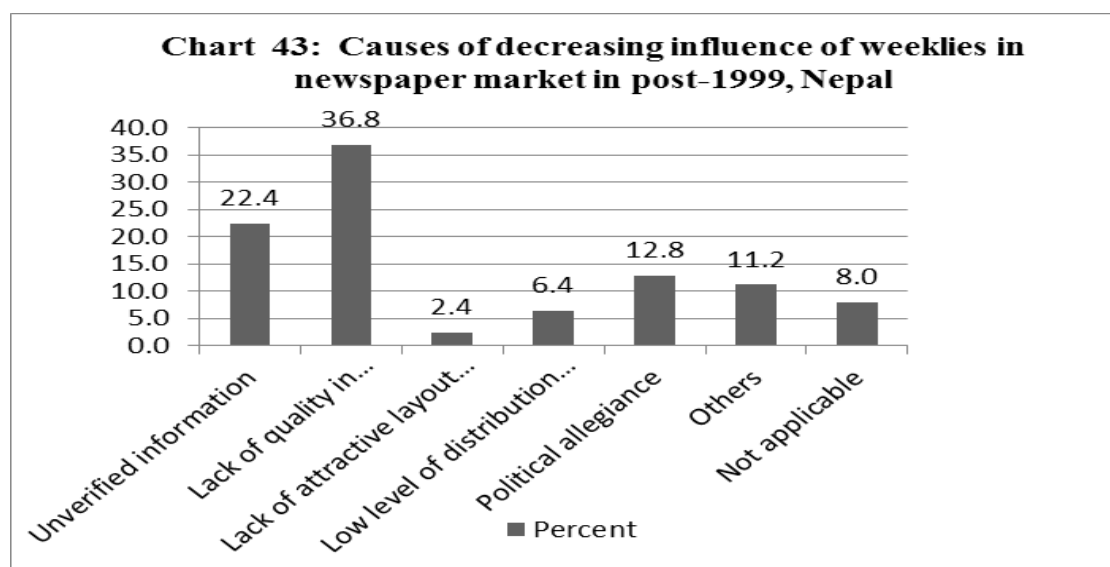


(Field Survey, 2015)



### Causes of Decreasing Influence of Weeklies

Chart 43 reveals that 37 per cent state that lack of quality in contents is the major cause of decreasing influence of weeklies in post-1990, Nepal and 22 per cent respondents say that presentation of unverified information is the major cause of the decreasing influence of the weekly newspapers.

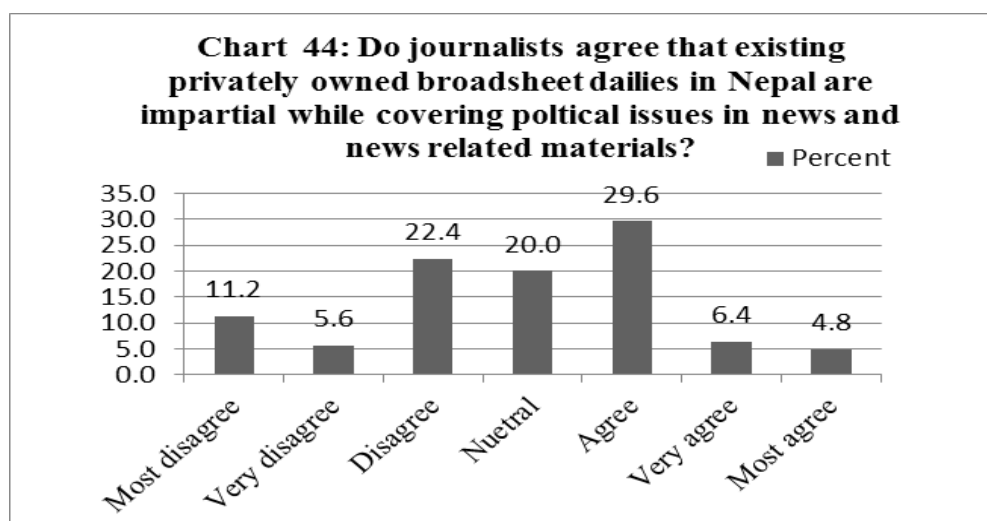


(Field Survey, 2015)

### Level of Impartiality in Broadsheet Dailies in Covering Politics

Most of the respondents think that existing privately owned broadsheet dailies in Nepal are impartial while covering political issues in news and news related materials. Chart 44 shows that nearly 30 per cent respondents agree that existing privately owned broadsheet dailies in Nepal are impartial while covering political issues in news and news related materials. As many as 6 and nearly 5 per cent of the respondents respectively very agree and 5 most agree that the dailies are impartial. Likewise, 20 per cent of the respondents remain neutral in this regard.

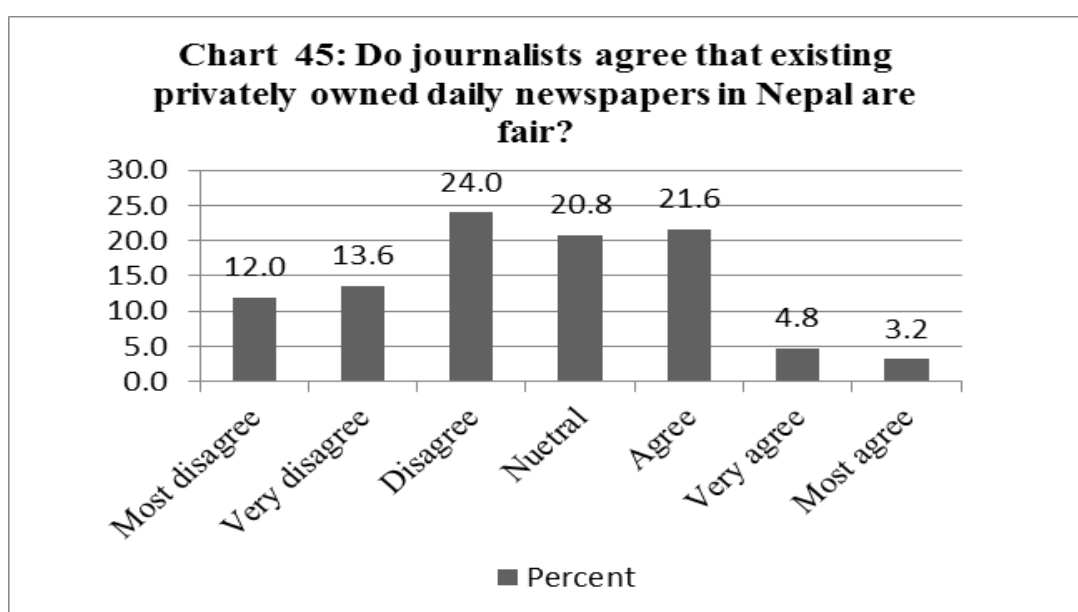
The chart shows that 11 and nearly 6 per cent respondents respectively most disagree and very disagree with the statement. Likewise 22 per cent of the respondents disagree with the statement.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Degree of Fairness in Dailies

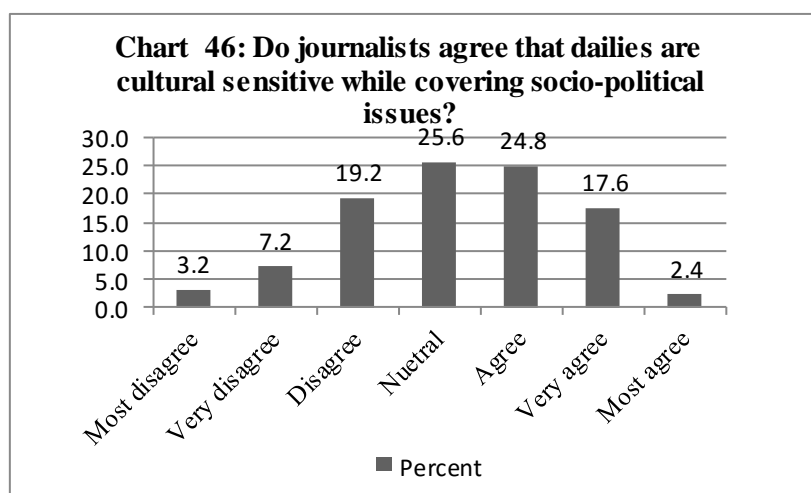
Chart 45 presents the readers' perception on the state of fairness of the existing privately owned daily newspapers. Majority of the respondents do not see that the dailies are fair in presenting news and views. The chart shows that 12, nearly 14 and 24 per cent respectively most disagree, very disagree and disagree. However, as many as 3, nearly 5 and nearly 22 per cent respondents most agree, very agree and agree that existing privately owned daily newspapers in Nepal are fair.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Level of Cultural Sensitivity in Dailies

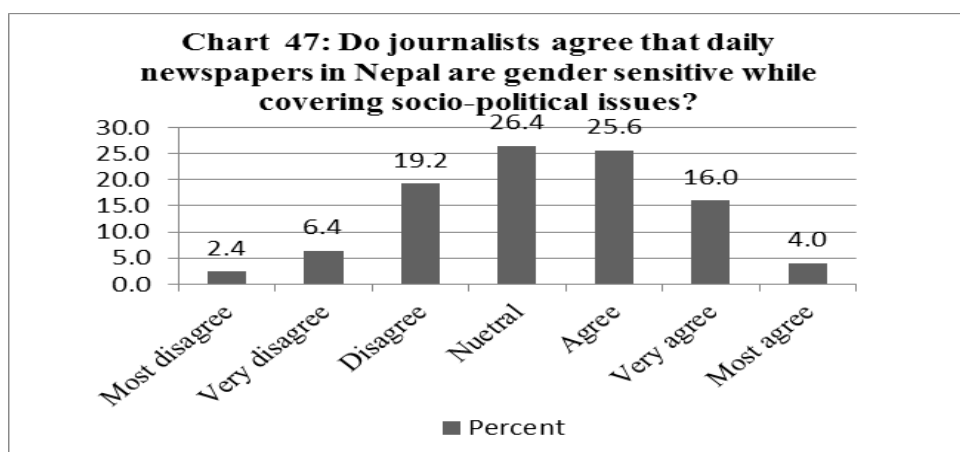
Chart 46 shows that majority of the respondents see that the dailies are cultural sensitive while covering socio-political issues. It indicates that 2, nearly 18 and nearly 25 per cent respondents respectively most agree, very agree and agree that the daily newspapers in Nepal are cultural sensitive in their coverage.



(Field Survey,2015)

### Level of Gender sensitivity in Dailies

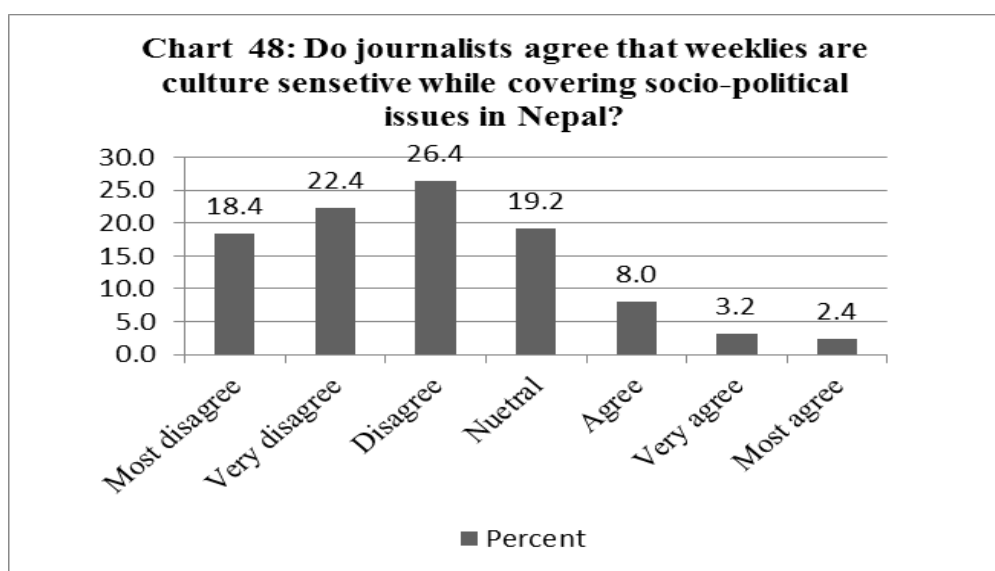
Chart 47 demonstrates that majority of respondents see that the daily newspapers in Nepal are gender sensitive while covering socio-political issues. It shows 4, 16 and nearly 26 per cent respondents respectively most agree, very agree and agree that the dailies are gender sensitive.



(Field Survey,2015)

### Level of Culture Sensitivity in Weeklies

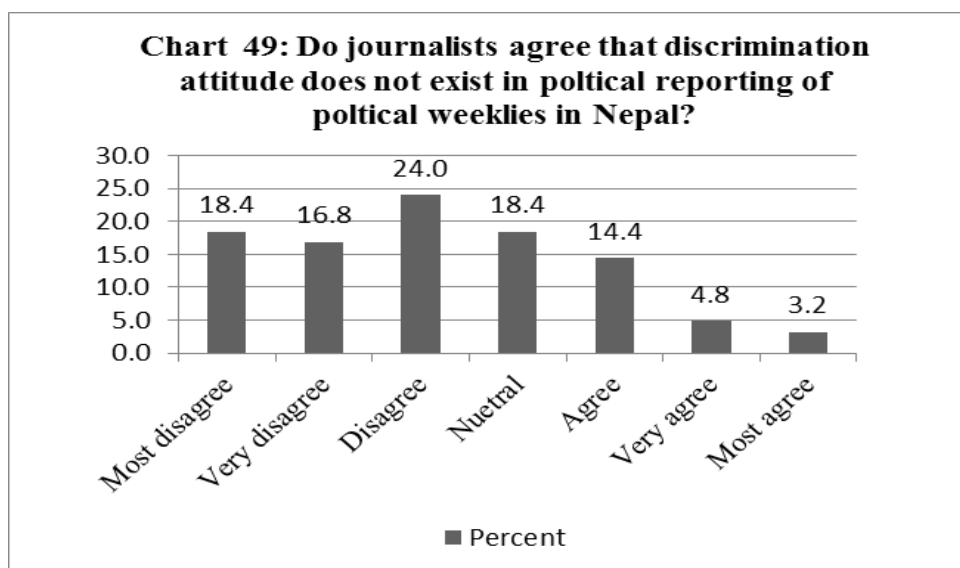
Chart 48 shows that majority of respondent do not see that the weeklies are cultural sensitive while covering socio-political issues in Nepal. It also indicates 18, 22 and 26 per cent respectively most disagree, very disagree and disagree with the statement that the weeklies are cultural sensitive. Likewise, 19 per cent respondents remain neutral in this regard whereas 8, 3 and 2 per cent of the respondents respectively agree, very agree and most agree with the statement.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Attitude of Weeklies in Covering Politics

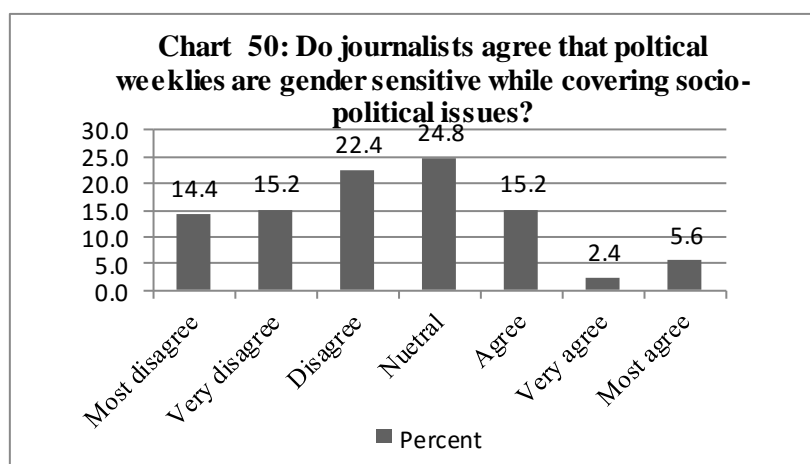
Chart 49 demonstrates that most of the respondents see that discrimination attitude exists in political reporting of political weeklies in Nepal, with 24 per cent of respondents showing that disagree with the statement that discrimination attitude does not exist in political reporting of political weeklies. Likewise, 18 per cent and nearly 17 per cent of the respondents respectively most disagree and very disagree with the statement. The chart indicates that 18 per cent of the respondents remain neutral in this regard.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Level of Gender Sensitivity in Weeklies

Chart 50 reveals that majority of the respondents do not see gender sensitivity in the political weeklies. It indicates that 22, 15 and 14 per cent of the respondents respectively disagree, very disagree and most disagree that political weeklies are gender sensitive while covering socio-political issues. Nearly 25 per cent of the respondents remain neutral in this regard. If 15 per cent of the respondents agree with the statement, 2 and 6 per cent of the respondents respectively very agree and most agree that politics-laden weeklies are gender sensitive while covering socio-political issues.

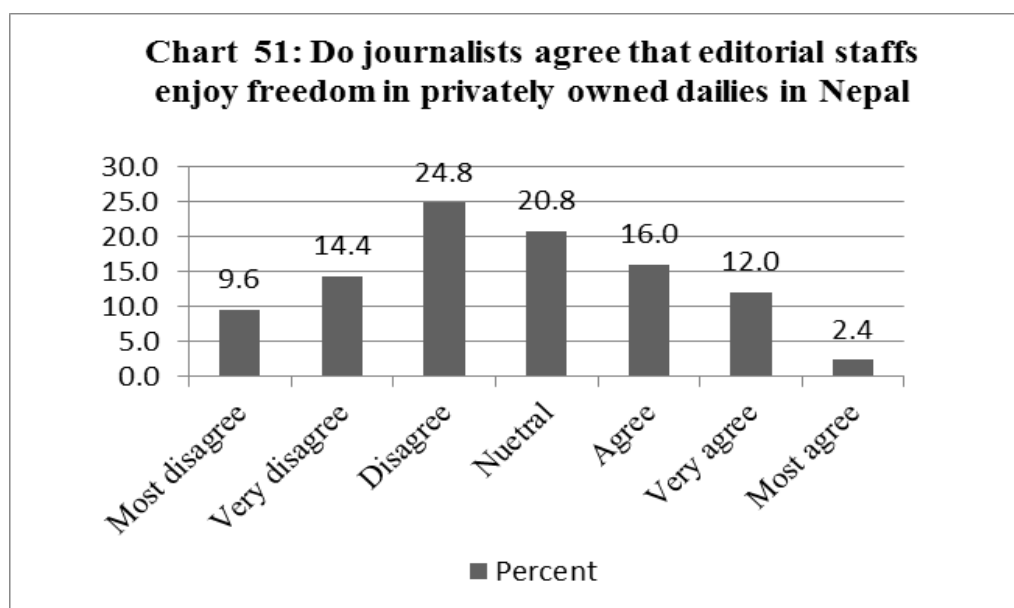


(Field Survey, 2015)

### Degree of Editorial Staff Freedom in Privately Owned Dailies

Chart 51 shows the journalists' perception on editorial independence in the dailies. Majority of the respondents do not see editorial independence in the dailies. Nearly 25, 14 and nearly 10 per cent of the respondents disagree, very disagree and most disagree respectively that editorial staffs enjoy freedom in privately owned dailies in Nepal.

