

MEDIA AND ITS ROLE TOWARDS WOMEN: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

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“There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing.” – Swami Vivekananda

ABSTRACT:

In this modern era, everybody is intimate with the word Media. It is a technically fashionable word. The term is widely used as a short hand for ‘Mass Media’. Media is comprised of Print and Electronic which are composed of the Radio, Television, Films, Internet, Newspaper, Magazines, journals and books etc. Conceptually, the mass media are the technological agencies and corporate organizations which are engaged in the creation, selection, processing and distribution of messages among the people. As a logical connotation, the mass media deal with the day to day problems and effect the human in general and a nation in particular. It contributes towards the emergence of mass society and mass culture.

Key words: *femininity, masculinity, feminism, gender, sex.*

Women's are the prime assets for the development of a country, especially in the context of India where nearly 50% of total population comprises of women. The time has gone when women were generally considered as an object and their role in family and society was very limited. The women of 21st century are achieving several mile stones and they are becoming source of inspiration for many. However, we cannot say it confidently that the image of women in Indian society has completely transformed, there are many evidences which proves the existence of systematic discrimination and neglect of women's in India. It may be in terms of inadequate nutrition, denial or limited access to education, health and property rights, child labor and domestic violence (Purnima, 2010). Media has always been a significant pillar of social transformation and social change. To bring a social change the instrumental role of media can-not be denied. It doesn't just have the power to build public opinion by reaching to far, wide and diversified audience but also mobilize people and mould the public opinion. This puts the media in a powerful position in a democracy. Popular mass media such as news papers, television, and radio represent a symbolic power of social control. Now days there are other interactive forms of communication have emerged out such as internet, blogs, social networking sites, text messaging, wikis, virtual world and many more. They are generally termed as new Media and becoming increasingly powerful mechanisms for mobilizing popular support. The characteristics of this new media are collect, collaborate, create and interact (Arif Moin & Ehtesham Ahmad Khan 2013). They effectively solicit public support and participation for the well being of the society. The structure of ownership and participation are new in new media and directly challenge the monopoly on mass communication possessed by traditional media producer. Women have crucial role to play in every sphere of life whether it is household, economic contribution child rearing or improving the quality of life. To play these role women should be conscious of their potential and it can only be possible when they will not be deliberately marginalized by male domination. In this context, media has an important role to play to create awakening in women to achieve their potential as the prime movers of change in society. (ibid)

The content of media reflects the pattern of value in any society. The prevailing attitude of the society gets revealed through the way subjects dealing with women are treated by the media

(Arpita Sharma, 2012). Media can act as both a perpetrator and as a protagonist – it can either reinforce the gender based discrimination by portraying stereotypical sensational images of women or it can provide balanced coverage that empowers women while exposing acts of gender bias (Amrita Ray and Mr. Ritwajit Das). Recognizing the role of media in women empowerment, the National commission for women and other organizations are striving hard to improve the status of Indian women different forms of communication for the mass.

Media play a significant role in society in that they inform and instruct their audiences about current issues and happenings around them or affecting them. The media are therefore a central part in human relations and an essential tool in communication as they play a critical role in educating the masses. In addition, societies and cultures are greatly influenced and transformed through the media. Cole and Daniel (2005) noted that “media convey messages that potentially inform and influence attitudes and behaviors” (p. xii). Many people pay close attention to what is written or presented by the media and thus base their thought patterns and belief systems around them. It is therefore important to consider what is being presented to the general public.

Feminist media studies have emerged as one of the richest and most challenging intellectual projects within the field of media and cultural studies over the past twenty-five years. The range, complexity and trans-disciplinarity of feminist media studies today bear little resemblance to the fledgling body of work that began to appear in the 1970s. The world wide feminist movement has pointed out three basic important dimensions regarding women’s participation, performance and portrayal in media. Reviewing the world scene the Mc Bride commission said that in general that the media paid inadequate attention to specific issues of women’s importance, to the activities of the women’s movement and the social contribution made by independent and gifted women. Women appear in news papers or magazines or films as self deprecating and dependent, irrational, superstitious and over emotional. In both the media vis. Print and visual women are shown either as the house wives whose interests are limited to domestic needs, or in sexually allowing background which by its associations with consumer goods make them attractive. A numbers of studies indicate over-effects of portrayal of women’s images. There are some fundamental aspects which have not received as much publicity as question of glamorization of women as sex objects by the media in a developing society like India. Traditionally, the media world has been male-dominated globally as well as nationally. Men design and define media policies, priorities, and agendas, including how women are portrayed and presented. Most often, it is men who make decisions about hiring staff. The ratio of male-female workers in the media is heavily imbalanced in favour of men. It is no wonder then that the media is biased against women in many areas. This bias affects images of women in the media, and, in turn, has a negative effect on women's development in a society. In India, cricket news occupies nearly 20% more space than women's issues. Female presence is more through advertisements, news of crime, and social events. Women's representation has moved beyond female images of the family and home to personal care, as dictated by the market agenda in a predominant patriarchy. The subtle stereotyping is more insidious as it is relatively more invisible but, nonetheless, demeaning and patronising.

The mass media function in the larger system of patriarchy and capitalism that controls media structures and organisations and represents women as subordinates. The recent debate of mass media vis-a-vis gender produces much more complex understandings of the cultural dimensions of power and equality, and more specifically feminist analyses of the media, culture and society (Gallagher 1992). With the proliferation of 'women's genres' -- soap operas, melodramas, women's magazines and so on -- women have emerged as important consumers of mass entertainment. The mass media also set the agenda for public opinion by selecting themes, items and points of views that tend to reinforce the patriarchal culture. But, the media simply does not reflect the social reality and conditions our values, attitudes and behaviours. They constitute only one side of the construction of women's marginality in culture.

Media has a role to play in the struggle for gender transformation and bridging gap between social identities of women and men. While communication studies, even of the radical critical tendency, have long seemed to be largely gender-blind (perhaps more a matter of unwillingness to see), one can now justifiably, speak of a cultural feminist media studies project' (Van Zoonen 1991; 1994; Gallagher 2003). The relationship between Media and women has a certain structure where woman is trapped as an object. The role of women in media-decision making is reflected in the poor representation of women issues and concerns. The drastically changing media (print) can be seen through years or especially in post-liberalization period, media has become market-oriented. Media-market on one hand has expanded opportunities for women but the kind of beats 'or job' are assigned to women journalists is to keep them confined to soft-beats (Tomar Ranu 2009) like handling feature writing or shallow writings. The relationship between the media and reality is, however, dialectical. Culture is not a static system, but an ever evolving process that constantly changes to accommodate emergent alternative and oppositional meanings, values and practices (Williams 1977). The mass media, particularly print and broadcasting media (television and radio), also provide some space for construction of new meanings and images. Although the progressive discourse is often co-opted in the mass media and re-constructed again to establish the hegemony of dominant social classes and reproduce gender relations, women's groups and media professionals continue to challenge them in the context of a larger system of patriarchy and capitalism that controls the mass media and subordinate women.

The reconstruction and representation of Gender issues is dealt within patriarchal discourse of the media. The question of gender touches almost every aspect of the media-culture relationship. Van Zoonen (1991) writes that the meaning of gender 'is never given but varies according to specific cultural and historical settings...is subject to ongoing discursive struggle and negotiation' (p45). Here important issue is professional inequality which is embedded in media and is strongly based on social differences between man and woman.

The exclusion and oppression of women by transnational corporations is translated into media representation and employment. To address these issues UNESCO commissioned major review of the literature worldwide related to women and Media (Gallagher 1981).

Gallagher (1981) notes that her reviews present a picture remarkable only for its overall consistency when compared from one country to another. The report offers considerable evidence in support of conclusion that is:

"Representation of women can best be described as narrow. On film, press and the broadcast media, women's activities and interests typically go no further than the confines of home and family. Characterized as essentially dependent and romantic, women are rarely portrayed as rational, active or decisive. Both as characters in fictional media material and as newsmakers in the press and broadcasting, women are numerically under representation- an absence which underlines their marginal and inferior status in many spheres of social, economic and cultural life. Prevalent news values define most women and most women's problems as unnewsworthy, admitting women to coverage primarily as wives, mothers or daughters of men in the news: in their own right, they make the headlines usually only as fashionable or entertainment figures."

It was indeed a political impetus that first shaped the academic agenda of feminist media analysis. One starting point for Western feminists was Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), with its searing critique of the mass media. At a global level the United Nations International Decade for Women (1975-85) was a catalyst for debate about the many sites of women's subordination, while the media's role as a specific source of oppression was documented in reviews initiated by UNESCO (Ceulemans and Fauconnier, 1979; Gallagher, 1981). These early analyses found the media to be deeply implicated in the patterns of discrimination operating against women in society - patterns which, through the absence, trivialization or condemnation of women in media content amounted to their "symbolic annihilation" (Tuchman, 1978). That general critique quickly came to be positioned around two central axes: an analysis of the structures of

power in which women are systematically subordinated; and a focus on the politics of representation and the production of knowledge in which women are objects rather than active subjects. These two concerns were addressed in many studies of the late 1970s and early 1980s as problems of “women in the profession” and “images of women in the media.” But they have gradually come together to produce a complex analysis of the structure and process of representation, the cultural and economic formations that support these, the social relations that produce gendered discourse, and the nature of gendered identity.

At global level major study was done known as Global Media Monitoring Project² in 2005. This study was co-coordinated by World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) an international NGO that promotes communication for social change. This study was conducted in 76 countries across the globe.

This study found that:-

- i) There has been a steady increase in the percentage of news items reported by women from 28% in 1995, to 31% in 2000, reaching 37% in 2005. Female reporters have gained more ground in radio and television than in newspapers. The press lags far behind the electronic media, with only 29% of stories written by female reporters in 2005.
- ii) As news presenters, women are more likely to be found in television than radio. With 57% of television items presented by women in 2005, this is the only area in which female outnumber males. In radio 49% of items were presented by women.
- iii) The on-screen presence of women decreases with age. Up to the age of 34 women are in the majority as both news presenters and reporters on television. By the age of 50, only 17% of reporters and 7% of presenters are female. For women in the profession, a youthful appearance is more highly valued than experience. Male presenters and reporters continue to appear on-screen well into their 50s and even 60s.
- iv) In most news organizations, local news is deemed less prestigious than national or international news. Female reporters are more likely to work on local stories (44%) than on national (34%) or international stories (32%).
- v) Female reporters predominate in only two topics weather reports on television and radio (52%) and stories on poverty, housing and welfare (51%). There is a 50-50 gender balance among reporters in celebrity news, and in stories on consumer issues. In all other topics, male reporters are in the majority. Sports news is the least likely to be reported by women, with just 21% of female reporters.
- vi) Overall, male journalists report at the so-called 'hard' end of the news spectrum such as politics and government (where women report only 32% of stories). Females are more likely to work on the so-called 'soft' stories such as social and legal issues (40% reported by women). Although many 'soft' news stories are important, they are not always perceived as such in the hierarchy of new values. As a result, the work of female journalists is sometimes under-valued, and women reporters are frequently assigned to stories that are downright trivial-celebrity news (50% reported by women), or arts and entertainment (48%).
- vii) There are more female news subjects in stories reported by female journalists (25%) than in stories reported by male journalists (20%).

This Global Media Monitoring project concludes that women have made great strides in the news media over the past decade. But they still struggle to achieve equal treatment. Older female professionals are rarely seen on television: for women appearance is valued more highly than experience. Female reporters frequently work in local news beats and on stories at the 'soft' end of the news spectrum. This could be one of the reasons why there are more female news subjects in

stories reported by female journalists. But, irrespective of who reports the news, the fundamental question is: why do so few women make the news at all. The Global Media Monitoring Project 2005 concludes, the world we see in the news is a world in which women are virtually invisible (Gallagher 2005).

Further Gallagher (2005) describes that the use of stereotypes reflects a mental block not only in terms of what society may expect from women, but also more seriously in terms of what women may expect from themselves. The structures of many societies have been based on assumptions of sex-biased roles, which are entrenched in the use of language. When gender-biased language is used in a story (for instance, craftsman, businessman, fireman, and policeman), journalists support a destructive bias that suggests women are excluded or incapable of playing their roles. True gender equality should liberate both men and women from the limitations of such narrow thinking.

—It is not impossible to produce news stories that are gender sensitive. It just means thinking more creatively about the topic at hand—whom it concerns, who should be included in its coverage, in what way and for what purpose. says Margaret Gallagher, author of the GMMP(2005).

It has been a global view of the contribution of women work force in media. In context of India, a study on Status of Women Journalist in Print Media was conducted in 2002 by Press Institute of India commissioned by National Commission for Women. A two pages questionnaire was distributed in three languages to journalists across the country, from Punjab and Shillong in North and North East to Kanyakumari in the South and from Calcutta in the East to Kotach in West.

This study reveals that women in regional-vernacular press are lagging far behind their colleagues in the English language press. There is vast difference in the wages earned by those in English national newspapers and those in regional media. This report says that in regional press men and women are hired like contract labor on daily wages. They are extremely insecure and invariably it is the women that are the first to be axed.

The level of awareness of basic working conditions is very low on some key issues:

- i. 31 per cent were not aware if any equal employment policy existed in their Organization.
- ii. 29 per cent did not know if women were targeted.
- iii. 19.5 per cent did not know whether formal appeal procedures or mechanisms for handling grievances existed in their organization while 50.7 per cent were sure of no such facility.
- iv. 10 percent are not aware of any formal training program in their organization while 42.3 said that no such facility was provided.
- v. 87.6 percent are not aware of any superannuation scheme or believe that it does not apply to them.

It's known that the Indian social system is an amalgamation of diverse cultures that are reflected in various gender relations ranging from patriarchal forms to matrilineal. The portrayal of this complex range of gender subjectivity can provide an appearance of media's simultaneous sensitivity and bias on gender issues. The prevalence of gender discourse has ensured that the impact of gender differentiating structures in terms of atrocities such as sati, rape, female feticide, denial to access to facilities and resources (credit, health care, property) and poor quality of participation in availed avenues is well reported. In the absence of defined and institutionalized policies, procedures and mechanism guided by gender just concerns, the messages conveyed fall in the realm of individual attribution o meaning and representation of gender issues in combination with the dominant socio-political norms. Thus gender representation in media is open to the

influence of competing tendencies, be it the market, cultural capital, communalism, electoral politics or women's empowerment articulation (Dagar, 2004).

The role of women is widely recognized as vitally important to international development issues. This often means a focus on equality prevailed between men and women, ensuring participation, but includes an understanding of the different roles and expectation of the genders within the community. Bornstein suggests that, there are two contrasting ideas regarding the definition of gender and the intersection of both of them as defined, "Gender is the result of socially constructed ideas about how the behaviour, actions, and roles a particular sex performs. The beliefs, values and attitude taken up and exhibited by them are as per the agreeable norms of the society and the personal opinions of the person are not taken into the primary consideration of assignment of gender and imposition of gender roles as per the assigned gender." (Wikipedia)

The women are unique creation of the world and constitute half of the population of the country. No society can socially, economically, politically and culturally progress without the active participation of women as stated by the great philosopher and emancipator of Indian women, Swami Vivekananda "there is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing". In spite of the fact, women are the most deprived and socially discriminated in the society in the name of gender and treated as sex objects and commodity. Such approaches and perceptions prevailed in the society are shown in the media from time to time. The concept of 'cultural transmission' shows how culture, and in particular expectations of the genders, can be transmitted from one generation to the next. Thus, the role of media as a factor for socio-cultural transformation shaping the attitudes and behaviours of the genders towards the better development of the society, upliftment and equal recognition of the women in the society is recognized in a developing country like India. But at the same time, the negative projection of the image of women, their poor participation in the media and also an insignificant role in the women issues, related to gender bias, sex objects are common feature of the media industry. It helps not only in nourishing these differences but also showing the ideology of male supremacy.

Women and media

The women and media has been subject of study for researchers all over the world. When we talk of women and media the first question that strikes us is why women is the subject of media and why not men? Why media and gender becomes the issue of discussion? The media's portrayal of women and gender inequality has been a matter of concern among media analyst and researchers across the globe. Over the years, the media industry has developed extensive communication infrastructure.

Media in its various forms, the print, electronic or new media has a constant presence in our everyday life. It plays a vital role in setting opinions, influences our behavior, attitudes, social interactions through the presentation of image. The mass media have played a decisive role in perpetuating gender stereotypes through the media messages and images across the globe. In the past few years the form and content of mass media have changed with new dimensions but even the modern media plays a significant role in the production and transmission of patriarchal structure of the society.

The women's movement of the 60s and 70s in the west had its impact in India also. The main-stream press then known as the 'Nationalist Press' in British India which was covering the colonial rule did not lack behind covering the various women's movement. The movement in the west questioned dominance of patriarchy and advocated for equality. The mass media influences the cultural domain by constructing social messages and people draw conclusion from the constructed reality. The exposure to mass media was considered as an important tool of modernity.

Earlier communication research argued on the representation of men and women in media. The media represents a constructed reality of media's selective interpretation of social reality and

such messages shape our perception of reality. The influence of the patriarchy in the media structures and media organization frames the image women as subordinate to male. Various studies carried on mass media and gender produces a complex understanding of the relationship of culture dimension of power and equality and the feminist perspectives of media, culture and society (Gallagher, 1992). With the incorporation of 'women's genre' in the various forms of media, women became durable commodity for the consumers of mass entertainment. Media organizations set agenda for public opinion and views that tend to reinforce the patriarchal dominion. Instead of neutral reporting the news reports showed women as trivialized, polarized, caricaturized, mischaracterized, depicted them in poor light and were represented as stereotypes. This kind of media coverage's effected women's development process and questioned the dignity of women in a patriarchal society.

The kind of relationship between media and reality is dialectic in nature. Culture is a dynamic form of social system, subjecting to the ever evolving process that constantly changes to accommodate the emergent alternative and oppositional meanings, values and practices (Williams,1977). Both the electronic and print mess advocated the construction of new meaning and image and allocated space for it. As a matter of fact the progressive discourse if often co-opted in mass media and is re-constructed which again reflects the hegemony of dominant social group and gender relation. The various women's group, women's organization and media professionals poses a challenge in the light of the larger context of patriarchy and capitalism for subordinating women in mass media. The feminist activists and media analyst critically analyzed the negative and stereotype representation of women in media.

The UNESCO conducted workshop (1975) stated that- " Recognized the tendency of the media to project stereotyped image of women, reinforcing traditional concepts of the roles of women, prejudicial to aspirations for improved status, rights and participation in society". The projection of the images of women by the media is one of the blockades in removing to the discrimination against women in society and one of the main factors in developing the sexist attitude towards the female.

In another UNESCO symposium (1975) stated to the participants at the symposium to "denounce the existing sexist images of women in the mass media, and appeal to women all over the world to carefully examine and analyze these images and to realize that they are literally living in the world of manmade images which do not resemble real women, or deal fairly with the realities of the women's experience".

Studies show that the blatant portrayal o sexism in the media shows more subtle distortions of women which are basically outcome of biasness and media construction of images. Larry Gross states that—representation is the "mediated reality" of our mass culture. By examining the images of women and the types of messages transmitted by the various media it would be worthwhile to analyze the specificity of media in reinforcing the existing gender ideology.

The print media plays a vital role in shaping public opinion in a democracy. The women's movement of the 1970s drew the researcher's attention to the representation of women and women's issues in the news media. With the growth of contemporary women's movement in India, there was sporadic growth of women's group who helped to give women's issues more prominence in media. The accepted norm in media is that events rather than processes makes news. The relationship between press and women's movement in India was not very smoother but still as compared to the west, the women's groups of our country have greater access to media.

Media, regarded as the mirror of society reflects the happenings of the society. The news reportage is institutional methods of making information reach the audience or readers; it is gathered by media professionals. The news reflects the form of society, indeed referred as a "mirror reality" (Tauchman.1978). the news media renders information to the audience or readers who have no empirical reference of the event, no concept, ideas shaped or attitude formed and even in case of definite attitudes event is constituted within the existing paradigm. The media "suddenly

and dramatically” deliver such information (Young, 1981). The events presented in news media as Sherisen (1978) elaborates about the crime reportage as “crime is an event with periodicity.... (it involves) the predictability of crime as a repeating event but with a newness everyday”. Studies shows that women are underrepresented and even when they appear in news they are shown as victims or passive reactors of the events in the news media (Bailey, 1994 and Ross, 1994). According to Joseph and Sharma, the importance of women’s issues in the news media is, “women’s issues are usually not the stuff of which headlines made. Not are gender related concerns considered good copies. When such questions draw the attention of the media, they are often sensationalized, trivialized or otherwise distorted. In a nutshell, their coverage can be summed up as a series of hits and misses” (Joseph and Sharma, 1994).

The relationship between gender and media bear strong dependency as the representation is central to media itself. Studies show that there exists certain biasness in the context of gender representation in the new media. Consequently, this leads to under coverage of gender issues and stereotyping is essentially an organizational practice. The coverage of special concern to women’s issue gives more weightage in the traditional concept of ‘news’. The dominant elite section of the society influence media organizations and the policy makers and this in turn gives more coverage to the male centric news. Tuchman defines such under representation or absence of women from the news as “symbolic annihilation”—together constitutes a combination ‘condemnation, trivialization and erasure’.

Margaret Gallagher (1978 and 1979) noted that overall media treatment of women can best be described as narrow...women are rarely portrayed as rational active or decisive...Underlying practically all media images is a dichotomous motif which defines women as either perfectly good wholly evil , mother or whore, virgin or call girl, even tradition or modern. Kunchenhoff (1975) noted “women primarily appear on T.V in a narrow social context of interpersonal relationship.” “Women are negatively portrayed in mass media” Adnan (1987). Fernandez (1992) contends that the media generally subvert women’s positions and act to preserve the dominant values of society. Women are underrepresented in television about 3:1. “Male were the most frequently identified recipients of aggression and the second most frequently identified initiators of aggression .Female were infrequently identified as recipients of aggression and were slightly more likely to be identified as initiator of aggression” Kalis and Neueddorf (1989).Copeland {1989} noted “men were framed a closer perspective than were women.” Busby (1975) and Durkin (1985) noted that Males are more violent, Females are more often victims on television.(Aslam Parvez & Robina Roshan, 2010)

Press in India do not completely ignore the women’s issues but such coverage is unable to explore the roots of problems instead it is presented in a relatively arbitrary and rather superficial form. Though women are comparatively less represented yet women’s group in India could project the problems fairly effectively through the press. The other aspect of press or news media is reflective of the kind of women’s issues that attracts the media attention. Studies show that the presentation of crime against women in news media led to multi-dimensional misrepresentation. The current media trend shows that there is increase or over representation of crime in the news media (March, 1991).

The issues that centers around the practical realities like the developmental issues, health, social status of women in society, family problems, prejudices against women in work place or gender biases gets less coverage whereas the other events and issues that constitute news worthiness for coverage of women’s issues encapsulate politics, crime and entertainment. The Indian press is basically known for its large coverage of political news, gossip and sensationalism (Goswami, 1994, Nandy, 1994a, 1994b; Karlekar 1994). A newspaper review revealed that issues of special concern that attract media’s attention are rape, dowry, atrocities and violence against women but it is not always the reflection of the real world. The representation of the gender related issues must be superficially presented and must encourage the means for understanding

the facts and realities of crime or other event or happening of society. Research suggests that women constitute more than half of the world's population. But do we hear their voices frequently in the news media? News acts as a mirror of the world, but the question arises are we presented the clear unambiguous reality or the distorted reality? It distorts reality, flattering the importance of certain groups, while pushing others to the margin (Gallagher 2005).

The relationship between media and women is based on certain structure where woman is used as an 'object'. The post liberalization made media market-oriented and the media-market has expanded opportunities for women but the problem rises in the representation of women. The media, an important form of discourse, that structurally frames, shapes and reflect public's opinion on various societal issues. "The media are important social institutions and are crucial presenters of culture, politics, and social life, shaping as well as reflecting how these are formed and expressed. Media 'discourse' is important both for what it reveals about a society and for what it contribute to the character of the society (Bell, 1995). Journalist need to understand the limitation of the media output and play the role in the constructing the reality by informing, educating and entertaining and transmitting culture. Though the journalists operate under professional and institutional constraints yet they can exercise their choice on the selection of angles or frames or images of story which have an influence on the coverage and portrayal of women in media. Since, they have a role in shaping public opinion, Sheikh (1999) asserts, "journalists have a special responsibility in shaping the image of women in media due to their role as conveyers of message that contribute to shape people's opinions and feeling." The study is narrowed to news media and the women's issues print media. The study is designed to explore the pattern and frequency of the coverage's of women's issues and evaluates the representation of women in print media. The main focus of the study is to analyze the nature and kind of women's issues given due importance in the mass media.

The Gender Stereotype

By 'Gender' we mean the roles and responsibilities that have been constructed by the society, in a given culture or location. These roles have political, cultural environmental, economic, social, and religious factors influencing them. Custom, law, class, ethnicity, and individual or institutional bias also influence 'gender stereotype'. Within the above framework, Gender attitudes and behaviors can be learned and can also be changed.

According to Gender stereotypical perceptions women are supposed to be dependent, weak, incompetent, emotional, fearful, flexible, passive, modest, soft-spoken, gentle, care takers while men are powerful, competent, important, logical, decision-makers, aggressive, focused, strong and assertive. Gender stereotype and gender inequality is so deeply engraved in the long history of social consciousness that it is now believed that only the media with its tremendous reach and power would be the ideal tool in bringing about gender equality. In literature there are many stereotypically female and male characters and feminists argue that these roles reproduce and maintain patriarchy.

According to Elizabeth Langland, there are common stereotypes such as the mother, the wife. The stereotype the "submissive wife" is portrayed as an "obedient, passive, unassuming" woman. Moreover, Gamble mentions that the submissive women are commonly portrayed as "nurturant wife, mother or muse". Traditionally, the wife's role was to stay at home and take care of the children, while her husband worked and brought money to the household (McElroy 102). Gale A. Yee claims that the role of the submissive housewife is partly a product of the wife's lack of financial independence. Thus, by following norms and values in society, reinforced by ideology and religion, the traditional wife reflects the stereotypical role of the submissive wife. In contradiction, Louis Blackwell discusses sexuality as a part of the stereotypical submissive wife. She argues that women are described as subordinating themselves to dominant men because of a fulfilling sex life. According to this stereotype, these particular women also have a tendency to endure their men's violent behaviour and abuse.

In India where a patriarchal society flourishes, 'son preference' is an age-old gender bias, in which the male of the family bears the responsibility of 'carrying forward' the family's name. He is supposed to support his parents in old age and also perform their last rites when they die. The fact that daughters are generally regarded as 'Parayadhan' or 'somebody else's wealth' and the giving away as dowry to the groom ensure that daughters are often seen as an 'economic liability'.

A United Nations statistics shows Gender inequality very starkly: Women perform two-third of the world's work but earn only one-tenth of the world's income. They comprise two-third of the world's illiterates and own less than one-hundredth of the world's property. A gross discrimination stands out.

