



ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

Although the Press Council of India has clear guidelines on the way the media should report on an depict women, there is a lot of controversy regarding this and many newspapers are not clear in their own guidelines while tackling such sensitive issues. The fact that crime briefs are reported as simple events mostly unaccompanied by any analysis conveys a sense of media apathy and indicates the inherent belief that violence against women is a daily feature of life and does not require analysis. Some part of the blame can be attributed to the system of education has played a central role in moulding the process and patterns of uneven development and disenfranchisement in post colonial India. At the societal

level, English-medium education has played a critical role in producing a modernized techno managerial elite that continues to have disproportionate influence in shaping the discursive terrain of development and thereby policies and programmes that affect the social fabric of the country. Less visibly, English medium education widens, social fractures in Indian society by creating and reinforcing a social, cultural, economic, and discursive divide between the English educated and the majority. Media is the mirror of society and media reports are reflection of happenings in the society. Media has immense power to influence the masses and communication and IT revolution has further increased its importance. Unfortunately, nowadays media is wavering from its actual role and giving biased

information which makes development of the society more difficult. Portraying women as equals in the society is a subject that has been given low priority by the Indian media. The Indian media needs to be sensitized to gender issues and now must focus on women issues in a decisive way as their role is detrimental for the women empowerment in India. In the light of these facts, the present paper focuses on women's issues in contemporary Indian society and role of media in addressing the issues.

KEYWORDS: mirror of society, social, cultural, economic, Indian society.

INTRODUCTION

Media is the mirror of society and media reports are reflection of happenings in the society. Media has immense power to influence the masses and communication and IT revolution has further increased its importance. The role of media has become very important in shaping present days society. Media is the part of the life, all around, from the shows one watches on television, music on the radio, the books, magazines and newspapers. It educates people about the current issues and influences the public opinion.

The common people rely on media to know about happenings in the society. Media is often considered as the 4th pillar of the society and democratic medium of information. Media has the power to pressurize and criticize the drawbacks of democracy. It is instrumental in bringing about unity among the masses and is backbone of the nation. The reach of media to common people has increased and undoubtedly media has attained the role of a very powerful organ in virtually all spheres of life.

The electronic media, particularly television, has become the most influential medium of mass communication in India. Television has a myriad of different goals, which range from entertainment to education. Various confines of education and entertainment are depicted in television. It's often looked at as a babysitter for children. The viewing of television can entertain the young and old alike for great amounts of time. Nowadays media is wavering from its actual role and giving entertaining or biased information which makes difficulties for development of the society. In the present era of globalization and liberalization, media has become more responsive towards global market and commercial gains.

Today, newspapers and television channels are trying to make fast money by cashing on the news in wrong sense and wrong way. The result is that news is available in various interesting colour. Instead of giving important information and educative programmes, media is giving emphasis on sensationalizing the public. In the race to become more popular and to make more money, they have broken all the limits which they must follow while serving to build a healthy and progressive society. They have virtually no respect for the sentiments and ethics of the people and the land that they serve to.

Portraying women as equals in the society is a subject that has been given low priority by the Indian media. They have been interested in conveying to the public a particular kind of message regarding women. One can flip through the pages of popular magazines and news papers, watch television programmes and commercial films to get the content of them loud and clear. The Indian media loves to see women as home-makers and as an avid consumer. For them, the woman is the one who buys without end and her hair, dress, shoes; each bears the stamp of the latest, the most expensive products. Though the media purports to project them as modern and liberated woman, but in actual endorsed them as consumers.

Though television has become a pervasive and powerful medium of communication in India but the portrayal of Indian women on the television is derogatory to their image and is slightly linked with their real concerns. Given the fact that the majority of women workers are housewives, there is hardly a glimpse of every day adjustments women have to make in the home, the burden of housework, their contribution as housewives and mothers. On the other hand they are portrayed as housebound and tradition bound passive persons whose major concerns are domesticity. There are instances of stereotyping and discrimination. The news, sponsored TV serials and reality shows dealing with real life situation and character on television has huge TRPs.