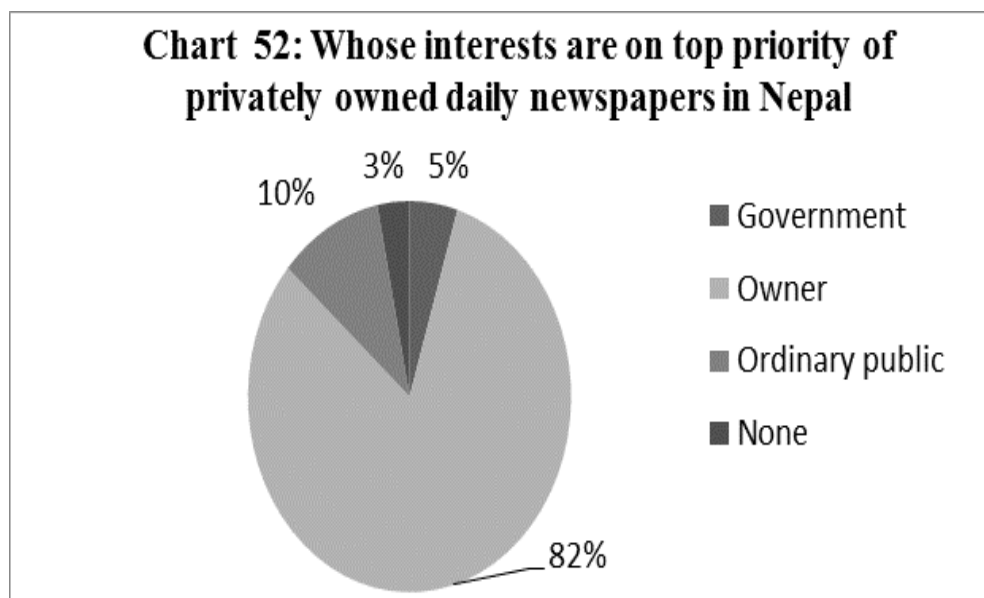
If 21 per cent of the respondents remain neutral in this regard, 16 per cent of the respondents agree, 12 per cent very agree and 2 per cent most agree that editorial staff enjoy freedom in privately owned dailies in Nepal.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Whose Interests Are Top Priority of Privately Owned Dailies?

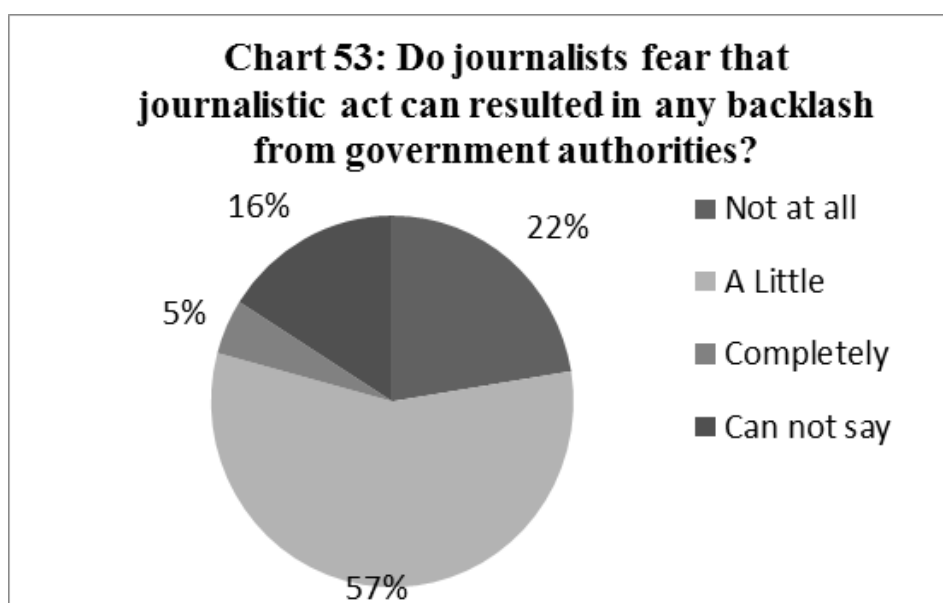
Chart 52 reveals that 82 per cent of respondents state that owner's interests are the top priority of privately owned daily newspapers in Nepal. Likewise, 10 per cent respondents state that interests of the ordinary public are the top priority.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### **Level of Fear of Government Authorities among Journalists**

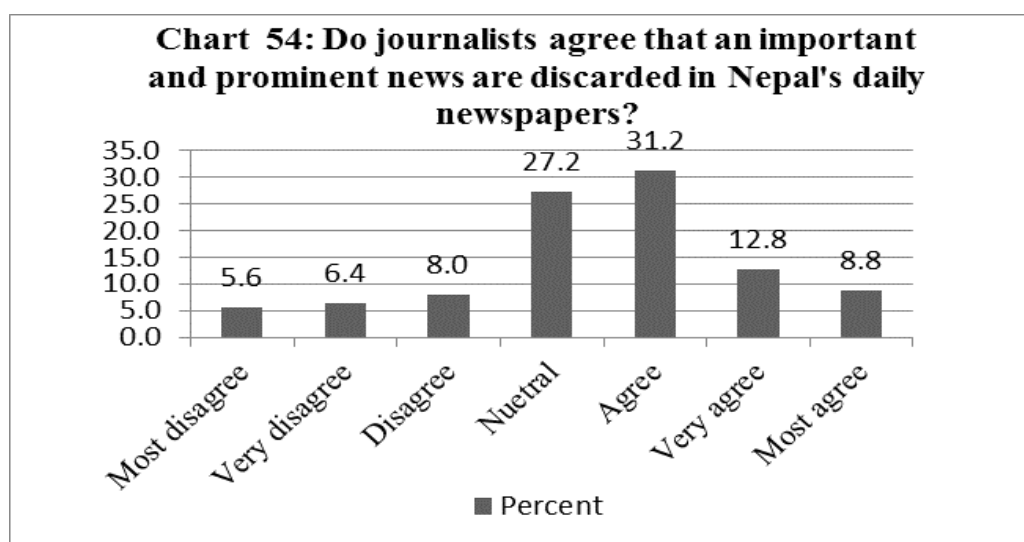
Chart 53 shows that nearly 57 per cent of respondents have some degree of fear that journalistic act can result in a backlash from government authorities. If 22 per cent state that they do not fear at all, 5 per cent state that they fear the consequence of the journalistic works. Likewise, 16 per cent state that they cannot say.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Suppression of Important and Prominent News in Dailies

Chart 54 demonstrates that majority of the Nepali journalists admit that important and prominent news are discarded in Nepal's daily newspapers, with 31, nearly 13 and nearly 9 per cent of the respondents indicating to agree, very agree and most agree that even an important and prominent news are discarded in the Nepali dailies. Nearly 6 per cent, 6 per cent, and 8 per cent of the respondents respectively most disagree, very disagree and disagree that important and prominent news are discarded in the dailies. Likewise, 27 per cent of the respondents remain neutral in response to the question.

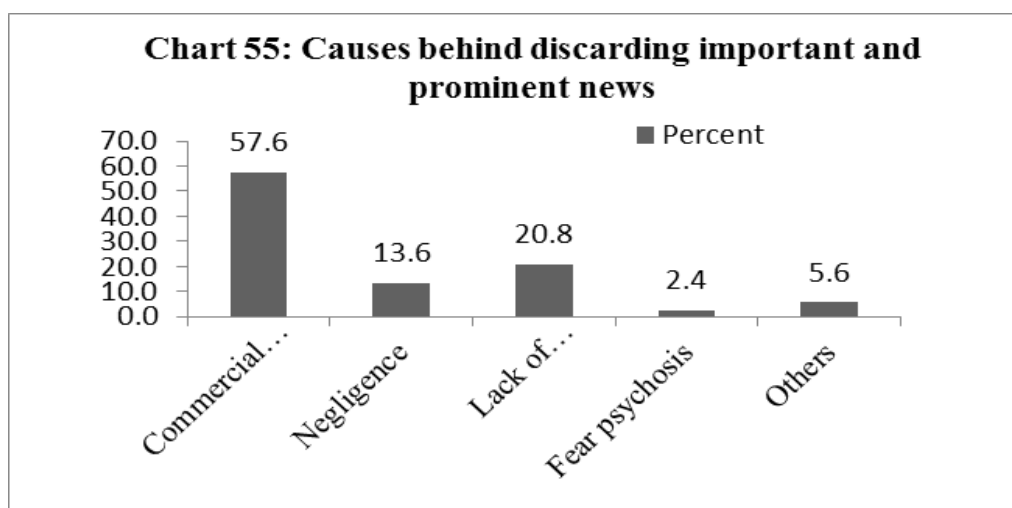


(Field Survey, 2015)

### Causes behind Discarding Important and Prominent News

Chart 55 shows that nearly 58 per cent of the respondents view that commercial interests are the major causes behind discarding important and prominent news in the daily newspapers. It indicates that 14 per cent of the respondents attributes to negligence the cause behind discarding important and prominent news in the dailies. Likewise, 21 per cent consider lack of professionalism 2 per cent consider fear psychosis as the causes of the discarding of important and prominence news.

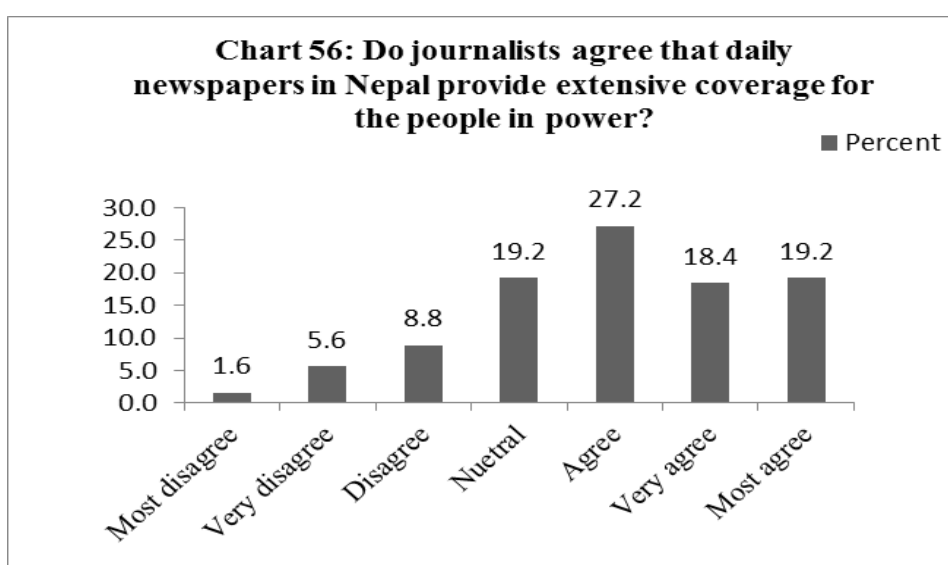




(Field Survey, 2015)

### Extent of Coverage for People in Power in Dailies

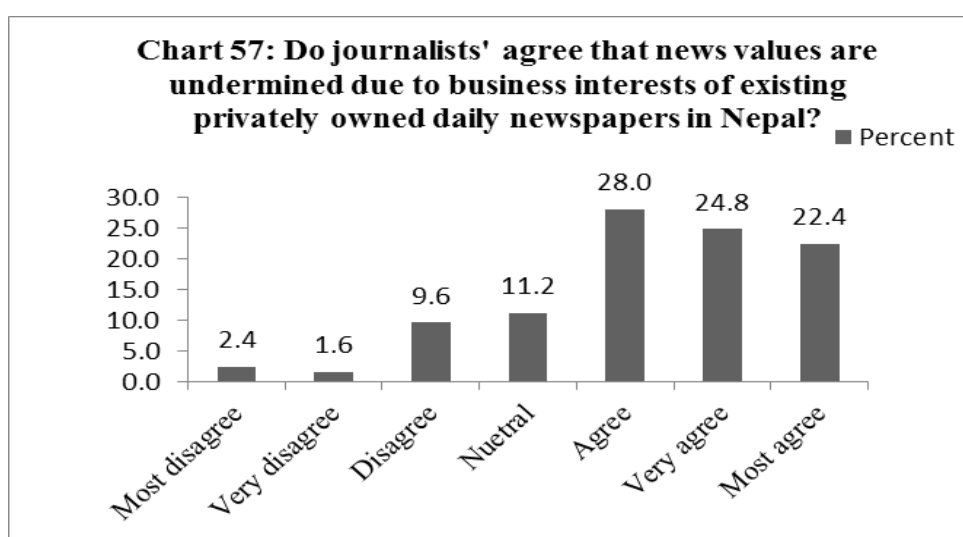
As Chart 56 demonstrates, majority of the journalists admitting that daily newspapers in Nepal provide extensive coverage for the people in power, with 27, 18 and 19 per cent of the respondent respectively indicating they agree, very agree and most agree that dailies give wider coverage to powerful people. Nearly 2 per cent, 6 per cent and 9 per cent of the respondents respectively most disagree, very disagree and disagree that dailies provide extensive coverage for the people in power. Likewise, 19 per cent of the respondents remain neutral in this regard.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### **Ignoring of News Values Due to Business Interests in Dailies**

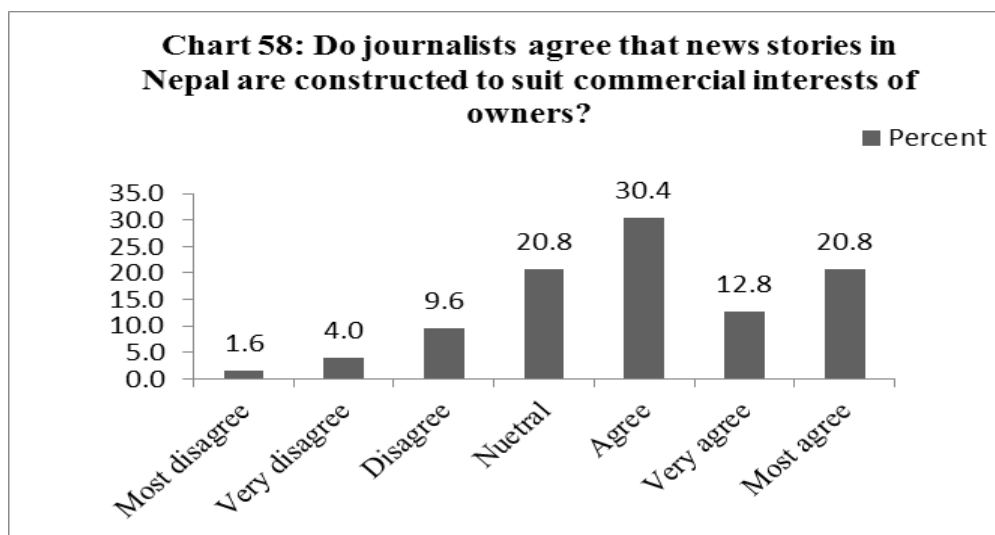
Chart 57 shows that majority of the journalists admit that news values are undermined due to the business interests of existing privately owned daily newspapers in Nepal. It indicates that 28, nearly 25 and 22 per cent respectively agree, very agree and most agree that news values are undermined due to the business interests. If nearly 14 per cent of the respondents view that news values are not undermined due to business interests, 2 per cent and another nearly 2 per cent respondents most disagree and very disagree respectively. Likewise, nearly 10 per cent of the respondents respectively disagree that news values are undermined due to business interests of existing privately owned daily newspapers in Nepal whereas 11 per cent of the respondents remain neutral in this regard.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### **Construction of News as Per Proprietor Influence**

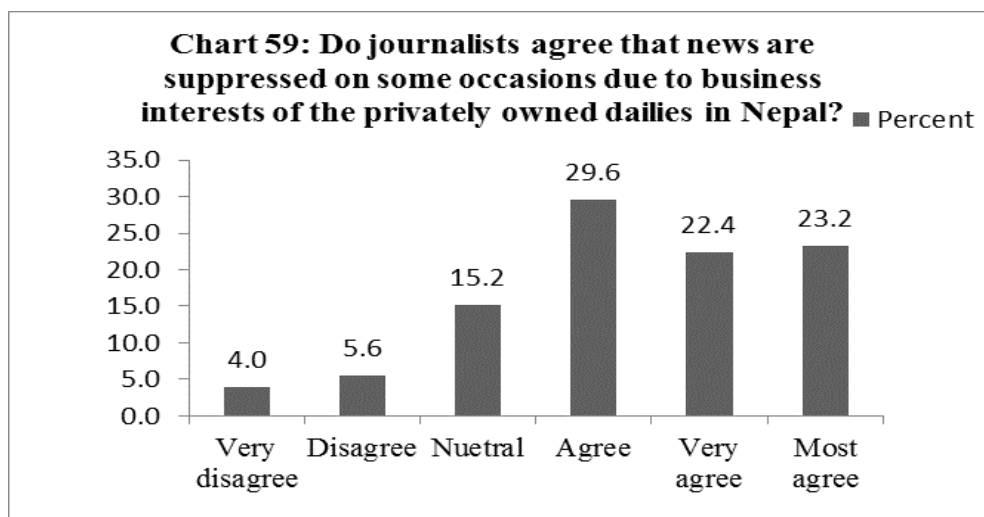
Chart 58 shows that 30 per cent of the respondents agree along with nearly 13 and 21 respondents indicating they very agree and most agree that news stories in Nepal are constructed to suit the commercial interests of the owners of the newspapers. Nearly 2 per cent respondents most disagree that news stories in the Nepali newspapers are constructed to suit commercial interests of the owners. Nearly 10 per cent and 4 per cent of the respondents respectively disagree and very disagree that the news stories are constructed to suit commercial interests. Likewise, 21 per cent respondents remain neutral in response to the question.



(Field Survey, 2015)

### Suppression of News Due to Business Interests in Dailies

Chart 59 demonstrates that majority of the journalists admit that news are suppressed on some occasions due to the business interest of the privately owned dailies in Nepal. It indicates 23 and 22 per cent of the respondents respectively most agree and very agree that news are suppressed. Likewise, 30 per cent of the respondents agree with the statement.

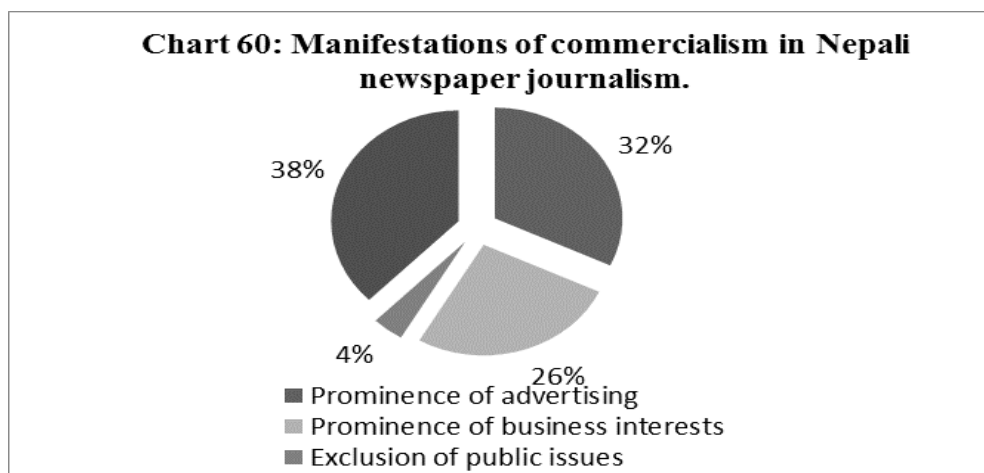


(Field Survey, 2015)

### Manifestations of Commercialism in Nepali Newspaper Journalism

Chart 60 demonstrates that 32 per cent of the respondents consider prominence of advertising as the manifestation of commercialism in the Nepali newspapers. It shows

that 26 per cent of the respondents take prominence of business interests as the reflection of commercialism. But 4 per cent consider exclusion of public issues as the manifestation of commercialism. Likewise, 38 per cent of the respondents take all these features as being reflected in the privately owned broadsheet dailies in Nepal.



(Field Survey, 2015)

## **CHAPTER-V**

### **CONVERGENCE OF FINDINGS: STATE OF NEWSPAPERS PRIOR TO AND AFTER 1990**

A number of scattered historical references offer a connected history of newspaper journalism in Nepal. The convergence of findings, thus, taken out of different methodologies, indicates a picture of evolution and features of transition of newspaper journalism from partisanship to commercialism.

#### **5.1 State of Professionalism before 1990**

State of newspaper journalism in Nepal prior to 1990 can be divided in two phases: prior to 1960 and after 1960. Because of the primitive stage in terms of scale, socio-political interaction and influence, Nepali journalism prior to 1951 was not considered as a significant entity in society. Although between 1951 and 1960 the newspapers in Nepal experienced multiparty democracy, the overall political environment was overburdened by the tradition of intolerance to criticism. Not much modification in the laws related to the media was made in line with the democratic system even after the advent of democracy in 1951.