Stereotyped "Feminine" traits

- **Physically Weak** - When a person is unsuccessful using bodily strength, for example incapable of opening a jar or carrying a big box, or similar actions.
- **Submissive** - When someone is obeying someone else without questioning their authority.
- **Emotional** - When someone is showing his/her feelings, both positive and negative.
- **Dependant** - Someone that depends on someone else, for example a home, food and money or other things.
- **Nurturing, Helpful** - Someone that takes care of or supports someone else physically or mentally.
- **Afraid, fearful** - When someone is nervous or afraid to get hurt or that something bad will happen.
- **Troublesome** - Someone who causes trouble or pain to others.
- **Follower** - A person that supports and admires another person or set of ideas. A person who is very interested in a particular activity and follows all the current news about it.
- **Victim**: Someone that needs to be saved because he/she is being hurt or tortured by someone.
- **Described as physically attractive** - The character is described as beautiful/attractive by another character.
- **Asks for or accepts advice** - The character asks for help or assistance or in other ways and shows that he/she need help.
- **Ashamed** - Someone feels shame or embarrassment due to something he/she has done. (England et al. 2011, p. 561 table 2 & 3 the oxford advanced learners dictionary.).

Stereotyped "Masculine" traits

- **Physically Strong** - Something shows that the character is strong, by example moving heavy objects, hitting something etc.
- **Assertive** - Someone that strongly expresses their opinions so that others will notice declaring or positively stating something.
- **Unemotional** - The opposite of emotional, a character that does not show emotions.
- **Independent** - Someone who is self-sufficient and does not depend on other people for home, food and money etc.
- **Selfish/Self-serving** - People who only care about themselves and not about others. People who are only interested in gaining advantages for themselves.
- **Hero, Brave, inspires fear** - A person that is admired for doing something good or brave, for example saving someone or doing something that is dangerous. Someone who inspires fear by making someone else be afraid of him/her.
- **Problem solver** - A person that finds ways to solve problems.
- **Leader** - A person that in some way leads a group of people.
- **Perpetrator** - A person that commits a crime or does something that is wrong/evil/mean.

- **Described as having a higher economic/career status and being intellectual** – A person that is described as having a profession in which the character earns a lot of money. Also this person is reading or doing similar intellectual activities.
- **Gives advice** – Someone who gives other people advice on how to act etc.
- **Proud** – Feeling satisfied with something that has never been achieved. (England et al. 2011, p. 561 table 2 & 3 the oxford advanced learners dictionary.).

An Ideal that is not “Real”

The objectification of women in mass media has a long sorted history. Critics, however, argue is that such an analysis is an exaggeration, which they dismiss along with most feminist critiques of society. This paper argues that the image of an “ideal” woman (as presented by the media) is harmful. The representation of women in the media has always been exploitative. It has, throughout the years, reduced women to being nothing more than objects to be won, prizes to be shown off, and playthings to be abused. It has also created a definition of beauty that women compare to them. Also, men compare the women in their lives to what they see on television screens, in magazines, and on billboards. Both the self and society has suffered because of the objectification, sexism, exploitation and assessment.

In 2010, following a set of three studies that “examined the associations among sexist beliefs, objectification of others, media exposure and three distinct beauty ideals and practices,” researcher Viren Swami and colleagues, found that sexism exists where beauty ideals and practices are rigidly consumed and followed, (Swami et al. 2010:367).

In patriarchal societies, the roles and privileges accorded to women are inferior to those assigned to men, and as such, sexism plays a central role in the continuing oppression of women. Moreover, and as predicted by the “beauty ideals are oppressive (BIO) hypothesis (Forbes et al., 2007), the existence of patriarchal structures and attitudes should result in significant relationships between sexist attitudes and the endorsement of beauty ideals and practices, (Swami et al., 2010:366).

Gender differences seen in some situations

Social situations: The social roles demand that the head of the family is always a male. He is also the main bread-winner while the woman is usually seen as a house-maker, a nurturer and care-giver.

Political situations: Power sharing between men and women is biased. Men are seen mostly at higher level of political field – the national, while women are expected to be at the local level.

Educational situations: There is a definite gender bias in educational opportunities and expectations. It is the boy in the family who gets the resources for higher education. Girls are usually expected to go to less-challenging academic fields.

Economic situations: There is a wide gap between access to lucrative careers and finance between men and women. Credit and loans; land ownership policies etc are more biased towards women.

Women and Media

Representation in the Media:

It has long been recognized by Feminists all over the world that there is a significant and long lasting influence of the media in either challenging or perpetrating existing constructions of gender. In a broad-ranging analysis, *Feminist Media Studies*, Liesbet van Zoonen explores the ways in which feminist theory and research contribute to the fuller understanding of the multiple roles of the media in gender construction in contemporary societies. The book analyses media

representations through content analysis and semiotics. Media as a tool for gender sensitization can only be utilized when the full influence of media of media on gender construction is understood.

The Fourth Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP 20092010), which is the most extensive research on gender bias and subsequent initiatives in the news media, shows women representation in the media. The GMMP, after gathering insights and information through media monitoring aims to promote a balanced gender representation in and through the news media. It involves voluntary participation of women from grassroots communities to university students and researchers to media practitioners.

It was astonishing, as the report shows that less than one fourth (24 percent) of the people made visible or heard or read about on Television and print news worldwide is female. That means that for every three males we see or read about in the media, we get to see or hear or read about only one female. This represents just a seven percent increase in fifteen years. In so called the 'News subjects' which rank higher in the media agenda, the visibility of women was even less. Women were represented only in four percent of 'politics and government' stories and just one percent in 'economy' stories.

Further highlighting the gender bias the three percent increase in women in the news between 2005 and 2010 mostly portrayed women as commentators on general opinion and not as experts in specialized fields. Women were generally placed in the 'ordinary interviewees' categories while men are mostly seen in 'expert' categories. While almost equal number of men and women reflected the general view of ordinary citizens in news stories, (47 percent female, 53 percent male), only 19 per cent of those providing expert comments on specialist knowledge or experience were women. Women spokespersons speaking on behalf of organisations were only 18 percent. The comparison was stark: Less than one out of every five authoritative sources interviewed by news media is female. The GMMP report added, the news presents a world in which men outnumber women in almost all occupational categories. In real life, women's participation in all spectrum of profession is much higher. The media has managed to provide a lop-sided picture in which women in positions of authority or responsibility are almost absent outside the domain of their homes. It was further pointed out that general visibility of women was desirable, infact it was even more crucial that the news reflected women's presence in every sphere. Only then a more realistic picture of the world would be presented by the media. Stereotypical roles were being strengthened by the media in which women were portrayed in their roles in a family five times more than men. The priorities being considered while agenda setting the distribution of stories, suggests the need for a radical transformation towards more gender-awareness and gender responsiveness. The status of 52 % of the population has to be given a second thought and has to be elevated from a subordinate post to that of equality.

Gender-based violence against women and girls

According to the 1993 UN General Assembly, violence of gender against women is defined as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life' (UN, 1994). Violence against women has its origins in the patriarchal structure that oppresses women (Amorós, 1990). It is the manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women which have resulted in the domination and discrimination of women in society. As an institutional response, global, regional and national organisations have taken significant steps towards state action to eliminate violence against women.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is the international bill of rights for women. This is the first international instrument to define violence against women and to set an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. The Inter-American Convention to Prevent,

Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women, Belem do Parà, was founded in 1994 by the Organization of American States (OAS). This regional body recognises all kinds of violence against women as a violation of women's human rights. These instruments have impacted favourably on the improvement of laws, regulations and policies to stop violence against women and girls in several countries, including Brazil, Spain, the USA, India, Mexico, Italy and the Philippines.

The definitions of violence of gender used by these instruments are based on the theoretical framework of feminist scholars. This issue became increasingly prominent in the literature in the 1960s, coinciding with the emergence of the second wave of feminism. In their analysis and conceptualisation of patriarchy, feminists first launched in the 1960s and 1970s the debate about sexual violence, as an attempt to define violence against women as a political problem, linked to their gender condition. In the 1980s scholars moved to the concept of domestic violence to emphasise gender inequality between women and men in the domestic sphere as the place where violence of gender is institutionalised. The most important development of feminist theory was to move towards a holistic perspective that unites all forms of violence against women and looks at the specific contexts in which gender-based violence is perpetrated. This advancement is reflected in the definition of both types –physical, sexual, psychological, economic, feminicide– and modalities –institutional, community, work, school– of violence against women and girls. At this point, we would say that scholarly developments have made a key contribution to the advancement of women's human rights, evidenced by the political dimension of feminist theory.

Media and violence against women and girls: a feminist scholar agenda

Both the CEDAW and Belem Do Parà call to the responsibility of the media in the elimination of violence against women and girls. In 1995 the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) called explicitly on governments to 'take effective measures or institute such measures (emphasis mine), including appropriate legislation against pornography and the project of violence against women and children in the media' (UN, 1995). The BPfA called on both the media and advertising industries to:

- Establish, consistent with freedom of expression, professional guidelines and codes of conduct that address violent, degrading or pornographic materials concerning women in the media, including advertising.
- Disseminate information aimed at eliminating spousal and child abuse and all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence. At the national level, laws regarding violence against women and girls in countries such as Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Spain and India list specific actions related to media industries. However, while the BPfA listed the actions which would achieve gender equality and stop gender-based violence, there is no single formal policy on gender and communication in most countries in the world.

All these mandates have been followed by extensive research developed by feminist scholars regarding media's role in the reproduction of violence against women. This is why gender-based violence in media content has become one of the core issues of the research agenda. The representation of sexual violence in media content was one of the first issues taken up by feminist communication studies. Feminist critics showed how through the commodification of women's bodies, media content –news, films, magazines– contributed to the 'normalisation' of sexual assault, rape and other forms of sexual violence and how they reinforced gender inequalities.

This first stage was followed by analysis of other specific forms of violence against women. Coverage of domestic violence in the news media attracted special attention as its rise was alarming. Based on a holistic perspective, current research includes the analysis of different forms and modalities of gender-based violence in media discourse (Vega Montiel, 2010). Findings from numerous studies have demonstrated the ways in which media content reinforces violence against women and girls (Benedict, 1992; Cuklanz, 2000; Laguna, 2004; Diez, 2002; Vega Montiel, 2007).

These studies show that:

- Media content reproduces sexist stereotypes that associate male identity with violence, domination, independence, aggression and power, while women are depicted as emotional, vulnerable and sensitive, and dependent upon male actions (Elasmar, Hasegawa and Brain, 1999; McGhee and Frueh, 1980; Thompson and Zerbinos, 1995).

- Women are usually stereotyped as sexual objects or even as mere body parts. Some examples show that: female nudity in magazine advertisements increased significantly around the world between 1983 and 1993 (Reicht et al., 1999); teen female TV characters used to be hyper-gendered (Holdden, 2012). In consequence, female sexuality is represented not as the sexual liberation of women but as the availability of women for male consumption.

- Only 24% of news subjects are women, 76% are men. Representation of gender in news is associated with relations of domination and subordination: whereas men are represented as sportsmen, politicians and businessmen, women are represented as vox populi –that is to say, they use to be associated to the lack of status and power (WACC, 2010).

- News reports of violence of gender tend to represent women as victims –associated to their lack of power– or, conversely, as those responsible for the violence of which they are victims. Usually, aggressors are not part of news reports (Diez, 2002; Vega Montiel, 2007).

- Popular music is a powerful vehicle for the reproduction of violence of gender. That is the case with rock and pop music, country, rap and, most recently, reggaeton. Feminist research has also shown how the Internet and ICTs are now part of the gender-based violence environment.

A central problem associated with digital communication is the growing circulation of pornography. Statistics show that there are 4.2 million web pages that offer pornography – 12% of the total number of websites in the world; 100,000 of them offer child pornography. The online pornography industry makes 97.06 billion dollars per year, a much higher profit than Microsoft, Google, Yahoo, Amazon, Netflix and Apple combined (Feminist Peace Network, 2006). Video games are now part of the digital gender-based environment. Some of the most popular ones show assaults on women, rape, prostitution and murder. Some examples are Grand Theft Auto and Benki Kuosuko (Maltzahn, 2006). Linked to pornography is the sexual trafficking of women, girls and boys that has been enhanced through the Internet. What some scholars call ‘virtual traffic’ refers to the implications of the Internet and other ICTs on sex trafficking (Maltzahn, 2006). Sex trafficking operates mainly in countries with a lack of Internet regulation and policy and a high percentage of poor women (UN, 2005).

At this point, we would say that ‘reducing women to sexual objects and making them available for consumption through communication and information technologies seems to be one of the most dramatic expressions of the digital age’ (Vega Montiel, 2013, p.21).

A final but no less important dimension of the gender-based violence and media relationship is the increase in violence against women journalists. Forms include sexual, physical, psychological, economic and feminicide. This occurs in conflict and post-conflict countries where the human rights of female journalists have become more vulnerable. This happens with the consent of states and in an environment in which news media do not ensure secure conditions for women journalists to develop their work. For this reason, just this year UNESCO and the International News Safety Institute (INSI) launched the Global Survey on Violence against Female Journalists. This effort goes together with other INSI actions, such as publications and training programmes aimed at female media workers.

In this context, we must also mention violence against women working in community media. Community media are crucial to ensuring women’s human right to communicate. In particular, community radio is a vehicle for the empowerment of women and the expansion of notions and debates on women’s human rights in rural communities. However, for decades most women in developing countries have been forced to operate their radio stations under conditions of scarcity as there has not been any official regulation of community media. This circumstance goes together with a context of violence of gender that prevails in rural communities, putting these

women in a vulnerable position. As in other areas, feminist communication scholars have been involved, together with activists, feminist advocates and women media workers, in important projects that have impacted at the global, regional and national levels. Examples are: the Who Makes the News? Global Media Monitoring Project, promoted by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) and coordinated by scholars such as Margaret Gallagher; the Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media from the International Women's Media Foundation, led by Carolyn Byerly; and Advancing Gender Equality in Decision-making in Media Organizations from the European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE), coordinated by Karen Ross, Claudia Padovani and Erzsébet Barát.

Establishing gender inequality as a determinant for violence against women

It has been acknowledged that there is a lack of information about causal factors for violence against women at the societal level of the ecological model compared to the individual and community levels (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002; WHO, 2010). Indeed, the lack of research data about societal risk factors makes comparison between settings within countries or between countries difficult to explore.

Cross-cultural studies provide important clues to understanding the ways in which social norms in different cultures affect levels of gendered violence. The work that has been done in this area finds a correlation between cultural social roles and levels of violence (Archer, 2006).

However, establishing the underlying causes of violence against women has been the subject of varying theories. The most prominent of these was the feminist model of causation that came out of the feminist movement of the 1970s. This held that patriarchy and men's indisputable power and oppression of women were the underlying causes (WHO, 2010). More recently, extended models of explanation have been incorporated to develop the theory of gender inequality further and to explore the effects of social roles, attitudes and other cultural factors. The one currently most in use is the ecological model. Heise (1998) advocated for a conceptualization in an ecological model that could take feminist theory further, incorporating other societal and community factors influencing individual perpetrator behaviour and explaining why some but not all men perpetrate violence.

The work of feminist activists in raising the profile of intimate partner violence and other violence against women enabled the issue to be seen as a significant public health problem. This has facilitated an approach that aims for prevention of the problem. However, one of the key factors in public health prevention is identifying the societal factors of the problem at hand Gender equality and violence against women and working to change these. This is more difficult where the problem is not just physical or biological but has a social dimension as well, as is the case with violence against women. This requires investigation of social elements at various levels of the ecological model.

The role of social norms and gendered expectations

An important aspect of thinking about gender inequality in this societal sense is to understand the role of social norms and social organization in situating groups into a hierarchical structure based on certain features such as gender, race or class (Ridgeway, 2014).

Such structures result in social status being conferred upon those with the most advantageous position. In terms of power and access to resources, these structures sort groups into a perpetuating pattern of inequality as the higher status groups retain their hold on power and resources. Ridgeway observed that social status or status in relation to other groups is therefore a central consideration in entrenched inequality. Entrenched differences in status lead to "status beliefs" and expectations about the social difference, for example that males are more competent, that then become autonomous beliefs which continue to reproduce the differences by perpetuating patterns of inequality (Ridgeway, 2014). This conceptualization of status explains the widely shared cultural status beliefs at the societal level that impact on ordinary social relations at the

community, organizational and individual levels, and work to legitimate the inequality of the social structure (Ridgeway, 2014). An important aspect of viewing inequality as a relational aspect between social group classifications is that it can bring in additional components of social inequality such as race, disability and class.

Summarising the evidence around gender inequality as a determinant for violence against women, one of the key features of sexual and family violence is the reality that such violence is disproportionately experienced by women as victims and perpetrated by men (WHO, 2005).

Socio-cultural theories about causes of violence are based on the consideration of power and its relation to social structures such as institutions, political and economic systems as well as shared beliefs and attitudes that may be influenced by these structures. Such shared attitudes and behaviours can be considered to be cultural factors that underlie behaviour in a particular group (Nayak, Byrne, Martin, & Abraham, 2003). In assessing causation of violence against women, interventions that address these specific factors to achieve attitudinal and behaviour change will be most relevant. It is therefore important to look at specific differences cross-culturally and take into account influences such as religion, history and political factors in assessing differences (Nayak et al., 2003). By examining the attitudes across diverse countries and cultures, it is more likely that themes relating to causation of violence against women can be gleaned. It has already been established by research that gender is important in relation to attitudes, for example gender differences in attitudes towards sexual assault and domestic violence have been noted between men and women, with men more likely to endorse violence against women (Fanslow, Robinson, Crengle, & Perese, 2010; Nayak et al., 2003; Victorian Health Promotion Foundation et al., 2006).

1.3.2 REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN MEDIA THROUGH FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

The women's movement of the west played a significant role in shaping the ground for the feminist in communication research. The feminist cultural politics focused on the media content and the construction of gender in media. In the developing countries the communication research on women started since 1980's. the united nations international decade for women (1975-85) initiated the communication research to study the negative portrayal of women in mass media. A very less study is carried on women's issues in the developing country where women have remained fragmentary and descriptive. Hence, research on women in the third world countries depends on the feminist paradigm. The three strands of feminist research on media are the content, the images and the representation on women (Gallagher, 1992) documented the invisibility of women in media effect of the negative documented the invisibility of women in media and the effect of the negative portrayal in the society. Such juxtaposition of 'positive' and 'negative' image of men and women posed problem in the interpretation media content by the audience thereby limiting the approach. To understand the representation of women in media the feminist critics carried out research to understand the depth underlying the construction or distortion of reality. This approach was criticized as it neglected the dialectical relation between media, and culture which culminated in the construction of 'women' in media. The challenge before the feminist in the third world in context of new communication is evolve conceptual framework adopted by the mass media in changing the political-economic forces keeping in mind the feminist agenda of the third world women in given cultural system.

The representation paradigm in the media is generally male centered because of the prevalent patriarchal system of society. Men tend to dominate the decision making position, and hold the top position in almost all fields. The enduring misogynistic representation of women in media led the feminist leaders set up their own media house. The male hegemony in media and the lack of women media professionals led to the underrepresentation of women in all media outlets. The United Nations decade for women (1976-1985) worked for the increase in the global news infrastructure and inclusion of women news from the progressive women's perspective. But the question lies has such international forum brought about any radical change in the representation

of women? The answer is no. this pinpoints that media follows the trend, which is male dominated. It fails to apprehend that media can enact on different viewpoints and ideas rendered by women to produce an enormous range of vision to bring the fundamental positive changes. But the fact lies that even the female journalists abide by the trend that men is apt in dealing issues like government, politics, policy making and many others. Women has achieved significant strides in the field of journalism yet the recognition was slow and has not sufficiently search out the terrain to prove the capacity of women in new roles. The press played a significant role in the women's liberation movement through critical writing on the role of women in society and their contributions, the gender difference, the hierarchical frameworks of patriarchal society, positioning muscularity in the top order, polarization evoked the outbreak of equality and liberty. Media took up feminine agenda and constructed the image of women which was influenced by the social and cultural consensus. It served as a platform to voice the need of women in the changing global context of the fast growing commercialized media.

The chronicles of historical evidences shows that the development of feminist started as 'movements' considered as historical process encompassing multifaceted ideas and thoughts, common issues and particularly the fight or women's rights. It may be mentioned that Mary Wollstonecraft's (1792) a pioneering feminist writer advocated for higher education for women, economic independency for women and also attacked the patriarchy supremacy in the society. These movements were structurally divided into three parts. The early feminist movement (first wave) was concerned with the equal status of women in the society and the right to suffrage and used the slogan "The Personal is political". The different feminist activity focused on the complete emancipation of women both in the public and private life. The androcentric and patriarchal hegemony prevalent in the society was easily elucidated. "The Feminine Mystique" by Betty Friedan (1963) marked the awakening of the awareness pervasive societal system which depicted woman as pitied object of decoration and ornamentation in the media. The legacy of feminist movement that started during the colonial period continued and demanded the attention of media to carry their ideas and views on women's issues all over the world and focused on enacting various reforms to bring the equality of status and protection of rights. The feminist leaders and activists advocated the incorporation of women's issues related to gender discrimination, work place discrimination and the right to vote (Bradly, 2005). From the sociological point of view the feminist perspectives were categorized into four stages, first it points the underlying absence of women in the cognitive structure of the discipline. Second focuses on the gender inequalities prevalent in the society. The third stage is seen as one moving towards the conceptualization of gender as a social structure while the fourth stage is seen as one of the intrinsic linkages between gender and other matrices of structural inequalities (Rege 2003).

The national organization for women (NOW) is the largest feminist organization in United States demands equal status of women in all the society and encompassing all spheres of life and employment. The feminist agenda drew the attention of the media in the "Forth World Confederation on Women" held in Beijing in 1995. The conference promoted the importance of equality between both gender and how this equality can be promoted by media. The "Beijing Platform for Action" routed a plan and formulated strategies to use the mass media to propagate the empowerment and development of women across the world. The negative portrayal of women was criticized by various organizations since it degraded the image of women. The various women's organization began to raise their concern against such negative portrayal like the codification and objectification of women in media. The Beijing conference provided greater impetus to the women's movement for the positive portrayal of women. Positive image of women in media can be brought about either by increasing the women ratio in media organizations or depicting them in the light of empowerment and outreach the public through the mainstream and the alternative media. The multidimensional and the holistic feminist framework help to raise the voice of the marginalized women, strengthen to fight their cause against gender bias, address gender based violence and

spread the seeds of equality right from the grass root level to the highest strata of society. The Isis, an international feminist school carried out research project called “people’s communication for development” in South Asian countries including India. The result showed that the women’s group in different section of the society responded to media. The coverage of different media like traditional and new media and communication technologies through a programmatic approach helped in developing and sharing information in gender, media and communication. The participation and position of women in media to large extent influences the impact of development process by making their views heard and the accurately representing the complexities of their lives. These images of women are deeply rooted in traditional social practices and interpretation that help the media in constructing female images. Women’s representation has moved beyond female images of the family and home to personal care, as dictated by the market agenda in predominant patriarchy.

With increased voices and protests from active women’s groups, some of media’s negative portrayal and representation of women have become quite subtle in the last few years. However, it is still rare that the media presents women as contributors to the development process or as professionals in their own field. The lack of a true gender-sensitive appreciation and analysis of women’s issues in media has allowed exploitative and derogatory images of women in media.

The economic liberalization made a shift in the portrayal of women from the stereotypical form to new genre career women in the Indian popular media and caters the distinct target audiences on market needs. Economic liberalization empowered the women with financial independence and dependency on the male members has considerably lessened (Chaudhury, 2000). There is a change in the media scenario in the post modern society; media highlighted the popular post feminism concept stating the paradox that women are dissatisfied even after complete emancipation. The media framed feminist rhetoric and ideology stating the vices of feminism which advocates the destruction of womanhood. The ‘post feminism’ constructs women by media as superwomen who desires to conquer the world which is not the real life patriarchal society and media plays an important role in the building of such image (Faludi,1991).

1.3 Review of literature

The study of relevant literature is a critical step to get apparent idea of what has been done, with regard to the problem under current study. Such reviews bring about a deep and clear perspective of the by and large field. The review of literature and previous studies carried out in relation to the field of women and media will be done in two levels. The first part will explore theoretical frameworks that govern or guide social norms and understanding of gender roles in society. This is important in creating a background and understanding how people interpret and relate to media representations and the significance that these frameworks play. It will also help mirror ideologies or myths that exist in society which may be observed in media presentations. The second part will focus on similar studies that have been carried out on the issues of women representation by the media. This will help guide understanding and give justification to the research goals and objectives.

Cultural Myths

Cultural myths can be found in every society and may be viewed as the backbone to every social structure. These may be defined as a system of beliefs that exists and pertain to specific cultural contexts. Rivers (1993) explained that cultural myths do not die easily since they are rooted in years, and even centuries, of belief, tradition, and fear, and that they have been largely created by men. She wrote that there has long been a general cultural assumption that women are not the natural protagonists of stories or histories, but that humanity’s story is essentially that of

men. This illustrates how media perceptions and coverage of women by the print media may be subject to pre-existing cultural myths and social thought patterns that may be dominant in society.

Rivers (1996) pointed out that there are two major myths on women existent in society: “The Myth of Female Weakness and The Myth of Female Strength” (p.17). She noted that media coverage of women often tend to bounce from one myth to the other. This has its own effects especially in the interpretation of the representations. Rivers observed that women’s strength rarely becomes the focus of media attention, except in distorted ways, such as when women are seen as too strong. Rivers (2006) illustrated the negative representation of working women by media based on myths existent in society in her writing:

“Hardly a month goes by without some major publication offering a dire portent for working women: they are going to start having heart attacks, they are never going to get husbands, they’ll send their kids running to shrink’s couches, they’ll be such bundles of nerves that they need a mommy track to keep working at all”. (p.61)

Patriarchy

Patriarchy in society and cultural myths also point out and explain thought patterns that exist in society. Paulson (2005), in her study on popular culture and the myth of women’s nature, argued that whether television or print media, popular culture serves to reveal, reinforce and shape cultural beliefs, values and myths held about the real world. She based her argument on the premise that popular images as may be seen by or represented by the media support patriarchal mythologies by the portrayal of women’s kinder nature. Furthermore, she illustrates that many of the images serve as reminders of the supreme social order of patriarchy. This in turn may be expounded to elaborate on the existence and forming of stereotypes as well as biases on gender roles in societies. This myth and belief system may as well be the lens through which media reports and magnifies the concept of working women as well as other roles and occupations as practiced by women.