The Indian soap operas (TV serials) like Hum Log, Khandan and Buniyad of 1980s, revealed more clearly what one could expect from television's portrayal of women and strengthened the belief that no matter how vast the variety of women portrayed, the message they conveyed did not fill one with any hope. Even today on Indian soaps, women are portrayed quite badly, perhaps worse than before. In view of such observations, the P. C. Joshi committee (1985) recommended a system of regular monitoring of the portrayal of women on television.

The popularity of films in India makes one speculate the magnitude of the social consequences of such media portrayals even more. The portrayal of women in Hindi films reveals the sheer quantity and variety of violence directed towards them. Women in bollywood films are often portrayed as hysterical bimbos. Screaming, yelling and crying are part and parcel of woman's reaction to stressful situations. There are number of movies where women who assert themselves are considered 'bad' while men, even if they tease and hit women are considered 'heroes'. The Hindi film industry is a profit oriented business and the dictates of the patrons, to a large degree, limits the choices of the directors of the movies. The Indian audience also must be partially blamed for the acceptance of such mistreatments of women in movies.

There are many instances of mistreatment of women by Indian media and not much has changed regarding portrayal of women. Interviews of men in newspapers usually focus on their work and hardly

ever mention their marital status or their dress sense. By contrast, women achievers are subject to irrelevant and distasteful queries. Take for example the interview of banker Tarjani Vakil by a leading daily. The interview treated the reader to colourful details about her appearance, personal life such as her penchant for beautiful sarees, her decision to stay single and her living in an extended joint family with emphasis on her feminine qualities like her soft voice. Another example is the television interview of the senior police officer Kiran Bedi in which she was asked if she likes to cook.

The media does try to establish a woman feminist, especially if she is a successful woman. Other examples of media biasness are also there. When the issue of reservation of seats for women in panchayats was discussed on television, it was men who did the talking while women sat as silent spectators. When women were shown leading dharnas against the Dunkel Draft, not even woman parliamentarian like Margaret Alva was approached for her views.

As the women are recently entering in the media field the study would like to know the criteria for the selection of women in the media as an active personnel. A such the respondents were asked to mention whether the media industry has any specific criteria for the selection of the women in the media field. The responses of the respondents in this regard are discussed below.

Table-1
Specific Criteria to Select Women Journalist

Particulars	No. of the Respondents	Percentage
Yes	181	60.33
No	119	39.66
Total	300	100.0

Source: Field Survey

The analysis indicates that there is a specific criteria for the selection of women in the media field. A majority of the respondents that is 60(60.33) percent of the respondents stated that there is specific criteria for the selection of women journalists. Remaining about 40(39.66) percent of the respondents indicates that there is no specific criteria for the selection of the women journalists. This clearly indicates that the media field follows specific criteria for the selection of women journalists.

Table-2
Criteria for Selection

Criteria	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Excellency and fluency in spoken language	194	64.65
Team management skill	66	22
Attractive physical personality	29	9.66
Tolerance nature with forecasting	11	3.66
Total	300	100.0

Source: Field Survey

The analysis of the data on the special criteria for women in the selection as journalist indicates that unlike the male members the women also preferred with the good qualities in the communication methods. It is further significant to note that the physical appearance of the women journalist is least cared for. The analysis indicates that nearly two third of the respondents that is 65(64.65) percent of the respondents indicates that the excellency in communication is the special criteria considered for women while recruiting them as journalist. About 22 percent of the respondents indicate that the team management is the special criteria for recruiting women as journalist. About 10(9.66) percent of the respondents and about 4 (3.66) percent of the respondents considered attractive personality and tolerance nature are the special criteria for the recruitment a s journalists respectively.

CONCLUSION:

Unfortunately, nowadays media is wavering from its actual role and giving biased information which makes development of the society more difficult. Portraying women as equals in the society is a subject that has been given low priority by the Indian media.

The Indian media needs to be sensitized to gender issues and now must focus on women issues in a decisive way as their role is detrimental for the women empowerment in India.

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