The Nepali newspapers between 1951 and 1960 are noted basically for their political partisanship. Generally, the virtue of a newspaper would be attached with the fate of a political party during that time. Newspaper market was mainly occupied by the party mouthpieces. The newspapers were in early stage in terms of appearance and reading materials. Overt slant and unfair writings were common. The period between 1951 and 1960 witnessed a flowering of political parties of all ideological hues, and the euphoria manifested in the newspapers. The major political parties started the papers under their direct ownership.

The democratic euphoria proved to be short lived and the restrictions impeded the way of professionalism. After 1960, suspension of civil and political rights discouraged the functioning of newspapers. However, journalists who were critical of the governments applied creative skills to communicate dissent voices. Nevertheless,

due to the existence of harsh legal measures large scale capital investment in the newspapers was dismal.

The history of Nepali print journalism timeline shows that the first magazine in Nepali language *Gorkha Bharat Jeevan* was started from India in 1886 by Motiram Bhatta. Subsequently, the first magazine in Nepali within Nepal, *Sudhasagar* monthly, was launched in 1898. After three years, the first Nepali newspaper, *Gorakhpatra*, started in 1901. At the beginning it was a weekly appearing every Monday, before appearing twice a week. Subsequently on February 18, 1961, it became a daily newspaper.

Citizen voices were almost absent in the public arena and did not reach the government policymaking level during the Rana rule. Moreover, the general public was not allowed to participate in political and intellectual activities. Literacy rate and the level of public consciousness were very low. However, the situation started to change after the 1930s as a small number of educated youths began to vow against the autocratic rule.

It was inevitable that the end of Rana rule opened the flood gate for publications, including newspapers in Nepal. Consequently, the Nepali newspapers, like a number of other industries, started as pre-modern entities. Due to lack of political freedom and the low level of political consciousness, the newspapers and periodicals did not emerge until the late 1800s. After the political changes of 1951, students, journalists and civil servants emerged as the influential pressure groups. However, the initial phase of the Nepali journalism frequently demonstrated rabid critics of the opponents and ultra-nationalist sentiments.

Journalists from earlier generation argued that professionalism in the Nepali newspapers started right after 1951. This argument is based on three factors. First, some of the newspapers of that period were not allegiant to any political stream. Second, some of the newspapers had not emerged with the financial support from the government. Third, some of the newspapers had not manifested any vested interest other than to serve the readers.

Nevertheless, most of the Nepali newspapers in post-1951 period had overt allegiance to political parties and they served as propaganda tools of the political parties. In many instances, the newspapers presented fictitious materials in order to defame opponents. The mouthpieces of the political parties were careless about their credibility and used to undermine accuracy.

Moreover, a positive aspect was visible after 1951. Public debates started to emerge systematically through the newspapers and the country witnessed the rise of a public sphere of critical discourse. Though very limited in circulation, newspapers began to be felt as major channels of public communication. The 1951 political change accepted the civil and political rights of people for the first time in the country. However, the restrictive laws prevailed even after 1951. General public were not aware of freedom of expression and opinion during 1950s. Even political parties that were in opposition during the democratic movement did not adequately internalize the notion of people's rights, especially the media freedom to criticize the government officials. Thus serious efforts for institutionalizing media freedom were not made during ten years period after 1951.

At the end of the Rana rule, *Gorakhpatta* was the only newspaper in the country. *Jagaran*, the first Nepali weekly from the private sector, edited by Hridaya Chandra Singh Pradhan, was started on February 15, 1951. After four days, the first Nepali daily, *Awaj*, edited by Siddhi Charan Shrestha, was started from the private sector and it became possible only after the demise of Rana rule. The first issue of the newspaper was published on February 19, 1951. *Samaj* daily appeared on September 9, 1954. After one year Maniraj Upadhyaya became its editor and publisher. The first daily in English, *The Commoner*, was launched on July 15, 1956 under the editorship of Gopal Das Shrestha. By the time of the inception of *The Rising Nepal* by Gorkhapatra Corporation, there were at least two regular English dailies in Nepal, *The Commoner* and *The Motherland*.

Examples of *Haalkhabar* and *Samyukta Prayas* demonstrate the professionalism and partisan leanings of the Nepali newspapers, the phenomenon that started in the initial phase of journalism in post-1951. The daily newspapers after 1951 political change were smaller in size and they had hard time struggling just to publish four pages. On

December 21, 1956, *Haalkhabar* published a notice entitled *Namra nibedan* [Humble urge] in its front page. The notice stated that despite its commitment to bring four-page daily, the management is compelled to bring only two pages again because of the lack of compositors. The notice also stated that the management is trying its best to bring four-page paper on a regular basis in the near future. The newspapers demonstrated their commitment to serve a wide range of audience. For instance, the same issue of *Haalkhabar* had appealed its reader to send articles.

Manindra Raj Shrestha started *The Motherland* on January 16, 1958 as its editor and publisher. After 1951 the flood gate of the newspapers was opened and by the time of the first general elections, the number of newspapers shot up dramatically. Over the years Nepali newspapers demonstrated an overt partisan practice as a dominant trend. The partisan practice started to surface with the end of Rana military oligarchy.

Within a decade after the end of the Rana rule, Nepal's newspaper landscape changed significantly in terms of size. The Nepali newspapers between 1951 and 1960 were allowed to uphold political debate. However, inadequacy of sense of a responsibility resulted in extreme partisanship or political slant. The well circulated excuse/reason has been the dire economic state of the press. They were quite aware that the trend to be a party mouthpiece was not compatible with the quest to report with professional standards. Therefore, some of them exercised balance in reporting. They also noted the change in the way how various issues were covered to some extent when the first elected government started to provide economic support to newspapers in 1958.

The newspapers were divided distinctly into two factions after the imposition of Panchayat system: One Pro-Panchayat faction and another one taking diametrically opposite positioning. Apart from the one year during the referendum, till the year 1990, the press representing the oppositions suffered the political restrictions and deprivation of the governments' subsidies. The press representing the opposition always aimed at the demolition of the Panchayat regime.

Though there were political restrictions over the newspapers in the aftermath of the king's take-over of December 15, 1960, they continued their struggle for survival. Thereafter, the newspapers were restricted by the government in a bid to prevent



alternative political views. During the period, the editors of weeklies, mostly members of the NC or a faction of the Communist Parties, crafted innovative ways to express on behalf of their respective parties. Mostly the weeklies ventilated the pluralistic views in the ambit of political communication.

One of the significant weeklies started after 1960 was *Naya Sandesh*. The weekly begun on July 23, 1961, and was published and edited by Ramesh Nath Pandey. Like *Samikshya*, which appeared during the period of the first elected government, it also claimed to provide views rather than the news. Unlike the other news publications, *Naya Sandesh* began with an extensively market-oriented approach in its contents and design. This was something new at that time.

Though all the political freedoms, including press freedom, were forbidden in the post-take-over period, newspapers continued their affiliation with different political parties. A palpable evidence of this is provided by the fact that most political parties competed to bring out newspapers in order to communicate within the political sphere. However, with the second amendment of the Panchayat constitution, the newspapers were compelled to face ultra-conservatism polity in 1975. The government imposed ban on 11 newspapers comprising both dailies and weeklies including *Rashtrapukar*, *Samikshya* and *Matribhumi*. Nevertheless, most of the popular weeklies provided the forum to advocate the cause for democracy.

Between the king's take-over and the referendum, most of the Nepali newspapers were weak in terms of opinion. Because of the governments' measures to mute them, most of the newspapers were not thought provoking in content but overtly critical to the governments. Before the referendum, most of the daily newspapers in Nepal used to cover the ritualistic news supplied by RSS, a state owned news agency. Only a very few newspapers dared to carry the dissenting voices in politics.

After the King's take-over in 1960, the Nepali newspapers struggled to seek and socialize democratic values. They played supportive roles during the political agitations between 1979 and 1990. Amidst the massive student movement, on May 24, 1979 King Birendra made the historic proclamation that a referendum will be held on the political system. On May 30, within a week of the Royal Proclamation of the

referendum, the King made another proclamation granting freedom of public assembly and expression. During referendum process the division between pro-establishment and opposition deepened. The rift remained intact throughout the Panchayat period till 1990. Another significant change was that the referendum which took place on May 2, 1980 provided an opportunity to political parties to reorganize themselves.

It is during this time that the banned anti-Panchayat parties, such as different factions of the Communist Parties and NC, consolidated themselves as powerful opposing forces in Nepali politics. The development had a strong impact over Nepali newspapers. Political activists engaged themselves in a mission journalism fuelled by new aspirations and some of the political parties started to run newspapers.

The king granted some relief in terms of freedom of expression during a short period between 1979 and 1980 amidst the preparation of the referendum. By the time of referendum political polarization among the newspapers was very clear. During the period of referendum, *Samikshya*, *Matribhumi* and *Rashtrapukar* were quite popular among the readers. Both *Samikshya* and *Matribhumi* were inclined to the left stream. *Samikshya* was aligned to Communist groups close to the then USSR. *Matribhumi* was known for its slant towards the Communist groups close to China. *Matribhumi* had a reach among the intellectuals outside of the Kathmandu valley.

During the 1979-80 referendum campaign, the Nepali newspapers overtly pursued the discourse over the political choice. *Rastrapukar*, close to NC, not only took the stand for the multiparty democracy, rather it used blue ink for some issues as blue colour was the symbol allocated for multiparty. On the other hand, the palace indicated its best wishes for the modified Panchayat rule. For instance, Queen Aishwarya wore yellow sari on some occasions during the campaigning period.

However, after the referendum Panchayat returned to its original avatar and most of the restrictions were again imposed. The outcome of the referendum had made the palace arrogant. After the referendum, the Panchayat resumed imposition of harsh measures against the newspapers. For example, on September 24, 1980, merely, five months after the referendum, the Bagmati Zonal Office revoked the registration of

three newspapers, namely *Samikshya*, *Nepal Post* and *Manoranjan*, and fined a sum of Rs. 100 each to their editors. Devendra Gautam, editor of *Nepal Post*, decided not to pay the fine and consequently he was deported to jail for 100 days. The zonal office claimed that the action was taken as per the Press and Publication Act of 2032 BS, which prohibited criticism of the diplomatic representatives, government's offices, the king and the royal family. The Act had a provision under which registration of a publication was automatically revoked when a fine was imposed on it by the local administration.

While on the one hand a faction of weekly newspapers practiced allegiance to the political parties, on the other, another faction was close to Panchayat system. For both of the factions, editorial independence and policy needed to be understood relatively to their ideological stance. By the time of the third amendment of the Panchayat constitution in the aftermath of the referendum in 1980, the government started to lose its control over the political environment in the country. The third amendment of the 1963 constitution in 1980 which set up direct elections to the National Panchayat resulted in origination of greater political activities throughout the country.

Some of the political newspapers emerged as relatively managed institutions, run under a team spirit in post-referendum scenario. However, the modus operandi of the newspapers having Nepali Congress slant were different from the newspapers leaning towards the Communist parties. The Communist parties used to form a small unit within the newspaper, entrusting it with the responsibilities of executing party decisions or to produce the materials as per party guidelines. The editorials staffs used to discuss the ways of executing the party directives within the unit. The party used to appoint the editor and subordinates and the same unit used to review the performance of the editorial staffs. The secretary of the unit used to be all in all and de facto editor of the party newspaper.

During 30 years of Panchayat rule, Nepali newspapers were polarized into pro-government and anti-government camps. Party-affiliated and party-owned newspapers were considered the mainstream newspapers during the period. The newspapers between the time of King Mahendra's take-over and the referendum faced draconian laws that were framed to impose restrictions on newspapers. Journalists were

compelled to face adverse situations in the absence of freedom of press and lack of access to information. The government could confiscate the entire property of a press if the newspaper materials assumed to be provoking sedition. However, prior to the referendum, *Rashtrapukar* along with other weekly newspapers showed firm commitment and partisanship towards democratic freedoms.

The real motive of the editors to run a newspaper was to serve the politics of a particular party. Gopal Thapaliya, the editor of *Chhalphal* weekly, provides veritable evidence of this point. He began a weekly in order to provide support to the party through his writings. He considered himself basically a freedom fighter as well as a party cadre. He carried a party version because he was part of the democratic movement and he was the member of the party. Selecting materials for the paper was a collective process. Materials would be decided jointly by the party in-charge and him. He was involved in the party organization during the inception of the papers. The process of preparing editorials was somehow collective; editorial team would prepare it in accordance to the party guidance.

*Chhalphal's* practice of journalism was fully galvanized by partisan leanings. It would take care of aesthetic aspects of writing too. However, its practice was mainly guided by the ideologies and principles of the party. The notion of Party's ideal journalist was to be red and expert simultaneously. Thapaliya does not remember any incident that party objected to any published materials at all. The materials were prepared in close consultations with the party. *Chhalphal* was considered as one of the organizers of the Communist movement in Nepal during the Panchayat regime, particularly after the referendum. Though it was not an official mouthpiece of then Communist Party of Nepal (ML), because of its allegiance to that party, every issue of the *Chhalphal* used to be impatiently awaited in order to get authentic view of Communist Party which was banned at the time. Even in post-1990 period, it was running in close cooperation with the party for many years. Over the years, it has been running independently with declared inclination towards Nepal Communist Party (Unified Marxist Leninist). A newspaper under the party had to run through an in-charge deputed by the concerned committee. The party central committee, as the policy making body, would provide guidelines for functioning. Publication of any material against the party line was not allowed.

*Prakash*, *Chhalphal* and *Drishti* led the Communist movement to a new phase infused with mission journalism. Through publishing the news related to injustice, exploitation, suppression and rebellion, these three newspapers played a pivotal role to make rural areas a prime sector of Nepali journalism. Exposition of suppression, rebellion, exploitation and incidents of protests were published in these papers. By providing materials on the struggle of peasant, labour, students and examples of global movements these papers disseminated the messages that liberation is obtained only through organized struggle.

Amidst such upheavals, Nepal's newspaper landscape was on the way of gaining wider ground. *Saptahik Manch* and subsequent weeklies run by the same editorial team were popular among the readers during the mid-1980s. It was started on December 16, 1982 on behalf of *Saptakoshi Prakashan*. Baikuntha Narayan Pradhan was its publisher. Its editor was Padam Thakurathi. Despite being the founder president of *Rashtrabadi Swatantra Vidhyathri Mandal*, student wing of the Panchayat, Thakurathi represented the liberal stream as a newspaper editor with the initiation of *Saptahik Manch*. On September 6, 1986, an attempt was to assassinate him when he was the editor of *Bimarsha weekly* that had resurface as the substitute for *Saptahik Manch* by the same group.

Though *Bimarsha* quickly gained popularity, it was inclined to a faction of pro-Panchayat politicians. It was exposed during an incident of extra-judicial killings by the police, when the paper, in allegiance to Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa, blatantly distorted the reporting on the incident. Piskar incident could be taken as an emblematic case in order to evaluate the state of media freedom in post-referendum Nepal. Nepali newspapers split into two factions regarding the coverage on the incident as usual.

The first issue of *Drishti* appeared in the market on October 30, 1983. Editorial of its first issue stressed on the necessity of the culture of listening to the voice of the press to charter the way towards democracy. It mentioned the difficulties of those journalists who uncover economic corruption. It showed commitment to put an end to economic corruption, black marketing, and injustice. Initially, the real motive of the

editor/publisher behind the newspaper was the mission. The newspaper could provide support to the party by transmitting news related to the party. Shambhoo Shrestha, the founder editor and publisher considered himself as a freedom fighter. He was an ardent supporter of party's world view. He held a strong feeling that he was contributing to the democratic movement. The materials for the paper would be decided by the in-charge from the party. The editorial team with the guidance of party used to prepare the editorials or the main news. The journalists including him would try to present the materials in a professional way to some extent. But there was an entangled existence of inter-relation between professionalism and partisan practice. On the one hand, the professionalism which the party journalists practised was based on the principles of free press. On the other, professionalism was fully galvanized by partisan leaning. Shrestha recalls occasions when the party objected to a particular published materials.

Another major newspaper that emerged after the referendum was *Deshantar* that was inclined to NC. Later, during the pro-democracy movement in 1990, it carried the voice of NC. During the movement the government tried to stop its publication and some of the issues were confiscated by the Bagamati Zonal Office.

*Deshantar* was close to NC and committed to the democratic movement. Thus the real motive to run the newspaper was, of course, the political mission to propagate democratic movement. That is why even after being arrested more than five times during his career, Kishore Nepal, the editor of *Deshantar*, continued the profession. It started during the last years of Panchayat era. That was the time for public awareness. The publisher and editor would be basically a journalist. But he did carry a party version because he was a part of the democratic movement. When it came to the selection of the materials, editorial team depending upon news flow used to be decisive. Though he was in Nepali Congress camp, at the time, the editorial would be drafted on the basis of typical relevant themes.

Besides the political atmosphere, a low level of literacy and inadequate technology were the stumbling blocks for the development of newspapers. Due to a primitive technology, mass production of Nepali newspapers was not possible during Panchayat period. The newspapers of that period were not appealing in appearance. Market was

very limited. As such, they were confined within a very limited circle. Financially, the newspapers of that period were extremely vulnerable.

The discriminatory behaviour practised by the Panchayat regime among the newspapers was one of the contributing factors for the political slant. The government's discrimination enhanced the polarization of pro and anti-circle among the newspapers. This polarization was a fertile ground for the anti-establishment parties to disseminate the political messages. The weeklies represented the partisan press, belonging to two major political streams the Communist Parties and Nepali Congress. Some of the newspapers, from the private sector, were at the forefront in propagating the government policies. However, they were not popular with the general mass.

The partisan newspapers in Nepal, mostly the weeklies, demonstrate a couple of strong characteristics. First, they have a marked consistency in editorial policy in terms of advocating certain views on politics. Second, the newspapers proved to be the ladder for the party affiliated journalists to jump into active politics. Many a journalist turned out to become noted political personalities. Third, such newspapers openly acknowledge partisan attitude.

Though, the dissenting voices were not allowed to be made public by the laws of the land, the newspapers demonstrated mettle to defy restrictions prior to 1990. The newspapers favouring the political parties, mainly weeklies of that period struggled in a bid to provide ventilation to the contentious politics. Although their presentations were biased against their political opponents, their materials appeared as the opinion and reactions providing insights into different power centres and political factions. The materials echoed the diverse political views of that period. Most of the newspapers resisted the government's harsh measures and ventilated the people's aspiration for political changes. At the same time, there were also newspapers which supported the Panchayat politics. The newspapers were divided into pro-establishment and anti-establishment factions. Thus the newspapers, especially the weeklies, became the forum for the public communication even in the period when civil and political rights including freedom of expression were denied.

### Timeline of Expanding Newspaper Landscape in Nepal

The table below shows that the history of the first periodical in Nepali language dates back to 1886. It started from the Indian city Banaras. However, the first newspaper within the country was *Gorakhapatra*. It was only after 92 years that the first privately owned broadsheet daily newspaper appeared in the country.

Table V: Timeline of expansion of the newspaper and other periodicals' landscape in Nepal

Year in AD	Events
1886	First Magazine in Nepali language, outside the country: Moti Ram Bhatta, a Nepali poet, brought out the first Nepali periodical, a literary magazine, <i>Gorkha Bharat Jeevan</i> in Banaras during the British rule in 1886 AD.
1889	First literary magazine in Nepali within the country: <i>Sudhasagar monthly</i> , 1898 AD.
1901	First Nepali newspaper: <i>Gorakhapatra</i> started on May 6, 1901. Weekly newspaper at the beginning (every Monday). Later, bi-weekly and tri-weekly since October 15, 1943 and December 23, 1946 respectively. Since February 18, 1961 it is published as a daily newspaper.
1951	First Nepali daily: <i>Awaj</i> . Its first issue was published on February 19, 1951.
1951	First weekly from the private sector: <i>Jagaran</i> was started on February 15, 1951, known as the first weekly started by the private sector.
1954	First English publication (1954-55): Barun Shumsher Rana, as the editor, began the country's first English language periodical, the monthly <i>Himalayan Guardian</i> .
1956	First daily English newspaper of Nepal: <i>The Commoner</i> , launched on the July 15, 1956.
1993	First broadsheet daily from private sector: <i>Kantipur</i> was started on February 18, 1993. It appeared at par with <i>Gorakhapatra</i> and its sister publication <i>The Rising Nepal</i> in terms of size, number of pages, use of photographs, beat reporters and deployment of district correspondences.