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation analysis theory provides an understanding of the influence and effect of one’s exposure to media. Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli (1993) stated that what is most popular tends to reflect and cultivate dominant cultural ideologies. In their research and study on the effect of prolonged exposure to television, they found that long-term exposure has certain effects on the overall thought pattern and assumptions made by individuals. This in turn is what develops into stereotypes and biases. This is illustrated in one of their case studies:

We have found that long-term exposure to television, in which frequent violence is virtually inescapable, tends to cultivate the image of a relatively mean and dangerous world. Responses of heavier compared to matching groups of lighter viewers suggest that the conception of reality in which greater protection is needed, most people ‘cannot be trusted,’ and most people are ‘just looking out for themselves’. (p. 30)

In the analysis of their study in support of cultivation theory, Gerbner et al. (1993) revealed that the television, for example, has become a primary common source of socialization and everyday information, mostly in the form of entertainment, which in turn has become part of a shared national culture. To this effect, they emphasize that “the exposure to the total pattern rather than only to specific genres or programs is what accounts for the historically new and distinct consequences of living with television: the cultivation of shared conceptions of reality among otherwise diverse publics” (p. 18). This illustrates the process and development of the cultivation theory.

Newspapers just like TV are a media source and thus equally play a similar role of informing and influencing its audience’s attitudes and thought patterns, especially those who are regularly

exposed to it. For example, it is not uncommon to find certain biases existent in society and specific to certain individuals which may be different from those not exposed to a particular form of media. Examples include political biases, sports news, educational information etc. which may be of interest to newspaper readers and thus are more likely to have certain attitudes and biases due to exposure to certain information in newspapers. This begins to explain how newspapers may play a part in Gerbner's cultivation theory.

Florian Arendt (2010) carried out a study aimed at investigating the existence of cultivation effects arising from exposure to newspapers in the reader's social perceptions and attitudes, based on Gerbner's cultivation theory. He justified the study by revealing several other studies that have used the theory before in newspaper analysis:

Although the original formulation of the cultivation hypothesis and much of the subsequent research focused on television, several studies have investigated the cultivation effect of newspapers (Arendt, 2008, 2009; Bauer, 2005; Grabe & Drew, 2007; Guo, Zhu, & Chen, 2001; Hicks & Lee, 2004; Nisbet & Wang, 2004; Reber & Chang, 2000; Reimer & Rosengren, 1990; Stroman & Seltzer, 1985; Vergeer, Lubbers, & Scheepers, 2000). (p.147)

He asserts that the focus on television is due to the general assumption that the television is the main media in use in America (Arendt, 2010, p. 147). This justifies the analysis of Gerbner's cultivation theory in newspaper studies. Arendt (2010) carried out a study which set out to investigate the cultivation effects of a newspaper on reality estimates and explicit and implicit attitudes among newspaper readers. He carried out a four month content analysis of news coverage by a certain newspaper which had the tendency to over represent foreigners as offenders as well as carry a negative view of the EU. In the study, Arendt (2010) found that those who read the particular newspaper chosen for the study were more likely to overestimate the frequency of foreigners as offenders and they also were inclined to have negative implicit attitudes toward the EU than those who did not (Arendt, 2010, p. 156).

Research Studies

The topic of media coverage and representation of women has been an ongoing issue that has been the interest of journalists, researchers, feminists, and scholars alike. Miller (1993) traced this aspect to previous happenings in history. For example, she recalled the social upheaval and newsroom battles of the 1970's when women activists and journalists demanded the same career and life options as men and the same news coverage and treatment of their activities. She explained, "Women hustled at 'women's sections' as both career and coverage ghettos" (p.169).

A recent movement that has sparked interest in various states regarding the representation of women by the media is "*Miss Representation*", a film that was produced in 2011 by Miss Representation, a non-profit social action campaign and media organization based in California. The film centers on how women are represented by the media and has become a major movement in various states campaigning for the fair representation of women by the media. The organization has also developed a curriculum that is being circulated to schools interested in educating the youth on the importance of positive representation and aims to encourage girls to look beyond what is being shown by the media.

The film was written and directed by Jennifer Siebel Newsom, an established film producer, speaker and advocate for girls and women issues. The film features various stories from teenage girls, interviews with politicians, entertainers and academics including Condoleezza Rice, Nancy Pelosi, Rachael Maddow, Rosario Dawson, etc. According to the website:

The film exposes how mainstream media contribute to the under-representation of women in positions of power and influence in America. The film challenges the media's limited and often disparaging portrayals of women and girls, which make it difficult for women to achieve leadership

positions and for the average woman to feel powerful herself. (<http://www.missrepresentation.org>)

The organization further reiterates that the media plays a critical role in shaping cultural norms and is a persuasive medium in society and thus the message that the media portrays plays a significant role in how others view their world, and in the context of this study, how a woman views herself in the world, in terms of her capacity and gender.

Ross and Carter (2011) carried out a content analysis, which revealed that male coverage in news items tend to appear more often and hence favored in comparison to female news coverage. Ross and Carter's (2011) study on the representation of women in media was based in Britain and Ireland, and was part of the Global Media Monitoring project 2010. Their findings revealed a bias in the representation of women in the media:

Few women appeared as celebrities (9% newspapers; 5% radio and 0% across TV) and they were much more likely to be framed as victims (26% newspapers, 28% radio and 24% TV) of various crimes and events, including domestic violence (19%), war (16%) and discrimination (16%). Across broadcast news, three-quarters of male victims were described as victims of war, which corresponds with the number of war-related stories featured during the monitoring day. Women's victim status was associated with a greater range of problems, including accidents, and women were more than twice as likely to be described as victims of non-domestic crime such as robbery than men, which is entirely contradictory to the statistical incidence of robbery in Britain. (p. 1155)

In addition, their findings revealed women were three times more likely than men to be described in terms of their family status (e.g. mother, wife, daughter), either as part of their personal biographical detail as primary or secondary subject, or else they were invited to speak precisely because of their relationship to the main (male) news subject (Ross and Carter 2011). This reveals how women are often displayed as minor or dependent subjects in many cases which demonstrates how women are misrepresented in the media as well.

Media plays a significant role in supporting and reinforcing societal norms. Sanchez Huckles, Hudgins, and Gamble (2005) held the view that the media have played an active role in reflecting and distorting the lives of people of color. They carried out a study to demonstrate how magazine advertisements in particular stereotype and distort women of color in ways that can be negative to how these women are perceived by themselves and others. They highlighted the aspect that media sources have the potential to offer effective and positive portrayals of the diverse individuals that comprise society in their role as potential socializing mechanisms. They stated that:

Ads can influence perceptions and create self-fulfilling prophecies by contributing to stereotypes, prejudices, and societal inequities. Specifically, advertisements have been identified as one of the most significant factors impacting society. It has been estimated that more than 184 billion ads are shown daily in newspapers and 6 billion ads appear in monthly magazines. (Sanchez-Huckles, Hudgins& Gamble 2005, p. 186)

It is in this same context that advertisements also act as a medium for the representation of women including those in entrepreneurial practice. In Sanchez- Huckles, Hudgins and Gamble's (2005) study, a content analysis approach was used to study the advertisements. Six female or family oriented magazines were analyzed through sampling and the results interpreted through sample coding. The results revealed underrepresentation in the majority of the magazines and stereotypical portrayal of women. While the feminist movement has played a significant role in empowering more women to engage in the career world and work outside the home, biases in society still exist.

Christine Adams (2003) carried out a research study to investigate the representation of women by the media with emphasis on print media. That study was based on Representative Deleta Williams of Missouri. The study was based on two major research questions:

1. Does sexism still exist in the media?
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2. Does the language that is used in the media promote sexist beliefs about women particularly women politicians?

In exploring the research questions, Adams (2003) brought out the co-relationships of language and media in the representation of women and included other researchers' opinions on the same to back up her research questions.

Her research was based on three major theories, including Feminist theory, Muted Group theory, and Patriarchal Universe of Discourse theory, which provided a conceptual framework for studying and understanding the research concept. Feminist theory, for example, is further categorized into five segments with the underlying concept of women's rights and improving women's conditions in the world. The methodology used was a content analysis. Adams (2003) carried out her research by examining and analyzing newspaper texts and excerpts from the *Warrensburg Daily Star Journal* (1993-2002) obtained from Representative Deleta Williams' collection. This was a favorable choice of medium as it provided a reasonable scope for the research since it is also a newspaper serving a small town, Warrensburg, Missouri. The process involved cutting newspaper clippings and categorizing them. Out of a total of 80 clippings, Adams (2003) eliminated 37 as irrelevant and carried out intensive analysis of the rest based on the classes of sexism, giving detailed examples in her outline. In conclusion, her research supports assertions presented by previous studies done on sexism in the print media. Newspapers emphasize stereotypes of women and the language used reveal sexism as well. There was also a lack of sufficient coverage for women and the articles about them received smaller headlines and were shorter in nature.

The journal article by Covert (2003) examined the representation and portrayal of working women in magazine articles and the topics in articles written about or for working women. The research findings were obtained through content analysis. A sample of five popular women's magazines were chosen and examined, with two issues of each sample magazine chosen randomly from the months of January to December 2002. Analyses were carried out in two levels, one focusing on the individual woman and the other on the article. For the individual level, codes were employed in noting attributes and characteristics related to stereotypical implications about the women. At the article level, the topics discussed were coded and analyzed. Both levels involved a comprehensive critical, qualitative analysis in the translation of the text, in the coding process, and in the interpretation of the findings.

According to the results, 65% of women presented in magazines were reported as working women taking up roles as musicians, artists, professional, and management careers. Both hypotheses were favored by the results and thus turned out positive indicating the use of stereotypical feminine attributes in descriptions of working women. One of the magazines, however, did not feature anything on working women. An in-depth analysis of the results from each sample magazine was outlined revealing the similarities and differences between magazines and their presentation styles. Varied aspects were thus noted. For example, *Cosmopolitan* featured articles on celebrity working women while *Good Housekeeping* had close to none. The use of language and choice of words stands out as key factors in the critical analysis of the samples and reveals underlying attitudes and messages.

Covert (2003) discussed several issues arising from the study in relation to the hypotheses tested. She concluded that the study supports both hypotheses presented. The study also reveals evidence of subtyping and stereotyping, e.g. by favoring celebrity working women evident in some magazines like *Cosmopolitan*. She noted that mainstream women's magazines reach many women and these play a role in influencing their attitudes on various issues including work and thus the presence of stereotypes may affect readers' views on working women.

Lazerfield and Merton(1960) identify three social functions which the media serve and call for sustained research into three aspects:

- The media confer status on public issues, persons, organizations, and social movements. It bestows and enhances the authority of individuals and groups by legitimizing their status. This status conferral function thus enters into organized social action by legitimizing select policies, persons, and groups which receive the support of mass media.
- Media serves to re-affirm social norms by exposing deviations from these norms to public view. Media publicity closes the gap between 'private attitudes' and 'public morality'.
- Mass media has lifted the level of information of large population, apart from intent, increasing dosages of mass communication do sometimes inadvertently transform the energies of men from active participation.

McQuail (1972) suggests the following five general conditions which bear upon the effects of media:

- The greater the monopoly of the communication sources over the recipient, the greater the change or effect in favour over the sources of the recipient.
- Communication effects are greater where the message is in line with the existing opinion, beliefs and dispositions of the receiver.
- Communication can produce the most effective shifts unfamiliar, lightly felt, peripheral issues, which do not lie at the center of the recipients value system.
- Communication is more likely to be effective where the source is believed to have expertise, high status, objectivity, or likeability, but particularly where the source has power and can be identified with.
- The social context group or reference group will mediate the communication and influence whether or not it is accepted.

Women in media have been subject of study for media researchers worldwide. Basically, there are two aspects of research study in context to women in media. One is representation (portrayal and coverage of women issues) and the other is women working in the media organizations. The present study is on the portrayal of women in Assamese media in both the print and visual media in context to different parameters like--- the various issues covered in these media, the space given to them in the news items or stories, the way of portrayals etc. Substantial work has been carried out in topics like women in electronic media but the study of portrayal of women from feminist perspective in both the media viz. print and visual is relatively less.

Gallagher (2005) research suggested that women constitute more than half of the world's population. The researcher questioned on the visibility of women that 'But do we see them or hear their voices frequently in the news media? News acts as a mirror of the world, but the question arises that whether we are presented with the clear unambiguous reality or the distorted reality?' The study suggested the targeted intervention of certain groups, while pushing others to the margin.

Sudeep paul (2011) points that in the world of media in which the women reporters are subjected to danger and difficulties. His book is a collection of articles from eminent writers and gives detail report on national seminar on the said topic. The primary focus includes a) representation of women in media and b) portrayal of women and coverage of issues/events concerning women. It highlights issues on the women's access to media how they are related to the media, their right to information and communication, analysis and how they disseminate their perception through the knowledge, opinion and perspectives through the organization. Finally, the laws and policies e.g. (The Broadcast Bill, content code) in relation to media and communications give least important to women issues even the age of ICTs or the media and even in macro level media developments (e.g. media globalization) the coverage women's issues is still far less.

The result of the 2010 GMPP project shows that women constituted only 24% of the news subjects in the world news, people who were heard or read about in the news. The figure for India

was 22%. The global media forum monitoring project (GMPP) is the world's longest running and most research on gender in the news media. India was among the 100 plus countries across the world where groups of volunteers participated in the Fourth Global Media Monitoring Project (GMPP), monitoring a cross-section of news media on a single, predetermined day: 10 November, 2009. The Network of women in media, India (NWMI), a professional association linking women Journalists and other women working in or on the media across the country coordinated the GMPP 2010 process in India. Women constituted less than a quarter (22%) of the people heard or read about in the news (i.e., as news subjects) across all topic categories. The corresponding global figure for news subjects—people who are interviewed or whom the news is about—was 24%. Across Asia the corresponding figure was 20 % (GMPP 2010).

In 2000 the Association of Women Journalist (AFJ) studied news coverage of women and women's issues in 70 countries. It reported that only 18% of stories quote women, and that the number of women-related stories came to barely 10% of total news coverage.

"Women in the Indian Print Portrayal and Performance" is an excellent book by Rama Jha(1992). In this book Jha analyses women professionals in journalism and the changing portrayal of women in the print media. Jha claims that women activists were largely responsible for enhanced media coverage of women's issues. She writes, " the continuing male bias that conditions news content and news analysis and also the presenting of the news in the paper.

She recommended that a broad national policy should be chalked out which can provide enough media norms. She writes, "Not that one is asking for any code of conduct within newspaper network. Self restraint is a must, particularly on women's issues. Otherwise there is a danger to sensationalizing reports on atrocities. Atrocities are atrocious enough. What is recorded should be a cool, objective, factual, hard look so that the subversion of women's interests that goes on in the male dominated press does not occur".

Venkataraman (2002) conducted a study entitled: Women in Print—the change over the last half century in reporting on women and gender issues by Indian newspapers. The study was conducted on a random selection of 84 national and region-specific newspapers over three time periods; the early fifties, the mid-seventies and 2000-2001. Both news material and features were included in the study. The result shows that women make page one news mostly as victims, for example when murder or rape is committed. Women politicians are the second largest category. The findings of the study also show that women get rare coverage on business and edit pages. The study shows that out of the stories appeared on the front page in 2001-2002, only 6.9% mentioned women. He writes, "Page one in Indian newspapers s still a male preserve. Women make front page news mostly as victims".

Dasgupta (1976) in her study of women's issues in four English dailies published in New Delhi in 1975, observed that women's issues received no attention in the six subject categories: social, economic, political, art and culture, biographical and other issues. However the study did not elaborate the methodology adopted for the study.

Although women occupy nearly half of the total population of the world yet every nation whether developed or underdeveloped has subjected women as marginalized section of the society. It becomes clear from the magnitude of visibility that women are seen more as object of entertainment but held less news worthiness. Gaye Tuchman (1978) in her book 'Health and Home: Image of women in mass media' says about the stereotyping of images of women within the media and the absence of omen from the news pages and Tuchman terms it as 'symbolic annihilation-a combination of condemnation, trivialization and erasure'.

The portrayal of women in media as sexiest form and the absence of the women from news media have disproportionately affected the image of women in the society. The UNESCO symposium was held and there was unanimous agreement upon the fact that the images of women projected by the media itself constituted the main obstacle in eliminating discrimination against women throughout the world and the main factor is the preserving o sexiest attitude towards

women and be replaced by factual and realistic representation of women. Below are discussed the UNESCO sponsored meetings—

- i) Media workshop for Journalist and Broadcasters, Mexico city (July,1975): this workshop conducted raised the question about the tendency of the media organization to project stereotype image of women, reinforcing traditional concepts of degrading women, enforce prejudices and negative attitudes towards them. It called for the various international organizations and various media organizations to extent their active co-operation in the task of upliftment of the status of women in society.
- ii) In the National meeting of mass communication researcher, in Caracas, Venezuela, in May 1975 where Marta Colombia de Rivera, critically compared the images of two section women under the backdrop of real and virtual. The real ones are the images of middle and lower middle class women but the virtual images are the one represented by the media. The real women are exploited, underestimated, sad, confined to the domestic chores and rearing children and if employed work under pathetic condition where as women constructed by media are rich and flaunting, contented and beautiful which enhances her status. The poor women even in films and television cater to the needs of her man which serves as universal panacea which solves all her problems be it economic or emotional.
- iii) In another UNESCO symposium for women in cinema, held in St Vincent, Italy (July 1975) vehemently opposed the projection of sexiest images in the media. In the symposium, appeal was made to women worldwide to examine and analyze meticulously these images which reflect that women are living in a world which consists of images made through the eyes of man rather man-made world for women where real women's and the realities experienced by women do not have any space.

Women's Feature Service (1993) throws light to the emerging trend in the portrayal of women in mainstream print media. The study was conducted in two parts-one that carried traditional women's page in popular magazine and women's magazine in terms of beauty, fashion, lifestyle, interiors, etc. Sometimes some serious articles on the status of women/women's issues were covered but the space rendered was less. More emphasis was given to advertisements and 'light articles' to grab the attention of readers. On the other hand, women are seen in articles on film celebrity when professionals or as high profile successful women highlighting the minority. The women's magazine through covered jokes, stories with trivial

Role of media in social change

A paper published by Centre for good governance (2006) on "The Right to Information Act, 2005-A Guide for media states that media being the firth pillar of a democracy really has the potential to bring in social change. Empowerment, social awareness and good governance are the three key areas where in media can prove beneficial and help in the upliftment of the people.

Mc Quail(1994) in his paper on "Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction" explains that social change can also be brought when there is a medium for flow of information in both directions. Media can provide that model in a community through interaction between the government and public, thereby generating greater participation and awareness. Thus participation and interaction are key concepts which can be achieved through media.

Enzenberger (1976) in his article on "Constitutions of a Theory of the Media, and in "In Raids and Reconstructions: Essays on politics, crime and culture" has proposed a politically emancipator use of media that is characterized by -1) interactivity between audiences and creators, 2) collective production and 3) a concern with everyday life and ordinary needs of people.

Mernit (2009) in his paper on –Using social media for social change|| describes that this is a digital age where social media has made a well established network of audience. There are social

networking sites which effectively follow issues in society and generate people's opinion. Net-enabled social tools have enabled new models for grassroots activism and community building, and they have changed how we function in society — how we communicate globally and locally, how we form ties and how we organize and connect. These web based tools have actually given voice to people to share, create, rate, and search for information.

A concept working paper by UNESCO on “World Press Freedom Day 2011, 21st Century Media: New Frontiers”, New Barriers says that the growing popularity of social media poses challenges for news media across the developed world.

A statement made by UNESCO in a conference at Windhoek, Namibia for World Press Freedom Day, two decades later, clearly narrates the present scenario of press. The arrival of the digital revolution – the evolution of the Internet, the emergence of new forms of media, and the rise of online social networks – has reshaped the media landscape and made –the press|| of 2011 something that those gathered in Windhoek in 1991 could not have imagined’.

Downie and Shudson (2009) in their article on “The Reconstruction of American Journalism” explains that newspapers, the country's chief source of independent reporting, are shrinking – literally’, with fewer journalists reporting less news in fewer pages’. The situation and prospects of broadcast television, which still commands a big audience across the world and remains the world's premier advertising medium, do not seem much brighter.

Ram (2011) in his paper on –The Changing Role of the News Media in Contemporary India – says that there is a shift in the preference of audience towards the web, mobile, and newer interactive digital platforms. As a result now days newspapers, TV channels and Radio channels and other forms of media have excellent websites offering rich, many-sided, multi-media content, including long-form features, investigative articles, and thoughtful analysis.

Parceiro (1999) in his article on “The Role Of Media in Democracy: A Strategic Approach” explains that informing the citizens about the developments in the society and helping them to make informed choices, media make democracy to function in its true spirit. It also keeps the elected representatives accountable to those who elected them by highlighting whether they have fulfilled their wishes for which they were elected and `whether they have stuck to their oaths of office. Media to operate in an ideal democratic framework needs to be free from governmental and private control. It needs to have complete editorial independence to pursue public interests. There is also the necessity to create platforms for diverse mediums and credible voices for democracy to thrive.

Barnett (2004) in the book named –Media, democracy and representation: Disembodying the public|| in the article on “Spaces of Democracy: geographical perspectives on citizenship, participation and representation” says that It has already been discussed that media has been regarded as the fourth estate in democracy. Democracy provides the space for alternative ideas to debate and arrive at conclusions for the betterment of society. The publicly agreed norms are weighed over that of actions on the part of economic organizations and political institutions (Barnett, 2004).

Tsekeris (2008) in his research article on –The Public Sphere in the Context of Media Freedom and Regulation. *Humanity & Social Sciences*– describes that this is close in essence to the concept of public sphere where rational public debate and discourse is given importance. Individuals can freely discuss issues of common concern.

Panikkar (2004) in his article on –Opinion: Media and the public sphere|| explains that media plays one of the crucial roles behind the formation of public sphere. However, Barnett is of the opinion that in modern times the true sense of public sphere is getting eroded with the media of public debate getting transformed to mediums for expressing particular interests rather than general interests which are universally accepted. This signifies that public sphere which is essential for a vibrant democracy can actually be channelized to serve vested interests rather than public good.

Ways in which media can bring social change

Since today we have better platforms to showcase our opinions, all these forms of Medias put together can help in generating positive interaction and by being agents of social change.

According to an article published by the Centre for good governance (2006) on – “The Right to Information Act, 2005 - A Guide for Media” states that, media can make a real difference to the lives of poor and disadvantaged people in the following ways:

- Making people more aware of their rights and entitlements
- Enabling people to have access to government programmes, schemes and benefits;
- Making people more aware of political issues and options and helping to stimulate debate;
- Educating the public on social, economic and environmental issues;
- Drawing attention to institutional failings – corruption, fraud, waste, inefficiency, cronyism, nepotism, abuse of power and the like;
- Fostering exchange of best practices, knowledge resources, access to better technology, and to better choices
- Creating pressure for improved government performance, accountability and quality, for example in service delivery; and
- Providing a discursive space for citizens to dialogue with other actors in the governance process.

Khamis (2009) in the research article –New Media and Social Change in Rural Egypt: Transformations, Paradoxes and Challenges|| reveals that Media opens the doors to the outside world. In one such study done in a village in Egypt it was found out that there was a shift from national to international television channels and from collectivist to more individualistic patterns of television viewership, which enabled challenges to hegemonic, monolithic governmental ideologies and to authoritarian family figures and women’s interference simultaneously.

1.3.1 Feminism and Media

The chronicle of historical evidences shows the origin and development of feminism. It is related to the ‘movements’ a historical process encompassing the multifaceted ideas and thoughts, common issues and particularly the fight for women’s rights. It may be mentioned that Mary Wollstonecraft’s “Vindication of the rights of women” (1792) a pioneering text argued for higher education for women, economic independency for women and also attacked the patriarchy supremacy in the society.

The subordination of women in various fields got attention for the various women’s movement. Feminist writer Simone de Beauvoir in her book, *The Second Sex* (1949), asserts women as a biological creature and implicit expression of feminity is socially constructed. The root of the feminist movement started from the right to suffrage. The study pointed that feminist movement drew the feminist theory which started critical writing on the role of women in society and their contribution. The book mentioned about the constructed images of women in media which was influenced by the social and cultural consensus. The other aspect of the book was gender difference, the hierarchical frameworks, patriarchal society, positioning patriarchy in the top order; polarization evoked the outbreak of equality and liberty. It is the response to the particular problems faced by the women which gets affected the third world countries. Implications for incorporation of women’s issues were recommended.

Rege (2013) states that from the sociological point of view the feminist perspectives were categorized into four stages, first is seen as one of the underlying absence of women in the cognitive structure of the discipline. Second stage focuses on the gender inequalities prevalent in the society. The third stage is seen as one moving towards the conceptualization of gender as a social structure

while the fourth stage is as the time realization of the intrinsic linkages between gender and other matrices of structural inequalities. The feminist critiques categorized these changes into different genre rather than cumulative assumptions. The different disciplines of categorizations were— inclusion, separatism and re-conceptualization. While the first is the inclusion of women in various cognitive structures leaving the mainstream unchallenged. The second kind of response from women's standpoint is that there are marginalization, exploitation and deprivation in a patriarchal society. The third position of reconceptualisation leads to inclusion of women in dichotomies like public vs. private but are with the attitude of taken for granted. Thus it is concluded from the study that the structural inequality in women's representation is the outcome of patriarchal society.

Jaggar (1983) said in a variety ways, they break into silence in predecessor theories, especially those which do not specify women's and men's relative positions in society and they reveal distortions in what has been said. The study revealed that the feminist scholars agree that the difference in gender is socially constructed and fundamentally used to differentiate categorically the analysis of social life.

Susan Faludi (1991) gives a methodically researched work which challenged the equality of status of American women of the 20th century. Her book starts by stating that the myths regarding the status of women and the press reports stating career women are more subject to depression than other women, that professional women quit jobs under pressure to stay back home, over thirty years women have little chance of getting married. Faludi pinpoints that these myths are not true instead they reflect the backlash against women in the society and what they gained in the recent years. Faludi further mentions that what has elevated a women's position in the society has actually led to their downfall. The writer reflected on the issue of Western media's support to 'trend journalism' which states that despite liberation, the women are still unhappy. She concludes that in post modern society the post modern feminists suggest those women's movements are the cause of women's unhappiness.

Gallagher (1992) on the feminist media research and criticism focused on the understanding of the cultural dimensions of power and equality. She pointed that the current media feminist trend focuses on the micro level ignoring the broader spectrum of power and politics. She argued from the feminist point of view the importance of micro level work within the political and economic context of media development and examines the macro-level forces impinging on media to formulate relevant policies and strategic judgments.

Urvashi Buthalia, (1993), says that, At the national level today, it is no longer possible to ignore women, whether it is with regard to planning documents, policy decisions, electoral policies and so forth, the question of specific needs of women has to be addressed'. Her study indicated that in today's contemporary society with growing awareness it is not possible to overlook the women's issues totally.

Martha A. Fineman and Martha Mc Clusky in their book entitled 'Feminism, Media and the Law (1997) discussed how media power influences the popular opinion. Deborah L. Rhodes puts up a significant analysis of the feminism and feminist issues' in the second chapter of the said book. The analysis begins with the absence or less women in media, their under representation in the important decision making body, how the press coverage caricatures, polarizes, sensationalize the various feminist movements and struggle. The writer further says that realities of the feminist objectives could be better apprehended by understanding how media construct and constrain the issues. The press coverage have undergone dramatic change in the coverage as many gender related topic, including the domestic and the sexual violence against women are covered. These movements elevated the feminist perspectives which gave a new dimension to the gender related issues. It heightened the awareness on the burning issues and how press reflects or refracts the feminist issues/feminism.