(Field study, 2015)



During the period of the Panchayat system and pro-democracy movement the weeklies were the forum to advocate the cause for democracy. Prior to the referendum, *Rashtrapukar* along with other weekly newspapers demonstrated firm commitment and partisanship towards democratic freedoms. The weeklies were more into militancy than truthfulness in covering politics. Their allegiance to the particular political force was overt and served as tools for the particular political organization. They were the missionary or the agent for the political change during the historical moment. Besides not being ideologically independent, they were also financially dependent on the political forces.

The media, on the way to fulfil its democratic potential, reflects the diversity of society. However, the notion could be true only in a well-meaning multiparty democracy. A pluralist media is one of the prerequisites for achieving diversity.

The weeklies with partisan leanings created an atmosphere for interplay between citizens and the political system. The newspapers with partisan leaning played a crucial role during the entire political movement of the country. Since the entire nation indulged in the political debate on the political system, partisan newspapers had wide space at their disposal to facilitate or even to propagate anti-establishment views. They were active in disseminating the information that served the political interests. For a long time, newspapers have been hoisting the flags of partisan politics. Such partisan approach was principally guided by the political theories to begin with. They have been claiming that they have always been sticking to respective political ideology.

Apart from the weeklies that were directly run by the parties, there were also other weeklies advocating a specific political cause. They were also directly involved in the political movement for democracy in the country. Regardless of the political oppression of the day, the trait of journalism in this period was one that sought to assert professionalism by covering news and views on national and international events. The newspapers would face legal obstacles and government oppression while disseminating information and favouring the quest for civil liberties. It may well be said that these were critical years for Nepali journalism. The weeklies with partisan leanings created an atmosphere for interplay between citizens and the political system.

The party newspapers were not similar to the official mouthpiece of the respective parties. Officially they were independent entity, but would be backed by the respective parties. In appearance they were professional newspapers. However, in essence they were political organs of the political wings of the political parties. The weeklies were getting support from behind the scene. Some of the political parties were effectively running those papers in clandestine manner and the trend was dominant until 1990.

Advertisements did not have a big role until 1990. The newspapers survived on copy sales, assistance with political back-up and to some extent political commitment towards the source of the funding. Prior to 1990, the political parties that were engaged in the struggle to establish democracy in the country had been running the newspapers as the part and parcel of their political activities. Politics was a major driving force of newspapers prior to 1990.

Political freedom was perceived as the only prerequisite for the evolution of free, fair and professional newspapers in the country in post-1990 Nepal. Between 1901 and 1990, Nepal's newspaper journalism traversed a journey from infancy to a stage of maturity to a greater extent. However, because of the lack of democratic rights the big newspaper institutions could not emerge before 1990.

## **5.2 Newspaper Landscape during Twenty Five Years (1990-2015) of Multiparty Democracy**

Newspaper landscape started to change dramatically with the 1990 political change. Following the change, a strong quest for professionalism surfaced. Following a compatible political environment, the emerging market began to drive the newspaper industry. After the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression and emergence of an open society, the role of the weeklies with partisan leanings substantially diminished.

One of the major contributing factors of the political transformation of 1990 was the vibrancy of the Nepali newspapers. Nepal witnessed phase of consolidation of democracy between 1990 and 1996. Thereafter, with the completion of democratic transition, proliferation of different outlets of mass media evoked the emergence of

newspapers institution with large investment. Consequently technological advancement also eased the change in terms of form and contents.

Transition of newspapers in post-1990 encompassed the evolution of new media policy and legal regime as well as emergence of large investment ownership of newspapers. However, the policy reforms remained inadequate in order to shape the new newspaper landscape to create more effective democratic space for the general public. It manifested in the adoption of new technologies made adverse impact over the older newspapers, especially the weeklies. These aspects, which created a cycle of cause and consequence, were crucial for discussion on the transition of newspapers in the post-1990 Nepal.

Nepal's political transition also requires to be understood in terms of the transition of media system from the state of dilemma to the state of vibrant, effective and goal-oriented media. The newspaper landscape witnessed some of the visible changes with the emergence of new political order. However, in absence of a new well managed and vibrant media system replacing the older one, the newspapers are seen unable to enhance the state-civil society dialogue as per the expectations.

During the interim period, before the announcement of the new constitution in 1990, Nepal's partisan press played a vital role. It was effective for some years until the emergence of big media houses. The partisan press, for about half a decade after the restoration of democracy, played a role to popularize the new constitution of 1990. It also made efforts in awakening people towards the citizen rights embedded in the constitution. It also enacted the role of a watchdog on behalf of common people. The 1990 constitution established and institutionalized the media freedom in the country. However, after achieving media freedom, other barriers started to unveil in the form of business and commercial interests.

During the first few years of the political changes of 1990, most of the mid-career journalists in Nepal carried a hangover of partisan practice. Nevertheless, the big media houses were institutionally compelled to demonstrate and maintain a balanced orientation towards professional norms and values. Since they were self-conscious enough as not to be seen partial and did not aspire to be branded as a party organ, they

were compelled to prevent overt partisan leaning. However, they were seen courting particular parties on certain occasions.

Newspapers in post-1990 Nepal has clearly demonstrated that they can provide a platform for different views regarding any issue or event. On the one hand there were weeklies which continued their practice of partisan journalism, and on the other hand, daily newspapers adopting the strategy of equi-distance from all political parties. Gradually, even the prestigious weeklies started to lag behind. Since most of the weeklies were affiliated to political factions, unpredictability on the part of the parties and politicians dragged those weeklies into further complicated positions.

Adoption of liberal media policy and constitutional and legal reform simultaneously stirred the people's psyche and opened the new avenues for technological advancement in Nepal. Thus, a conducive atmosphere for large scale investment in the newspapers created the mass newspapers that were different in terms of size, content and circulation from their predecessors.

It is evident from the world history that circulation of newspapers increases with the heightened political awareness. People want to see political development on the pages of newspapers and generally a politically awakened citizen gains a sense of gratification with in-depth political reporting. Citizens feel they are involved in the political discourse through the newspapers.

Although, there were some well-known dailies and weeklies that existed before and after the referendum 1980, their reach among the general public was relatively low in comparison to the large dailies that were to emerge in the aftermath of 1990. Thus, the mass newspapers in the real sense emerged only after 1990 in the form of broadsheet dailies.

Mass newspapers can be identified using some specific criteria. Such newspapers evolve with large investment, has comparatively wide reach and access as well as remarkable size of the market. In the context of Nepal, the new political climate led the country to two major trends-the flow of capital investment in newspapers and the operation of high speed printing press for the production of newspapers. Thereafter, the Nepali newspapers reached the era of mass production with wider reach and

consumption. Such trends along with the diversified audience and pluralism animated the newspaper industry. As the newspaper industry started to grow, it began to create a remarkable size of market.

Today's newspapers are the end product of an evolutionary process of the print media in global scenario. The newspapers had undergone several experiments in order to achieve its current variant. In the course of time, a well-accepted definition of an ideal newspaper was developed. It envisages a newspaper as a printed paper produced by a mechanical process at least once in a week and available to everyone who would pay the price. The definition says that a newspaper usually covers news of general interest rather than items on specialized topics and needs to be readable by the people of ordinary literacy skills. The newspaper needs to be timely. Going by such widely accepted definition, the history of newspaper dates back to the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century.

In the year 1830, the US newspapers with limited elite readers began to witness a transformation into the mass newspapers. The Nepali newspapers encountered similar such transition after the political changes in 1990. In the Nepali context, mass awareness and mass media arrived simultaneously. Backed by political changes and technological innovations the country witnessed the professional development of journalism. However, the dichotomy was that the weeklies, that were catalyst agent of the pro-democratic movement, started to decline after the restoration of the democracy.

It is not a matter of debate that one of the significant trends of Nepali press after the restoration of democracy is enactment of professionalism and crisis of partisan press. In an effort to expand their reach some publishing houses started printing *Kantipur* and *Nepal Samacharpatra* in Biratnagar to grab the market of Eastern part of the country. *Nepal Samacharpatra* started to print from Biratnagar on April 26, 2001. *Kantipur* started from there on June 2, 2001. *Kantipur* daily started printing from Chitawan, a town in mid-region, on July 1, 2004. Though, in the course of time changes have taken place, the newspapers underwent continuous multiple expansion of reach and access in Nepali society.

The editions of major dailies from different parts of the country are a new phenomenon in post-1990 Nepal. As newspapers increasingly seek advertising they

have to seek readers for satisfying advertisers' demand for value for money. There are readers in small towns and countryside, and such readers want to read about themselves. Thus the requirements drove giant advertisers to demand that newspapers be widely available with contents presented in a simple and day to day language.

Nepal entered into the age of newspaper enterprise after the 1990 political changes. Before 1990, the Nepali newspapers were severely restricted by draconian laws. The Nepali laws concerning the press and publications before 1990 were considered as part of propaganda. The laws were made for restrictions and not for the media freedom.

After 1990, weekly newspapers such as *Prajatantra* and *The Independent* appeared with relatively secure financial backing to begin with amidst euphoric hope in the new democratic system. Similarly, immediately after the restoration of democracy, a news magazine, *Janamanch weekly* was started by Publications Nepal Pvt. Ltd. on October 25, 1990. On behalf of the Publications Kishor Silwal was its publisher and the editor was Mukund Parajuli. Although it was a weekly magazine with relatively well managed team, it was known for its leaning towards NC.

*Janaastha* weekly, splinted from *Drishti* weekly which was wellknown for its allegiance with the then CPN (UML), holds a market share just above the broadsheet dailies such as *Rajdhani* and *Nepal Samacharpatra*. It was separated from *Drishti* after 1990. *Janastha* is closely followed by *Sanghu*. The editors of both the tabloids have leftist, apparently UML inclined, image. However, both the papers are known for their exclusive subjective contents that do not spare anyone.

After 1990, in terms of size and appearance of the newspapers, the situation was entirely different, as *Kantipur* started as 12-page-broadsheet. It was followed by more than a dozen other dailies. With the need for large capital investments in advanced printing plants and the recruiting and maintaining of a number of staffs, no single individual, as a publisher, could afford to begin a newspaper in the changed context. Consequently, journalists became the employees of newly emerged newspaper companies.

In the changed atmosphere, initiation of daily newspapers proved to be successful over the years. The difference was visible in terms of appearance as the dailies of the earlier days used to be smaller in size. When it was conceived nobody could have predicted that Kantipur Publications would embody a success story in the post-Panchayat order. *Kantipur* daily, started on February 18, 1993 demonstrated an example of changed attitude towards the role of the newspaper in the post-1990 period, i.e., the readiness to cover all political parties. This was not a common practice prior to 1990. *Kantipur* started to carry articles representing different political parties. The practice was novel during the early years of democracy after 1990. In contrast to *Gorakhapatra*, it sought to give fair coverage to all political view points and to treat all views with a degree of respect. Consequently, the practice became a dominant feature in the daily newspapers that emerged after 1990.

Both the newspapers of Kantipur Publications earned credibility in a short period. Within half a decade after the restoration of democracy, *Gorakhapatra* was lagging behind *Kantipur* daily. In fact, the general readers were tired of stereotyped presentations of *Gorakhapatra* and its sister publication *The Rising Nepal* that echo government's views and lines irrespective of which party is in the government.

Although, Kantipur publications started its dailies with the recruitment of a group of known journalist-figures with allegiance to Nepali Congress, it hired significant number reporters who were well connected to different political parties. For instance, Kishore Nepal, a well-known pro-Congress journalist was the powerful news coordinator at the Kantipur Publications. Later, the Publications started to recruit the reporters and staffs with different political leanings and allowed the materials to colour as per their partisan leanings. It is evident that the Post always does lean more toward NC.

*Kantipur* and its sister publication *The Kathmandu Post* managed to publish a wide variety of opinions. It positioned itself at the centre-right in its political standing. Its market positioning contributed to its growth and expansion. The newspaper's readers and writers belong to the demographic group that tend to be centre-rightist. *Kantipur* and *The Kathmandu Post*, more generally Kantipur Publications, added an alternative platform for expression of different opinions and thoughts. Within a couple of years

two broadsheets from a well-managed privately owned publication house, posed challenges and could compete against government subsidized newspapers.

It is pretty clear that per day circulation figures and distribution networks of newspapers in Nepal has increased tremendously after 1990. However, an agreed data for the newspaper market is not available. On December 15, 1996, in the fourth year of its inception, *Kantipur* started to use the slogan, *Nepalma sarbadhik bikri hune rashtriya daunik* [The highest selling Nepali national daily] on its mast head, though without any substantiation to its claim.

Following the lead of Kantipur Publications, a number of broadsheet dailies came into existence. The year 1995 witnessed democratic euphoria in bringing out as many as three broadsheet dailies from the private sector. There were broadsheets such as *Lokpatra*, *Himalaya Times* and *Ajako Samacharpatra* of Kamana Publications, which later changed its name to *Nepal Samacharpatra*, has been one of the continuously serving newspapers in post-1990 Nepal. *Aajako Samacharpatra* was started on January 11 and *Himalaya Times* hit the market on December 25.

Soon after Surya Publications Pvt. Ltd. started two dailies *Shree Sagarmatha* and *The Everest Herald* in Nepali and English languages respectively on January 25, 1996. Tirtha Koirala and Vijaya Kant Karna were the editors for Nepali and English papers of the Surya Publications. The Publications tried to cater to the UML-sympathizing left-of-centre readers. However, less than half a year, it went out of business in mid-1997. Some entrepreneurs, with the backing from CPN-UML, had established Surya Publications to counterbalance Kantipur Publications pro-congress slants.

Nepali newspapers entered the age of competition for information with the initiation of legal reforms that allowed private radio and subsequently came up with the initiation of the first private radio in 1997. This added media avenues made the newspapers to think about their need to up-grade their news materials. Two years after the advent of the democracy, the government paved the way for non-state players in the radio sector with the promulgation of *Rashtriya Sanchar Niti, 2049* [National Communication Policy, 1993]. However, it took another three years to develop an effective provision for the same in the regulation. And it took another two years to translate the provision of the *Rashtriya Prasharan Niyamawali, 2052* [National



Broadcasting Regulations, 1995]. By the year 1997 the government itself broke the monopoly of government owned radio by allowing licences for FM band to the private sector. On May 18, 1997 *Radio Sagarmatha* was launched and it was followed by a several hundred FM radio channels spread all over the country today. The liberalization of radio created long term impact on newspapers in terms of news and news related materials, inducing the additional competitive media environment.

The year 2001 is remarkable in a sense that it was the year for the initiation of private sector television channels in Nepal. With the assumption of all the state power by the king himself on February 1, 2005, Nepali newspapers were broadly divided into two factions. One faction comprised political weeklies owned by the editors themselves. Another faction comprised the big dailies owned by the business people. The newspapers owned by the business people were receptive to government's instructions for a few months after the king's takeover.

Nepal experienced suspension of democratic process once again in 2005. The political actors, which emerged with the 1990 political change, faced severe criticism from the general public. However, the role of newspapers was also inadequate to prevent the interruption in democracy. The newspapers could not empower the people to protect and assert their rights in an infant democracy as per the expectation. Newspapers require conducive political atmosphere and democratically managed media system to ensure vibrant socio-political discourse.

Six months after the king's takeover in 2005, the Supreme Court gave a verdict to stop the process of cancelling the licence of Kathmandu based Nepal FM. The verdict encouraged the privately owned dailies to provide space for the materials critical of the government. In the course of time most newspapers began to give space to the anti-monarch movement.

Nepal entered the era of another transition since 2006, when the armed conflict between Maoists and the State ended with the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) on November 21. Thereafter, newspapers found another benchmark. The number of private television channels including the channels dedicated to the news, were increased. The trend mounted the pressure on the newspapers to supply a good amount of quality news. Later, the political changes in 2006-7 institutionalized the

long-time quest for independent radio in the country and guaranteed full-fledged news bulletins and political interviews. The year 2006 is also marked for the fast-paced growth of FM radio channels in Nepal.

There were some areas where, besides the commitments, things could not move ahead before 2006. For instance, although the Right to Information was guaranteed in the 1990 constitution, the Act could not be ratified before 2007. An Interim Constitution was promulgated in 2007, paving the way for the Constituent Assembly Election. Subsequently a general election for the Constituent Assembly was held on April 10, 2008. After the election, the first session of the Assembly, on May 28, 2008, voted to abolish monarchy and declare the country as a Federal Democratic Republic. However, the Constituent Assembly got dissolved without promulgating constitution. Declaration of republic resulted in a new wave of critical thinking and new level of awareness. The Working Journalists Act was enacted in 2007. Furthermore, diversity in terms of inclusion of the voice of ethnic and minority groups started to be represented in substantial manner after the country was declared a republic. In fact, these developments are the indicators that demonstrate the impact of political transition after 2006.

As per the Companies Act 2006 of Nepal, someone who wishes to start an enterprise can establish a company. A company comprising less than seven members is considered as a private company. The number of shareholders in a private company cannot exceed 50. A private company needs to be mentioned clearly as private limited company. A private company would be eligible to begin business after obtaining a certificate from office of the company registrar.

Nepali newspapers in post-transition phase, which started in 2007, encountered a different socio-political state. As the country transformed into the republic state by abolishing two and half a century long monarchy, it witnessed shift in power structure. Hence, the levers of hegemonic control over the political-economy, including media system, occupied by the political forces emerged out the republic.

The state owned newspapers remained under the direct control of the successive governments even after 2007. As the 2007- interim Constitution was framed in the

spirit of cultural, ethnic and gender sensitivity, debate on the functioning of the Nepali newspapers came to the surface. Formulations and adaptation of comprehensive policies concerning ethnic, cultural and gender sensitivity are the expectations from the Nepali newspapers in the aftermath of 2007 political change.

The dailies continuously grew in republic and the weeklies continuously lost their ground. The top level human resources, including the owners and editorial staffs of Kantipur Publications, split into the new publishing houses. One of the groups started *Nagarik* and *The Republica* in 2008. It is the first big house that brought out two dailies in post-republic Nepal.

On August 7, 2011 *Nepal Samacharpatra* began to claim itself as "*Rajdhani sabaibhanda badhi padhine rashtriya daunik* [Most widely read national daily in the capital]." It did not present a single line to corroborate the claim. However, it was obvious that broadsheet dailies are leading newspapers in the market.

Press Council Nepal provides the circulation figures based on the claimed made by the respective papers. It has not conducted any research on the circulation figures. The leading newspapers in post-1990 Nepal are the dailies. As per a senior official of the Council, who was involved in Audit Committee of Circulation, in the fiscal year BS 2067-68, *Kantipur* had claimed a daily circulation of 213,772. It was followed by *Nepal Samacharpatra* with 77,274 copies and *Annapurna Post* with 62,355. *Naya Patrika* and *Rajdhani* claimed 57,010 and 40,990 copies respectively. *Sanghu* weekly claimed in 2067-68 BS circulation of 10,298 (Acharya, 2070 BS, p. 47).

In the fiscal year 2069-70 BS, both *Kantipur* and *Annapurna Post* did not fill in the circulation related forms developed by the ACC of PCN. However, the number of, circulation figures claimed by other newspapers sharply fluctuated when compared with the data they had provided with earlier fiscal year. As per the record of the PCN, in the fiscal year 2069-70 BS *Nagarik* claimed its daily circulation as 14,243. Similarly, as per the record kept by the PCN, the respective dailies *Naya Patrika* and *Rajdhani* claimed their daily circulation 27,563 and 14,801 respectively. In that fiscal year *Nepal Samacharpatra* claimed its circulation to be 77,274.

By an estimate, as stated by Gopal Budhathoki, former member of Audit Committee of Circulation in the capacity of the member of the Press Council Nepal, *Kantipur* is the highest selling newspaper in Kathmandu with approximately 40 thousand from the stalls together with those on the streets. Besides that it has another 40 thousands annual subscribers in Kathmandu alone. *Kantipur* is followed by *Gorakhapatra*, *Nagarik*, *Annapurna Post*, *Naya Patrika*, *Rajdhani* and *Nepal Samacharpatra*.