Maïtryee Choudhury (2000) "Feminism in print media' laid emphasis on two important aspects of the social process in Indian popular media and feminism which augmented women's

movement and the process of economic liberalization and how the economic liberalization effects the media. The writer analysed some magazine like Femina, Savvy, Cosmopolitan and came to the conclusion that liberalization increased media market and also the various market needs, distinct target audiences. The scenario in the Indian context is different from the backlash of US or UK. In India, the women's movement has emerged as strength and also possesses a vocal opposition. The writer is under the notion that economic liberalization bears a direct impact on the coverage of print media as it intertwines popular media and feminism. The writer criticized that the intellectual paradigm has replaced the traditional system of identifying the middle class and this shift has also introduced the policies of representation.

Baseline studies

Studies carried on the change of representation of women in the Indian media since 1988 (Balasubramonyam 1988, Prasad, 1992, Joseph and Sharma, 1991). The study focused on the increase of space rendered to women's issues. The study of space in the English newspapers indicate that such space for women's issues was the impact of the various urban women's movement and liberal reformist stance of the English newspapers (Joseph and Sharma, 1991). The hierarchy of news and news values and serious articles on women are still covered less compared to the entire coverage. Media emphasizes on even oriented stories rather than processes. The conclusion is that newspaper give selective coverage to the women's issues and often presents distorted feminist views (Balasubramonyam 1988).

Sonia Bathla (1998) study showed that women's issues are predominantly event oriented in print media. Moreover a major percentage of the news stories focused on violence/crime. The study implied that such stories are not carried because of any sensitivity towards women; rather they fit nearly into the media's routinisation as it is easy to obtain from regular sources. The researcher further stated that the implication of violence /crime stories serve two purposes i) add to the social consensus and ii) help to keep women in subordinate place. The study further provided an insight into the relationship between media and social movements. The study concluded that the government support patriarchy but live up to rhetoric of being liberal and accessible and that women's movements are used by the government as instrumental in political constituency. It stressed that media plays a crucial role in constructing the image of the women's movement either in positive or negative light.

Rashmi Luthra (1987) studied the gender portrayal of women's issues in the print media. The critical analysis of the women's issues with prior tone and treatment revealed that the crime issues were covered the most. The study observed that stories related to an event or an issue was considered newsworthy. It pointed on the tactics adopted by the reporters to present the women's news/stories with feminist perspective to gain prominence. The study concluded that the patriarchal system of society is responsible for less visibility of the women's issues or movements and attributes it to the 'symbolic annihilation' of women in news.

Rukshnanda Pervez (2009) studied the representation of women in print media. The methodology adopted was content analysis of English and Urdu newspapers. The study inferred that top women's issues were fully covered in the daily newspaper like crime, politics, education, health, fashion, advertisements and pictorial representation of women. Studies showed that sports, literature, environment, law and religion are area which got less coverage. News report on sport and religion was more of photographic representation with single line description. Analysis showed that Urdu newspapers are dominated by sensational stories of glamour, crime (rape, domestic violence), political issues and religion where as the English newspapers highlighted on fashion, Art and craft, health and literature.

Nautiyal and Dabral (2012) study focused on the coverage of women's issues in two newspapers with largest circulation in Uttarakhand 'Amar Ujala', and 'Dainik Jagran'. The analysis was made on the items like equality, health, education, sexual harassment, violence, police

attorocities and crime against women covered by the newspaper as articles, news stories, analysis, editorials, letters to the editor, column. Results show that newspapers render little space for women issues, less than one percent (1%). The findings show that news items are covered by both the newspapers while women's issue was given less attention in Analysis, Editorials, Columns and Articles. The researcher also finds that women's issue got least preference in the editorial selection. The data shows that newspapers do not project a balanced picture of women's lives in real world. The researcher recommended more studies regarding the "participation, portrayal and access of women to the media and its impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women should be carried out.

Ankur (2008) a freelance journalist carried out a study with Urdu, Hindi and English newspapers from Patna for a period of one month. Study shows that the space allotted by the Urdu newspapers on women and children is more than Hindi and English. The Urdu daily newspaper Rozana Rastriya Sahara gave 20% of the news space to the coverage of women and children issues. It is followed by the Hindi daily Hindustan. Quami Tanzum, a Urdu newspaper gave 9% of the space to the issue. The Hindi newspaper like Rashtriya Sahara allotted 13%, Dainik Jagran allotted 9%, Prabhat Khabar 8%, Aaj 8% and the lowest coverage is in next 6%. Regarding the coverage of English dailies The Times of India covered 9% and Hindustan Times 7%. Ankur tallied his numbers and the figures were found after monitoring various newspapers for a month that women's and children's issues are less covered.

Ozean (2009) study analyses the male and female visual representation in six Turkish newspapers. The study was made to explore the richness of visuals in the newspapers without which serious shortcomings occur in the results. The study aims to obscure the similarities between religion, secularism and visual depiction of women. Content analyses of the newspapers were carried out and qualitative iconological and semiological analyses were employed to study the visuals. The analysis of visualization of gender there is low representation of women compared to men.

Greenwald (1990) analyzed the coverage of women in the business section of two metropolitan newspapers. She found that women were the main subjection in only 5 of 180 stories.

Bhatnagar's study (1966) women's issues in four English dailies publishes in New Delhi in 1987 showed that only 280 (1%) items in the sample pointed on the problems and welfare activities about women. Important items like women's education, right and wage rates of women workers lacked adequate coverage in any newspapers undertaken for study.

Dasgupta (1976), in her study of women's issues in four English dailies published in New Delhi in 1975, observed that women's issues received no attention in the six subject categories social, economic, political, art and culture, biographical and other issues. However, the study did not elaborate the methodology adopted for the study.

Hasan and Sharma (2011), in their study on utilization of print media by women homemakers found that the heterogeneous female with different socio-economic background use media for entertainment. While a majority of them read magazine and newspaper for information, news and entertainment. They concluded that print media like magazine and newspapers are important tools for homemakers to gather information. However, the study did not elaborate the methodology adopted for the study.

Sharma (2005) in his article on the women in Indian media studies the case of introspection for media planners. Sharma mentions the study made by Bahuguna which shows that studies related development got less than 9% while the sensational stories related to crime got between 52% and 63% of items in newspaper (Nitin Jugran Bahuguna). A study of four English dailies in India showed that women's issues accounted to nearly 2% (Bahuguna).

A study carried out by Mohammed (2009) included both the print media and electronic media. Analysis of over 2000 newspapers from June 2007 to Sep 2009 was coded for the study and news channels like, NCN, Capital News, VCT Evening News and prime news. Results show that

Guyanese women and children together accounted for 2.9% of the total coverage. That woman's issues were covered five times more in newspapers and 3.5 times more on television compared to children. Newspapers like the Guyana time more women's issue followed by Starbrock News and The Chronicle in 2008.

Avasthi and Shrivastava (2001) mentions how feminist try to provide gender equilibrium under the perspective of gender universality through various media. This study shows that empowering women in diversified field helps in the manifestation and redistribution of power in the patriarchal ideology.

Sullivan (2009) studied about the constructed image of women in media. When women are linked with violence, the 'durable news commodity' and that the violent story and the stereotypical representation of women together determine the coverage of the story. Critical discourse analysis of fourteen newspaper stories from the Australian and Courier- mail from 04/03/08 to 30/03/08 were carried out and the analysis indicated that such coverage of the traumatic nature of event become spectacle of sympathetic and moral panic and the agenda of media and the government's key role develops the story wherein the 'virgin' victim is victimized to defend her credibility in the highly gendered racial coverage.

A study by Paromita Borah employs three methods to understand media content. Initial part of the study examines the 'peak periods' to ascertain the pattern of coverage. Second, 4058 articles were used for the study to examine the prominent frames employed by newspapers. Third, the interview of the journalist from the same newspaper to study the factors that influence the way these frames were created in the first place. Results show that, in general, the motive of this coverage is marketability of the stories. This inference is implied by the overall coverage as well as the responses of journalists.

Women being victim of domestic violence or crime is not considered unusual but a woman killing a man makes big news. According to the social constructionist perspectives 'deviant behavior' is associated with psychological illness. This study on battered women also kill abusive male partners was conducted by analyzing 250 newspapers articles published between the years 1978 to 2002. The study was supported by using four typifying models, to understand the criminalized behavior that were tagged 'mad' and then 'bad' by the newspapers. The social construction of image of 'battered woman who kills' and promote feminist narrative in the media. Findings suggest that feminism explanations are necessary to deter the factor influencing the dominance of media—simplicity, sensationalism and conventionally (Noh, Lee and Feltey, 2010).

Another study on the crime done by women, Berns (2004) examines the coverage on women's magazines, Glamour and Good Housekeeping shows that such magazines carry stories on empowered women but actually throws light on the underlying message that women is responsible for the private troubles by her actions, decisions and ignores the behavior of the abusive men.

Davis (1951) in his study on 'Crime News in Colorado Newspapers' found that the crime coverage in Colorado newspapers bore no relationship to changes in state crime rates.

This study examines the reporting of crime as epidemic and put forward suggestions for enhancing the values of the press in crime reporting. The discourse analysis shows the pattern of crime reporting and the creation of fear reportage by print media which shapes public perception of risk-factor in criminality, crimes, infuse public awareness and impact on the justice system. The study unveils the major lapse during the crime reporting. Results suggest that standard pattern are deficient, implementation of proper guidelines for crime reporting and refraining from trivializing women related crime issues (Jimoh et al, 2007)

The abuse on women is on the rise. Women opt for legal assistance only after the violence has escalated. This paper aware us about the assistance available to the women undergoing abuse. It presents the discourse on public health and gender and how the public health system helps in the implementation of anti-domestic violence intervention programmes (Deosthali et al., 2012).

Rupsayar Das (2012) study on the comparative analysis aims at investigating print news discourse on violence subjected to women in India. The incident provoked a nationwide non-violent protest, known as 'The Pink chaddi' campaign 2009, after the attack on girls in a pub. Sample selected for the study by the researcher are the top English national dailies and local daily newspaper (on line edition) for the analysis.

Content analysis using advance computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) called Leximancer v3.5. both the national and local newspapers and the electronic media covered the whole episode. The researcher further states that for a globalised socio-media reform has to work both implicitly and explicitly. Most global media organizations are under the male domain. There is less scope for female to run such organizations. In the patriarchal form prevalent in the society the feminist perspective should also be given serious considerations. The researcher adds, 'Harnessing strong public opinion, governmental and public policies towards VAW and 'femicide' are paramount: a task should be carried out by the media'.

Meera Kosambi (1993) presents comparative reports from India and republic of Korea on violence against women. The UNESCO carried out a major programme on peace. Human right and the Elimination of all forms of discrimination, studies on violence against girls and women were carried out during 1990-1991. The main aim of the study was to find the cross-cultured findings on equality between men and women. And the strategies employed to curb the violence perpetuated against girls and women. In the Indian context study reviewed the regional and national newspapers, case study of the victims. The Korean study focused on the reports related to sexual violence from 1985-1990 a comparison carried in diachronic frame. In the countries, mass media coverage or specifically newspaper reporting of the cases of violence against women have shown an increase in the past few years. This reflects that there is an increase in the incidence of crime against women and media's interest vests to earn revenues.

Metekaire (2003) conducted an analysis of the coverage of women politician by the print media. Four newspapers were selected for the study and the analysis showed that media began to recognize women politicians and their contribution in decision making and representatives of their communities. She also stated that there should not be polarization of women stories by the media houses instead unbiased report on women politicians and women's issues should be covered.

Another study on the issue of print media coverage on representation of women electoral candidates in general elections was carried out by Golder (2009) found women receive less representation in media and are more identified with social welfare and the feminine traits. And that under representation or stereotype or discriminatory and unfavourable media projection deter the political venture of women. She presented the universal statement 'male dominance in the formal political sphere is universal'. Further the study pointed the subordination of women stems from the socio cultural values and practices that firmly entrenched in systems and structures of society. The study concluded that women are less represented in politics and media concentrates more on the physical traits of appearance.

A study of editorials of three national dailies—The Hindu, The Times of India and The Hindustan Times by Srinivasan (1985) showed that 27.3%, 27.8% and 46.3% respectively were rendered for political story. The study also analysed the treatment given to the issues in the editorials on a three point scale- favourable, unfavourable and neutral and noted that favorable editorials were more in all the three papers.

In the Indian democracy the political groups are categorized by gender, ethnicity, region, socioeconomic status, age, or education that represent the functioning in the policymaking process. The feminist theorist opines that with the presence of women in the government and administration helps to convey different perspectives on political issues because they are just not 'standing as women but also acting for women as group' (Phillips, 1995, 1998; Mansbridge, 1999).

Pavyar (2004) study was to examine the coverage of Gender, Environment and Development (GED) issues in the Indian-language newspapers. She draws the focus to the main

hypothesis is that the high rate of gender discrimination in India contributes to a gender bias in the coverage of GED stories. Frequency analysis was used to examine the newsworthiness of GED. The parameters used in the study of gender and media were gender typifications and gender stereotypes. The results of the frequency analysis were assessed in connection to evaluations and assessments made by newspapers' editorial staff, gender scholars, international and Indian NGOs, and Indian government representatives. The result show that the press does not highlight the actual and real needs of the people in India instead there is biasness in the coverage of the GED issues. It concludes that the NGOs, gender scholars and press watch organizations observed and inferred that the coverage of GED is weak.

The united nations fourth world conference on women (1995), brings to light the increase of career women in communication sector but few could reach the decision making body or the governing body. There needs to be gender sensitizing to eliminate the gender based stereotyping found in local, national and international media houses.

The study explores the changing media (print) pattern especially in the post liberalization period with media becoming market-oriented. The focus of the study is on Hindi press coverage over the construction and representation of gender issues in patriarchal society (Tomar, 2009).

Bano (2003) mentions that the word 'woman' being replaced by 'gender' and the biological difference is considered to be the root of the socio-economic inequality. She mentions Joan Scott, who emphasized that the socially constructed gender connotation be exposed and deconstructed to abolish the gender inequality.

Mehta and Eape (2012) shows a gendered analysis of the twelfth five-year plan suggests that women is an important factor in India's political economy and that gendering of public policy must be of macro-economic nature. The study shows the 'inclusion' list lacks specificity for measuring and monitoring the inclusiveness of women in the plan. It also mentions that the policies should universalize education, health and social security.

Slatton (1971) conducted a study of sports magazine and portrayal of women in it. The study was conducted on 5 major magazines from 1900 to 1968 on role of women in sports. Slatton came up with the conclusion that "advertisements portraying women in sports show only a recreational interest with little acceptance of sports competitive aspects".

Theberge (1991) carried out content analysis to study the print media coverage of gender, women and physical activity. The study was made in two sections, first six month coverage of four Canadian newspapers and secondly, ten years six month study of a Canadian women magazine, Chatelaine. Results indicate that the media shows little response to women's physical activity. Moreover, the newspapers were largely conservative in response to women's fitness activity and accounts to masculine hegemony in the sports and physical activity. Analysis of Chatelaine showed that there was coverage health which highlighted fitness, diet and weight control but presented limited views on physical activity.

Norman Fairclough (1995) emphasizes the multi-semiotic character of texts in his book 'Media Discourses' and visual images and sound using the example of television language, as other semiotic forms which may be simultaneously present in texts. In his study, Bazerman's (2004) perspective on intertextuality is employed as the point of departure to analyse the intertextual practices of each sample text. For the purposes of analysis, these levels of intertextuality can be recognized through certain techniques that represent the words and utterances of others. These techniques start with the most explicit 'direct quotation' and 'indirect quotation': to 'mentioning of a person, document, or statements' and 'comment or evaluation on a statement, text, or otherwise invoked voice'; to more implicit 'using recognizable phrasing, terminology associated with specific people or groups of people or particular document' and 'using language and forms that seem to echo certain ways of communicating, discussions among other people, types of documents'(Bazerman, 2004).

The interface between the media and politics has long been a focus of communication research. However, the gendered implication of political communication and the manner in which the news media cover issues of relevance to women and how depict the women is a more recent concern. Women, Democracy, and the Media: Cultural and political Representations in the Indian press (Bathla 1998) have focused on the functioning of what she calls the 'Brahmanical Hegemony' - the deeply rooted cultural orientation of the Indian urban elite. Her study was based on empirical data derived from an analysis of news and interviews with Indian journalists and women activists. This has led to women's issues being defined as belonging to the private sphere and thus not relevant to public debates about democracy. Bathla has stressed the need to confront this mind-set in order for debates of women issues in India to progress.

In this regard, some studies have found that social issues related to women (equality of status and opportunity) got less than 9% while sensational stories relating to women which were invariably crime stories got between 52% and 63% of items in newspaper. Besides the print media, electronic media is also depicting women as scrupulous, religiously intolerant, craving only for their family, politically naive, socially inevitable and culturally ultra modern. In recent time, sex and sensation are becoming the primary motivations behind any reportage, where women are used as commodity; some time in advertising some products or some time as sexy babes neglecting the real status of the whole women section.

It is a fact that the Indian society generally considers women as weak and inferior. As a result, a woman undergoes tremendous traumas from birth to death. Many girl children are annihilated even before they see the light of the day, many girls are raped on roads or at homes, many wives are beaten by their husbands and in-laws, many girls have to give up their education to help their parents to earn money. But media are not focusing those problems. They are only busy with to publish the gossips of the actors and actresses, the love stories between them. This negative attitude towards women in real life is very much reflected in the way media represents them as well. Media representations of Indian women reveal that they are less accepted and respected as persons and more looked upon as objects. She has three projected roles--- biological, domestic and decorative. Media are hardly challenging the gender attitudes promoted and perpetuated by the society. Watching a BBC documentary on Indian cinema a British youngster commented, "Indians must be very poor, and they seem to have very little respect for women". He had after all seen a few clippings of films inserted in the documentary. What if he were to watch at length, more of our kitsch movies and worse still sexually suggestive, dehumanising song sequences.

Media monitoring as a tool for change was officially recognised by the United Nations in 1995, in Section 'J' of the Beijing Platform for Action ((Global Media Monitoring Projects, 2005 report) better known GMMP.} The idea of GMMP one-day study of the representation and portrayal of women in the media worldwide has been conceived in 1994 at the 'women Empowering Communication' conference in Bangkok organised by the World Association for Christian Communication' (WACC), Isis International-Manila and International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC). The GMMP has grown to be the largest, longest-running study on gender and media and remains an important source of data on the status of gender on media across the world.

The nineteenth issue of Media and Gender Monitor attempts to capture key discussions on Gender and media at WACC's Congress held in October (2008) in Cape town. The congress experience re-affirmed the importance of continued engagement with a thematic area the despite its significance for gender equity and women's struggles, has been overshadowed by other, equality crucial thematic areas of concern. The network of gender and communication groups has however not wavered in understanding the importance of media as a source of cultural production, as a site through which material gender inequalities and injustices are reinforced and reproduced. The unshaken commitment is visible through the case studies feature in the current issue of MGM.

The World Association for Christian Commission (WACC) project (2007) implemented by the Women's Media Centre (WMC) in Cambodia was spurred by concerns about negative

stereotyping and degrading depiction of women in Print Media. It is indispensable that mainstream media worldwide shows little concern for gender balancing reporting, as evidenced by the results of the Global Media Monitoring (GMMP) in 2005. Perhaps the most impressive outcome of this multi-strategy project was the act by ordinary Cambodian women to directly challenge media on negative portrayal of women, in their record over 100 'letters to the editor', 44 of which were selected for publication in Raksmei Newspaper.

The Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) held in Beijing in 1995 recognised 'communication' as a significant tool to women's empowerment. Since then women's networks have been developed at the local, national and international level. The efforts of these women's organizations largely remain focused on the promulgation of global information, monitoring governmental and intergovernmental organizations and organizing educational and awareness programmes for the promotion of social, political and economic empowerment (McLaughlin, 2004). In this context McLaughlin (2004) emphasizes the significance of transnational feminist networks as public spaces; as sites for promoting unanimity, sharing and exchanging experiences and strategies. It is well documented that the notion of public/private debate was reinforced by the First Wavers with the aim, in part, of "dissolving the distinction between a private woman's sphere and a public, male arena" (Peet, 1998: 248). Feminists since this time have challenged the notion of a dichotomy between these overlapping spheres (Fraser, 1989; MacKinnon, 1989; McDowell, 2006; Rose, 1993; Walby, 1990). They have also recognized the many ways in which space is always gendered (McDowell, 1983; Rose, 1993; 1996; Pain, 1991; Valentine, 1989). Straddling the intersection of private/public spaces are those spaces of transcendence, production, politics and power that are frequently regarded as a male domain. By contrast, 'home' as a space of reproduction has frequently been regarded as a private and quiet space for women to perform unpaid labour (Okin, 1989; Pateman 1988, Rose, 1993; Walby, 1990). This research recognizes that private and public spaces are the 'practiced places' (de Certeau, 1984: 117) intimately connected to the hierarchy of private and public spheres. Private space, in this research, includes those spaces used by the young middle class career-minded Assamese women of my sample to practice every day the discourses connected to femininity and modernity especially within the household. For examples, the expectations associated with marriage and motherhood; 'the double burden', especially for majority of the married women in the sample (who have paid work) with respect to housework and childcare; their position within the family as a daughter and daughter-in-law; and to highlight the role of the

Gallagher Margaret (2001) in *Gender Setting: New Agendas for Media Monitoring and Advocacy* raised questions such as an age of global information structures, what scope exists for independent citizen action in media and cultural policy formation? How can audiences effectively voice critiques of media content? In an increasingly market-centred and consumer-oriented media world, what is the potential for monitoring, lobbying and advocacy? This book focuses on media portrayals of gender, more particularly the media's role of in reproducing and reinforcing patterns of discrimination against women in society. The book further aims to unify the hitherto disparate strands of academic research and feminist activism in the form of gender media monitoring aimed at policy critique and practical change. Research findings and monitoring experiences from both North and South are together to demonstrate how, with varying levels of resources and expertise. Women's groups have developed monitoring models that can be effective in widely different media contexts. Drawn from countries as diverse as Canada, India, Spain, Jamaica, Austria and South Africa, these approaches will have lessons for everyone concerned about media democracy and diversity in the new information age.

The conferences and deliberations have failed to bring about greater awareness among women folk in regard to their rights, privileges, roles and responsibilities. We find the articulation of the women's point of view through conferences, rallies and other events. At the end both the girl child and the women themselves inextricably located in mesh of values and aspirations that have

little meaning outside the context of value and culture. Women are not thoroughly organised in our country.

The relevance of Mass Communication comes mainly from the meaning of multiple or mass production and the large size of the audience which can be reached by mass media. Wilbur Schramm states that mass media can help to create a 'climate for development' by introducing new values, attitudes and modes of locomotion. In reality, mass media can function as of community integration, participation and action for development process. According to Deniel M.Learner, mass media act as 'mobility multipliers', spreading favourable attitude for social change. Mass media are capable of changing attitudes and behavioural patterns of the people.

Women constitute the largest number among the illiterates, knowledge have-nots and under-privileged class of Indian society. Women are, indeed, the backbone of national development. It is in this context that the importance of mass media for extending the educational and developmental support to women assumes a national dimension for national development. The UNESCO Report on women and mass media states, "The perspective of women reflected the messages disseminated by the mass media expresses male concepts of women. The commercial media produce message systems and symbols which create or structure prevailing images of social reality which in our step-up show women as housewives, consumers and sex objects. Women in advertising or other media are always young and attractive, they are frequently depicted as sexual objects, as in the home, and they are seldom shown as intelligent people. The mass media's role is primarily to reinforce definitions and identities set in the framework constructed for and by men". It is clear that mass media are not only dominated by the men, who run it, but also, in large part, by men who read or see or hear it.

Our experience reveals that mass media in India are male-centred, male-dominated and male-biased. When it comes to projecting the image of women, all types of mass media are guilty of portraying negative images. There has been a failure in identifying the problems of women and there is a continued projection of women through men's eyes. In the process, their needs have been overlooked and they have been discriminated against. An exploration of this material reveals this bitter reality in India. The findings have been evolved in three fronts, namely, 1) Participation of women, 2) Portrayal of women, 3) Discrimination against women in mass media in India.

Women are not seen as important constituents in decision making positions in government, the media, academia or traditional development agencies. The role that women play in the media, their professional status in them (media) and the images of women projected by the media are inextricably linked.

According to Klapper (1960), the mass media play a vital role in disseminating information, conducting propaganda, educating and enlightening people, strengthening national integration and accelerating social development. The communication media are potent instruments of social change, contributing substantially to national development. When we talk of national development, we mean of women and men, and we talk of women development and the media role in their development, we have to identify the two dimensions of the term "development". Firstly, it is the development of women and the role of the mass media in this process. Secondly, it is the development of the society and the nation through the development of its women.

The role of the media in development of women is twofold—

- a) Development through exposure to media by way of programmes and printed material. This is a consumer-oriented function, and by the consumer, we mean women.
- b) Development through the active the participation of women in the production of media messages by participating in the decision-making process regarding programme content, policies and the projection of a balanced image of women.

A preliminary examination of the literature concerning the image, role and social condition of women in mass media showed that any study of the image of women in the mass media and

women's association in the production of messages will have to be viewed in the socio-economic, political and cultural context.

In the ultimate analysis, the presentation of women in the mass media depends on the interplay of forces that shape social reality and one of these forces is the media itself. "The communication media produce messages and symbols which create on structure prevailing image of social reality, thus affecting the process of social change".

In *Women and the Indian Print media* (Jha, Rama, 1992) Rama Jha describes about the performance and portrayal of women in media. Firstly, she talks about the women journalists who deal with the women's problems, and also mentions that there are some male journalists who turn the problems viewed by the female journalists in to jokes. The male journalists are dominating the whole field of media in such a way that the female journalists cannot be concerned about the real problems of women and so their issues do not get proper limelight to be focussed of. The writer also mentions some problems faced by Indian women such as rape, burning of women by their in-laws, beating by husbands, witch burning, illiteracy and portrayal of women in print media. But those problems never got proper importance because of the negative role played by the male journalists. So, the portrayal of women sometime will not positive. According to Jha, to portray women properly importance should be given on to publish the realistic problems faced by them, without which some wrong pictures of women will be portrayed.

So, the writer urges to the whole Indian women to become concerned about their main problems relating to society, economy, culture and politics otherwise their male counterpart will portray wrong pictures of women in front of the whole world.

In his article "**Depiction of women in Indian media-A case of introspection for media planners**" Dr.Sanjeev Kumar Sharma criticises the ways how Indian media both print and electronic are portraying women in the era of globalisation. The issues relating to women's are not discussed in media; rather women are used as a commodity relating to women's are not discussed in media; rather women are used as a commodity and sex object. Newspapers give no place to rape, crime, politics, scandals, serious debates and discussions on issues related to women. Most of the newspapers publish only the gossips about the TV serials or film actresses.

The writer also states that magazines as well as newspapers have sections for females where the reared if left only with the option of reading some personal gynaecological problems of married women or personal love hick-ups of young girls. In Television also there are various serials where women are shown involved in conspiracy, premarital, extra-marital affairs, wearing costly, heavy golden and diamond jewellery, little care about anything else than the individual matters, and at all not even a word about the outside world. He also mentions about the advertisements where women are used to show their body. In most of the advertisements even a word about the outside world. In most of the advertisements in India be it newspapers or television or magazines, the main ingredient is women and these depict the picture of women as vulgar and cheap.

Now a day, as a visual media, advertisements play important role in promoting different products. Every day we are exposed to a number of advertisements through various media vehicles like newspapers, magazines, radio, television, internet and various outdoor media. But there has been much criticisms against advertisements as these are portraying women as sex objects. Women's physical attraction has been used as a whole, or in parts, to market everything from brassieres, male under garments to automobiles. These ubiquitous images encourage people to think of sex and women as commodity, and these may contribute to violence against women. For example, there is an advertisement of a premium whisky that shows one man is taking first sip of that particular whisky and the lady sitting in front of him appears to be losing some inches of her dress, after every drink the process is going on up three drinks. After three sips of the drink he finds that the breasts of the previously over clad lady have become quick visible and half clad and his own shirt has slipped from his shoulders. And the voice smurs kuchh bhi ho sakta hain (Anything

can happen). The depiction of women in this and other advertisements is actually insult to the women in general which are destroying the real status and dignity of women. According to a United Nations Research Report (1975) on Advertising and the Portrayal of Women, advertisements have been held responsible for projecting women in a derogatory light, and as inferior class of beings (National Advertising Review Board, 1975). Shrivastava's (1992:7) research on the Indian media has shown that the dominant negative stereotypes in connection to the portrayal of women are:

1. A woman's place is in the home.
2. The most important and valuable asset of a women is physical beauty.
3. A woman's energies and intellect must be directed toward finding the right man.
4. Women are dependent coy and submissive; they are masochistic in their response to indignities humiliations, and even to physical violence inflicted upon them.
5. The good woman is the traditional house wife long suffering, pious and submissive; the modern woman who asserts herself and her independence is undesirable and can never bring happiness to anybody nor find happiness for herself.
6. Women are women's worst enemies.
7. The working woman is the undesirable exception who must be brought in to the marriage fold and made to conform to traditional social norms.

S.S.Roy (2012) states that today globalisation has left deep impact upon the Indian nation. With the passing of time with globalisation there occurred profound changes in economic, cultural, social and political arena. In economic system public sector has been ignored and private sector has been glorified. Open market system and privatisation have become the mantras behind the development of a particular country like India. The writer focuses that the state relegates vast power on the hand of the private players. Of this, competition is going to be a usual thing among the producers of different markets. Everyone is trying to sale their products as soon as possible. So, they are busy with various manipulating activities to sale their products. That's why they are taking the help of advertisements.

According to the writer the companies busy with competition are using the faces and bodies of beautiful women to popularise their products. These producers always producing lots of products everyday and there is competition everywhere to become the best seller. For this they are using women in a cheap manner whether necessary or not. For example, they are using women in the advertisements of cigarette, man, s underwear, man's shaving cream etc. They are portraying women wrongly for their own purpose.

The 1974 Report of the Committee on the Status of Women (Joshi Committee Report) found that 'women are represented as wives and mothers in most TV and other media programmes. Although 36% of them are agricultural workers, women are predominantly projected as non-producers, with a decorative function, being marginal to national growth and development. Plural nature of Indian culture and the diverse roles women play is neither acknowledged nor communicated. These results in stereotyped images and role specifications of women in unidimensional projection of their reality'.

Schaffer, Sharada J. (2006) attacks not only the stereotyping but also the unethical and offensive representation of women in advertisement that work to their detriment and perpetuates an undesirable gender hierarchy.

The author places her detailed analysis of individual ads--- a whopping 2,000--- against the backdrop of Indian societal, cultural and religious norms that reinforce patriarchy and the inherent violence in Indian society against women, be it through bride burning, rape, or a number of other ways.

The author has reviewed ads over a 12-year period from 1994 to 2005, but she admits that the majority of the ads are from the 1990s, and her critical analysis raises some crucial questions that have troubled not only women but also social scientists cutting across gender. Unsparring in her

observations, the author asks: “Does a woman need to be always tall and slim, young and light-skinned with silken skin and mop of gloriously shining hair?”

In the concluding chapter, the author presents a new code of ethics, challenging advertisers to re-examine their notions of gender in order to uphold women’s inviolable right to be treated with respect and dignity.

Sudarsanam, Jawhari, (2005), in *Representation of Women in Media: The Legal Debate* discusses about the important points raised at the Being Conference (1995) regarding the role of mass media to curb the evil of depicting women in a derogatory manner. According to him women should be empowered by enhancing their skills, knowledge and access to information technology. This ensures to curb the negative portrayal of women internationally and to challenge instances of abuse of power in an increasingly important industry, the mass media.

The Beijing Platform of Action further suggests that the self regulatory mechanisms for the media need to be created and strengthened and approaches developed to eliminate gender-biased programming. There is a need to develop, by the media and advertising organizations, professional guidelines and codes of conduct and other forms of self regulation to promote the presentation of non-stereotyped images of women. Therefore, there is a need to establish, consistent with freedom of expression, professional guidelines and codes of conduct that address violent, degrading or pornographic materials concerning women in the media, including advertising. The national governments and the international organisations have to play a role here. They should encourage the media to refrain from presenting women as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and present them as creative human beings.

Haripriya, M. (2005) states that liberalisation and privatisation have definitely invaded the today’s consumer market in India. Our urban India is slowly transforming into a western society. The concept of global village and information revolution has led the markets to target the world with one message. The writer also says that in this process, western culture is being imbibed into our veins. The advertisers have not succeeded in the just and true portrayal of women. There is surely a renaissance going on for the Indian women. But this renaissance is not being captured correctly by the advertisers. There is a need to voice out for a change in advertising content.

Women have been exploited by the advertisers for decades. They have frequently been stereotyped in the traditional roles or home maker, or have been projected as ‘visual prop’ to enhance the appeal of an advertisement. However, since the early 2000s, the frequency and the number of such demeaning and exploitative advertisements in the print and the electronic media have reduced (Jha, Jyotsna & Nigam Divya:2007). Here the writer writes that since the advertising agencies in India are male dominated, the tendency to portray women in traditional roles, or in superhuman roles where they manage the home and the job, has been inherent in the content of Indian advertising.

In her seminar paper Shellat. M (1994) describes how after the gain of independence in 1947, advertising in India was restricted mainly to the print media since television reached the country only in the late 1960s. According to her study, the print advertisements of the 1950s and 1960s portrayed men as breadwinners of the family, decision makers and professionals while women were portrayed as being inordinately concerned with their physical appearance and cooking meals to please their men and families.

Mallika Das (2002) in her study examined the portrayal of women and men in Indian magazine ads. Over 1,100 magazine ads from a wide range of magazines in 1987, 1990 and 1994 were examined. Results indicate that although the portrayals of women and men in Indian magazine ads have changed the period, they are still portrayed in stereotypical ways.

In this book the writer has accused the TV programmes being portraying women in derogatory manner, which has minimise the respect and dignity of women. He found that even though women were present in most of the TV programmes in significant numbers, their portrayals did not reflect the complexities of Indian women.

Addressing the Press council of India at the inauguration session of National Press Day, Justice G.N.Ray says that the most significant movement will be the movement for the emancipation of women. There should be respect for the women section in all fields; they should be given equal pay for equal work, there should be no gender gap between man and woman. According to him the most important medium through which the problems can be focused is the media. Both the print and electronic media should focus the gender inequalities, violence against women. These should not give importance on focussing women as sex objects or commodities.

Women should be given the democratic space where she can talk about her problems. For this the media can be regarded as the best way through which they can transmit their voices and ideas to the mass. So, media should play a significant role to develop as well as empower the women by focussing their problems and most importantly they should portray women as strong and superior not like the inferior and less respected. Because distance between the media and women not only derive the women of their right to information but keeps them in the dark (Prasad K.:2005). Discussing the modern issue of feminism the writer has opened a new angle to think about the equality, freedoms or liberties for the women. She showed a great concern for the women's movement for the restoration of the feminine needs and necessities in the era of liberal economy.

In her seminar paper Ranu Tomar attempted to explore the struggle for transformation and bridging gap between social identities of women and men. The relationship between media and women has a certain structure where women are trapped as an object. She also states that the role of women in media decision making is reflected in the poor representation of women issues and concerns.

Besides the advertisements, Cinema is also one of the most important and cheapest visual medium of entertainment in contemporary India. Unfortunately, the commercial film industry, which is a purely profit based industry, cares little about the image of women they portray to the public. Commercial films have followed a set pattern of female image portrayals wherein women are projected as sacrificing themselves for the family and reaffirming values of self-effacement and devotion to the male head of the family. Women who opt for a less traditional life are portrayed in a negative light. Furthermore, these films vividly portray physical violence against women and hardly ever show women as being capable of thinking for them in a logical and rational manner.

Gokul Singh and Dissanayake (2004) quoting Richards (1995) mention three categories of sexual objectification of women in Indian cinema, the tribal costume which is used for cabaret dances, through which women's body particularly pelvic region and the other parts are shown, the wet sari and the behind the bush scene. In the film Hum Apke Hain Koun (1995), the leading female actress wore a deep cut blouse, indicating the scopophilic nature of the camera. In an another popular Indian cinema Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge(1995) actress Kajol enacting the modern version of the wet sari sequence, wearing not the sari but a more revealing white costume. In this film the female character comes from such a conservative Indian family that she fears to tell her father that she has fallen in love with someone. Given that conservative context, it seems unlikely that such a character would be dancing a rain dance.

In their study of the mistreatment of women in commercial Hindi films, Dasgupta and Hegde examined a sample of 30 movies. After examining the movies the researchers concluded that the mistreatment of women in Hindi films is a mechanism which reinforces and perpetuates the patriarchal order of Indian society.

Television is also one of the most popular electronic media in India. In the television programmes women are basically seen as performing the decorative functions and as being marginal to national growth and development. Another important aspect of television programming is that large chunks of the entertainment programmes are drown from commercial film content. A crucial implication of this phenomenon is that as in commercial films, women on television entertainment programmes are projected as non-thinking, sacrificing and suffering

beings while educated and motivated women are seen as the scourge of the patriarchal order of society.

TV serials are depicting women and young females as involved in conspiracy, pre-marital, extra-marital, post illicit affairs, wearing costly, heavy golden, and diamond jewellery, perpetuating their religious fundamentalism, spending time in family feuds, suicidal love affairs, mega parties, palatial houses, luxury cars, sleek mobiles, elegant make-ups, little care about anything else than the individual matters, and at all mob even a word about the outside world.

As in the case of television, Desai and Patel state that the majority of the radio entertainment programmes in India are borrowed from commercial films. As far as typical women's programmes on radio are concerned, on an average, 60% of programme time is devoted to entertainment only. Twenty percent is given for educational programmes, and 20% is used for imparting information. Women are portrayed as gossip-mongers, and they are given advices on how to become a good wife, a good mother and improve their physical appearance. They are also given elaborate instructions on how to cook, sew knit etc.

The print media in India (when compared to electronic media) have limited impact on the vast and mainly illiterate population of the country. The majority of the population has depended on the oral tradition of cultural transmission for over two hundred years. It has been seen in the newspapers that these give place to the news related to rape, crime, politics, scandals, sports and economics; serious debates and discussions on issues related to women are completely missing. In vernacular press the depiction of women gets a share only in coloured pages where there is a lot of gossip about actress of TV serials and film stars along with some hot pick-ups. The English press also dwells upon providing snaps of the hot babes and erotic photo gallery of party mania in multistar hotels.

Magazines as well as newspapers have sections for females where the readers are left only with the option of reading some personal gynaecological problems of married women or personal love hick-ups of young girls, otherwise special features on knitting, fashion, sales etc. are the routine one.

As a result, most of the feminist writers have come forward to study about the present status of women in media. And the necessity of feminist approach to the media is being acknowledged everywhere today. The world wide feminist movement has pointed out that the portrayal and employment of women in media are in a most derogatory position. In the middle of the twentieth century, Simone de Beauvoir's book 'The Second Sex' was published and she clearly established that the problems and the poor image of women arose from the affirmation of the past and a gross neglect of the growth, development, the talents and opportunities of women in specific societies. Her work is a classical expose and a foundation for an intellectual defence of women and their rights to a different experience (Busby; 1975, 107-131). Betty Frieden's research about the construction of the American cultural ideal of "the happy housewife heroine" in women's magazines and advertisements is a typical example of feminist academic venture related to media. Her book 'The Feminine Mystique' (1963) was a best seller and gave rise to a revival of women's movement which had been dormant since the successful struggle for women's suffrage. Betty Frieden also headed one of the first 'second wave' feminist groups 'National Organisation of Women' which declared the media to be one of the major fields of struggle for women's rights. The group demanded better placement of women in media, child care centre and journals by women. A research project was launched in entire US to monitor TV networks and local stations for sexist content.

According to Raja Rao one of the biggest obstacles to women's access, participation and control of the media is the patriarchal structure of societies where men continue to see women as subordinate to them. Patriarchal attitudes of governments and media are manifest in their being predominantly male institutions which tend to view women as an undifferentiated mass of low status of society. Gender biases and gender-based discriminations therefore result in stereotyped

attitudes, sexual harassment, pay inequities, discriminatory treatment in assignments and promotions, traditional gender hierarchies, including a premium on family responsibilities, lack of support mechanisms for working women and low education that deter women from joining the media or assume decision-making positions.

Thus, it can be said that there is an on-going trend in Indian Media to portray women as busy and concerned with beautifying herself, choosing make-up, new fashions, jewellery, cosmetics, constantly watching her weight, worried about good figure and skin colour, proud of advertising and selling latest products. She is hardly portrayed as having social commitments, capable of intelligent decision making, or as capable leaders and policy makers. Usually she is shown to accompany her husband like a shadow or as a decorative piece. Manu's dictum that 'a woman is protected by her father in childhood, husband in adulthood and son in old age' is perpetuated in all media representation. In most representations she is tactfully domesticated, and her place is 'home and hearth' by unwritten codes of society. Everything around her is arranged in such a way that she can't let herself loose. Women who break this unwritten code and re-arrange their day are considered feminists or rebels. And media is playing their role perfectly to preserve the societal concepts. As a result, most of the mediated women are "weak, passive, needy and subservient, or vain, irrational and hot-headed. But the question is how to turn the media into an effective tool for promoting constructive change and faithfully representing the multiple roles of the women today--- as achiever both at home and in the labour force.

MEDIA PORTRYAL OF WOMEN AND SOCIAL CHANGE:

In exploring the relationship between media and society, pertinent questions include whether media are molders or reflectors of social structures, and whether media are agents of social change or reinforcers of the status quo (Rosengren, 1981; Glasser, 1997).

The mirror approach employs the metaphor of the mirror to describe the role of media in society (Curran, Gurevitch & Woollacott, 1982). It assumes that the media provide a truthful and objective portrait of social reality. The null effects approach also suggests that media content reflects reality with little or no distortion, but sees this reality as the result of compromises between those who sell information to the media and those who buy it (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). Studies show that the "pictures" we get from the media differ from the world outside (e.g., Giltlin, 1980; Lang & Lang, 1971). Media content does not simply reflect the world, but represents it by highlighting certain elements over others (Devereaux, 2003). Traditional Marxists believe that the images and definitions provided by the media are "distorted or 'false' accounts of an objective reality" which are molded by the ruling political and economic groups (Curran, Gurevitch & Woollacott, 1982, p. 22).

Many feminist studies on media and society focus on the relationship between media portrayals of women and social reality. Much attention has been given to the gender-role messages in television programs (e.g., Ferri & Keller, 1986; Matelski, 1985), newspaper and magazine content (e.g., List, 1986; Silver, 1986), and advertising (e.g., Lysonski, 1985; Whipple & Courtney, 1980). These studies found that women are often underrepresented or stereotypically portrayed as playing passive, submissive and dependent roles. The media are hypothesized to fulfill the structural needs of a patriarchal and capitalist society by reinforcing gender differences and inequalities (Van Zoonen, 1996).

The female images constructed by the media are not fixed entities and have changed over time in response to both the feminist movement and the broader socioeconomic changes (Rhode, 1995). One obvious improvement might be the shift from firmly locating women in the domestic sphere to one that emphasizes an independent career in the world of paid employment, but the gulf between the media representations and reality still exists (kiran Prasad, 2003).

1.3.1 Trends in Mass Communication

In developing countries feminist communication research on media content, images and representation has grown since the early 1980s. It was the United Nations International Decade for Women (1975-85) that provided political impetus worldwide to initiate research and action for changing women's portrayal and participation in the mass media. In comparison to the Western feminist scholarship in the field of communication, however, communication research on Third world women has remained fragmentary and descriptive. Despite proliferation of women-in-development literature in the last two decades, gender in the field of mass communication has remained a marginal area of inquiry among feminist scholars (Steeves 1993). Hence, empirical and theoretical work in the area of women and mass media in developing countries is limited and uneven across regions. As a result, media research on women in developing countries has relied heavily on the feminist paradigm for communication research, developed in the west.

Gallagher (1992: 4- 7) highlights three strands in feminist research on media content, images and representation. The focus of feminist scholarship in the 1970s, conducted mostly in North America and Asia (Japan, Korea and the Philippines), was on quantitative content analyses of "sex-roles and media stereotypes". This research documented invisibility of women in various media forms and highlighted how media images reinforce negative portrayal of women in terms of behaviours, aspirations, psychological traits and so on. Gallagher argues that such juxtaposition of "positive" and "negative" media images of men and women is problematic. There is a tendency in such an approach to define "positive" images of women in "masculine" terms. For example, showing women as authoritative, autonomous, self-fulfilled and successful, etc. while ignoring the ways in which the audience read and reinterpret media content. Despite limitations of this approach, it condemned and drew our attention to sexism in media and provided impetus to feminist research on media content.

In the 1980s, feminist film criticism, based on qualitative European perspectives and methodology which use psychoanalytical, semiotic, and post-structural frameworks in analysis, contributed to broadening our understanding of how the media construct definitions of femininity and masculinity, and how images of women reflect or distort reality. The focus of this approach is on understanding "representation" of women through the study of text and textual mechanisms. Criticism of this approach is directed towards the neglect of a dialectical relationship between media and culture which construct the notion of "women". The question is not merely to examine whether the media reflect or distort images of women, but to explore how images and meaning of femininity and masculinity in media are socially constructed within the context of patriarchal social relations.

Furthermore, recent feminist media criticism that has drawn from cultural studies shifts our attention from the text to the context of reception in which the audience plays an active role in producing and negotiating textual meanings. Construction of textual meanings is an integral part of social and power relations in society, which are constantly contested and negotiated by the audience. Gallagher argues that in the recent years feminist media criticism, heavily influenced by post-structuralist and post modern theory, places far more emphasis on autonomy of audience reading of the text and validating audience "pleasures" and ignores the fact that women as audience are positioned within a cultural system which reproduces particular representation of "femininity".

Gallagher concluded with saying that recent feminist media research and criticism gives us useful insights in understanding cultural dimensions of power and equality. However, she expresses caution against the apolitical trend in current feminist media studies that focuses on the micro-level while ignoring the issue of power and broader political and economic concerns.

Mass Communication researches primarily concentrate on the study of its effects on the society. The role of mass media in development activity was very clearly implied in the dominant paradigm of development. The media is instrumental in defining what we think who we are and

what one's place in the society. It has impact on how issues are interpreted and evaluated. Klapper (1960) suggested that people exposed themselves to messages selectively. There was a tendency of individuals to expose themselves relatively more to those items of communication that set with their beliefs, ideas, values, etc. Regardless of exposure to communication, an individual's perception of a certain event, issue, person, or place could be influenced by his/her latent beliefs, attitudes, wants, need or other factors. Thus, two individuals exposed to the same message could go away with diametrically different perceptions about it. Research showed that even recall of information was influenced by factors such as an individual's needs, wants, moods, perceptions and so on.

The diffusion of innovations theory has important theoretical links with communication effects research. The emphasis was on communication effects: the ability of media messages and opinion leaders to create knowledge of new practices and ideas and persuade the target to adopt the exogenously introduced innovations. There was disagreement on the question of whether ideas were independently developed in different cultures, or whether an idea was invented in one culture and borrowed by or diffused into one another. Evidence indicated that in most cultures there was prominence of borrowed or diffused elements over those that developed from within a particular culture (Linton: 1936, Kroeber: 1944). The diffusion of innovations research established the importance of communication in the modernisation process at the local level. In the dominant paradigm, communication was visualised as the important link through which exogenous ideas entered the local communities.

Lerner (1958) in "The Passing of the Traditional society" points out that the mass media were both index and agent of modernisation. In Lerner's model, there was close reciprocal relationship between literacy and mass media exposure. The literate developed the media which in turn accelerated the spread of money.

S.C Dube (1958) studied the importance of communication in community development programme in India. Wilbur Schramm (1964) emphasised on the role of communication in the process of social change by saying that the development of mass media is one of the requisites for and signs of a modernising society. He noticed change in social, cultural, religious and personal attitudes which subsequently have helped change and shape a society completely different.

The society has by and large reacted almost in an identical manner. This has been established by some well-known studies conducted by Indian mass communication scholars such as Rao (1956) and several others. These researchers have proved that mass media have immensely aided and assisted the rate and score of development and the pace of people in absorbing the new media which has completely revolutionised the style of people.

Lakshmana Rao's (1966) monographic study of two Indian villages is based on the anthropological approach. He has not administered any systematic technique for collecting data except depending on observation. His two villages of South India—Kothuru (a new village) and Pathuru (an old village) were found at contrasting stage of development. One was becoming industrialised, where as the other still clung to the agrarian economy. He has tried to study the role that communication plays in the economic, social and political development of a community. The findings reveal the impact of communication on economic, social and political spheres of community. Communication helps a person to find alternative ways of making a living, helps him to raise a family's social and economic status creates demand for goods, motivates local initiative to meet the rising demands, raises the literacy rate, shifts the influence from the age old and traditional status to knowledge and ability helps him in the process of power change from heredity to achievement, motivates the traditional leaders to defend their power by raising their information level, increases awareness about government plans and programmes and helps the community or the nation to power through unity.

C.R Prasad Rao and K. Ranga Rao (1976) have studied the village communication channels in three villages of Andhra Pradesh. Their study examines the determination of the communication

channel usage in a sample of 209 farmers. Causal relationship between the channel usage and audience attributes are sought to be identified through path analysis. The farmers, all under 50 year of age, each cultivating over 2.5 acres, were interviewed with the help of a structured schedule. The farmers' willingness to change was determined by their secular orientation, credit orientation and risk orientation; their resource based abilities were determined by applying four status dimensions, viz. Caste, education, the scale of farming and operation and the level of living. Three channels of communication were considered to be dependent variable --urban contact, contact with extension agencies and exposure to mass media. High caste, high ses and wealthy farmers were found to benefit most from the form extension activity, which was not significantly influenced by education. Urban contact was found to promote extension contact which, in true, directly contributed to exposure to mass media. One of the important findings is that the knowledge imparted through broadcasting was significantly retained by the respondents even 30 days after the broadcast. The effectiveness of communication could be enhanced by using a mix of the following mutually reinforcing channel, for the effectiveness of the subject matter of the broadcast, 1) the subject matter should be related to the felt needs, 2) the dialogue should be able to create a mental picture in the mind of the listener regarding the subject matter, 3) clear summaries should be given at the end of the radio talk. Two further suggestions are made to improve the modes of presentation, viz.,(1) at the time of broadcast, the key ideas should be tactfully stressed so that they may be easily detected by the listeners and (2) the programme should be carefully rehearsed and timed. The commercialisation of radio and television in India has brought the whole world of advertising to his door steps. As the messages about the new goods and products reach the rural homes and if the messages relate to people's interests, consistent with their attitudes, congruent with their beliefs and supportive to their values, as De Fleur and Rokeach (1976) point out, these are quickly acted upon and hotly pursued. This is a fact that majority of people are not gaining or are not able to benefit too much from the media messages. Since there are individual differences in personality characteristic among such members, it is natural to assume that there will variations in effect which correspond to these individual differences.

S.C Dube (1964) conducted a survey on the perception of emergency after Chinese attack. He observed that 83.3% of the respondents were aware of the Chinese aggression. The information reaching the elite through the mass media is relayed to the common village people through the traditional channel. Lakshmana Rao (1966) studied the role played by the communication in economic, social and political development of a community. Damle (1966) enquired into the diffusion of modern ideas and kinds of knowledge in seven villages. The study elicited information regarding the awareness of people about national political scene, world political structure, modern ideas regarding caste and religion and the impact of new ideas of recreation, movie, radio, sports, newspapers lectures, political propaganda, etc. C.R Prasad Rao and K. Ranga Rao (1976) who have studied the human communication channel in three villages of Andhra.

Since the establishment of the Indian institute of mass communication (IIMC) in New Delhi in 1965 by the Government of India, various types of Researches have been undertaken on various dimensions of communication. Since August 1, 1975 through the Satellite Instructional Television (SITE) development programmes were shown in 2,379 villages of six states. A team of social scientists were employed by SITE to test the efficiency of television on and in improving agricultural practices and population control in promoting National integration, in upgrading and expanding education and in promoting better health and hygiene for a better life in rural areas (Gupta:1985).

In fact, very little work has been done in the field of social communication prior to 1990's. Since 1990's onwards the trend have been shifted to National Television Network i.e. Doordarshan and more specifically to successful launch of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV D2) on October 15,1994 makes an important mile stone in India's space programmes. Mahajan (1988) in a study of patterns of television viewing among girls in Meerut city found that television viewing

increased knowledge about other countries and promotes the general feeling universal brotherhood.

Modi (1985) studied the inter-relation between leisure, mass media and social structure in an empirical situation of Rajasthan. He provided of comprehensive description of traditional forms, folk motifs and cultural roots of leisure and the new challenges from the electronic revolution of the mass media and its encroachment on leisure, culture and social structure. His work was based on empirical study of a village Garhi Maamur in Alwar district of Rajasthan and the urban community in Jaipur of Rajasthan. His major finding was that there exists a clear con-commitance between the social structure and the structure of leisure of a society and change in either of the two influences each other. Thus, Modi establishes that social structure influence the nature and form of leisure and the leisure itself helps in generating newer structure, social norms and culture.