Another estimate claims that if one has to list seven major dailies that are popular on the street of Kathmandu the name goes likewise: *Kantipur*, *Gorakhapatra*, *Naya Patrika*, *Nagarik*, *Karobar*, *Himalayan Times* and *Annapurna Post*. Conversation with Puskal Dhakal, Kathmandu based newspaper distributor, reveals that the market position of *Janaastha* weekly newspaper comes after *Nagarik* and it is ahead of *Karobar* and *The Himalayan Times*. Except two entertainment based Friday weeklies, sister publications of *Kantipur* and *Nagarik*, *Janaastha* and *Sanghu* are the top selling politics-laden weekly newspapers.

The Press Council Nepal (2072, p.244) awarded A+ grading to *Gorakhapatra*, *Kantipur*, *Himalayan Times*, *Annapurna Post*, *The Rising Nepal*, *Nagarik* and *The Kathmandu Post* dailies in the newspaper classifications result for the fiscal year 2069/070 BS. The Council awarded A+ grading to one more daily *Naya Patrika* for the fiscal year 2070/071 BS (Press Council Nepal, 2072, p. 281). Tabloid *Janaastha* weekly, along with other two weeklies, magazines *Nepal* and *Himal*, are also included in A+ grading for both the fiscal years.

All the dailies are open for subscribers, whereas weeklies do not provide for such subscriptions. Besides the entertainment focused weeklies, like the ones brought out by publishing houses that publish *Kantipur* and *Nagarik*, most politics-laden weeklies have very low circulation in comparison to the dailies. As much as 75 per cent of the entire contents laden with political messages in the mainly black and white weeklies do not have even figure in the top ten papers in the market. As per the PCN record, in the fiscal year 2069-70 BS, *Gorakhapatra* gave its daily circulation as 32,111. Similarly, *Janaastha* and *Sanghu* weeklies claimed their per day circulation as many as 14,225 and 10,000 respectively.

The editions of major dailies from different parts of the country are a new phenomenon in post-1990 Nepal. As newspapers increasingly sought advertising, particularly national advertising, they had also to seek readers for satisfying advertisers demanding the value for money. Readers were to be found in the small towns and countryside, and such readers wanted to read about themselves. Thus the requirements of national advertisers drove newspapers to make their papers locally available with simple content in their day to day language.

The country got a new Federal Republic Constitution on September 20, 2015 after the second election of the Constituent Assembly which was held on November 19, 2013. The new constitutions took the country at the threshold of new beginning. The mass newspapers that flourish after 1990, witnessed a new atmosphere with the consolidation of 2007 political change. Between 1990 and 2015 the country witnessed the transition of newspapers to mass newspapers. The daily newspapers identified themselves as public domain with large and diverse content and audience, and also with greater extent of professionalism in this time frame.

### **5.3 Impact of Political Changes of 1990 on Politics-Laden Partisan Weeklies**

Despite the difficult political scenario, the political weeklies continuously carried the voices of the political parties until 1990. They provided a forum for public debate and communication during Panchayat period. Even though the political parties were outlawed and many political activities were banned, the newspapers covered them. After 1990, the stronghold of weeklies started to decline in the market.

The political changes started to alter the scenario. National awareness due to the political movement and the growth in readership is another consequence. The change resulted in novelty in terms of form and content of Nepali newspapers. Accountability in Nepali press heightened after the introduction of democracy. Thus, the Nepali newspapers in the post-1990 period marked a rapid and startling transition.

As the political changes altered their role, it slowly dawned that small weeklies need not necessarily uphold their politics. After the restoration of democracy the political parties that were outlawed for three decades assumed power and they received wider avenues for the publicity. Small weekly newspapers were no more required. Political

activists themselves realized that the weeklies are not capable to conduct political communication in a changed context and they were attracted to the professionally functioning large dailies to express themselves. After the emergence of the broadsheet dailies the traditional weeklies were considered inferior media outlet even by the political leaders.

Amidst the political atmosphere of openness, the country began to pass through a transition from partisanship to commercialization with the historical political change of 1990. Then gradually commercialism emerged out of the non-partisan papers. During the early years after the restoration of democracy the newspapers had to undergo a transitional phase. By that time, partisan leanings were common characteristics of the newspapers.

The weeklies played a historical role in animating the campaign for political democratization, but they reached the declining stage in post-1990 media scenario. The dailies started with large investment that replaced the weeklies in a relatively short span of time. Privately owned dailies received warm welcome by the reading audience and they considered it a new phenomenon in the country's professional journalism. Within a few years, many weeklies that had played historical role, by and large, were confined to the pages of history. Some weeklies changed their forms and contents and managed to survive in the market. However, the dailies continuously moved ahead, leaving them far behind in terms of circulation, reach, advertisement revenues and influence. Difference is sharply visible in terms of appearance as the dailies of the earlier days used to be smaller in size.

The changes in political scenario and the constitutional guarantee of the right to express, paved the way for the newspaper industry. The democratic euphoria spread among intellectuals who had since so long pressed for the freedom of expression. However, the journalists who had a legacy of partisan leaning continued their adherence to their traditional way of functioning. Eventually, in the new context, they continued becoming tools for their respective political parties. Restoration of democracy in the year 1990 chartered the way for the newspaper industry, and subsequent development of mass newspapers. The constitutional guarantee of the freedom of the press and the change in governance created a new environment for the newspaper industry which attracted mass readers.

The changes in political scenario and the constitutional guarantee of the right to express, paved the way for the newspaper industry. The democratic euphoria took over intellectuals who had since long aspired for the freedom of expression. However, the journalists who had a legacy of partisan leaning did not change their modus operandi. Eventually, in the new context, they continued becoming tools for their respective political parties.

After the restoration of democracy in 1990 the new environment of pluralism and openness encouraged the investment in journalism from private sector. Increment of newspapers itself backed the professionalism. This new phenomenon created a difficult situation for traditional partisan newspapers of the country. Within half a decade of restoration of democracy, Nepal witnessed the emergence of some of the giant players in the periphery of newspaper industry. Such media-houses were new phenomenon Nepal has never seen before. The new trend was not favourable for the partisan press. In fact that was the beginning of decline of partisan press in Nepal.

The weeklies continued their acknowledged partisan inclination in post-1990. However, they started to be declined after the emergence of the mass newspapers. The liberal polity of post-1990 Nepal gave birth to a wider range of big newspapers. Though, there were some well-known dailies and weeklies existed before and after the referendum 1980, their reach among the general public was low in comparison to the big dailies that emerged in aftermath of 1990. Thus, the mass newspapers in the real sense emerged after 1990 in the form of broadsheet dailies. The partisan newspapers are not considered as main stream media after 1990.

In post-1990 scenario, *Drishti* changed itself not only in terms of content, but also in terms of appearance in order to face the market challenge. When some of its journalists expressed disagreements over its "old fashion" and left the paper and started new ventures, as the editor cum publisher, Shambhoo Shrestha felt the compulsion to revamp the paper to cover more than partisan politics after the emergence of the broadsheet dailies with huge investment. Within a couple of years after the restoration of democracy, the political parties decided to withdraw from all the economic and management involvement in the weeklies that had allegiance to them.

The preconditions for the development of the mass media such as availability of a potential audience, development of symbolic language, technology, and evolution of political freedom with the guarantee of freedom of expression started to surface in post-1990 Nepal. Nepali newspapers faced a competitive atmosphere which resulted in the transformation of the entire newspaper landscape. The political changes induced a take-off moment in the media business resulting in a short and long term reforms in the newspaper landscape. Thereafter, the 1990 political change gradually started to alter the world of the Nepali newspapers. Impact of the political changes resulted in the opening of a new era of newspaper journalism. The well-known partisan newspaper *Rashtrapukar* was closed in the early years of democracy in October 1996. Other such newspapers continued with sever difficulties. Though *Chhalphal* continued with its traditional style and appearance, *Deshantar* and *Drishti* changed its getup and content. These newspapers have not snapped off official relations with their respective parties but they are not considered authorities on the respective parties' views.

The Nepali newspapers have a long legacy of partisan press and they have been deviating from professional norms and standards on many occasions. However, the major aim of the daily newspapers in post-1990 Nepal is to develop as impartial and professional as well as income generating industry. Because the media has been enjoying independence from the shackles of the state, it is natural for the people to expect non-partisan newspapers.

The weeklies or low-scale-investment newspapers carried alternative voice in the society during the Panchayat period. Even after 1990, at least in quite a few contexts the weekly newspapers proved to be an alternative media outlet to the mainstream national dailies, that is, during the direct royal rule in 2005-6. Operation of 8-page, mostly black and white political newspapers, do not need large investments and they are most often run by the journalists themselves. In most cases the proprietor plays double role as a publisher and the editor. These weeklies are not run by conglomerates or big business houses. They do not function as a corporate management. Thus, in comparison to the privately owned big national dailies, weeklies indulged less in commercial interests. The editors of the weekly newspapers state that they have been disclosing the information that were suppressed by the privately owned big dailies



The newspapers, specifically the weeklies, with political messages in their contents, functioned as the political organs of different political parties between 1960 and 1990. The weeklies clearly manifested two tendencies before 1990: newspapers that were supporters of Panchayat system and newspapers that played the role of the opposition. Hardly any newspaper played the role of an independent watchdog. The newspapers, especially the weeklies, were considered as alternative sources of information.

Professional intellectuals, who had started to read newspapers prior to 1990, recall those newspapers' political slant. Nearly 90 per cent (see Chart 3) of the respondents of the survey among 125 professional intellectuals for this study evaluated those newspapers as partisan papers. As many as 48 evaluated the state of newspapers in Nepal prior to 1990 as highly partisan and 41 per cent termed them as partisan.

Journalists also find the newspapers before 1990 with political slant. As many as 87 per cent (see Chart 34) of the respondents of the survey amongst 125 journalists consider political allegiance was high amongst the newspapers of that period. 58 and nearly 29 per cent of the respondents consider that the state of newspapers prior to 1990 was highly partisan and partisan to political parties.

However, after 1990, even political activists, writers and analysts, who were active contributors to the weeklies, shifted to the dailies. As the weeklies started to decline, the dailies started to emerge as effective avenues to ventilate the different world views concerning public issues and affairs. The survey among active readers, representing professional intellectuals, also reveals that 75 per cent of the readers observe that the influence of the weeklies has decreased in the newspaper market (See Chart 31) after 1990.

For example, Daman Nath Dhungana, in a quick one-week evaluation of 18 newspapers including *Deshantar*, *Chhalphal* and *Drishti* in May 1999, observes that even though all those newspapers were not official mouthpieces of the political parties still they assumed the role of a mouthpiece. He states that they rarely covered any social issue and that they distorted the matter to serve the political interest. Dhungana, former speaker of the parliament, concludes in a paper presented at a seminar entitled Human Rights Violation by Mass Media, and organized by Sancharika Samuha in May 1999 that it was very rare that one would get social news in those newspapers.

Overt political allegiance is one of the contributing factors for the decline of the weeklies after 1990. In the survey among the Nepali journalists, as many as 86 per cent of the respondents (See Chart 41) state that political allegiance is visible in the weeklies. Similarly, as many as 69 per cent of the respondents state that weeklies frequently carry unverified information (See Chart 39). As many as 59 per cent respondents observe that discriminating attitude exists in the political reporting of political weeklies (See Chart 49).

In the aftermath of the 1990 political changes, the dailies emerging in private sector rapidly gained momentum. In contrast to the fate of the weeklies, the dailies diversified their contents and began to show impartiality to some extent. Survey among the journalists reveals as many as 41 per cent of the respondents consider that the dailies are relatively impartial (See Chart 44).

Aside daily newspapers, the weeklies older than the privately owned broadsheet dailies, started to lose the ground after 1990. Different estimates on circulation of the Nepali newspapers, including the classification conducted by the PCN, demonstrate that the weeklies are declining after 1990. Survey among the journalists conducted for this study also leads to similar conclusion, with 65 per cent respondents saying (See Chart 42) that the influence of political weeklies in Nepal had decreased in the aftermath of the political changes of 1990. Thus, it is indicative that the influence of the political weeklies has been overshadowed by the dailies that emerged after 1990.

Although the party political paper is one of the common variant of the newspapers all over the world, the newspaper of this kind, published by or for the party, has been losing ground to commercial press forms, both as an idea and as a business enterprise. In the context of Nepal, the current dailies are not seen as overtly partisan. The contents of the Nepali newspapers are diversified and the current newspapers are not politics-laden. However, lack of financial and editorial independence as well as the transparency in ownership, are considered as the major weaknesses of the current Nepali newspapers.

The role, opportunity and challenges of the Nepali newspapers altered after the emergence of democracy. The changed context was the consequence of the constitutional guarantee of press freedom. The constitutional guarantee of press

freedom enshrined by the article 13 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1990 created a fertile ground for big investment in the press. With the enactment of the new constitution, press laws were reformulated.

Broadsheet dailies emerged as one of the consequences of the political changes that ensured political freedom. Newspapers are blessed with a fear free atmosphere where censorship and the harsh legal measure of the past days were abandoned. In this context, the newly emerged dailies started to serve more than the substitute of the old fashioned weeklies. The editions of major dailies printed from different parts of the country are a new phenomenon in post-1990 Nepal. This is one of the added attribute of the print media landscaped that has emerged after the regime change of 1990.

Promotion of freedom of expression, media pluralism and diversity development of local newspapers outside Kathmandu valley, and trained human resource are some of the indicators for assessing Nepal's newspaper landscape during the period of transition. By the first decade after 1990, Nepali media improved significantly in these areas.

After King Gyanendra's assumptions of power in 2005, the dailies were soft toward the new regime for over six months. As the agitation against the direct royal rule gradually took off, the big dailies started to turn critically against the King.

After the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression and open society, the role of the weeklies with partisan leanings diminished to greater extent. For a long time newspapers have been holding the flags of partisan politics. Such partisan approach has been principally guided the political theories. They claim that they have always been sticking to respective political ideology. Despite the restrictions imposed on political freedoms and the pluralistic views, Nepali society, in comparison to 1951, was transformed greatly in terms of polity by the year 1990. The situation was ripe to bring about the political changes.

The discrepancies between the aspiration of the general public and the presentation of partisan papers widened rapidly after the emergence of democracy. Registration of newspapers increased every year after 1990. However, the general readers wanted to

see newspapers with complete and balanced presentation of diverse range of news and other reading materials. Thus the partisan newspapers lagged behind in the market.

#### **5.4 State of Political Communication Based on Newspapers Prior to and After 1990**

Nepali newspaper landscape prior to 1990 was dominant by the weeklies, tabloids with partisan leanings. After 1990, broadsheets emerged and the weeklies continued to exist, but without change. In the changed context, the small dailies that continued since the Panchayat period started to vanish. Even after 1990, the weeklies echoed the partisan voices of different factions of the political parties.

Free and fearless communication between political leaders and their electorates grew in greater extent after 1990 in comparison to prior to 1990. Proliferation of broadsheet dailies created an atmosphere where exchange of ideas, belief and opinion in different levels of society became possible.

Prior to 1990, the state owned dailies, *Gorakhaptra* and *The Rising Nepal*, were well managed and resourceful in comparison to the low-budget dailies and weeklies from the private sector. By the mid-1990s, *Gorakhaptra* and *The Rising Nepal* gradually lost their influence to the privately owned dailies. Prior to 1990, there was only one big newspaper organization, Gorakhaptra Corporation, in the country, run by the government. The newspapers from private sector were small institutions with very limited human resources. In many cases the newspapers were run by a single person. Editor and publisher used to be the same person. In many instances, the editors required to play the role of advertising collector and distributor too. A few newspapers had two or three editorial staff who worked almost like volunteers. Later, mainly after the referendum of 1980, some newspaper organizations had a few editorial staff with modest finance, and administration cum marketing section. The newspapers of that period had demonstrated high level of partisan leanings.

The newspapers prior to 1990 were different in terms of various aspects of the current dailies from the private sectors. Professional intellectuals, who had been reading newspapers even before 1990, observe differences in content, size and layout between the existing privately owned broadsheet dailies and the newspapers prior to 1990. As

many as 87 per cent respondents state that today's dailies are different from the newspapers prior to 1990 Nepal. Similarly, 12 per cent respondents view that there are little differences between the newspapers of the two different periods. Less than 1 per cent opine that they see no difference (See Chart 2).

The range of inquiries implying different methodologies, this study, reached a general conclusion that today's privately owned broadsheet dailies are different in terms of depth and quality of information in comparison to the newspapers prior to 1990. The newspaper landscape started to change after the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990.

Analysis of the front-page contents of some of the representative newspapers from Panchayat period and that of *Kantipur* also show that the reading materials are getting diversified after 1990. The socio-political activists started to move away from the traditional weeklies with the daily newspapers gaining popularity and greater reach. They started to ventilate their idea through the dailies. The newly emerged dailies provided a wider range of platform for critical comments. Thus, the opinion-editorial pages of the daily newspapers began to be diversified and pluralistic.

Since, the broadsheets started to provide adequate space for political discussions and different points of view, the weeklies lost their attraction even in terms of political analyses and comments. The survey among the professional intellectuals demonstrates that people started to depend on dailies for the combination of information, education and entertainment. If 52 per cent intellectual respondents state that they read dailies for all three reasons, only 15 per cent of the respondents state that they read the weeklies for these combined reasons (See Chart 4).

The daily newspapers before 1990 used to be of small in size and most of them used to publish routine and formal news. The weeklies used to cover analytical materials. However, the major driving force for the contents was politics. The Nepali newspapers of that period were dominated by the political contents. Thus the contents lacked diversity during that period.

Before the emergence of broadsheet dailies in the private sector, the weeklies were overtly partisan. After 1990, the situation started to change. However, during the early

years of the 1990s, the newspapers remained more or less partisan. After the emergence of the dailies from the private sector, the trend started to change. The newly emerged dailies did not demonstrate overt political slant. By that time the political weeklies with message-laden materials started to lag behind the market-centric dailies.

The seed of change was the new constitution that guaranteed the press freedom. Subsequently, media policy and related laws and regulations were amended and modified in line with the new constitution. However, during the process of transition from dominant trend of political message-laden newspaper journalism to market driven newspaper journalism, Nepal witnessed the growing importance of advertising revenue for the large-circulation daily newspapers.

In post-1990 Nepal, the threshold of change in the newspaper industry was the change in ownership pattern that resulted in the content and the relationship between the newspaper and its readers. The new relationship created new kinds of expectations from newspaper among the readers. The responses began to manifest in the form of content. The newspapers started to encompass sports, entertainment and a variety of other issues. Both political and commercial interests create hurdles for independence of journalism and cultivate other sources of unfreedom.

The market competition among the large-circulation daily newspapers resulted in dramatic erosion in political slant and a spurt in the diversity of the contents. It is distinctly visible that the number of reporters outside the Kathmandu valley increased significantly, the trend of beat reporting started, quality of photographs, layout and cartoon improved noticeably, and editorial-opinion pages become more attractive and readable.

Because of the authoritarian nature of the rule political communication was under the scrutiny of the king and his governments prior to 1990. The origin and levels of political communication are not fully under the control of the government after 1990. Rather, the business interests of the advertisers and the corporate interests of the investors have greater influences over the nature and extent of communication within the ambit of newspapers. A different way of plantation of political slant in the newspapers started to surface after 1990. The nexus between a business interests that

hold newspapers and political interest began to result in skilfully manipulated messages.

Newspaper journalism in Nepal has been moulded in different shapes in the course of political changes over the years. After the restoration of multiparty democracy within the country amidst the worldwide wave of liberalization, Nepal's newspaper journalism took a new direction. The market-driven trend was the new direction taken by the Nepali daily newspapers in the aftermath of 1990. Along with this, news operations also began to be market-driven.

### **Comparison and Contrast: Nepali Newspapers Before and After 1990**

The table below summarises a comparative study of the Nepali newspapers landscape prior to 1990 and post 1990 era. Whereas there was a single major publishing house owned by the government, the political changes of 1990 ramified privately owned daily newspapers. The birth of the broadsheet dailies in the private sector also gave birth to corporate ownership in the world of Nepali newspapers which ultimately opened the way for commercialism.

Table VI: Comparison between the period prior to 1990 and post-1990 era

Prior to 1990	Post-1990
More militancy than truthfulness in covering politics.	No overt partisan leaning
Vehicle for the political interests or movement. Missionary or the agent for the political change during the historical moment.	No acknowledged allegiance to political organization, parties or the movement.
Aligned with particular political force and established political identity.	Hard to recognize political identity.
Dedicated and attached to political activism.	Market driven.
Mostly the political jargon-laden monotonous materials.	Light, entertaining and human interest materials.
Old technology.	Relatively modern technology
Weak financial status and generally not-profit making.	Profit making enterprise.

(Field study, 2015)

Complicity between media and political groups in Nepal is embedded in a historical context where media developed with the aim of mediating between political factions and public interest. However, the Nepali newspapers after 1990 started to depend chiefly on commerce. It began to shape itself to fit in the market to survive in the new competitive environment of the media world. Moreover, it also made a departure from direct political and overt allegiance with political forces.

Constitutional provisions for establishing, registration, and freedom of media entities are the key strengths of the Nepali media. Likewise, legal framework for media operations and diversity in media landscape are also the major strengths of the Nepali media.

The Nepali media in general, are seen unable to expose corruption and inform the public regarding the governance and incapable to hold people in power accountable. Without a concrete policy to promote diversity and plurality in the ownership and in the contents the newspapers cannot gain the status of a genuine public sphere.

Political freedom sets conducive atmosphere for the coverage on political parties and their activities. Since it was restricted even to mention the name of political parties and report on activities were deemed illegal newspapers had to struggle in order to undertake political communication.

Nepali Newspapers after 1990 have enhanced the political communication. Politics and public life are being interpreted in newspaper contents. Newspaper sites generated, debated and evaluated the meanings of public life. Thus the general public in Nepal generated discourse by treating mass newspapers as a public sphere after 1990.

Formation of political news and their consequences come under the arena of political communication. It explores the crucial importance of information in human decision making. Political communication also examines media contribution to setting the agenda and framing political issues. Nepali newspapers started to contribute a wider range of political communication after 1990. Thereafter, Nepal witnessed a great amount of flow of information and other contents in the modified form of newspapers. The newspapers became capable of encouraging lively debates. However, on some



occasions they tend to be reluctant to express independent opinion on the issues that implicate controversies.

During these 25 years government's monopoly on information about events has terminated. Thus not only supportive images and information are being released to the media. Increased ability of journalists to gather information and images along with technology and skills has made it difficult for governments to maintain a monopoly over information.

### **5.5 State of Commercialism in Newspapers in Post-1990 Nepal**

Apart from professionalization, the post-1990 newspapers started the process of commercialization and industrialization which have created long-term impact on the socio-political communication within the country. One of the significant consequences of the political changes from controlled society to liberal economy is the establishment of corporate ownership in the ambit of the mainstream newspapers. Political freedom was perceived as the only prerequisite for the evolution of free, fair and professional newspapers in the country before 1990. After achieving media freedom, the other barriers started to be noticed.

Since the newspapers from private sector have to stand on their own, they are under pressure to present human interest and saleable matters. They have to survive in the market. Thus, the newspapers after 1990 became market-driven. However, they frequently deviate from balanced approach and sense of social responsibility, as they are trapped into the hyper commercialism.

Commercial interests are entirely confined to the benefits of buying and selling, both tangible and intangible products. Commercial interests ensure that the seller gets paid for the service or product once the purpose was served. Similarly, corporate interests are aimed at the creation and maintenance of corporations and corporate structures. In the case of a mass media, the general public perceives a clear distinction between commercial interest and professional engagement.

As capitalism and newspapers have grown together in most part of the world, it seems but obvious for the trend to get replicated in Nepali context. In the post-1990 scenario

of the country, liberal political and economic policies are the backbone of the media system. However, in the absence of a concrete and comprehensive media policy anomalies exist. In fact, these areas are to be considered as the indicators that demonstrate the impact of political transition after 2006. These phenomenon amply demonstrate the transition of Nepali newspaper world and sets the initial conditions for its path ahead.

Consequences of the political change of 1990 gave birth to a new environment of big investment in media. As a result mass media emerged as an industry. Consequently, unlike earlier days, in post-1990 Nepal, more advertisers, proprietors and resources have become mandatory basic requirements in order to begin a newspaper. The new political and economic scenario, inevitably, started gradually to create a new media climate with the dominances of big media companies. The trend began to shape the dimensions of the press freedom.

Political allegiance was the driving trend prior to 1990, whereas commercial interests have been the prevailing trend in post-1990 Nepal. The Nepali newspapers after 1990 have been free from State interference. However, due to the commercial interests, most newspapers found themselves unable to play the role of surveillance to the government and to inform the general public in a balanced way. The Nepali newspapers are yet to see the growth in terms of capacity, governance and role.

It is evident from several indicators that the Nepali newspapers have indulged in the commercialism in the aftermath of the 1990 political change. As indicated by the results, 38 per cent journalists consider prominence of advertising, prominence of business interests and exclusion of public issues as the manifestation of commercialism in the Nepali newspaper journalism (See Chart 60). As many as 32 per cent and 26 per cent of the respondents respectively view prominence of advertising and prominence of business interests as the manifestation of commercialism. Revealing one of the major appalling symptoms, 64 per cent of the Nepali journalists opine that the news stories in Nepal are constructed to suit the commercial interests of the owners (See Chart 58).

The key aspect of democratic media comprises independence, pluralism, transparency and public interest. Likewise, objectivity, investigation and factuality are considered

the norms of journalism. Such key aspects and basic norms of newspapers and journalism in an emerging democracy which is undergoing a political as well as media transition are paramount. It is only because of the newspapers that respect values of democracy and media professionalism can contribute in order to form public sphere in real sense. The Problem with the Nepali newspapers after 1990 is that at many instances they have seen unable to imbibe the democratic principles and values of professional journalism due to the commercialism.

The 1990s-generation of the broadsheet dailies has been demonstrating higher level of professionalism in comparison to the newspapers prior to 1990. The newspapers in post-1990 Nepal are presenting diverse range of content and their political reporting in general are fair. They have wider reach and access to general public and their institutional set up is organized. These newspapers are spending a big amount on staff salaries and their advertisement revenues are significant. They have developed a system of beat reporting and they have panel of specialized writers and columnists. However, some of the burning questions pertain to the functioning of the privately owned dailies. Nearly 66 per cent of active journalists do not agree that the privately owned broadsheet dailies are free from business and commercial interest (See Chart 36). Nearly 82 per cent of the journalists state that the daily newspapers are serving the owner's interests (See Chart 52). Similarly, 30 per cent journalists observe the existence of editorial independence in the dailies (See Chart 51). Likewise, 2.4 per cent of the respondents most agree that the journalists in the dailies enjoy editorial freedom.

It is evident that in the era of commercialism, the role of editor and reporter has been compromised in the privately owned broadsheet dailies. It is the proprietor's decision that prevails in setting news priority and the agenda of the day. Editors sing the tune in accordance to the stance of the investor. Commercial interest is the dominant trend in the privately owned daily newspapers and many a time such commercial or corporate interests have resulted in political manoeuvring in newspaper reports. Thus, an atmosphere encouraging comprehensive and noticeable professional values, standards and norms for the Nepali newspapers need to be promoted. Initiation of comprehensive codes of self-regulation on the part of a professional journalist and a

strong will of the political parties in order to contribute to the culture of free flow of political communication are yet to be achieved.

Constitutional and legal guarantee of the press freedom are the rules of the game in post-1990 Nepal that has addressed the quest for pluralism and wider level of participation in newspapers. A state of free, pluralistic and independent newspapers as the preconditions for achieving the dream of free press is existed in macro level. Since the privately owned broadsheets are independent of the governments plurality of opinions and ideas is guaranteed in principle. However, commercial, business or corporate interests hold the lever of the press. Thus, they are seen not immune to the overpowering commercial interests.

Pluralism and diversity are necessary to enable citizens to participate in public discourse, and develop newspapers as public sphere. Independence is also a prime factor that makes newspaper a public sphere. However, various factors adversely affect editorial independence. Constitutional and legal provisions as well as judicial practices are the backbones of press freedom and editorial independence. Beside political control, newspapers need to be independent also from the business interests in order to present diverse, complete and correct information to the general public. Over dependence on market mechanisms such as high return margins limits the freedom of the press. On the one hand, newspapers enjoy freedom from the State; on the other hand, economic conditions become the main constraints to freedom of the press. Freedom of the press and of the media, in a broader context, also includes relative editorial independence from economic influences.

Low standards regarding truth and decency as well as control by unscrupulous monopolists are considered as the outcomes of hyper commercialism. It is the quest of professional journalism that the market pressure needs to coexist with social responsibilities. However, absence of a tripartite understanding among the state mechanism, media entrepreneurs as well as journalists, and the readers has resulted in commercialism among the privately owned daily newspapers in Nepal. Though commercial interest is the dominant trend in the privately owned daily newspapers, political maneuvering is also in existence in order to serve business or corporate interests. The newspapers are broadly controlled by the power relations of the existing

society. Anomalies such as suppression, distortion and manipulation of news and other reading materials are manifestation of such controls over the newspapers in post-1990 Nepal.

First, the state mechanism is not able to formulate a comprehensive media policy compatible to the political transition to address the entire media landscape, including small, medium and large scale newspapers. In the changed political context, an appropriate and updated media policy as the base to ensure professional practice is essential. The modification of the existing media laws and the formulation of new laws are not possible in absence of such parameters.

Second, the individual media houses hardly brought their statement of the editorial policies in public domain. Most newspapers have not declared their own codes for the sake of self-regulation.

Third, indifference attitude of readers or consumers has contributed to the ignorance of professional standards in newspapers. The professional intellectuals in Nepal are not involved in serious and regular evaluation of newspaper content.

In the absence of updated and comprehensive media policy, laws and measures of self-regulations and adequate level of awareness among general public some of the anomalies in newspaper journalism persists even after 1990. Nepal has yet to achieve a comprehensive policy in order to address the issue of diversity of the newspaper content. An atmosphere suitable for content-diversity in newspapers would have been created by the legal provisions concerning three categories of ownership such as commercial companies, private non-profit bodies and the public sector. Again, for such outcomes aimed at professional newspapers, comparing diverse, vibrant and independent characteristics, the country needs policy reform concerning newspapers in the course of consolidating the media freedom that are the outcomes of popular movement of 1990 and 2005-6.

The plan and policies of the major political parties demonstrate the existing state of political will towards the quest for media professionalism. Nepali Congress, an advocate of Western model of liberal democracy, did not give due attention to the state of newspapers in the country in its election manifesto during the elections of the

constitutional assembly, 2013. UCPN (Maoist) expressed its commitment to provide subsidies to the media run by marginalized groups. Likewise, UML stresses on guarantee of pluralism and diversity, and envisages diverse mix of mass media institutions.

As in other parts of the world, commercial mass newspapers brought business interest as well in Nepal. One of the greatest consequences of such interest has resulted in an undue ownership concentration in the media sector that started in the 1990s Nepal. In the present state of media ownership concentration and its impact, media houses are seen as deciding the news values. The non-media interests of the media giants are dictating the contents. In several incidents the big media houses that are running radio, television and newspapers have been covering the particular news with unusual prominence.

Survey among the intellectuals reveals that above fifty per cent of the audience read the dailies to get acquainted with politics. As many as 54 per cent of the respondents (See Chart 5) state that they read daily newspapers to get acquainted with politics. However, 31 per cent respondents state that they read newspapers for apolitical information. Thus, the privately owned dailies are serving the audience with different tastes.

It is worthy to mention here that only 36 per cent of journalists view that the dailies are presenting the materials that are related to daily life of the general public (See Chart 37). As many as 30 per cent respondents remain silent on the question: do you agree that daily newspapers in Nepal present materials that are related to the daily life of the general public?

Several instances are evident that the dailies, generally the privately owned broadsheets, are creating discourses on issues concerning the general public. However, senior as well as practising working journalists observe and as some of the cases studies reveal, the dailies have to ensure to the general public a coherent and predictable professional behaviour. As many as 54 per cent, of the total respondents state that the dailies are creating discourses on the issues of public concern (See Chart 38). As many as 53 per cent of the journalists think that even important and prominent news are being discarded in the dailies (See Chart 54). It is interesting that nearly 58

per cent of the respondents views that important and prominent news are discarded in favour of the commercial interests (See Chart 55).

Moreover, 75 per cent of the journalists view that news values are undermined owing to business interests of the existing privately owned daily newspapers (See Chart 57). The survey conducted among 125 Nepali journalists, as a part of this study, reveals that more than 75 per cent of the respondents admit that news are being suppressed on some occasions due to the business interests of the privately owned dailies (See Chart 59).

Concentration of ownership in the hands of a few newspaper companies would certainly be the dominant phenomenon in Nepal in days to come. Anti-concentration laws and legal obligations for transparency could be one solution in this regard. Likewise, a quest for financial transparency in the growing newspaper business has surfaced. Major political changes that occurred at different time frames, and which were instrumental for widening democratic sphere, have proved to be the stepping stones for the advancement of newspaper journalism in Nepal. Political changes along with technological advancement have been chartering the way for the gradual development of professionalism. However, the privately owned dailies have refrained from professional standards to a greater extent due to excessive commercialism after the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990.

## CHAPTER-VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

With the advent of multiparty democracy in 1990, Nepal witnessed two significant changes in the newspaper landscape which were to have considerable impact on future developments. These were, first, the emergence of the large-circulation dailies and, second, the growing importance of advertising revenue for the privately owned broadsheet dailies.

#### 6.1 Summary

Newspaper journalism in Nepali language originated from India. Thus, Nepali journalism, obviously in the form of print journalism, took off outside the country. During the democratic movement, popularly known as anti-Rana agitation, Nepali-language newspapers from India carrying mostly revolutionary publications were smuggled into the broader of Nepal until the 1951. The government owned daily *Gorakhapatra* was the only newspaper in the country. During the Rana regime Nepal's media landscape confined to a single newspaper and was administered by the government. Throughout the 104 years of Rana oligarchy, only one newspaper came into existence. About ten non-newspaper publications were either ran directly or were backed by government institutions.

Nepal's first encounter with multiparty democracy in 1951 altered the scenario and individual citizens also came forward to run newspapers independently. After 1951, the flood gate of newspapers was opened. Mostly the official mouthpieces were influential in order to carry political communication during that period. Thus between 1951 and 1960, the dominant trend of the Nepali newspapers was partisan leanings. However, the euphoria of newspaper journalism faced a high degree of restrictions with the political change of 1960.

The king's takeover shifted the political paradigm and the publication activities faced stagnancy over the years. The party mouthpieces were outlawed along with the political parties. However, amidst constitutional and legal restrictions on the freedom of speech and expression, the newspapers continued their struggle to conduct political



communication in the country. The Nepali media, since 1960, continuously suffered official restrictions, censorship and discouragement until 1990 except for a short period during 1979-80.

Right from the period of minor legal reforms of 1948 to the advent of democratic constitution in 1990, the Nepali newspaper faced challenges in different forms, achieved advancement, and kept their pace to move forward. In the post-take-over period, the Nepali newspapers generally built their image as an anti-status quo force in the political life. Most of the popular newspapers between 1960 and 1990 made their contributions to the political changes.

The year 1990 proved to be the benchmark for the Nepali newspaper industry. For some years, immediately after the restoration of democracy, the newspapers were seen perplexed in terms of using the broader range of media freedom. During the initial period of democracy, due to the lack of adequate level of sense of responsibility, newspapers continued with the partisan leanings. Newspapers largely served the contents with low level of accuracy and fairness. However, within a few years after the restoration of democracy, a notable transformation occurred with the emergence of privately owned dailies that significantly upheld the level of professionalism.

The constitutional guarantee of the press freedom opened a new era for the proliferation of big dailies. Political change of 1990 paved the way for mass newspapers to greater extent and privately owned dailies began to reach mass audience in real sense. Borne with a legacy of decades of struggle for freedom of expression and opinion, the Nepali newspapers started to realize their constructive role in the society after achieving the civil and political rights. Journalists started to be awakened on the issue of their roles in the changed context. They realized that the earlier roles of the newspaper, mainly launching campaign for politics, had changed.

As one of the major consequences of the political changes of 1990, the Nepali newspapers began to create an open platform, where diverse voices echoed. Journalists and entrepreneurs moved forward to meet new horizon of possibilities. With creative and innovative attempts, Nepali newspapers started to occupy the place of an important entity in society. Such an atmosphere of media diversity equips

common citizenry with greater reach and access to mass media. The political changes of 1990 established a base for the mass newspapers in Nepal. The history of the Nepali newspapers is inevitably associated with the political history of the country. The political changes of 1990 created a benchmark that led to the emergence of broadsheet dailies in private sector. Subsequently, the pluralistic polity invoked competition among the newspapers.

Contrary to the earlier newspapers, the Nepali newspapers in post-1990 Nepal started to be driven by market forces. The earlier newspapers were politics-laden. After 1990 the newspapers started to cover diverse range of contents. As market-driven newspapers, the privately owned broadsheet dailies occupied the dominant position after 1990 whereas the traditional low-budget newspapers, generally weeklies, started to be displaced or overshadowed. An atmosphere of coexistence of small and large scale newspapers, a diverse mix of the ownership patterns of mass media, could be guaranteed the opportunity for the general public to communicate themselves in free manner.

Nepal's political transition needs to be understood also as the transition of media system from the state of dilemma to the state of vibrant, effective and goal-oriented media. The transition of newspaper journalism after 1990 is affected mainly by three domains. First, transition from the state of non-freedom to freedom. Second, the political actors and media are not being able to define their territories. Third, little journalistic initiative given in building the press as an institution.

During the years after 1990, developments in reporting, economics, content, and technology have surfaced. Over the last 25 years, Nepali press have been exercising freedom of press, freedom of speech and expression and continuously advocating for the same since country achieved multiparty democracy in 1990. The democracy was interrupted briefly and the press experienced censorship under the King Gyanendra's direct rule between 2005 and 2006. However, the Nepali press regained the same democratic atmosphere after the short-lived autocratic rule.

Although the privately owned broadsheet dailies are the influential mainstream newspapers in Nepal after 1990, they do have political slant to some extent. However, they have avoided an overtly partisan attitude. Although they have been taking public

discourses ahead and conducting political communication, the dominant trend of commercialism has restricted them in emerging as a dependable public sphere.

The constitution and law are the major factors that led the Nepali newspapers towards a state of liberalism. Laws related to the media prior 1990 were basically for the restriction of freedom of expression and opinion. In the aftermath of 1990, the laws related to the media formulated guaranteeing the freedom of expression and opinion. After 1990, the creation of a legal framework to protect the media was an integral part of the new constitutional settlement. This settlement also carved a new separate path for the profession of journalism. It opened the door for an opportunity for the newspapers to establish itself as an independent entity from the politics. By then, for the first time in the Nepali history, this separation between the way of politics and journalism started to appear distinctly. Prior to 1990, running a newspaper meant establishing democracy under the strategy of the existing political parties or opposing the anti-Panchayat political forces. Political changes of 1990 paved the way for professionalism to a greater extent.

The political development after 2006 led the Nepali newspapers to yet another stage. With the proliferation of private radios and television channels in the dawn of the new millennium, the Nepali newspapers encountered a new level of competition in the field of news and other journalistic materials. With the emergence of radio broadcasting in private sector, the country entered into an era of cross-media competition. Newspapers faced the competition in terms of dissemination of news and information. Later, by the first decade of the advent of television broadcasting in private sector, the newspapers faced more competition in disseminating news and information. It is clear that the era of republic will also be an era of stiff competition among the different news outlets, vertical and as well as horizontal. As another transition period of Nepali politics, which started in 2006, concluded its full circle with the promulgation of a new constitution in September 2015 from the Constituent Assembly formed by the 2013 elections, the newspaper landscape will be shaped accordingly in the days to come.

Prior to 1990, since the newspapers were deprived of the concept of business, most journalists did not consider the revenue from the advertisements as the overpowering source of income. Since, the newspaper organizations were small-scaled; their

financial obligations were also limited. The newspapers were basically financed as an avenue of philanthropy or a means to serve political mission. They were basically tools of the political parties or factions. In the aftermath of the political changes in 1990, the Nepali newspapers began to transform into the tools for commercial enterprise.

Many newspapers grew as enterprises in the aftermath of 1990. However, in the absence of essential measures including comprehensive policy from the part of the government, and moral commitment on the part of the media owners, the newspapers gradually started to indulge in commercialism. As the theory of maintaining balance between moral and material existence of a newspaper is subjected to the indifference attitude, the instances of interference in the editorial independence began to surface. Consequently, the contents started to get visibly be affected.