Brown (1986) found that in any society, feminine personality comes to define in relation and connection to other people more than the masculine personality does. In an analysis of several Japanese films, researcher Yasuko (1977) found that the predominance of the perception of women is ether wife or whore—the dichotomy already found in media portrayals. Studies on television programmes have also shown that media present an extremely narrow range of female image—a young in traditional feminine occupations- if employed at all, seeking identity through love or marriage, deliberately home oriented, self sacrificing and dependable. Television copes with and helps to produce a crucial categorisation of its viewers into masculine and feminist subjects. A Mellencamp (1985) trace this back to the 1950's where she finds the origin of the 'gender base' of television, with sport and news shows for men, cooking and fashion shows for women.

According to Bhagat (1992) improved technologies for rural women are established to be the heart of development and innovativeness was thought to be best single indicator of the multifaceted dimension called modernisation. Rogers (1976) suggested a new definition of development as a widely participatory process of social change in a society intended to bring about social and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through gaining control over their environment. The predominant role of communication has been: 1) to transfer technological innovations from development agencies to the client and; 2) to create an appetite for change through raising a climate for modernisation among members of the public.

Subhanarayan (1991) emphasised that light viewer can remain so he attend to his work and make a decent living provided; he does not fall for the glamour and glitter as provided by television. He watches TV for a few specific hours a day and remains so as a light viewer and restricting his choice to programmes like news, documentaries etc. Thus, he leaves out the entertainment as presented by TV and shuns away from commercially oriented serials and music and anything of the kind. He becomes an abnormal person when he starts watching serials and other entertainment oriented programmes. TV is like a magic box and it mesmerise the audience completely. To run away from TV it needs a strong will power and education to cure him of negative effects of television.

K.B Mathur (1994) in his study on communication for development and socio change, viewed traditional folk media as culture and community based media. He observed that traditional folk media existed even before the advent of the modern mass media. It was through the utilisation of these media that some of the dynamic religious movements spread for the wide (Mathur 1994:20).

Nevertheless, mass media can play an important role in generating the awareness and shaping the public opinion in the case of the developed societies as well as in the case of a developing society like India. In case of vulnerable disease like AIDS/HIV mass media can played a vital role.

Sardana (1995) depicted that Panchayati Raj personnel should be taken into trust and confidence at decision making level. They are not investigative journalists. They are the spaces of

the enterprises charged with the responsibility of projecting the correct image of the organisation to various publics. They can perform their role in an atmosphere of understanding, appreciation, direction and support from the top management.

Suriakanthi (1995) depicted that government's effort to provide community radio sets in the villages did not succeed as real beneficiaries are far away from the picture. The goal of radio (Bahujan Hitaya, Bahujan Sukhaya) has got much more relevance in these days particularly in tribal dominated regions. Real picture of the country-men are found in village India. Everybody loves to hear reality, truth, the event as it is, but not a concerned image of an event. The time is nearing when radio will be of the people, by the people and for the people. When the very survival of the medium is questioned, there is a need to decentralise, the whole system, when everybody becomes a broadcaster and a listener as well. Comprising predominantly field based programmes, radio clubs will act as resource centre for total human development.

According to Kumar (1995) the need for appropriate communication technology in speeding the process of rural development is essential communication technology for the third world must be in the vision of new possibilities for enriching the lives of people both economically and socially with the aid of science and technology. In this context, the importance of video, one of the most powerful mass media is introduced, no doubt an important aspect of advancement in communication technology but it has mainly as a source of entertainment for long time, and its potential for development lies largely untapped. He further emphasised that formulation of proper strategy for the effective utilisation of video in the developmental efforts really paid it. Video technology has received considerable attention by the development practitioners throughout world.

Malhan (1995) emphasised that the communication media (including the big and small, modern and traditional, person-to-person and extension) are necessary to inform, educate and persuade people and thus provide effective communication support to democracy and developmental plans. The media can disseminate news, views, programmes and policies provide perspective to them for proper understanding; and promote participatory dialogue. They have to act as a watchdog on the as well as economic front. They can help in promoting national cohesion, enlighten and mobilise public opinion and stimulate the participation of various public at different levels. The media have the potentiality to act as catalysts in diffusing new practices, skills and technology. In this age of communication explosion and propaganda, they can aid in presenting a time image of the country and its people abroad, and promote better understanding of the outside world and its events among the people in the country.

Joglekar (1995) emphasised that it is also impossible to check telecast beamed worldwide by satellite. Satellite television is still new to India. But it will soon spread fast. A certain degree of discretion is necessary on the part of the international organisation to see that they take into account the impact and the results that a hasty programme may have. Power brings with it responsibility. And if the international media networks reap the advantage and the profit that globalisation brings they cannot shirk the responsibilities that go with it.

According to Mohanty (1995), agricultural extension, health education, population education, rural development and public information through the use of modern mass communication media has become more popular for the use of the rural urban masses. Mobilisation of the human potential at present scarcely tapped is not dependent on technological means alone and inter-personal communication plays a crucial in this endeavour.

According to Kuthiala (1995) the media of mass communication has to be used to cater to the need as perceived by the people themselves and not by experts. The anomaly of a few people deciding what the millions require need to be removed. Control of the media has to be moved techno experts to socially conscious non-experts experiment like kheda and many other have repeatedly talk to each other rather than a few people talking down to vast majorities. The role of

media men the developing society is that of the facilitators who coordinate dialogue between different sections of the population, rather than controllers and information brokers.

Singh (2003) analysed the relationship between mass media and level of modernity among the middle class youth in an empirical study conducted during January-March 1999 in silchar town of Assam by administering an interview schedule on a sample of 44 male and 38 female youth drawn from the voter list of a middle class locality. He found that as far as the relationship between mass media communication and modernity is concerned there was a positive relationship between mass media exposure and modernity at the medium level, but mass media exposures not solely responsible for 'the modernity level of an individual. It is also influenced by some other variables such as caste, class, occupation and education of the subject. Regarding the relationship between social structure and modernity it was found that there was no clear cut relationship between caste and level of modernity as most of the higher caste subjects has modern level of modernity and the lower caste subjects have developed high modernity. Thus, there seems to be a negative relationship between the caste and the level of modernity. However, there is a positive relationship between education and modernity in the sense that no respondent have primary 'level of education and no has very low level of modernity, at the secondary level of education 87.05% have medium level of modernity and a few (12.05%) have low level of modernity. It also suggests that although the level of modernity increases with the level of education but it perpetuates more at medium level. As far as the relationship between the income group and level of modernity is concerned that the medium level of modernity was found in a high degree in the low income groups. These suggest that there is no relationship between income group and modernity. Among the Brahmins most 60.86% have medium level mass media exposure; while among the Kayastha (52.83%) have medium level of mass media exposure, among the Vaishyas (67.67%) have medium level of mass media exposure, among the lower caste no one has low media exposure and most of subjects have high (33.03%) and medium level of mass media exposure (66.67%). It suggests that the media exposure of lower caste is relatively high than the upper caste respondents. At the secondary level 25% subjects have low media exposure, while at the graduate and post graduate level it diminishes at 10%. There is a level of high media increase as one move from secondary to post graduate level. At secondary level 18.75%, graduate level 28.57% and post graduate level 45%). Father's education also has positive relationship with son's media exposure. The subjects whose fathers are engaged in Govt. Or private sector have more mass media exposure rather than those whose fathers are engaged in business activities or retired from the services. There no relationship between income group and mass media exposure. In conclusion, we can say that the relationship between the three variables taken in the present study is complex. Although there seems to be a positive relationship between mass media communication and modernity, but level of modernity perpetuates more at medium level. The other factors like level of modernity of a person. However, the structural variables like caste has to some extent in negative communication as lower caste respondents have high and medium level of modernity associated with high and medium level mass media exposure. Therefore, it can be said that education is the most important factor in the advancement of the modernity level from medium to higher level rather than exposure to mass media communication. The factors like religion and caste have a negative impact on the process of modernisation. This is evident from the items wise analyses of the modernity in which of the respondents were of the view that a person who is Atheist may not be a good person. Thus, the deep root of caste and religion in Indian social structure check the process of modernisation in a developing society like India. Therefore, the level of modernity perpetuates more at medium level.

Singh (2003) thus rejects the views of Dharamvir (1990) and Mahajan (1990) that mass media has a negative relationship with modernity which in his view is an over simplification of the intricate relationship between mass media exposure and level of modernity. This study also shows the invalidity of the works of George Gerbner (1984), Sharuda (1988) and Singhal and Rogers (1989). It is a very clear that it is not simply the exposure to mass media communication which

brings modernity but what is most important is the contents of the programme listen or watch by a person on audio-visual and broadcast media or the kind of contents read by a person in the newspaper or the magazines. The high frequency of watching mythological serials on television by most of the subjects indicates that such type of programme may check the process of modernity rather than to enhance it.

From it is now clear that there are various paradigm and approaches about the effects of mass media on society. Some researchers are of the view that there is direct effect of media on society and individuals while the others say that there is limited impact of mass media on society and that is also under certain conditions. Some claims that there is no any direct impact of media at all.

1.3.2 Trends in women studies

Women's studies attempt to make sense of social, cultural, economic, and political trends linking all this back to mainstream ideology and theoretical foundations relevant to the study of gender; and at the same time exploring women's place and context in the time that the research takes place in. The studies that took place globally in the greater part of the period between the 1960s-1980s were significant in bringing to the forefront women's issues especially as they pertained to the media. During this period a number of studies in line with feminist thoughts on the place of women in society were spurred on as a result of second wave feminism and most pointedly the women's liberation movement. The research concentrated on media content and the media's representation most notably of women. Research was conducted to investigate the depiction of women in gender specific roles many of them concentrating solely on advertising content. The point of these studies (Friedan 1963, Courtney and Lockeretz 1971, Dominick and Rauch 1972, Ferrante, Haynes and Kingsley 1988, Gilly 1988) was to show that advertising content did not adequately reflect social developments of the time. Findings can be drawn on to illustrate key themes and issues of debate that were of concern at the time. From the aims of these studies the issues of the time become apparent. The major issues were how women were being treated in society versus their actual place and role in society and how they were portrayed in the media; in contrast to how men were treated in society and their actual place and role in society versus how that was portrayed in media content. Another aim of studies in this time was to build onto the body of feminist writings and more particularly to contribute empirical research findings that would support feminist arguments towards liberating women. In South Africa at this time liberation meant something completely different. Women's issues were sidelined due the political struggle and the goal of emancipation of the nation. Whereas in the United States and Britain at this time, terms such as emancipation, equality and liberation were most notably associated with women's issues, in South Africa these terms were associated with the political struggle. Hassim (2006:21) characterises women's protests as "sporadic, varied in content, and characterised by an upsurge of political mobilisation around a specific campaign, followed by decline". This is unlike the consistent debate and study of women's issues in Western societies.

In South Africa it is claimed that other more prominent issues often took and continue to take precedence over women's issues. Hassim (2006:34) states that The dominant position within the ANC until the late 1980s was that the emancipation of women was secondary to and contingent upon national liberation. The task of women activists was to mobilize women for the broader struggle One can begin to notice the differences in the period between Western trends concerning women's issues and those in South Africa. Liberal feminists have argued for the emancipation of women from what they perceive to be a male dominated society. Equality for liberal feminists means that women would have an equal place in society alongside men; for example an equal chance in the labour market. Studies that concentrated on gender specific roles looked specifically at categories of occupation, product relationship, setting/environment, age of the on screen characters, sex of the on-screen spokesperson, and the sex of the voice-over. These categories were

considered adequate in obtaining findings to address the major concerns surrounding the portrayal of women at the time. The categories were developed from popular stereotypes that concerned both men and women. For example under the category of occupation the assumption was that women would occupy low-level income jobs as secretaries whereas men would in comparison occupy high-level executive, professional, and semi-professional occupations such as doctors, and managers. The approach to the analysis of how women were portrayed in the media meant that negative meanings were attached to such portrayals. Assumptions of research during this time anticipated negative and reductionist portrayals by the media, influenced mainly by the comparison between men and women.

A quantitative approach was prevalent at the time but recent trends have called for a more qualitative in-depth analysis and understanding of the different ways that women are portrayed. Such recent trends include that of raunch culture, where female characters are deliberately portrayed in a sexual nature either because they choose to or because the portrayal makes a specific point (Rizos 2009). Such developments are notably supported by more interpretative, in-depth techniques such as conducting a semiotic analysis where the embedded or rather different levels of meaning in a text could be explored rather than select aspects as was the critique of a more quantitative approach that may lose sight of more current developments in the field of gender studies. Alternatively Strinati (2003:177) explains that some feminists have also begun to critique the reliance on content analysis because the method tends to neglect wider structures of economic, political and cultural power. This is why most of these studies rely heavily on a theoretical base to address and support these aspects. Nevertheless a quantitative approach is still relevant to research on gender because many researchers aim to sample as many advertisements for analysis. This was because many of the studies also wanted to identify patterns and themes across television stations or mediums. A quantitative approach supported larger samples. Another contributing factor the relevance of the approach is that representation and the study of gender issues is considered somewhat subjective researchers asserted that by conducting a quantitative analysis that could be supported by pilot tests and inter-coder reliability that would strengthen the validity of their findings.

Demarcating the field

The point of departure in this field is to first define what is meant by gender continuing to more concentrated discussions of women's issues. Gender is generally and simply defined as cultural and social differences between the sexes. In the discipline of gender studies the following streams of feminism, masculinity and sexual orientation are included in women's studies (Fourie 2009).

Demarcating the field of gender studies involves as stated before defining gender biologically followed by more specific arguments on each and/or both sexes. Broadly this can include understandings from various disciplines including anthropology, psychology, politics as well as sociology. These disciplines offer various arguments that can be applied successfully to the study of gender and communication within the context of the study. For example Van Eeden (2006) in the research she conducted on gender associations with shopping malls uses aspects of geographic space, sociological, anthropological and psychoanalytical aspects in an exploration of media content in the form of advertisements for shopping malls. This multidisciplinary approach is able to provide a significant semiotic content analysis of advertisements illustrating how shopping as a social and cultural act has been traditionally associated with women. The research cannot be described as a study in communication rather it looks at an aspect of gender exploring how space is constructed and maintained through a media platform. Despite valid contributions, demarcating the field of gender studies has become quite difficult. It has become more difficult to write about gender and the media without drawing on a multitude of disciplines. Here concentration will

specifically be given on debates and issues surrounding conservative/traditional versus feminist viewpoints on how women and their images are portrayed in media and why.

Conservatism versus feminist views

Conservatist or traditional views rely heavily on biological determinism as an explanation for why women occupy very specific positions in society. The central argument is that biologically women are different from men. The biological make up of the sexes is seen as a determining factor that explains why women and men have traditionally been understood according to specific social and cultural roles. Over and above this, conservatism seeks to retain traditional gender specific roles. Anthropological studies on women's issues link conservatist views and feminist concerns by emphasising that social and cultural constructions of gender identities is based on biological difference (Ortner 1974, Gilmore 1990, Moore 1998).

McKay (1987:i) states that "According to the traditional view we are destined to be wives and mothers, to cook, mend, wash and care to be largely excluded from high-status occupations and positions of power". McKay (1987) is speaking from the perspective of being a woman. The study that McKay (1987) conducted looked at the nature of gender roles in South Africa and resonates with findings in American and British studies at the time (Friedan 1963, Courtney and Lockeretz 1971, Dominick and Rauch 1972, Ferrante, Haynes and Kingsley 1988, Gilly 1988). These same studies looked specifically at those more traditional roles and argued against the conservatist approach critiquing it for being too narrow and deterministic. The conservatist approach accordingly does not accommodate social, cultural or significant political change and the effect of the aspects on gender issues.

Feminism arose primarily to challenge and correct the flaws in the conservatist approach. Though feminism has a long history, discussion will concentrate primarily on the nature of feminist debate from the 1960s to more current debates. An overall concern in feminist debates is the relationship between gender, culture society, and ideology (Meyers 1997:1). Three long-standing streams in feminism can be identified and discussed for the purpose of this study; including liberal feminism which pays particular attention to labour relations as well as the unrealistic and oppressive way that women are represented by the media (Strinati 2003:160). Radical feminism supports the biological differences between women and men but critiques this difference being used to subordinate women. Radical feminism furthermore supports arguments that recognise patriarchy as the dominant ideology operating in society responsible for the repression of women. Socialist feminism also accepts the ideological role of patriarchy in culture and society and argues towards the radical transformation of social norms and practices as the only means to liberate and strengthen women's position in society.

The feminist movement reached its peak in the United States during the 1960s. Attention was given to how the media represented women. The media was seen as being instrumental in communicating ideological messages and it was the origin of such messages that concerned feminists. The perceived pervasiveness of media content called for continued analysis of the nature of media content. The media was understood to be an intricate part of the socialisation process because of the perceived audience exposure rates (Boyd- Barrett 2002). Increasing changes in the labour market meant that traditional occupations associated with women and men were no longer relevant. Changes in the labour market also resulted in aspects such as space needing to be revisited. Women were no longer solely operating in the private sphere but were also working in the cities; spaces traditionally associated with men. This also meant that roles of wife and mother (for women) and provider (for men) needed to be reevaluated. Feminist studies aimed to bring to the forefront the discrepancies between current media portrayal and ideal media portrayals.

Liberal, radical and social feminists argued that audio-visualised portrayal of female characters still chose to rely on traditional/conservative definitions of occupation, role, and associations with space. These categories were outdated needing to be redefined. Continuous study

and research into advertising content during this period showed little change or shift in how advertising content portrayed female characters. Concern was raised over the lack of significant change in media content despite continuous study and exposure. Schneider and Schneider (1979) analysed Australian televised advertisements and noted slight changes in occupational roles assigned to female characters. Female characters were portrayed in professional positions; however this does not mark a significant change when so many other studies did not mirror this change.

Liberal feminists were calling for more equal representation in terms of the air time that women received on the as well as the nature of the portrayals needed to be more in line with social changes (Williams 2003:58). Alternatively radical feminists were calling for change but acknowledged that there would always be differences between the sexes. This stream of feminism argued that some differences needed to be celebrated while those that supported unequal treatment needed to be revisited and publicised (McDowell and Pringle 1992) Mabandla (1991) argued that significant change would be a result of existing power relations and ideology being addressed and held accountable as the driving force behind the existing place of women in society and within their specific cultural contexts. It is generally an agreed upon notion in gender studies that power relations operating at a social, cultural, economic and political level is the origin of biased gender representation. Feminist arguments stated that media content to some extent was an extension or projection of existing ideological power relations that operated consistently and continuously on social and cultural level.

Patriarchy is used to encapsulate these power relations prevalent in society. The study, debate and critical evaluation of the concept of patriarchy is an important one in feminism; as the term is adopted to explain why women are treated as the lesser citizens of society not having the same human and social rights that men have. Patriarchy is a term that is found in most studies that look at women's issues because it is relied upon to explain what women's place in society was and continues to be. To this end women's studies are heavily reliant on a theoretical base to contextualise, explain, and validate findings, because so many studies are predominantly content analysis the theoretical base becomes very important.

McDowell and Pringle (1992:10) explain that to understand the underlying structures of women's oppression it is important to understand the power relations operating in society. Debates around the issue of patriarchy became quite academic in the sense that many writers (McKay 1987, Ferguson 2004) felt that it was also important to offer different approaches to the understanding of patriarchy. Walby (McDowell and Pringle 1992) for example offered a systems approach explaining that patriarchy was an interconnected system that could be looked at from six different angles. These angles included patriarchy as a mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions. Walby's (McDowell and Pringle, 1992:11) system of patriarchy appears to cover the state, religion, economy as well as the private sphere. Mitchel (McDowell and Pringle, 1992) on the other hand offered a structuralist approach explaining that patriarchy operated on different levels; namely an ideological and capitalist level. Much time was spent on the intricacies of what constituted patriarchy and how to identify aspects of patriarchy operating in media content.

McDowell and Pringle (1992:12) explain that in the early parts of the 1990s there was a move away from patriarchy and towards gender as a category that may be more useful for ensuring that all social relations are looked at not just sex role stereotyping. This is in part a valid point and has been discussed in many studies at the height of second-wave feminism that concentrated on sex role stereotyping. Gender can be seen as an umbrella term encapsulating issues of feminism, masculinity as well as sexual orientation. Patriarchy is an important aspect in understanding the relationship between women's issues in society as well as issues in masculinity. What McDowell and Pringle (1992) are stating is that when patriarchy becomes the defining ideology drawn on in a

study or research initiative the result in most cases is an analysis of sex roles that are linked to patriarchal ideology limiting the scope of studies. A more holistic approach is being proposed that takes into account other aspects of gender. Yet these studies that have been critiqued for concentrating on patriarchal issues were all relevant in emphasising and adding reliability to the findings of the studies that preceded showing that women were not realistically portrayed in media content. Patriarchy as an ideology is still relevant in current studies, because women's issues in the form of oppression, emancipation and equality are still relevant in research. Studies will in some sense draw on patriarchy to support and explain why women are still on various levels and in different contexts oppressed. Reversely the same ideology is used to address masculinity and traditional expectations placed on men. Martin (Diamond and Quinby 1988: 16) argued this point in the late 1980s stating, "it is imperative that we not dismiss the importance of the concepts of patriarchy and oppression". Furthermore an analysis of sex-role stereotyping is still relevant in current research and across numerous disciplines, this is especially true from a communication perspective that seeks to understand why different forms of media portray parts of society in very specific ways and why women continue to be portrayed in traditional and outdated roles.

Altekar(1959) in his study illustrated the position and status of women in Hindu Civilisation from ancient times to the present both in the east and the west and offered solutions to the various problems that are faced by the Hindu women and simultaneously by men. He described the problems related to the childhood and education of women in the society, from the Vedic period to Smritis and Upanishads and to present time. He prescribed solutions to the problem by drafting of the new special courses for female education that would give equal emphasizes to both domestic and professional life. He threw light on the numerous problems related to the marriage, married life, divorce and the position of the widows. He said women held a respectable position in the society as well as public life and participated in religious activity. He even said that women had proprietary rights during covertures and proprietary rights during inheritance and partition; she had hold over the family matters and decision in the Rig Vedic age.

In the similar way (Upadhaya,1991; Lal:2005) explored a broad perspective from the ancient times including Vedic period to the present time. They traced hat with the passage of time after Vedic period the condition and status of women deteriorated with the arrival of Muslim leaders and British. And eventually at the times of British rule, social reforms were initiated by some of the great leaders and thinkers of the time such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dayanand Saraswati, etc with this many women's organisation came up and participated in the freedom struggle movement. He traced that though there is constitutional grants equality of the sexes but still there is good number of crimes and violence against women. They analysed the issues of women freedom and gender equality in the Indian society and traced towards the injustices faced by the women such as sexual harassment, rape, gender discrimination, prostitution, violence and such other related crimes.

Ghadially (1988) provided an immediate access to some critical areas on the subject of women such as role and identity of women, existing stereotypes related to men and women, concepts of femininity and liberation in the context of changing roles, various violence faced by women, portrayal and representation of women in various mediums of media and also on the variety of efforts generated to this country regarding sensitising people to inequalities between the sexes.

Ammu and Kalpana (1994, 2006) addresses the set of questions that has arisen in recent years concerning women assess (as users) to the media and information their participation in media and communication structure and their portrayal and perspectives in media content. The second edition retains its unique gender analyses of media content and situates views and evaluates the coverage of women issues in the media within the context of recent trends in both the economy and media industry. Employing a novel and nuanced methodology, it offers a distinctive

view of the history of both the media and women the movement in India at the beginning of the 21st century.

Thakuria (2008) provided an account of scribes falling before extremism in the north east during the recent past. He pointed out that not a single killer was apprehended for the 22 journalists killed in different cases during this period. The atmosphere of the north east is blended with terrorist activities and these incidents from a considerable part of everyday news. So its natural journalist falls prey to the terrorist's bullets and women are no exception.

Thus it is clear that status of women has changed from time to time and women have to fight for their position.

Present day focus of media ethics on women

Misrepresentation of gender or gender discrimination in media is one of the most alarming issues today, which is indicative of the fact that till the resent date, media through showing high concern over women's issues, yet they are proposing no strategic schemes to do away with women subordination. The inherent tendency of media to capitalize women subordination and oppression thereby promoting the profit making mechanisms has been put to question at different corners. Media ethics is a strong intervention in the functioning of media in the said way.

Though in the year 1986, the government of India has passed an act called 'Indecent Representation of Women Prohibition Act and several organizations have adopted several codes or norms in several periods, the fact remains the same. Both print and electronic media continue to exploit women by portraying either stereotyped or the so-called 'modern' or 'vulgar' images of women. Media, be these Commercial Advertisements or Day Soap Operas or the so-called family drama or movie or news are degrading debasing and stereotyping images of women. The news papers and electronic media are saturated with gender-biased coverage. Media are very much influenced by the male dominated trend of patriarchal value set up.

Despite the strides made by women in various sectors including media themselves, women are persistently portrayed by the different forms of media in negative and stereotyped manner and exploited as sexual object and gratifying commodity. 'In everything from advertising, television programming, newspapers and magazines, films and video-games, women and girls are more likely to be shown in the home, performing domestic chores such as laundry or cooking, as sex objects who exist primarily to serve men, as victims who cannot protect themselves and are the natural recipients of beatings, harassment, sexual assault and murder', said Bandana Rana.

Despite the caution taken, media are still lacking in gender sensitivity. As is stated by Ansari, 'media today has become highly money oriented industry and can go to any extent to gain the TRPs, which is a gateway for getting maximum advertisements'. Media sensationalize stories and make it spicy and serve it to the viewers or the readers. News channels are more concerned about their television rating points. Media which are thriving on sensations, add colours to all issues/stories, be it molestation, theft, murder, kidnapping or rape, the result is desensitization to violence, aggression and stereotyping which lead to a stereotyped image of women in the mind of the viewers.

The way advertising media treat women and the exploitation of women both in and by advertising is a frequent deplorable abuse. Women are often treated as objects whose purpose is to satisfy other's appetite for pleasure or for power. Despite, the ethical codes/norms states that media should not portray women as passive or submissive, the current trend of female characters in television serials is also not admirable.

Media need to refrain from presenting women as inferior and exploiting them as sex objects. Women need to be perceived, portrayed and projected as equal authentic human beings in the media. Gender stereotyping should be eliminated through an exertion of will and foresight on the part of the media industry.

Women's Issues and Indian print media

However, only political freedom in terms of universal suffrage did not mean that other women's issues took centre stage. "Interaction between media and women's activists and groups have brought these issues to the forefront and generate public awareness especially about 'less complicated and contentious ones – such as education, healthcare, income-generation, savings and credit and to some extent, legal action.' (Joseph and Sharma) But, these issues still fail to make it to the first page or headlines in the media in a sustained manner.

Women's issues first began to be addressed in India when the State commissioned a report on the status of women to a group of feminist researchers and activists. According to the Report (1974) "Towards Equality" the heterogeneity of Indian experience reveals that there are multiple patriarchies contributing to the existence of multiple feminisms. "Patriarchy "according to Sylvia Walby is "a system of social structure and policies in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (1990), and "Indian society is oppressively patriarchal"(Suma Chitnis:1988).