Thus, instead of partisan leanings commercial interests have surfaced as the major source of unfreedom for the newspapers in the aftermath of 1990. During their long struggle for democracy different factions of the Communist parties and Nepali Congress, and other groups in various timeframes of history, ran newspapers as a primary vehicle for winning support from the wider population. Their primary way of gaining support among the public had been the dissemination of their own ideological messages. Now it is the Commercialism that is the primary source of unfreedom over the years after the restoration of democracy. Partisan leanings are a secondary source of unfreedom in the current Nepali dailies.

Juxtaposing to the State's guiding principle of caring for marginalised people, Nepali newspapers are gradually heading towards the direction of hyper commercialism. Thus a public sphere cannot be formed in real sense without encouraging the local newspapers simultaneously with the large national media. Apart from such structuring, the issues of human resources, adoption of advance technology, diversity of content, and diversity of ownerships are the major areas of concern in this regard. At this juncture, where newspaper commercialism has become a driving force, a diverse mix of the ownership patterns could ensure the diversity in contents.

As interaction-intensive organizations the Nepali newspapers are yet to achieve success in bridging the society with different levels of communication. The

newspapers have been debilitated by the commercial interests to undertake social responsibilities. To fulfil such expectations, the Nepali newspapers should have gained independence over all kinds of vested interests and should be governed by self-imposed ethical codes.

The privately owned broadsheet dailies, which emerged in the aftermath of the political changes of 1990, indulge in the commercial interests of the owners. As one of the major consequences of the establishment of the multiparty democracy in 1990, the newspapers have been transformed into out and out business enterprises. The political changes have invoked the transition of newspaper journalism from the state of partisan leanings to the state of the commercialism.

The Nepali newspapers, in general, have been covering the issues related to daily life of the general public. The newspapers are creating bridge between the political leaders and their electorates. Current dailies are different in terms of depth and quality of information in comparison to the newspapers prior to 1990. However, there are some stumbling blocks that have prevented them from establishing themselves as an effective public sphere in real sense. The newspapers place their owner's interests on the top priority. Commercial interest of business groups prevails and influences the privately owned broadsheet dailies. Even important and prominent news are often discarded in the dailies in favour of the commercial interests.

The political changes of 1990 and 2006 have empowered the newspapers amidst inter-media competition for news and information. Such competitions are the major outcomes of the political changes. The competitions have encouraged growth in terms of quality and diversity of contents. However, at the same time, competition for commercialism has led the newspapers to ignore even the issues of public concern. Since the basic criteria of success has been translated into profit and power, which is also for economic benefit, many a time the Nepali newspapers have deviated from the high expectations of the general public.

## **6.2 Conclusions**

During the advent of democracy in 1951, the Nepali media sphere was not considered as a significant entity in society. With the guarantee of civil and political rights in

Nepal, it witnessed a rapid proliferation of newspapers since 1951. Though, newspapers were fully indulged in partisanship, they facilitated political communication and created vibrancy in socio-political milieu of the country.

The euphoria did not last beyond a decade. As the political system shapes the media system of any country, Nepal sustained a strained relationship between the government and the press for next three decades after the king's takeover in 1960. However, the newspapers explored creative ways to express political discontent amidst the constitutional and legal restrictions. They evolved a subtle metaphorical language and crafted sarcastic styles as a coping mechanism and to expose the anomalies in politics. During this period newspapers were clearly divided into pro and anti Panchayat regime which fuelled the partisan trait. Gradually, the newspapers assumed the role of the opposition to the government.

The political changes of 1990 opened the way for the newspaper revolution. The changes invoked professional competition, mass readership and diverse range of contents. However, in the absence of appropriate policy measures of regulation and self-regulations the country yielded to several anomalies in the profession. The advent of professionalism gradually geared up the post-1990 dailies to an era of commercial newspapers. Consequently, the fundamental ingredient of liberal economy, commercial or business interests, started to escalate. As the consequence, the frames installed by the business interests moulded the content of newspapers and started to hinder the professional standards. Thus, the post-1990 dailies that were emerging as public sphere were public sphere in their outward outlook only. The Nepali newspapers have still to go a long way to play a role towards becoming an effective public sphere. The abandonment of party allegiance forms the part and parcel of the newspapers transformed into a mass press attempting to attract readers of all classes and political persuasion. However, the repudiation of party allegiance made by many of the new commercial dailies is not a retreat from political involvement. On the contrary, the big newspaper houses have been exercising influence over the political power centres to materialize their corporate interest, seeking return in terms of market strength.

Prevalence of politically overloaded newspapers are one of the telling symptoms of a society where civil and political rights are curtailed. Such skewedness are common

and is a dominant tendency in a country where democratic rights are interrupted. One of the major consequences of the 1990 political change is not other than the declining trend of political-obsessed weeklies. Prior to 1990 partisan leaning was among the major sources of unfreedom for media institutions. In the aftermath of 1990, the major influencing factor over the newspapers has been the business or corporate interest that replaced the political dominance.

In the aftermath of 1990 political change, an ideal of liberal communication embedded into a liberal political-economy drew a clear demarcation between doing politics and the profession of journalism. It attracted entrepreneurs wanting to invest in newspapers and other outlets of mass media. It also cultivated the mass audience by catering diverse range of reading materials. This newly born industry also made its presence felt by generating revenues and employment which was not the case prior to 1990. Nevertheless, merely an emergence of privately owned big newspapers does not necessarily guarantees fair and independent communication in a country which is undergoing a political transition. Transition of politics from partyless system to multiparty democracy inaugurated the way for the transition of newspapers. However, inability to formulate adequate, appropriate and updated media policies to counterpose crass commercialism of newspaper industry, it has provided an easy way to ignore and deviate away from the professional norms and standards of journalism. The gap debilitates newspapers from growing into a much anticipated role of interaction-intensive organizations. On the contrary, while Nepali newspapers are enjoying the freedom of expression and opinion, guaranteed by the constitution for more than a couple of decades, they are yet to contribute towards evolving an axis of vibrant public sphere which is uncompromising towards protecting the interest of the general public.

## **Annex I**

### **Provisions for the Mass Media in Nepal's Constitutions and Laws from Different Time Frame**

Fundamental Rights Act, 2005 BS (1949)

Right to Personal Liberty Act, 2006

Government of Nepal (Constitution), 2004 (1948)

Nepal Interim Constitution, 2007

Nepal Press and Registration of Publication Act, 2009 [1952]

Press and Publication Act, 2009 (1952)

Interim Constitution (Second Amendment) Act, 2008

Interim Constitution (Second Amendment), 2009 BS

Press and Publication Registration (Amendment) Act, 2011BS

Civil Rights Act, 2012 BS

Press and Publication (Second Amendment) Act, 2014 BS

Nepal Press and Publication Registration (Amendment) Act, 2015 BS

Nepal Interim Constitution (Fourth Amendment), 2015 BS

Nepal Interim Constitution (Fifth Amendment), 2015 BS

Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 2015 BS

Slander and Defamation Act, 2016 BS

Nepal Interim Constitution (Sixth Amendment), 2016 BS

Press and Publication Act, 2019 BS



Press and Registration of Publication Act, 2019 BS

*Gorkhapatra* Corporation Act, 2019 BS

Constitution of Nepal, 2019 BS

Constitution of Nepal (First Amendment), 2023 BS

Treason and Sedition (Crime and Punishment) (Second Amendment) Act, 2027 BS

*Gorkhapatra* Corporation (First Amendment) Act, 2028 BS

Press and Publication (Second Amendment) Act, 2028 BS

Press and Publication (Third Amendment) Act, 2029 BS

Treason and Sedition (Crime and Punishment) (Third Amendment) Act, 2032 BS

Press and Publication Act, 2032 BS

Constitution of Nepal (Second Amendment), 2032 BS

Referendum (Crime and Punishment) Act, 2036 BS

Freedom of Speech and Expression Act, 2037 BS [Freedom of Speech and Expression Ordinance, 2037 BS]

Defamation (First Amendment) Act, 2037 BS

Constitution of Nepal (Third Amendment), 2037 BS

Press and Publication Act, 2039 BS

National News Agency (Second Amendment) Act, 2045 BS

Press and Publication (First Amendment) Act, 2046 BS

Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 2047 BS

Press and Publication Act, 2048 BS

Press and Publication First (Amendment) Act, 2048 BS

Press Council Act, 2048 BS

National News Agency (Third Amendment) Act, 2048 BS

Working Journalists Act, 2051 BS

Communication Related Some Nepal Acts (Amendment) Act, 2055 BS

Communication Related Some Nepal Acts (Amendment) Act, 2057 BS

Terrorists and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Act, 2058 BS

Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Ordinance, 2058 BS

Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Ordinance, 2061 BS

Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Ordinance, 2062 BS

Communication Related Some Nepal Acts (Amendment) Ordinance, 2062 BS

Interim Constitution of Nepal (First Amendment), 2063 BS

Right to Information Act, 2064 BS

Working Journalists (First Amendment) Act, 2064 BS

Interim Constitution of Nepal (Second Amendment), 2064 BS

Interim Constitution of Nepal (Third Amendment), 2064 BS

Interim Constitution of Nepal (Fourth Amendment), 2064 BS

Interim Constitution of Nepal (Fifth Amendment), 2064 BS

Interim Constitution of Nepal (Sixth Amendment), 2064 BS

## Annex II

### Transition of Newspaper Journalism from Partisanship to Commercialism in Post-1990 Nepal

#### *Survey among Professional Intellectuals for the purpose of PhD study*

(Note: Please select one option that you prefer most or tick only ONE answer. Fifty per cent of the questions including 4, 8, 9, 12-21, 24, 27, 31, 33, 34 and 36 will be measured by Likert scales for appropriate degree of your agreement. As Likert scales increase, you agree more. For instance, if you totally agree with question, which means you most agree, you will put mark on 7. The scale is placed to measure most agree, very agree, agree, neutral, disagree, very disagree and most disagree respectively.)

Name (Optional):

Age:

Sex: M ☐ F ☐

Profession/Occupation:

Experience:

Organization/ Company:

#### *General queries on Nepali newspapers*

1. Why do you read newspapers?

1. For information
2. For education
3. For entertainment
4. For all above three
5. If any other reason, specify

2. How do you observe the differences in the existing privately owned broadsheet daily newspapers of Nepal from the newspapers prior to 1990 era?
  1. Yes, today's dailies are different from the newspapers prior to 1990 Nepal
  2. Little different
  3. No difference
  4. Cannot say
3. How do you evaluate the state of newspapers in Nepal prior to 1990?
  1. Politically, newspapers of that period were highly partisan
  2. Politically, newspapers of that period were partisan
  3. Politically, newspapers of that period were not partisan
  4. Cannot say
4. Do you agree that today's privately owned broadsheet dailies are different in terms of depth and quality of information in comparison to the newspapers prior to 1990?

Most Agree			Neutral			
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

*Daily newspapers in post-1990 Nepal*

5. Why do you read daily newspapers of Nepal?
  1. For information
  2. For education
  3. For entertainment
  4. For all three
  5. If any other reason, specify

6. Why do you read the existing privately owned broadsheet daily newspapers of Nepal?

1. To get acquainted with politics
2. To be entertained
3. For apolitical information (e.g. human interest, environment etc.)
4. Cannot say

7. How often do you read daily newspapers?

1. Everyday
2. 3-4 days in a week
3. Occasionally
4. Never
5. If any other region, specify

8. Do you agree that today's daily newspapers in Nepal present the materials that are related to daily life of general public?

Most Agree Most Disagree		Neutral				
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

9. Do you agree that the daily newspapers in Nepal create discourse on the issues of public concerns after 1990?

Most Agree Most Disagree		Neutral				
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

10. What is the degree of connectivity established by newspapers between the political leaders and their electorates?

1. Very effective
2. Effective
3. Not effective

4. Cannot say

11. What is the most significant aspect of the Nepal's daily newspapers that attract you?

1. Layout and design
2. News
3. Views
4. If any other factor, specify

*Editorial Independence in the daily newspapers after 1990*

12. Do you agree that political independence of the editorial team is visible in the privately owned broadsheet daily newspapers in Nepal?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

13. Do you agree that discriminatory attitude exists in political reporting of privately owned daily newspapers of Nepal?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

*Ethical standards and fairness in dailies*

14. Do you agree that journalists in Nepal cover events/news that are professionally irrelevant and lack news values?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

15. Do you agree that the existing privately owned daily newspapers in Nepal abide by the ethical standards of journalism?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

16. Do you agree that the existing privately owned daily newspapers in Nepal are impartial in political reporting?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

17. Do you agree that the existing privately owned dailies are fair to all political parties while covering their news and views?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

18. Do you agree that the current daily newspapers of Nepal provide extensive coverage for the people in power?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

19. Do you agree that the daily newspapers are culture sensitive while covering socio-political issues in news and news related materials?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

20. Do you agree that the daily newspapers are gender sensitive while covering socio-political issues in news and news related materials?

Most Agree			Neutral			
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

*Business interests in the current Nepali dailies*

21. Do you agree that news values are undermined due to business interests in the existing privately owned daily newspapers in Nepal?

Most Agree			Neutral			
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

22. Whose interests are in the top priority of the daily newspapers in Nepal?

1. Government
2. Owner
3. General public
4. None

23. What prevails on and influences the privately owned broadsheet dailies in post-1990 Nepal?

1. Commercial interest of business groups
2. Political interest of political parties
3. Political interest of government
4. Cannot say



24. Do you agree that even important and prominent news are often discarded in the Nepali dailies?

Most Agree Most Disagree			Neutral			
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

25. If important and prominent news are discarded, what are the causes?

1. Commercial interests
2. Negligence
3. Lack of professional skills
4. Fear psychosis
5. If any other reason, specify

26. What is the manifestation of commercialism in newspaper journalism in Nepal?

1. Prominence of advertising
2. Prominence of business interests
3. Exclusion of public issues
4. All of above
5. If any other reason, specify

*The Nepali weeklies prior to 1990*

27. Do you agree that the weekly newspapers during the *Panchayat* period were well known for their political allegiance?

Most Agree Most Disagree			Neutral			
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

28. For what reason do you remember the weeklies of pre-1990 Nepal?

1. Their political analysis
2. Information they used to provide
3. Entertainment materials
4. Cannot say

*The current Nepali weeklies*

29. Do you read the political weeklies of Nepal?

1. Occasionally
2. Regularly
3. Never
4. Once or twice in a week

30. Why do you read the political weekly newspapers of Nepal?

1. For information
2. For education
3. For entertainment
4. If other reason, specify

31. Do you agree that political allegiance is visible in the political weeklies of Nepal?

Most Agree Most Disagree		Neutral				
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

32. What is the most significant aspect of the Nepali weeklies that attract you?

1. Layout and design
2. News
3. Views
4. If other (specify)

33. Do you agree that the political weeklies of Nepal frequently carry unverified information?

Most Agree Most Disagree			Neutral			
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

34. Do you agree that the political weeklies of Nepal carry very little newsworthy materials?

Most Agree Most Disagree			Neutral			
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

35. What prevails in and influenced the political weeklies of Nepal?

1. Commercial interests of business groups
2. Political interests of the political parties
3. Political interests of the government
4. Cannot say

36. Do you agree that influence of the political weeklies are decreasing in Nepal's newspaper market after 1990?

Most Agree Most Disagree			Neutral			
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

37. If you agree, what is the main cause of decreasing influence of the weeklies in the newspaper market in post-1990 Nepal?

1. Unverified information
2. Lack of quality in content
3. Lack of attractive layout and design
4. Low level of distribution and circulation
5. Political allegiance
6. If other reason, specify

### Annex III

## Transition of Newspaper Journalism from Partisanship to Commercialism in Post-1990 Nepal

### *Survey among journalists for the purpose of PhD study*

(Note: Please select one option that you prefer most or tick only ONE answer. Fifty per cent questions including 8-12, 16-19, 21-25, 27, 29-32, 34, 37 and 39-42 will be measured by Likert scales for appropriate degree of your agreement. As Likert scales increase, you agree more. For instance, if you totally agree with question, which means you most agree, you will put mark on 7. The scale is placed to measure most agree, very agree, agree, neutral, disagree, very disagree and most disagree respectively.)

Name (Optional):

Age:

Sex:

M

☐

F

☐

Organization/ Company:

Role:

Experience:

### *General queries regarding Nepali newspaper landscape*

1. Why are you in journalism?

1. Because it is a profession
2. Because it gives prestige
3. Because it is a platform for promoting democratic rights
4. Because it exerts influence in society
5. If any other reason, specify

2. When did you start to read the Nepali newspapers?

1. Before the age of 14
2. Before the age of 18
3. After 18 years of age
4. Cannot remember

3. What is the degree of connectivity established by Nepal's newspapers between the political leaders and their electorates?

1. Very effective
2. Effective
3. Not effective
4. Cannot say

4. How do you evaluate the state of newspapers in Nepal prior to 1990?

1. Politically, newspapers of that period were highly partisan
2. Politically, newspapers of that period were partisan
3. Politically, newspapers of that period were not partisan
4. Cannot say

*The current Nepali dailies*

5. Do you read the daily newspapers of Nepal?

1. Occasionally
2. Regularly
3. Never
4. Cannot say

6. Why do you read the daily newspapers of Nepal?

1. For information
2. For education
3. For entertainment
4. For all above three

5. If any other reason, specify

7. What is the most significant aspect of the Nepali daily newspapers that attract you?

1. Layout and design
2. News
3. Views
4. If any other reason, specify

8. Do you agree that the privately owned broadsheet daily newspapers are free from political pressure from different political corners?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

9. Do you agree that the privately owned broadsheet daily newspapers are free from business or commercial interests?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

10. Do you agree that daily newspapers in Nepal present the materials that are related to daily life of general public?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

11. Do you agree that daily newspapers in Nepal create discourse on the issues of public concerns?

Most Agree			Neutral			
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

12. Do you agree that the front pages of the daily newspapers in Nepal are Kathmandu centric?

Most Agree			Neutral			
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

*The current Nepali weeklies*

13. Do you read the political weeklies of Nepal?

1. Occasionally
2. Regularly
3. Never
4. Once or twice in a week

14. Why do you read the political weeklies of Nepal?

1. For information
2. For education
3. For entertainment
4. If any other reason, specify

15. What is the most significant aspect of the Nepali weeklies that attract you?

1. Layout and design
2. News
3. Views
4. If any other reason, specify

16. Do you agree that the weekly newspapers in Nepal frequently carry unverified information?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

17. Do you agree that the weekly newspapers in Nepal carry very little newsworthy materials?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

18. Do you agree that political allegiance is visible in the Nepali weekly newspapers?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

19. Do you agree that influence of the political weeklies in Nepal is decreasing after 1990?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

20. If you agree, what is the one main cause of the decreasing influence of the weeklies in the newspaper market in post-1990 Nepal?

1. Unverified information
2. Lack of quality in content
3. Lack of attractive layout and design
4. Low level of distribution and circulation
5. Political allegiance



6. If any other reason, specify

*Ethical standards and fairness in the dailies of Nepal*

21. Do you agree that the current daily newspapers in Nepal abide by the professional and ethical standards of journalism?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

22. Do you agree that the existing privately owned broadsheet daily newspapers in Nepal are impartial while covering political issues in news and news related materials?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

23. Do you agree that the existing privately owned daily newspapers in Nepal are fair?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

24. Do you agree that the daily newspapers are culture sensitive while covering socio-political issues?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

25. Do you agree that the daily newspapers in Nepal are gender sensitive while covering socio-political issues?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

26. What prevails on and influences the privately owned broadsheet daily newspapers in Nepal?

5. Commercial interests of business groups
6. Political interests of the political parties
7. Political interests of the government
8. Cannot say

*Ethical standards and fairness in the Nepali weeklies*

27. Do you agree that the political weeklies abide by the professional and ethical standards of journalism?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

28. What prevails on and influences the political weeklies in Nepal?

1. Commercial interests of business groups
2. Political interests of the political parties
3. Political interests of the government
4. Cannot say

29. Do you agree that the weeklies are culture sensitive while covering socio-political issues in Nepal?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

30. Do you agree that discriminatory attitude does not exist in the political reporting of the political weeklies in Nepal?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

31. Do you agree that the political weeklies are gender sensitive while covering socio-political issues?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

*Independence in the dailies*

32. Do you agree that the editorial staffs enjoy freedom in the privately owned dailies in Nepal?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

33. Whose interests are the top priority of the privately owned daily newspapers in Nepal?

1. Government
2. Owner
3. Ordinary public
4. None

34. Do you agree that political allegiance is not visible in today's privately owned dailies in Nepal?

Most Agree			Neutral			
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

35. Do you fear that your journalistic act can resulted in any backlash from government authorities?

1. Not at all
2. A little
3. Completely
4. Cannot say

36. As a journalist, are you compelled to cover the issues or events that are professionally irrelevant and lack news values?

1. Yes, frequently
2. Not at all
3. Some times
4. Cannot say

37. Do you agree that an important and prominent news are discarded in Nepal's daily newspapers?

Most Agree			Neutral			
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

38. What is the cause behind discarding important and prominent news?

1. Commercial interests
2. Negligence
3. Lack of professional skills
4. Fear psychosis

5. If any other reason, specify

39. Do you agree that daily newspapers in Nepal provide extensive coverage for the people in power?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

*Business Interest in the dailies*

40. Do you agree that news values are undermined due to the business interests of the existing privately owned daily newspapers in Nepal?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

41. Do you agree that news stories in Nepal are constructed to suit the commercial interests of the owners?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

42. Do you agree that news are suppressed on some occasions due to business interests of the privately owned dailies in Nepal?

Most Agree				Neutral		
Most Disagree						
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

43. What is the manifestation of commercialism in the Nepali newspaper journalism?

1. Prominence of advertising
2. Prominence of business interests
3. Exclusion of public issues
4. Above of all

## Annex IV

### Focus Group Discussions

Questions:

How do you evaluate newspaper landscapes prior to 1990 and post-1990 Nepal? What are the visible differences?

What was the state of newspaper professionalism prior to 1990? If you think that there was professionalism, could you cite some examples?

What is your view on the perception that newspapers in post-1990 Nepal are being preoccupied by commercial interest?

S.N.	Group	Date	Venue
1.	Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication and other teachers, TU	15 November 2014	Nepal Press Institute, Thapathali
2.	Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Purwanchal University	16 November 2014	Kantipur City College, Putalisadak
3.	Editors of newspapers who are in the field since the Panchayat period	21 November 2014	Dhokaima Café, Patan Dhoka
4.	Professional journalists representing the dailies	23 November 2014	Kantipur City College, Putalisadak
5.	Young media researcher and journalists	19 December 2014	Centre for Media Research, Baneshwor
6.	Teachers of Kathmandu University	18 January 2015	Department of Languages and Mass Communication, School of Arts, KU, Hattiban

## **Annex V**

### **Key Informant Interviews**

Questions for scheduled Key informant interviews:

1. How do you map the state of transition of the newspapers from the period prior to 1990 to the post-1990 Nepal?
2. What are the differences that can be identified between the newspaper journalism prior to 1990 and after?
3. What are the visible changes in terms of institution/ownership, form, human resources and content of the newspapers in post-1990 Nepal?
4. Could you please cite some examples of professionalism in the period prior to 1990 and post-1990 Nepal? For instance changes regarding the remuneration for the writers, columnists or the diversity in content.
5. What are the changes in the newspapers with the country's transformation to the republic?
6. Are the Nepali newspapers preoccupied by commercial interest after 1990?
7. What are your suggestions to uplift the professional standards of the Nepali newspapers?
8. What are the components that the new media system in the country requires?



S.N.	Name	Venue	Date	Designation/known as
1.	Maniraj Upadhyaya	Residence, Dillibazar	August 29, 2014	Retired editor of the Samaj
2.	Indrakant Mishra	Residence, Sitapaila	August 30, 2014	Retired editor/ Founder of Dainik Nepal
3.	Homnath Dahal	Residence, Maitideve	August 30, 2014	Founding editor/publisher of the Rashtrapukar
4.	Kishore Nepal	Residence, Battisputali	November 10, 2014	Senior journalist/writer
5.	Dhurbahari Adhikary	Residence, Jhamsikhel	August 31, 2014	Senior journalist
6.	Lal Deusa Rai	Department of journalism, RR Campus	June 6, 2014	Pioneer media educator
7.	Ramkrishna Regmi	Kantipur City College	May 6, 2014	Media scholar
8.	Mall K. Sundar	Residence, Kilagal	November 3, 2014	Senior journalist/linguistic activist
9.	Madan Mani Dixit	Residence, Dillibazar	December 19, 2014	Senior journalist/writer
10.	Prem Kumari Pant	Residence, Putalisadak	November 7, 2014	Senior woman journalist
11.	Dr. Bhim Prasad Neupane	Consultancy Office, Tinkune	August 19, 2014	Economist/Politician
12.	Prof. Chiranjivi Khanal	Bakery Café, Teku	May 7, 2014	Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, TU
13.	Ramesh Nath Pandey	Residence, Dhumbarahi	November 10, 2014	Former journalist/politician
14.	Devendra Gautam	Residence, Kamalpokhari	August 28, 2014	Senior journalist
15.	Hira B.K.	Office, Jamal	November 4, 2014	Development consultant
16.	Barbara Adams	Residence, Naxal	November 8, 2014	Senior journalist/columnist

## Annex VI

Front page news of *Kantipur* daily between February 18 and March 19, 1993

S.N	Date	No. of news with Kathmandu Valley dateline	No. of news with outside valley dateline	News about domestic political issues	News on non-politics (Domestic)	No. of quotes of ruling politicians	No. of quotes of politicians form opposition	No. of total news stories
1	18-Feb	7	0	3	3	3	2	16
2	19-Feb	7	0	2	5	1	0	16
3	20-Feb	8	1	1	8	0	0	18
4	21-Feb	5	3	4	4	4	4	18
5	22-Feb	6	0	4	3	3	1	14
6	23-Feb	10	0	5	6	3	0	19
7	24-Feb	5	1	3	4	1	4	19
8	25-Feb	8	2	3	7	5	7	20
9	26-Feb	8	0	4	4	6	5	17
10	27-Feb	9	0	2	7	1	1	16
11	28-Feb	5	2	4	5	0	2	14
12	1-Mar	7	1	4	4	5	6	17
13	2-Mar	5	2	3	4	3	1	17
14	3-Mar	6	1	2	5	1	4	17
15	4-Mar	8	1	3	6	1	4	15
16	5-Mar	11	1	2	10	3	5	16
17	6-Mar	9	0	4	5	7	5	14
18	7-Mar	10	0	2	8	0	1	18
19	8-Mar	3	2	2	5	2	0	15
20	9-Mar	5	3	4	4	2	5	17
21	10-Mar	8	3	5	6	4	10	16
22	11-Mar	4	0	1	4	2	5	14
23	12-Mar	6	5	3	8	4	5	17
24	13-Mar	8	1	5	5	3	7	14
25	14-Mar	6	1	4	3	3	5	14
26	15-Mar	11	0	5	6	3	8	20
27	16-Mar	10	3	4	8	2	1	19
28	17-Mar	5	1	4	6	4	3	20
29	18-Mar	12	0	5	7	3	3	16
30	19-Mar	11	1	1	11	3	0	19

## **GLOSSARY**

### **MAJOR MEANING, TERMINOLOGIES AND DEFINITIONS**

#### **Professionalism and Commercialism**

Professional journalism grew out of commercialization and modernization of newspapers. McQuail (2000, p.22) mentions that it is more relevant to see the emergence of a new kind of newspaper as a result of commercialization. It is in this context that the notion of objective journalism was born (Hodges, 1998, p.108). Discarding the role of partisan advocacy, the ideal journalist (and the responsible Press) would must detach himself or herself from the political process in order to observe it objectively.

Thus commercialization and professionalism of the newspapers is being considered as cause and effect in general. However, hyper commercialization of newspapers resulted in several anomalies. The hyper commercialization yields unprofessional attitudes, the supremacy of material existence over the moral existence of newspapers. Just like political bias and partisan leanings, excessive commercialization also prevents a newspaper from fully upholding public interests.

Dominick (1999) states that the mass press appeared during an era in which ordinary people were first recognized as political and economic force in North America during the mid-1800s. He discusses the preconditions for emergence of the mass newspapers that were, in fact, commercial newspapers of that time. He describes the situation where property requirements for voting had been scrapped. Every state but one chose presidential electors by popular voting. In addition, this period was marked by the rise of an urban middle class. Dominick further states that in North America, the trend towards democratization of business and politics fostered the creation of a mass audience responsive to a mass press (p. 90). The mass newspapers were thus the consequence of commercialization of newspapers.

McQuail (2000) opines that the mass newspaper has been called commercial for two main reasons: it is operated for profit by monopolistic concerns, and it is heavily dependent on product advertising revenue (which made it both possible and

advantageous to develop a mass readership). He also presents other scholars' views in this regard. He mentions that the commercial aims and underpinnings of the mass newspaper have exerted considerable influence on content, in the direction of political populism as well as support for business, consumerism and free enterprise (p.22).

Baran and Davis (2002) state that the notion of professionalism formalizes an important conception about the role of media—that of a watchdog guarding the welfare of the public. He adds that in some ambitious formulations of this role, the media are envisioned as an independent social institution, a Fourth Estate of the government, charged with ensuring that all other institutions—the three branches of government, business, religion, education, and family—serve the public. In joining the trend toward professionalization, according to Baran and Davis, media practitioners pledged to uphold standards of professional practice (p. 99).

McQuail (2000, p.172) links the objectivity concept of journalism with professionalism. He (2000, p.187) states that this version of an ideal standard of reporting practice has many advocates and has become the dominant ideal for the role of professional journalist. However, he concludes that professionalism, in general, is not very strongly developed within the media and employees have relatively little autonomy in relation to management and owners.

Hodges (1998, pp.107-8) observes that it was not until the present century, however, that a theory of a responsible press emerged among journalists themselves. The early tradition in America is hardly what Thomas Jefferson had in mind. In the colonial period, printing was in the hands of partisan pamphleteers, some pursuing religious goals and others advocating political causes. Newspapers could aptly have been described as "partisan rags." They were advocates, not reporters, and they were more prescriptive about special interest solutions to the society's problems than descriptive of the shape and genesis of those problems.

Burton (2010, p.70) states that the idea of professionalism is one which endorses expertise and the right to do things in certain ways. He notes that it is well documented that news workers invoke professionalism as a way of endorsing news values and therefore what they do selectively with news material.

Hedley (1992) states that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the mainstream media in the United States remained largely non-ideological. Very few mass circulation papers, magazines, and broadcast stations are affiliated with political organization, parties, or movements. It was not always so, but purposeful no affiliation has been a hallmark of the American press for more than a century. This characteristic—both a source of professional pride and result of economic self-sufficiency—is one of the main features that distinguish the American press from many others around the world (pp.8-9).

Professionalism is the precondition in order to run a newspaper independently or to sell its products, i.e., news and views. McQuail (2000, pp.22-23), in this regard, quotes Hughes, Schudson and Curran who observe the emergence of a new kind of newspaper as a result of commercialization. They describe a new kind of newspaper as lighter and more entertaining emphasizing human interest, more sensational in its attention to crime, violence, scandals and entertainment, and having a very large readership in which lower-income and lower-education groups are over-represented. Thus, commercialism could be considered as deviation from the noble idea of professionalism. Commercialism or hyper commercialization exists in absence of balance between moral and material existence of a newspaper.

Concept of professionalism in journalism developed in the course of making it widespread or mass based. It presents a way of media functioning in accordance with ethical standards. Baran and Davis (2002, pp. 98-99) argue that as pressure for government regulation of media mounted, industry leaders responded with efforts to professionalism. The industry lobbied for and subsidized the establishment of professional schools to train media practitioners. Rather than cede control of media to a government agency, media managers went on record with pledges to serve public needs. In the context of Nepal, the Royal Press Commission, 1958 (PCN, 2060 BS, p.330) recommended to provide professional training to Nepali journalists.

In 1923, the American Society of Newspaper Editors adopted a set of professional standards entitled *The Canons of Journalism*. Since then, virtually every association of media practitioners in the western democracies and elsewhere has adopted similar standards. In doing so, they are emulating professionals in fields like law and medicine. These standards typically commit media practitioners to serving the public

as effectively as possible. However, contrary to the noble idea of professionalism, excessive commercialization or commercialism of newspapers have posed threat to the notion of public service and truth telling.

### **The Partisan Press and Its Nepali Variant**

There are newspapers in the world that advocate explicitly for a certain political party or group or the goals. Since every socio-political campaign needs its own mass media, partisan press gets backing by interest groups. In the arena of international politics too, media have been utilized by the power centres. Perhaps this is obvious. But one of the professional postulates is that media are independent and committed to discovering and reporting the truth, and that they do not merely reflect the world as powerful groups wish it to be perceived. Thus, the partisan leaning is one of the major stumbling blocks for the professional practice of journalism.

Front-runners of the media world say that their news choices rest on unbiased professional and objective criteria, and they have been supported by the intellectual community for this contention. However, in many instances, powerful officials are seen to be able to fix the premises of discourse, to decide what the general populace is allowed to see, hear, and think about, and to manage public opinion by regular propaganda campaigns. Ignorance of objectivity, lack of balanced treatment and overt advocacy through the contents of the newspapers in order to serve a certain goal are the symptoms of the partisan leanings.

In the course of describing features of partisan newspaper, McQuail (2000) states that its uniqueness lies in the attachment of its readers by way of party allegiance, its sectionalism and its mobilizing function the foster party objectives. Examples include the vanguard press of the Russian revolutionary movement, the party political newspapers (especially social-democratic) of several Scandinavian countries and the official party press of Communist regimes (p.22).

Hadenius and Weibull use the term partisan newspapers as they explain transformation of newspapers with strong links to political parties in most European countries. McQuail and Siune (1998, p.14), in this regard, quote the duo as follows: in the early 1970s, newspapers with party political content represented more than 80 per

cent of the total circulation of the Norwegian and Swedish press. They further state that twenty-five years later, the newspapers—almost without exception—claim to be non-partisan and independent.

Partisan leanings lead a newspaper to advocate certain goals rather than to transmit information and to pass objective comments. Street (2001, p.20) states that the cause is explicitly and deliberately promoted in partisan bias. He considers editorial comments which recommend support for any political party or take sides in a policy controversy are examples of such bias. He adds that this can take the form of explicit recommendations to vote for one party or another, or it can be identified in the blatant endorsement of a cause.

O' Malley and Clive (2000) state that, in due course of time, depoliticization took place in most European countries. According to them, by the 1940s, partisan newspapers broke their ties with their political parties. They often remain loyal to their former political ideology, but they are no longer owned and financed by the political parties. In England the rise of a mass circulation daily press in the first four decades of the twentieth century disrupted the direct political ties of papers to political parties; the old direct forms of subsidy and party-based partisanship were modified by the financial independence achieved by owners of commercially successful papers (p.17).

During its initial phase, American newspapers were greatly influenced by the partisan trend. Dominick (1999) mentions that newspapers grew in numbers before the Revolutionary War [1775-1783]. Most of them were partisan, siding with the Colonies or with the Crown. This period marks the establishment of the political press, which openly supported a particular party, faction, or cause. The early newspaper editors, though divided over some issues, were united as never before by the passage of the Stamp Act of 1765 (p.88).

Dominick (1999), further, states that politicization of newspapers did not end with America's victory in the Revolutionary War. Instead, partisan leanings of the press were transferred into another arena—the debate over the powers of the federal government. The participants in this controversy included some of the best political thinkers of the time: Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, John

Jay. Newspapers were quick to take sides in this debate, and their pages were filled with Federalist or anti-Federalist propaganda (p.88).

McQuail (2000) considers the party political paper dedicated to the task of activism, information and organization as one of the common forms of the newspaper. Presenting the changed scenario that surfaced over the time, he states that the party newspapers, published by or for the party, lost ground to commercial press, both as an idea and as a viable business enterprise. According to him the idea of a party press, even so, still has its place as a component in democratic politics. Where it does survive in Europe (and there are examples elsewhere), it is typically independent from the state, though possibly subsidized, professionally produced, serious and opinion building in purpose (p.22).

Campbell (2000) views that historians, mark the 1830s as the beginning of the transition between the partisan and modern press eras. He states that though American journalism begun as a venue for partisan politics (encouraging debate over issues such as constitutional amendments, slavery, and states' rights). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, publishers figured out how to sell news as a product (Campbell, 2000, p.439). The Nepali newspapers started to depart from their partisan leanings, at least overtly only after 1990. The 1990s mark the slow but definitive beginning of departisanization of the larger section of the Nepali newspapers.

Political press with partisan leanings, comprised of newspapers with more militancy than truthfulness in covering political debates and controversies. Partisan newspapers intensely propagated a particular cause and routinely took sides, thus, intensifying the divisions. Accordingly this same understanding, newspapers aligned with the particular political force are known as partisan press. Partisan newspapers are party affiliated and they are not impartial. Kharel (2010, p.228) states that leopards do not change spots, nor do political party press change their partisan colour for professional character. He termed the nexus between political parties and the media in Nepal as deep rooted, a culture that developed since the early 1950s.

Coverage in partisan newspapers undermine truthfulness, concentrate on messages designed to create a desired impact on the public. During the Panchayat period, journalists used to acknowledge their biases either with the ruling regime or with the



out-lawed Nepali Congress or with the factions of the Communist Party of Nepal. Editors, who were against the Panchayat system, used to be discouraged by the state's repressive measures. Kharel (2010, p.229), in this regard, states that during the Panchayat rule, journalism remained controlled by the state. Various cases of cancellation of registration numbers of newspapers, confiscation of press equipment, censorship and initiation of legal cases against journalists, including sedition charges, and punishment are on record.

Out-lawed political parties had been using the newspapers as a platform for alternative discourse and as a catalyst for anti-Panchayat movement. Journalists, who were critical of Panchayat, took part in the democratic movement through their writings. They did not dare to face threats including the imprisonment. They had to face harsh consequences for their audacity. During this period, many critical journalists were forced to serve prison sentences. They were not only jailed, but also subjected to torture, and sued. But they remained adamant. Practising journalism during this time was regarded either as a struggle for democracy or as defend to existing political system. The conflicting parties would accuse each other of reporting garbage.

Primarily the weeklies have been recognized as the newspapers with partisan leanings in Nepal. There was a time when they were considered as mainstream press in the country. They played a pivotal role to create and develop the culture of newspapers or media in broader sense within the country. For a long time, these weeklies were the synonym for mass communication in Nepal. However, they started to face a hard time after the restoration of democracy in 1990 on account of larger investment in staff members, technology, transportation, distribution and marketing.

As the oldest news media in the world, the newspapers in early stage in any society struggled for the freedom of expression. They struggled against the status quo in every society in order to create a space for free expression and free flow of information. Thus the struggle of the newspapers lie at the foundation of media freedom in the world. Moreover, in the early days of the institutionalization of democracy, newspapers were its effective tools and means in many parts of the world. After 49 years of the initiation of the newspaper, the government started radio. The

government started television after the initiation of television broadcasting in the country.

In Nepal, radio and television broadcasting were not allowed in the private sector before 1990. Even for the print media, the overall state policy was to discourage the private sector investment, prior to 1990. This is the reason behind the existence of the small radical and mostly partisan newspapers in the country. During the Panchayat era, to run a newspaper meant a battle against or defend the regime rather than doing business. There were two fronts in the battle-ground comprising pro-Panchayat and anti-Panchayat weeklies. Thus, partisan leaning was the driving trend of the newspaper landscape in Nepal before 1990.

The partisan leanings of the big newspapers in post-1990 Nepal is generally not apparent. This kind of newspapers have not been identified as having allegiance to a particular political party. However, it would not be correct to conclude that the era of partisan has ended. McQuail (2000) observe this phenomena as universal trend. He opines:

In the case of privately owned media, the links to the political system are usually less transparent, but not always so. Media proprietors generally have financial and strategic interests that call for continuous influence on political decision-making. Not infrequently they have open ideological positions and even political ambitions of their own. The endorsement of political parties by newspapers is probably more common than not. (McQuail 2000, p.211)