The Indian print medium's liberal and reformist legacy of the pre-independence period has helped address women's issues. Journalists have striven hard to give women's issues a legitimacy so as to bring them within the ambit of "what makes news." Yet, several media researches conducted over a period of time continue to reveal that most women's issues remain within the confines of inside pages and analyzed only if they have socio-political implications and not independently as women's issues.

The famous Shah Bano case of 1985, which dealt with the issue of maintenance for Muslim women on divorce from her ex-husband, found newspapers focusing on the political, religious and legal aspects rather than from the standpoint of its impact on women.

While it is not correct to say that media is gender-biased, commercialization has definitely changed the orientation of the news selectors. A senior male journalist of a leading English Newspaper points out that when news is weighed against "readership qualities", which are more often than not determined by the "management of newspapers who sit in Ivory towers", it is difficult to "package and sell" serious news.

Despite such observations, there are instances: *The Indian Express, Pune Edition*, in the month of February, 2003, gave a complete supplement of 10 tabloid size pages to address the issue of Post-Rape Trauma which was the outcome of a research project by media students. Also, in quick succession were *Indian Express'* publication (March 18,2003) of an article "An Alternative women's Reservation bill" by Madhu Kishwar, founder editor of *Manushi*, and the *Times of India's*(March 20, 2003) "Shortchanged Again: Not a Woman-Friendly Budget", by Jayati Ghosh, Professor of economics at the renowned Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Coverage of serious women's issues is therefore not entirely a neglected area in English newspapers although the frequency of such reportage leaves much to be desired.

The non-English language press tackles women's issues seriously even while maintaining a socio-cultural balance of the specific geographical area. The socio-cultural dimension of a particular region does have a bearing on covering women's issues, says Sabita Goswami, veteran journalist of Assam and the first woman reporter of the North-East who represented the British Broadcasting Corporation. As a pioneering woman field reporter, Goswami writes in her autobiography ,her journalistic travails of covering the most volatile and turbulent socio-political insurgency ridden situation in Northeast India. In Assam, women's status has, since time immemorial, been on par with men they even share equal property rights and the dowry system does not exist. "Coverage of women's issues has always found prominence in newspapers in the North-east, and editors who are most often men, address these issues seriously," she points out. Interestingly however, she does also note in her autobiography how she was not given a job as a reporter in an English daily in Assam presumably because she was a woman!

While the number of women in media houses has increased, those at the decision making level in media houses are yet to see women in the board-rooms. Would the presence of women in editorial boards of media houses make a difference to perspectives portrayed in the media regarding women issues?

Sandhya Taksale, a leading woman journalist who writes in another Indian language Marathi and a long time Assistant Editor of the Marathi *Saptathik Sakal*, spoke of marketing and advertising pressures on the print media. "Even though there are pressures of the market, with commitment, determination and a distinct ideology, it is not difficult for the press to highlight such serious issues as we continuously do. There is always a way out," adds Taksale.

Like the English press, the regional language press has also been the victim of stiff competition and the increasing pressures of marketing and advertising. Yet they continue to address development issues, including women's issues, with sensitivity and a alacrity. Writing in a language spoken by the people of the region does retain the essence of meanings.

Former Chief Sub-editor of a leading Marathi newspaper, Ms. Varsha Kulkarni regrets that regional and mofussil news items that have a potential for serious handling are often neglected. "Many women's issues do come out of other development stories like water problems, sanitation and environment issues. Reporters must be able to recognize and understand this perspective," says Kulkarni. The news desk also has to be proactive in recognizing multi-dimensional potential in a news item.

While leading English women's magazines often face the criticism of being commercially driven and elitist, women's magazines in Indian languages do take up serious women-oriented development issues although not without a generous mix of cooking, knitting and beauty in the traditional format. Only niche magazines / newsletters like the *Population and Development Newsletter "People"* or *Grassroots* published by the Press Institute of India are exceptions. A private circulation magazine like "*Kaarbharani*" in Marathi addresses issues of empowered women in decision making bodies while another Marathi magazine "*Purush Spandan*" from Mumbai by Men Against Violence and Abuse (MAVA) addresses the need for women empowerment. Although the reach of such magazines is limited, the regional language press is making a difference in promoting women empowerment.

Women and audio-visual media

The audio-visual media has in the recent past had a tremendous growth and reach nationwide. Both, national television channel 'Doordarshan' and All India Radio (AIR) were primarily introduced with the objective to reach out to the people with development oriented messages. Women's issues aimed at empowering women have been consistently addressed by both Doordarshan and AIR through serials, discussions, talks and other audio formats. Interestingly however, just as in the print medium, commercialization and the directive to be financially self-sustaining has had its impact. Sometimes a compromise has to be struck on a serious issue in favor of a sponsored program. So, there arises a general contradiction in purpose versus commercialization. However, Sujata Paranjape, a radio programmer in Pune India, says that the All India Radio's women-oriented programs, especially phone-ins have a tremendous impact on the audience. Satellite television channels have faced the brunt of severe criticism in portraying conflicting images of women through their television soaps. With liberalization in 1990s, the satellite television channels' 24 X 7 sitcoms, soap operas, international programs, crime based programs have invaded the bedrooms like never before. On the one hand Hindi television serials like *Kahani Kissii Roz (Story of a time)* or *Kahaani Ghar Ghar Kii (Story of every home)* had scheming, nasty women like Ramola Sikand and Pallavi, while on the other there was Tulsi, the ideal traditional Indian woman of a soap *Kyunkii Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi (Because the mother-in-law too was once a daughter-in-law)*. Although most of these serials do have extreme portrayals of women, it was interesting to witness how they subtly made statements about a woman's individuality. There

were episodes of *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*, for instance, that showed the woman-woman bonding between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, traditionally considered a difficult relationship. The women of the family supported Tulsi's cause while the new generation men in the serial are also given a dose of how they need to treat the women in their lives as equals. A more recent and currently on show popular soap "Balika Vadhu" (Child-Bride) has been addressing the rather regressive issue of child-marriage (constitutionally illegal), it has gone on to talk about the importance of women education as a key to empowerment. Besides, it also portrays an old-fashioned conservative grand-mother in law transform her attitude to being more progressive and even supporting her grand-daughter in-law (who is a divorced former child bride) in her mission for economic empowerment of women through education and micro-credit economic support tools.

In a culturally diverse society like India, such messages passed on subtly in the comfortable confines of a family life wherein exist diverse viewpoints -- traditional and conservative to the modern -- are attempts at making a statement about women empowerment without losing out on the advertisement revenue. Real life based crime-related programs have also addressed domestic violence and women's safety issues with a message to the society on respect and equality of women and the stance that women need to take in crisis situations. These are positive moves.

Women and advertisements

Advertisements in both print and audio-visual media once again depict conflicting images of the woman. Advertisements in the 1980s saw the woman as a homemaker to her macho man, in the 1990s arrived the sensitive, complete man but the woman was still a sex symbol. The advertisement world has also dared to tread where it dared not before, in creating the sexist, abusive, insensitive and hormone-driven female chauvinist bitch. While there are ads that show career women, young independent girls who know their minds and are no longer the coy girlfriends, who tease boys, advertisements like the fairness creams do continue to occupy airtime. Advertisements that are often timed around events like International Women's Day promote consumer items through a "liberated" career woman. Such advertisements hijack terminology, tones and concepts without actually addressing the larger issue of women empowerment.

In an email interview (October 14, 2013) whether gender sensitizing briefings were held with creative teams of advertising agencies in India, Rahul Jauhari, the National Creative Director of a leading advertising agency, Everest Brand Solutions said, "Usually the briefing to the team is comprehensive. Given the environment today where social media backlash is a reality, brands and agencies are a lot more conscious of the stance they take. I think most responsible agencies and brands are gender sensitive. Most agencies will brief their teams accordingly. Obviously one will expect lady members of the team to be gender sensitive a bit more instinctively and naturally. All in all, I think agency personnel are quite cognizant and appreciate the impact communication can have gender issues. Frankly if you observe, most well entrenched brands will and do toe the line here. Apart from the brand not wanting to upset the consumer, it is pretty much what any responsible person or brand would do." It is worth noticing how gender sensitivity is expected to be 'instinctive' for women team members!

Women and films

While Indian films have mostly projected women in the traditional stereotype, new films, both commercial and serious cinema, have in the recent past, addressed deeper women's issues. Dr. Vaishali Diwaker, a sociologist who has studied gender, nation and cinema, says films in the 1930s and 40s reaffirmed the impact of Brahminical patriarchy on women. Even when some films dealt with radical issues of those times like widow re-marriage or a right to have an opinion in not consummating a marriage, in the end, the films showed the woman as repenting her actions and succumbing to the normative order to fit into the Brahminical patriarchy. Mr. Amol Palekar, noted film-maker and actor, in a personal interaction on this topic said that through his several films, he

has consciously probed, explored and questioned serious women's issues with a strong belief that cinema can make a positive impact. Palekar's films like *Akriet*, *Ankahee*, *Thodasa Roomani Ho Jaye*, *Daayraa*, *Kairee*, *Dhyasparva* or *Anahat* (that explores women's sexuality), have portrayed women in absolutely non-stereotyped roles. Today, mainstream Hindi (Bollywood) cinema too portrays a more independent strong woman, sometimes a career woman balancing home and a career, or a single woman, a divorcee or even an unwed mother, a go-getter asserting her individuality. However, 'item numbers' with raunchy sexist songs do continue to find reel space in the movies, once again contradicting a message it might have intentionally or unintentionally sought to drive home to the audience. India has a rich diverse regional language cinema that also not only portrays women as empowered, but also addresses other women's issues.

Women and theater

While theater has often portrayed women in mythological and historical roles, there have been distinct trends in portraying women's issues effectively through proscenium theatre as well as traditional theatre like puppet theatre. If we take a peek at Marathi theatre, Mr Madhav Vaze, a renowned drama critic and theatre personality, points out that though Marathi theatre initially had a preponderance of male domination in the pre-independence period, during the social reform movement, it addressed women's emancipation issues very effectively. Post independence saw prolific playwrights like the renowned Vijay Tendulkar whose plays extensively dealt with women empowerment. Today, new generation playwrights are addressing women's issues in a starker and bolder manner than ever before. Efforts at increasing awareness about women empowerment can be seen through initiatives like Pune's Friends Puppet Theatre that take up women's issues through puppet shows to reach out to the grassroots. Also, street plays, flash mobs and other folk forms of communication across the country play a key role in communicating women's issues and create awareness among the public.

Women and new media

Although the Internet has opened new vistas offering a plethora of information, its reach in the Indian context is still limited to the urban areas. Interactivity and its inherent characteristic of allowing an individual to navigate through available information according to one's own perceptions, makes the Net an effective communication tool. Perhaps its impact can be judged only when the entire nation has access to broadband Internet connection.

However, Blogging and Tweeting have ushered a new trend in new media communication, particularly for educated urban Indian women who are using this medium to start a discussion or debate on any topic. For instance, a 17-year old blogger was moved by the response she received from fellow bloggers across the globe when she posted a blog on female foeticide in India. Most bloggers admit that when they start interacting with people from diverse backgrounds and countries with diverse opinions via their blogs, they suddenly feel a part of the global community where they can make a difference with what they have to say.

What makes new media and blogging in particular more challenging is the unfettered flow of information and opinions which can promote women empowerment. But, the flip side to it is counter blogging, which can be negative, nasty and egoistic comments resulting in an unwarranted war of words, sometimes probably negating the very purpose of the debate.

Women Empowerment in India

The resurgence of women's issues resulted in U.N. declaration of 1975 as women's year and the period of 1975-1985 as women's decade due to the international recognition of the problems faced by women's all over the world. The appointment of the national committee on the status of women in India in 1972 and the publication of the report highlighted that despite constitutional guarantees the roles, rights and participation of women in all sphere of life were limited. In spite of

constitutional and legal safeguards, the women in India continue to suffer, due to lack of awareness of their rights, illiteracy and oppressive practices and customs. A steep decline is evident in the male- female ratio in India over the last century. It declined from 972 females for every 1000 males in 1901 to 927 per thousand in 1991 and 921:1000 (921 females for 1000 males) according to the census of 2001. The northern states in India show even poorer ratios than the national average. From cradle to grave there is a systematic discrimination against women. Nutrition, health care, education are all withheld or provided grudgingly to daughters. Son preference is expressed in deep rooted cultural mores, blessings and rituals at a marriage, foods prescribed for pregnant women, condolences at the birth of a girl child.

According to Cambridge English Dictionary 'empowerment' means 'to authorize'. In the context of the people, they have to be authorized to have control over their own lives. When applied in the context of development of the particular segment of population, the women have to be 'empowered' to have control over their own lives to better their socio- economic and political conditions. Thus, women empowerment can be interpreted as totality of empowerment including political, social, cultural, and other dimension of human life as also the physical, moral and intellectual. Empowerment of women unlocks the door for modernization of any society. Participation and control over resources of power are critical indicators in the process of development. Women especially in rural areas possess the least proportion of these resources and are therefore dependent. Thus, the question remains that who will empower them and how to empower them. Ideally speaking no one empowers any one and the best way is 'self empowerment'. However, this segment of population is handicapped both structurally and culturally to empower themselves without any outside help and affirmative action by the state and others. At the same time, it's also true that as long as they don't make any effort at self-empowerment, it would be long and difficult task and process for the outsiders to empower them. Instead of remaining passive beneficiaries, they must have to become active partners.

After independence, Government of India took several initiatives, programmes and policies, apart from constitutional and legal safeguards for the empowerment of women in the country.

Constitutional provisions in India

The Indian constitution grants equality to women and also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women to neutralize the cumulative socio-economic, educational and political disadvantages faced by them. The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of the Indian constitution. Article 15 of the Indian constitution forbids discrimination on grounds of caste, religion, sex, race and place of birth, whereas Article 16 ensures equal opportunities of employment. Some of the provisions of Indian constitution safeguarding the women rights include: Equality before law for women (Article 14); State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (1)); State to make special provision in favor of women and children (Article 15 (3)); Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16); State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally, the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); Equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d)); To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities (Article 39 A); State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42); State to promote

with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46); State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health (Article 47); To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e)); Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat (Article 243 D(3)); and not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality (Article 243 T 3) etc.

Legislative provisions in India

The government of India has enacted several women-specific legislations to uphold the constitutional mandate and to protect women against social discrimination, violence and atrocities and also to prevent social evils like child marriages, dowry, rape, practice of sati etc. The 'crime against women' under various legislations of government of India could be broadly classified within two categories: First, the crimes identified under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) which includes Rape (Sec. 376 IPC); Kidnapping & Abduction for different purposes (Sec. 363-373); Homicide for dowry, dowry deaths or their attempts (Sec.302/304-B IPC); Torture, both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A IPC); Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC); Sexual harassment (Sec. 509 IPC) and importation of girls (up to 21 years of age). Secondly, the crimes identified under the Special Laws (SLL) which are though not gender specific, but some do have special provisions to safeguard women and their interests. It includes The Employees State Insurance Act, 1948; The Plantation Labor Act, 1951; The Family Courts Act, 1954; The Special Marriage Act, 1954; The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955; The Hindu Succession Act, 1956; Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956; The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (Amended in 1995); Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961; The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971; The Contract Labor (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1976; The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976; The Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act, 1979; The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983; The Factories (Amendment) Act, 1986; Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986; Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987; and The Marriage (Amendment) Act, 2001 etc.

The constitutional and legislative provisions in India not only grants equality and protection to women, but also empower the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. In India, within the framework of a democratic polity, laws and development policies, programs have been aimed at women's advancement in different spheres of life. From Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards, there has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues in India, from welfare to development of women. India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committed to secure equal rights of women. Important among them is the ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993; The Mexico Plan of Action (1975); the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (1985); the Beijing Declaration as well as the Platform for Action (1995) and the outcome document adopted by the UNGA session on Gender Equality and Development & Peace for the 21st century titled 'Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action ' have been endorsed by India for appropriate follow up.

Government Policy in India

The Government of India had ushered in the new millennium by declaring the year 2001 as 'Women's Empowerment Year' to focus on a vision 'where women are equal partners like men'. The objective of government policy in India has been to bring about development, advancement and empowerment of women in the country through active participation of all stakeholders. The government has attempted to create an environment through positive political, economic and social policies for complete development of women. Government policy has been to promote women's participation in political, social and economic life of the nation and identical access to health care, quality education, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office etc. The objective has been also to strengthen legal system aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and changing the societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women.

Five Year Plans

In the first five year plan, the issue to provide equal status to women in India was focused. In fact the first four five year plans were focused on organizing various welfare activities for women's with priority to women's education. The fifth and sixth plans witnessed a shift in approach from welfare to entire development of women in India. The seventh plan laid stress on efforts to identify and promote beneficiary oriented programmes with the intention of extending direct benefits to women in India. The eighth plan made a significant shift from development to women's empowerment. It recommended 30 percent reservation for women at all levels of government. The Ninth plan ensured that a minimum of 30 percent of benefits or funds flow to women from all ministries and departments of the government. As the result, some positive indicators of women's development in India can be seen in the female literacy rate, which rose from 8 percent in 1947 to 54 percent in the 2001 census. In the same way life expectancy rate rose from 40.6 years in 1861-1971 to 58.1 years during 1981-1991 and to 64.9 years in 2001. The total fertility rate has also come down from 5.97 in 1951-1961 to 3.3 in 1997 and to 2.97 in 2001, signaling a comparatively greater acceptance of family planning and late marriage norms. Women presence in parliament has also increased from 4 percent in 1952 to 8.9 percent in 2001. At the village and district levels, nearly one million women are heads and members of the local self-government institutions.

There is no doubt about the fact that development of women has always been the central focus of planning since Independence. However, a clear vision is needed to remove the obstacles to the path of women's emancipation both from the government and women themselves. Efforts should be directed towards all round development of each and every section of Indian women by giving them their due share.

Education

The Government policy has been to ensure equal access to education for women and girls. Special measures were taken by the government to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate illiteracy, create a gender-sensitive educational system, increase enrolment and retention rates of girls and improve the quality of education to facilitate life-long learning as well as development of occupational, vocational and technical skills of women in India. Reducing the gender gap in secondary and higher education and gender sensitive curriculum is the focus area of government

Health

Women must have access to comprehensive, affordable and quality health care. A holistic approach to women's health which includes both nutrition and health services with special attention to the needs of women and the girl at all stages of the life cycle is another priority of the government. The reduction of infant mortality and maternal mortality, which are sensitive indicators of human development, is a major concern. The government policy reiterates the national demographic goals for Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) set out in the National Population Policy 2000. Measures have been taken by the government to enable women to exercise informed choices regarding their reproductive rights, vulnerability to sexual and health problems together with endemic, infectious and communicable diseases such as malaria, TB and water borne diseases as well as hypertension and cardio-pulmonary diseases. Government is also focused on to tackle the social, developmental and health consequences of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases with a gender perspective. Spread of education, compulsory registration of marriage and special programs like BSY and delaying the age of marriage so that by 2010 child marriages should be eliminated are other focus area of the government. In view of the high risk of malnutrition and disease that women face at all the three critical stages of life cycle viz., infancy and childhood, adolescent and reproductive phase, government is focused on meeting the nutritional needs of women and widespread use of nutrition education to address the issues of intra-household imbalances in nutrition and the special needs of pregnant and lactating women.

Economic

Women comprise the majority of the population below the poverty line in India and given the harsh realities of intra-household and social discrimination, macroeconomic policies and poverty eradication programs is the focus area of the government to address the needs and problems of such women. Government intends to implement the programmes which are women oriented with mobilization of poor women and convergence of services, by offering them a range of economic and social options, along with necessary support measures to enhance their capabilities. In order to enhance women's access to credit for consumption and production, the government has proposed the establishment of new and strengthening of existing micro-credit mechanisms and micro-finance institution so that the outreach of credit is enhanced. Other supportive measures include the adequate flow of credit through extant financial institutions and banks, so that all women below poverty line have easy access to credit and to include women's perspectives in designing and implementing macro-economic and social policies by institutionalizing their participation in such processes. Government also intends to recognize their contribution to socio-economic development as producers and workers in the formal and informal sectors (including home based workers) and initiate appropriate policies related to employment and working conditions.

Legal System

Government intends to make legal and judicial system more responsive and gender sensitive to women's needs, especially in cases of domestic violence and personal assault. It intends to enact new laws and review the existing one to ensure that justice is quick and the punishment meted out to the culprits is commensurate with the severity of the offence. The government policy aims to encourage changes in personal laws such as those related to marriage, divorce, maintenance and guardianship with the full participation of all stakeholders including community and religious leaders so as to eliminate discrimination against women. The evolution of property

rights in a patriarchal system has contributed to the subordinate status of women. The government policy aims to encourage changes in laws relating to ownership of property and inheritance by evolving consensus in order to make them gender just.

Institutional Mechanism

Government of India intends to strengthen the institutional mechanisms which exist at the Central and State levels, through provision of adequate resources, training and advocacy skills to effectively influence macro-policies, legislation, programmes etc. to achieve the empowerment of women in India. Government initiative includes the formation of the National and State Councils to oversee the operationalization of the policy on a regular basis. The National Council to be headed by the Prime Minister and the State Councils by the Chief Ministers with broad in composition having representatives from the concerned Departments/Ministries, National and State Commissions for Women, Social Welfare Boards, representatives of Non-Government Organizations, Women's Organizations, Corporate Sector, Trade Unions, financing institutions, academics, experts and social activists etc. the government also intends to establish National and State Resource Centers on women with mandates for collection and dissemination of information, undertaking research work, conducting surveys, implementing training and awareness generation programs, etc with link up with Women's Studies Centers and other research and academic institutions through suitable information networking systems. The government proposal also includes strengthening of institutions at the grass-roots and district level. Government intends to organize and strengthen women's into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) at the Anganwadi/Village/Town level through its programmes and help them to institutionalize themselves into registered societies and to federate at the Panchyat/Municipal level. These societies will bring about synergistic implementation of all the social and economic development programs by drawing resources made available through Government and Non-Government channels, including banks and financial institutions and by establishing a close Interface with the Panchayats/ Municipalities.

Indian government special initiatives for women

Special initiatives were taken by government of India for building confidence and self dependency across Indian women. Some of them include: (i) National Commission for Women was set-up as a statutory body in January 1992 with specific mandate to study and monitor all matters related to constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary, etc.

(ii) Reservation for Women in Panchayats & Municipalities (Local Self Government): The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act was passed in 1992 to ensure one-third of the total seats for women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas.

(iii) The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000) to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child with the ultimate objective of building up a better future for the girl child.

(iv) National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) to bring advancement, development and empowerment of women in all spheres of life through creation of a more responsive judicial and legal system sensitive to women and mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process. The strengthening and formation of relevant institutional mechanisms

and implementation of international obligations/ commitments and co-operation at the international, regional and sub-regional level was another commitment.

(v) The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005: It provides for more effective protection of the rights of women guaranteed under the constitution who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family and for matters connected herewith or incidental thereto. It provides for immediate and emergent relief to women in situations of violence of any kind in the home.

(vi) Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) was created in January 2006 and is the nodal Ministry of the government of India for the advancement of women and children.

(vii) Implemented ESCAP Project on Improvement of Statistics on Gender Issues during 1994-96 by organizing the first National Workshop on Improvement of Statistics on Gender Issues in 1994 followed by Second National Workshop in 1995, at New Delhi. These workshops laid the foundation of identifying various relevant issues including data requirement, data gaps in the field of gender statistics and indicators on gender issues. Started bringing out the regular Annual publication "Women and Men in India" since 1995.

(viii) National Plan of Action (NPA) was prepared in 1998 for Improvement of Statistics on Gender to bridge the data gaps. In a meeting held at Rome in December 2007 in wake of Global Gender Forum, it was decided by IAEG that India would chair an Advisory Committee for capacity development in Gender Statistics.

In spite of all these provisions, there is growing indecent representation of women or references to women publications, particularly in advertisements which have the effect of denigrating women and are derogatory to women. Though there may be no specific intentions of these advertisements, publications, etc to have an effect of depraving or corrupting persons. Therefore the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act 1986 was legislated to effectively prohibit indecent representation of women through any publication, media or advertisement. The object of this Act is to prevent depiction of the figure, form of body of women in any indecent form which is likely to deprave, corrupt, and injure the public morality or morals.

The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 provides for the regulation of representation of women in the media. It prohibits indecent representation of women through advertisements, books, writings, paintings, figures or in any other manner. Section 4 prohibits the production, sale, hire, distribution, circulation, sending by post any books, pamphlets, slide, film, writing, drawing, painting etc., which contain indecent representation of women in any form. Yet advertisements showing women in an indecent way are aired day in and day out and hardly any action is taken. The National Commission of Women (NCW) has suggested modifications in the Act and elaborates upon ways to strengthen it and make it workable so that the objectives can be achieved. (Mamata Raw 2012).

Women Issues in India: Current Perspective

Women's are the wealth of India and they have contributed in almost every field and made country feel proud at every occasion. They are in front, leading the country, making mile stones and source of inspiration for many. In politics, President Pratibha Patil, Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar, UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Chief Minister of UP Mayawati and Delhi Sheila Dixit, bureaucracy, Nirupama Roy, in socio-cultural field, Medha Patekar, Arundhati Roy, Shobna Narayanan, Lata Mangeskar, Anjolie Ela Menon, Rekha, Meera Nayar and many others, in sports,

Sania Mirja, Saina Nehwal are some of the names at the top. Women's are also playing important role in national growth and economic development through corporate houses. They are not only working at grass root level but participating in decision making. Jyoti Naik, President of Lijjat Papad, Kiran Mazumdar, Chairman and Managing Director of Biocon, Naina Lal Kidwai, Deputy CEO of HSBC, Ranjana Kumar, Chairman of NABARD, Ritu Kumar, CEO of Escolife, Priya Paul, Chairman of Apeejay Park Hotels, Indira Nooyi, Chairperson & CEO of Pepsico, Roshani Nadar, CEO of HCL are some of the pioneers in their respective field. At present women's are contributing and participating in every sphere, politics, business, education, science and technology, media, sports, art and culture etc.

However this is the one face of coin and on the other side of coin is the hard truth of the Indian society. There is systematic discrimination and neglect from early childhood of women's in India, which could be in terms of inadequate nutrition, denial or limited access to education, health and property rights, child labour and domestic violence. The fear of sexual violence has been a powerful factor in restricting women's behavior and sense of freedom. The struggle against violence is actually the struggle against the unequal distribution of power both physical and economic between the sexes. It is important to address the root cause for the subordinate status of women in the Indian society. Hillary Clinton, US secretary of State, addressing the Delhi University students on 20 July 2009 said that "women's roles and rights are as important as any issue we can list. Women are the key of economic growth. It's been established through research". Men should perceive women not as subservient being but as empowered individuals who are equal partners. The issues need to be seen in the context of a patriarchal social framework and a value system based on 'son preference', such as the son being responsible for the carrying forward of the family name, support in old age and for performing the last rites. Further, the practice of dowry and the tag of 'Parayadhan' translate into daughters being considered an economic liability. Women's are not only entitled for survival but also to a life with dignity, grace and equal opportunities so that they can grow to their full potential. There is an urgent need to pay attention to the issues that concern this section of population. The focus should be on poverty reduction, gender justice, health, nutrition, sustained awareness of rights and redressal, eradication of social evils etc.

Political Issues

Women's equality in power sharing and active participation in decision making, including decision making in political process at all levels will ensure the achievement of the goal of women empowerment. Government of India through 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts reserved the one-third of seats in all local elected bodies for women as a sign of political empowerment. Over a million women have actively entered political life in India through the Panchayati Raj institutions. There are many elected women representatives at the village council level. The percentage of women in various levels of political activities in India have risen considerably, however women are still under-represented in governance and decision-making process. Their power is restricted, as it the men who wield all the authority. Their decisions are often over-ruled by the government machinery. It is crucial to train and give real power to these women leaders so that they can catalyst change in their villages regarding women. In recent years there have been explicit moves to increase women's political participation at top level. However, the Women's reservation bill is a sad story as it is repeatedly being scuttled in the parliament. All this shows that the process of gender equality and women's empowerment still has a long way to go.

Economic Issues

Women professionals in India are facing a range of problems. Women have extensive workload with dual responsibility of profession and household and they have to balance household demands with those of their profession. Development policies and programs of the country tend not to view women as integral to the economic development process. This is reflected in the higher investments in women's reproductive rather than their productive roles, mainly in population programs.

Women are engaged in economically productive work and earn incomes though their earnings are generally low. Most of the women work in agricultural sector either as workers, in household farms or as waged workers. It is precisely livelihood in agriculture that has tended to become more volatile and insecure in recent years and women cultivators have therefore been negatively affected. The government's policies for alleviating poverty have failed to produce any desirable results, as women do not receive appropriate wages for their labour. There is also significant amount of unpaid or non-marketed labour within the household. The increase in gender disparity in wages in the urban areas is also quite marked as it results from the employment of women in different and lower paying activities. They are exploited at various levels. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their status can be elevated in society. There is urgent need to improve women's economic status because they are fundamental to the process of economic development of the country.

Social and Cultural Issues

The socio-cultural attributes in society have left a deep mark on women empowerment in India. Parents depend on sons for support in old age and looked to them as potential builders of family prestige and prosperity whereas daughters are considered to destine for others. Women's in India need and expect equal access to education, health, nutrition, employment and productive resources. In fact they are fighting for their rights to decide their own path for development.

Education

The female literacy rate in India is though gradually rising, it's lower than the male. According to the National Survey data (1997), only the states of Kerala and Mizoram have approached universal female literacy rates. The gender gap in education is far greater in northern states of India. Although in states where enrolment rates for girls are higher, many girls drop out of school after a few years of education. Factors such as inhibition on education being imparted by male teachers to girls once they reach puberty, is responsible for drop out. Consequences are that early marriage and child birth pronounced in families of lower socio-economic status.

Health and Nutrition

The socio-cultural practice of women eating last in the family has eminent effect on her health especially if it is a household in low economic status. Most direct effects of poor health and nutrition among women in Indian society are high mortality rates among young children and women of child bearing age. A women health and nutrition status influence her newborn's birth weight and chance of survival. Post neo-natal death is generally caused by infectious diseases. The incidence and severity of most of this disease are affected by controllable factors such as immunization, health care and nutrition. Due to gender biased, these factors are not controlled equally for male and female children. Maternal mortality in India estimated at 437 maternal deaths

per 100,000 live births, result primarily from infection haemorrhage, obstructed labour, abortion and anaemia.

Crimes against Women

Crimes against women are of various natures. It include crimes involving sexual exploitation for economic gains like prostitution & trafficking, adultery, abduction, rape, wrongful confinement, and murder etc on the one hand and crimes related to women's property like dishonest misappropriation, criminal breach of trust, domestic violence, dowry extortion and outraging the modesty of women etc on the other. These crimes are not only injurious and immoral for the women but for the society as a whole.

Violence against women

Violence against women has been clearly defined as a form of discrimination in numerous documents. The World Human Rights Conference in Vienna, first recognised gender- based violence as a human rights violation in 1993. In the same year, *United Nations* declaration, 1993, defined *violence against women* as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to a woman, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life”. (Cited by Gomez, 1996)

Radhika Coomaraswamy identifies different kinds of violence against women, in the United Nation’s special report, 1995, on *Violence Against Women* ;

a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non spousal violence and violence related to exploitation.

b) Physical sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution.

c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the state, wherever it occurs. This definition added ‘violence perpetrated or condoned by the State’, to the definition by United Nations in 1993.

Coomaraswamy (1992) points out that women are vulnerable to various forms of violent treatment for several reasons, all based on gender.

1) Because of being female, a woman is subject to rape, female circumcision/genital mutilation, female infanticide and sex related crimes. This reason relates to society’s construction of female sexuality and its role in social hierarchy.

2) Because of her relationship to a man, a woman is vulnerable to domestic violence, dowry murder, *sati*. This reason relates to society’s concept of a woman as a property and dependent of the male protector, father, husband, son, etc.

3) Because of the social group to which she belongs, in times of war, riots. Or ethnic, caste, or class violence, a woman may be raped and brutalised as a means of humiliating the community to which she belongs. This also relates to male perception of female sexuality and women as the property of men.

Combining these types of abuse with the concept of hierarchical gender relations, a useful way to view gender violence is by identifying where the violence towards women occurs. Essentially, violence happens in three contexts - the family, the community and the state and at

each point key social institutions fulfil critical and interactive functions in defining legitimating and maintaining the violence.

1) The family socialises its members to accept hierarchical relations expressed in unequal division of labour between the sexes and power over the allocation of resources.

2) The community (i.e., social, economic, religious, and cultural institutions) provides the mechanisms for perpetuating male control over women's sexuality, mobility and labour.

3) The state legitimises the proprietary rights of men over women, providing a legal basis to the family and the community to perpetuate these relations. The state does this through the enactment of discriminatory application of the law.

Margaret Schuler has divided gender violence into four major categories;

1) Overt physical abuse (battering sexual assault, at home and in the work place)

2) Psychological abuse (confinement, forced marriage)

3) Deprivation of resources for physical and psychological well being (health/nutrition, education, means of livelihood)

4) Commodification of women (trafficking, prostitution)

Adriana Gomez has also talked about two basic forms of violence, that is; structural and direct. Structural violence arises from the dominant political, economic and social systems, in so far as they block access to the means of survival for large number of people; for example, economic models based on the super-exploitation of thousands for the benefit of a few, extreme poverty in opposition to ostentatious wealth, and repression and discrimination against those who diverge from given norms.

Structural violence according to her is the basis of direct violence, because it influences the socialisation which causes individuals to accept or inflict suffering, according to the social function they fulfil. Open or direct violence is exercised through aggression, arms or physical force. (Larrain and Rodrigue, 1993)

The Fourth Conference of Women, 1995 has defined violence against women as a physical act of aggression of one individual or group against another or others. *Violence against women* is any act of gender-based violence which result in, physical, sexual or arbitrary deprivation of liberty in public or private life and violation of human rights of women in violation of human rights of women in situations of armed conflicts. (Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995 Country Report).

Violence is an act carried out with the intention or perceived intention of physically hurting another person (Gelles and Straus, 1979).

Gender Violence is defined as "any act involving use of force or coercion with an intent of perpetuating promoting hierarchical gender relations". (APWLD, 1990, Schuler, 1992)

Adding gender dimension to that definition amplifies it to include violent acts perpetrated on women because they are women. With this addition, the definition is no longer simple or obvious. Understanding the phenomenon of gender violence requires an analysis of the patterns of violence directed towards women and the underlying mechanisms that permit the emergence and perpetuation of these patterns.

Liz Kelly (1998), *Surviving Sexual Polity* has defined violence as "any physical, visual, verbal or sexual act that is experienced by the woman or girl at the time or later as a threat, invasion or assault, that has the effect of hurting her or degrading her and/or takes away her ability to contest an intimate contact".

In Indian society, it is widely accepted that within the family the man is the master and women is the inferior and subordinate partner and societal pressure force women to maintain this status quo. Wife beating is the most prevalent form of violence against women in the Indian society and it is viewed as a general problem of domestic discord. According to National Crime Report Bureau, 1.5 lakh crimes against women are registered annually out of which nearly 50,000 are related to domestic violence in their homes.

Female Infanticide and Feticide

This is playing a significant role in lop sided sex ratio in India. Poor families in certain regions of the country sometimes resort to killing baby girls at birth, to avoid an unwanted burden on family resources. Sex selective abortion has also been common in the country. It's dangerous to abort the foetus after 18 weeks of pregnancy and quiet harmful for mother too at such a late stage. Various techniques of sex determination and sex pre-selection have been discovered during the last fifteen years, such as sonography, fetoscopy, needling, chorion biopsy and the most popular amniocentesis have increasingly become household names in India. Amniocentesis technique is used in the small town and also in some cities of states like Gujrat, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Tamilnadu, Rajasthan etc. Mumbai and Delhi are also the major center for sex determination and sex pre-selection tests

.Dowry

Dowry remains the major reason for discrimination and injustice towards women in India. When dowry demands are not met, it precipitates into serious consequence for the young bride. The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 marks the first attempt by the Government of India to recognize dowry as a social evil and to curb its practice. The act was modified with the Dowry Prohibition Amendment Act of 1984, which has again been modified with Dowry Prohibition Bill 1986. Women's organization have played key role in this process of change. The 1961 Act define dowry and makes the practice of dowry- giving and taking, a punishable offence. However, i t is ridiculous to see that even among highly educated sections, the articles of dowry are proudly exhibited in the marriage as a status symbol. The dowry abuse is increasing in India. The most severe is 'bride burning', the burning of women whose dowries were not considered sufficient by their husband or in-laws. Most of these incidents are reported as accidental burns in the kitchen or are disguised as suicide. Dowry is one of those social evils that no educated woman will own up with pride, still many are adhering to it. Practices of dowry tend to subordinate women in the society. Women should be more economically empowered and should be educated properly regarding the various legal provisions such as Section 498A CrPC, protection from domestic violence etc., only then this evil menace could possibly be eradicated from Indian social system.

Rape

Rape is the fastest growing crime in India compared to murder, robbery and kidnapping. According to the report of National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), every 60 minutes, two women are raped in this country. A total of 20,737 cases of rape were reported in the year 2007, registering a 7.2 percent increase over the previous year. According to NCRB, 19,348 rape cases were reported in the year 2006. The biggest number of such crimes was reported from Madhya Pradesh. One-quarter of the victims were minors, 75 percent of culprits were known to victims and 10 percent were relatives. These figures are underestimations as many incidents go unreported due to fear of stigma and non awareness of rights. There are also the countless cases of eve teasing, indecent gazes, pinching, brushes and comments that infringe upon the rights of women, especially in overcrowded spaces and public transport buses and trains. Major cities in the country have become the hub of misdemeanour because of technological reach. Mobile, cyber café, car, beach, mall, restaurant, hotel have become popular apparatus for the criminals. What precipitates the problem is that the incidents of rape, sexual molestation and harassment have been followed by dubious

attempts by perpetrators and law enforcers to arm-twist the course of justice. There is a need for a drastic change in attitudes and mindsets towards such incidents. Poor investigations, harsh cross examination of victims, senseless adjournment of cases and faulty assessment of evidence and furnishing of evidence by victims in presence of culprits are areas that need reforms.

In the year 2007 for which the latest data is available from the National Crime Records Bureau, seven of the ten fastest rising crimes in India were those against women. While the incidence of all cognizable crimes under the Indian Penal code rose by under 5 percent over the previous year, dowry deaths registered an increase of 15 percent, cruelty by husband and relatives 14 percent, kidnapping and abduction of females 13 percent, importation of girls 12 percent and sexual harassment by 11 percent. Rape and molestation cases grew by a more modest 6-7 percent, but even that was higher than the average rate. Despite the increasing cases of crime against women, they would appear to be not in priority list of the investigating agencies. The NCRB data shows that investigation starts within the same year in only one out of 10 sexual harassment cases and only two out of ten cases of molestation or cruelty by husband and relatives. Similarly, only three out of ten rapes and dowry deaths are investigated within the same year. A comparative study of the data available about these crimes suggest that there were rise in the crimes against women in 2008 compared to the previous year. While a total of 1,012 cases were registered for kidnap of women in 2007, the number went up to 1,494 in 2008. Similarly, the number of incidents related to dowry death rose from 1,226 in 2007 to 1,233 in 2008. Similarly, cases of atrocities perpetrated for dowry rose to 2,230 in 2008 from 1,493 in 2007. Cases related to eve-teasing and molestation shot up to 188 during 2008, 20 more than those recorded in the previous year. Also incidents related to kidnapping of women increased from 1,012 in 2007 to 1,494 in 2008. The fact remains that there is sufficient information about crime against women that calls for appropriate remedial actions.

Media Coverage of Women Issues

Media implicitly rank the importance of the public issues according to the amount of press coverage devoted to an issue. Lack of appropriate media coverage of an issue leads to the implication that the topic is not important. Public awareness is significantly lessened if a story is not reported. Violence against women is a global pandemic and the consequences of media ignorance and bias are horrific. In India, the amount of coverage in mainstream media is inversely proportional to the actual prevalence of the kinds of violence and gives a false impression. Most disturbing is the disproportionate coverage of sensationalized violence. Invariably, rape stories get far more coverage than domestic violence stories. In all likelihood, this is because rape stories usually focus on one individual woman. If she is attractive, she is a very marketable victim. It is no accident that rape is a frequent theme in pornography. The sexual brutalization of women is a highly marketable business and a profitable story for the news media. For example the Indian media, be it press or the broadcasters, choose to highlight the rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl rather than to report about the success of women in recent panchayat elections in the country. The media have no time to show the actual problems of real India at the grass root level, its culture, traditions, faiths and beliefs and so on. They usually show only those handpicked stories which sells and increase their TRPs. (Juluri, V. (2013, March 19).

Even the amount of media coverage women get overall is much less than men do. Men are provided with a larger number of opportunities to present their viewpoints and shown in diverse roles in all areas like administration, law, business, science and technology. While representation of women varies from negligible to total exclusions and are interviewed and talked about only in

certain accepted professions such as educationists or doctors. If they are interviewed for achieving success in a 'male' profession, then it often goes to great pains to point out her 'feminist' (ibid).

Indian media needs to be sensitized to gender issues. It should play proactive role in inculcating gender sensitivity in the country and should ensure that women are not depicted in poor light. It should devote special slots for crimes against women in India and discuss all proactive aspects. The challenge before media is to move beyond clubbing what happens to women with routine crime briefs, on the one hand, and sensational stories, on the other. Media should take a proactive role in creating public awareness on the rights and privileges of women. Constitutional and legal rights should also be advertised and discussed regularly. The latest rulings and judgments are discussed so that the public are made aware of these rulings. Press Council should be given more teeth so that they could intervene effectively to counteract objectionable publications. There must be mechanisms to sensitize Censor Boards and bring about a working dialogue between members of the Censor Board and citizens groups (Nair, G. 2013, Feb 21).

This is the time to rethink and revisit the country's mass media policy. There are many issues which should be discussed threadbare to have an unbiased and healthy media policy in the country. But before that materializes, the stalwarts of Indian mass media should exercise prudence and restraint, show the truth, unadulterated, undoctored and unbiased news and views, unbiased analysis and non-sensationalization of events or incidences whether big or small (Uberoi, P. (2006).

Press, the fourth estate of democracy, has to maintain a balance between good reporting and accountability. Journalists are expected to maintain a standard of neutrality, objectivity but not sans sensitivity. In an era of paid news, media often become agents of propaganda. With electronic media entering the scene, our living rooms are flooded with 24 hours entertainment and news channels. Nothing escapes the gaze of media. While electronic media is a manifestation of the fact that we are living in the information society, there are some pertinent concerns a viewer needs to raise (Parvin Sultana, 2014).

With regard to news channels, the first concern must be whether print and electronic media is able to manage the required standards that are set for good journalism. How do media report on sensitive issues like sexual violence against women, child sexual abuse? Over a period of time the competition of TRPs (Television Rating Points) paved the way for unnecessary sensitization of news. The line between real news and scripted dramatic serials has become blurred. People became mere stories. While print media tried to maintain the code of conduct, electronic media often overstepped its domain. A number of incidents made one rethink where to draw the line between journalistic ethics and sheer sensationalism. While covering the Aarushi-Hemraj double murder case of 2008, news channels showed lewd animated pictures of the 14 year old girl along with the other victim in indecent postures. This is not an isolated incident. When a tragic incident of a video doing rounds in one of India's premier educational institution took place, media continued to be insensitive. Along with the students involved, media continued harassing the other students by constantly intruding their academic space. Fingers were also pointed at students coming from particular states of the country. The same media was lukewarm towards the institution's struggle for getting their democratic elections back (ibid).

Another shocking incident was a young girl being molested on a busy highway in Guwahati by a number of miscreants in June, 2012 and this was being shown through live telecast by a local private news channel. While a young girl was being pushed and pulled in every direction, the news channel was basking in the glory of being able to provide a live telecast. What happened to the journalist's duty as a concerned human being to intervene and immediately inform the police? Are we pushing notions of a neutral, objective bystander too far? Live telecast of molestation seems like

a precedent to live telecast of more serious crimes. Similar behaviour was witnessed during the December, 2012 gang rape case in Delhi where news channels as well as some newspapers were more obsessed with the identity of the victim and her relationship with her male companion as opposed to the crime (Chaudhuri, A. 2012).

In another recent incident, when a girl was attacked by her class mate in a premiere university, while the entire country expressed shock and concern, a leading Hindi newspaper *Dainik Bhaskar* was more caught up in discovering the nuances of the relationship between the girl and the boy. Instead of initiating a debate on the need to rethink romantic relationships, the paper indulged in character assassination of the girl who was fighting for her life. Compelled by the demand of market, this newspaper seemed untouched by the ongoing debates of how movies like "*Ranjhnaa*" (2013) tend to justify the aggressive behaviour of a jilted lover. Another shameful incident is the kind of reporting that is doing rounds on the recent case of gang rape in Mumbai. In case of criminal assault on women, media is expected to maintain a level of secrecy. This is to save survivors of such assault from further harassment. In this case while some newspapers initially gave out details regarding the woman's workplace, they immediately removed it. But a leading daily like The Times of India sent its reporter to the building where the woman lived to give an exclusive report on the reaction of her neighbours and friends. It also gave details about the way this heinous crime was perpetrated. Other papers like the Hindustan Times, Indian Express, The Hindu only provided details given by the hospital. This is a gross violation of journalistic ethics, and a threat to women who face such crimes.(ibid)

This recurring insensitivity on the part of media raises some pertinent concerns about whether news media is also commercialised and gendered. Even news items are dovetailed for a dominantly male audience. News business is rapidly driven by hard news. Entrusted with the crucial responsibility of keeping people well informed on the kind of atrocities happening around the country, journalists of both print and electronic media need to be extra careful (ibid).

Any talk of the role of media cannot bypass a discussion on movies and TV serials which are an important source of entertainment. With increasing number of cases of violence against women, social scientists, and psychologists tried to understand if there is any relationship between representation of women in media and increasing violence on them. While there may not be any direct causal relationship, people who are exposed to a particular degrading portrayal of women are found to be more acceptable of the violence meted out to them. Most mainstream movies and TV serials portray women in two ways - as meek, docile and vulnerable, in constant need of protection of a male or as cunning and calculative. Family and politics at home seem to be central to these women's existence. Very few TV serials or movies take up issues that a working woman faces in her life. How we see a woman and her relationships on the TV screen is crucial in Indian society. In a conservative social set up, families do not give the space to engage on issues of relationship. If movies like "*Ranjhnaa*" (2013) romanticize stalking to such an extent that male aggression comes to be justified as true love, women are denied agency even in such an intimate relationship. It is only when popular culture questions these deep rooted biases; women will be able to deal with society on an equal footing as men (Parvin Sultana, 2014).

Government Media Policy

The government in India is striving for removing demeaning, degrading and negative conventional stereotypical images of women and violence against women in media. The government attempt is to involve private sector partners and media networks at all levels to ensure equal access for women in the area of information and communication. The government of India policy is to encourage media to develop codes of conduct, professional guidelines and other self

regulatory mechanisms to remove gender stereotypes and promote balanced portrayals of women and men.

Degradation of women in media

Media, both the traditional and modern, is in no where exception regarding the portrayal of women. Like television, radio, old folk stories, films, and print media perpetuate gendered role portrayals. Many a time print media are guilty of sexism, distortion of image of women, and propagation of gender stereotypes as mothers, housewives, dependent, passive recipient etc. the prominent image in most of the popular print media is that of the self-sacrificing housewife. Women are seldom shown as working women-capable professionals, labourers, farmers in those media.

The portrayal of women in the print media is also quite degrading more often than not depicting her as a commercial commodity. By reinforcing gender stereotypes and constantly glorifying motherhood and subservient wifedom the print make it difficult for women to break out these prescribed roles, norms and behaviour patterns. In spite of the boom in electronic media, high tech information explosion, the traditional print media remain unvanquished. It carries credibility, weight and still moulds the opinion of many. Clearly the media do not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world.

The daily newspapers rarely put women's news relating to their development. Rather they prefer reporting on rape, atrocities, crime, sexual harassment and abuse of women prominently in their columns. Besides Sunday or Saturday special glossy editions on women's fashion, beauty, leisure and other luxurious news items with erotic photographs are issued from time to time by daily newspapers. If a woman wins a beauty contest, magazines and newspapers in particular give much importance to the news and even take her photographs on front page but if a woman gets Nobel Prize she does not get so much coverage. Even the photos of sport stars are also provided in a manner that depicts their body attraction.¹

Popular newspapers with large circulations many times flash vulgar and obscene glossy photographs with wide coverage of (three days after) the cruel incident of Laxmi Orang, happened on 24th Nov, 2007 in Guwahati, may be mentioned here². This bias evident, how sensational are print media too. The less moral or responsible media are the more sensational, the more monetary/profitable, they become. The underlying principle of today's media is inclined towards making more money by creating more sensationalism.

Indian magazines contain primarily and predominantly volumes of advertisements and sexist writings. Vast majority of Indian magazines are known for the portrayal of women as sex objects, consumers and the like. Even women magazines, like Femina, Women's Era, and Eve's Weekly foster traditional patterns of female subordination in modern trappings.

Movies are another particular aspect of audio-visual media which do have an overdose of sex. Sex and violence are the two usual targets for anyone to take on the film industry. Keeping the moral sense in vain, like advertisements, in movies too women are often depicted as sexual objects either for pleasure or for profit. The film industry is likely to be running on the principle that 'the less you concern ethics, the more you profitable'.

Thus, women image has gone through several unjust projections at the hands of the media. Throughout times women have been portrayed in the media as victims, subservient, nurturing, sacrificing and objectified sexualised beings. Images of women as objects and as the recipients of aggressive behaviour do cause a desensitization of violence.

¹ For example, the Dainik Jugasankha (a local daily, Silchar) pictorial depiction of Serena Williams, a popular tennis star, on 29th Jan, 2010.

² The Telegraph, Guwahati, dated 27th Nov. 2007

It is true indeed that while the functioning and the sustenance of the media depend highly upon marketing agencies or forces, to go against the compulsions created by these forces is tough for media. Because of the control exercised by the market, there is possible extinction of those forms and contents of media which are unable to meet the criterion of market forces even when they are of undoubted relevance towards creation of a better society. And secondly, there is possible expansion of those parts of media which clearly harm the general societal interest.

Thus the interplay of market and media fixes the route for media functioning. This sort of market mechanism is now-a-days being projected as a nearly flawless mechanism not only for establishing an economic equilibrium but even for deciding the social issues.

Globalisation is one of the most relevant factors which have caused changes in both media-inside and the relation between media and market. The process of globalisation enabled to have the larger impact upon people. As the market is becoming worldwide, survival in the new global business market calls for increased competition and in order to face increased competition, the use of technology has been maximised.

As the tentacles of globalisation have trespassed into electronic media, there is an increase in information flows, a technological change with the advent of fibre optic communications, satellites, and increased availability of worldwide web. The technological base of the media is also causing changes in the media-market relation. The new technology based on satellites, computes etc. not only make the storage, processing and transmission of information much easier, but it does so at a much reduced cost. Because of such cost reduction, information management or media are now attracting more attention as a commercial activity, relegating many of its non-commercial dimensions to the background.

The media functioning viewed as economic activities which disseminate information has also undergone radical changes causing a much larger role of the market forces in its affairs. The most fundamental aspect of this change in the media character is that-earlier information was viewed as a source of knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment, but in today's world, besides these, information is a source of 'power'- an institution which has more information about others is in a position to maneuver and manipulate and hence, more powerful. This power implication of information is what lends it a character of a commodity, commanding a price which may or may not reflect its value.

Another important dimension of information as a commodity is that disinformation is also a commodity and media are a vehicle for both. Just as information makes an individual or organisation potentially more powerful, by being innocently fed with disinformation it can become vulnerable. Advertising is a burning example, where persistent disinformation is able to produce a distorted preference pattern among the consumers, serving the interest of the giant producers. Indeed producers today need not produce what the consumers want, but the consumer can be made to want what the producers produce. Such being the power of information and disinformation; it is very natural that the entire media space is under pressure and it thus yields easily to the market forces. Space is allocated to those messages which are paid for, other messages how so ever desirable, are either altogether neglected or are reluctantly given a little space, just to avoid the criticism that media are wholly a commercial activity.

The process of globalisation has severe implications for the regulation of the media as electronic methods of communication proliferate state regulation is becoming increasingly difficult. So in the globalised media anything (violence, pornography) goes to increase coverage and profit. Thus dehumanising or devaluing women through media content has become natural. As Margaret Gallagher has pointed out that 'with the globalisation of markets, economic affairs are becoming more and more detached from social concerns. As multimedia conglomerates markets, public authorities are less and less able to impose/maintain controls to the detriment of the most vulnerable groups in society. With media regulation becoming more and more difficult to enforce,

and with the media increasingly driven by the quest for huge financial profit, the commodification of women in media content is likely to intensify". (Gallagher)

Moreover, the dominant trend of our society is also one of the relevant factors. Our society is grounded on patriarchy, where women are supposed to enjoy the secondary status and bear all types of oppressions. As every society has its own norms and values, the patriarchal society is also having its own standards and it always tries to impose its norms and value to all its disseminations including the media. Media is just a reflection of the existing social structures. The reporters, the journalists, producers, editors and other associates of the media are part and parcel of the society. Media have now become a tool to serve the system itself. The main purpose of the media is to serve the larger society by providing information, education and entertainment, whereas media are capitalising women's distorted images for sustaining its own survival in the competitive world. It sustains the patriarchal values in order to serve a particular section of society.

What is concern is that with the growth of people's awareness about the increasing tendency of commercialization of media, people's reliability on media is going downward. So, media should overcome the situation and follow the ethical guidelines because media can survive in the long run by making compromises with morality, honesty and integrity.

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