

A CRITICAL REVIEW: PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN MASS MEDIA

Naaz Bano^{*1}, Rajesh Dahiya^{*2}, Ekta Melkani^{*3}

^{*1}Ph.D Scholar, Department of extension education and communication management, CCS HAU, Hisar,

^{*2}Assistant Professor Department of extension education and communication management, CCS HAU, Hisar,

^{*3}Ph.D Scholar, Department of family resource management, CCS HAU, Hisar

^{*1}E-mail id.- naazbano1995@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The role of Mass Media's towards women is becoming the rising concern of the many feminist writers, principally regarding the portrayal, performance and participation of women. Because diverse circumstances regarding to the mass media's role towards representing the image of the women have unlocked a new viewpoint by leaps and bounds to think specifically about it. There are a range of criticisms raised by the feminists. According to the different feminist's writers such as Shulamith Firestone, Simon de Beauvoir, Kate Millet, mass media is portraying stereotype pictures of women as they are submissive, inferior and subordinate and only the home maker lack of all rights of decision making. In India there are different feminist writers such as Arundhati Roy, Kamla Bhasin, Anita Desai, Ritu Menon and Kiran Prasad who have criticized the role of mass media towards women issues and portraying them in inappropriate way. They have focused on the point that as Indian society is male dominated and this dominance can be clearly distinguished all over the place and unfortunately Indian mass media is not the exception to that.

Key words: Women, Feminism, Participation, Social empowerment, Mass Media.

I. INTRODUCTION

The term media is widely used as a short hand for 'Mass Media'. Practically, the media are those technological agencies which are occupied in the processing, selection, creation and circulation of information among the community and populace. As a reasonable connotation, the mass media deal with the day to day problems of the country and particularly of the common people. It adds towards the appearance of mass culture and mass society. Indian mass media, like every advanced and modern country, consists of the electronic media and print media which are composed of the Television, Film, Radio, Publication, Press and Advertising.

Women's portrayal, participation and performance in mass media these are the three most significant dimensions of study of modern time, particularly for the feminists. Because for the development and empowerment and of the women segment, it is very essential to give them appropriate environment where they can increase their voices against the prevalent disparities and the gender-gap which they perceive in our patriarchal or male dominated communities. By improving the women's status in all aspects, is regarded as the only approach to eliminate gender gap and achieve enhanced quality of life for the women. For this purpose, communication can be considered as very important way and mass media can play a noteworthy role in shaping attitudes, perception, social values, behavior and norms. It has been broadly recognized that mass media can take part in playing substantial role in motivating, promoting, encouraging and disseminating information amongst the societies and are regarded as the key performers in the economic, political and social empowerment and development of women. Mass media can give importance to the coverage regarding issues and problems faced by women, these initiatives can give women a space to speak about their lawful rights, freedoms and most notably media can present a democratic atmosphere where women can take part and stand for their womanhood and in this way they will be portrayed positively.

A positive representation of women in media is crucial to maintain the real self-respect and status of women in society which will help in minimizing the gap and disparities among men and women. But if media also turn out to be male dominated or take part in playing the role as a mere driving force to forward this custom then the entire situation will be in opposition to the women where their welfare, participation, development and empowerment will not be promising. Keeping in mind the role of mass media in the development and empowerment of women. This review paper has following specific objectives:

1. To critically review the role of mass media in constructing the images of women.

2. To critically review the type of coverage by different types of mass media regarding the issues and problems of women.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kiran Prasad (2005) in her book, Women and media-challenging feminist discourse, writes that without the welfare of the women the progress of the society is not achievable. Women should be given the democratic freedom where they can talk about their issues. For this the role of mass media can be regarded as the greatest way through which women can convey their voices and thoughts to the mass. So, media must play an important role to empower as well as develop of the women by focusing on their issues and most significantly they should portray women as superior and stronger not like the less respected and inferior members of the society. Because of the detachment between the women and mass media women deprived of their right to information and keep themselves in the dark.

Addressing the Press council of India at the inauguration session of National Press Day, (2008) Justice G.N.Ray said that the most noteworthy movement will be the movement for the liberation of women. There must be respect for the women in all aspects of life; they should be given equal payment for equal work, there should be no gender discrimination. According to him the main significant medium through which the problems of women can be acknowledged is the mass media. Both the electronic and print media should spot the gender biasness, violence against women.

Ranu (2011) attempted to explore the struggle for transformation and bridging gap between social identities of women and men. The relationship between women and media has a definite structure where women are intended as an object. She also stated that the role of women in media decision making policies is reflected in the deprived representation of women's issues and apprehensions.

Das (2012) examined print news discourses on an act of violence perpetrated on women in India, which induced a nation-wide non-violent remonstrations, popularly known as "The Pink Chaddi" Campaign, 2009. By using modern computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) called Leximancer v3.5, the research considered online editions of a number of the top English national and local daily newspapers for analysis and after analysis he suggested Global media institutions must essentially purify their own ideologies, priorities and policies, so that they can extrinsically set a rectification, principally within societies. The greater part of the global media 7 organizations are owned & run mainly by men. Women working in the media organization and institutions do have limited freedom and responsibility to take. It is very imperative that the media should be free from the patriarchal mind set and start fascinating feminist perspective into serious considerations, so that mass media can communicate healthy outlook towards femininity in the community.

Nautiyal and Dabral (2012) analyzed hindi dailies like Dainik Jagran and Amar Ujala and observed that the total percentage of included area for women's concerns and problems is about 0.64 percent and 0.66 percent respectively. This revealed that the space covered to women's subjects was very less. From the study it was concluded that only the daily events related to women are reported by the newspapers while women's issues could not get the adequate autonomy in discussions and analysis. Researchers also noticed that women got less preference in readers mind i.e. letters to editor. Only a small number of useful portions or feature articles are published for women. Some articles updating women about their legal rights, or about their potential for political activity. The findings of the study gave an idea that the newspapers do not present an impartial picture of women's miscellaneous lives. The "participation, access and portrayal of women in the mass media and its impact on the empowerment and progression of women is a major concern that needs to be taken care of.

Roy (2012) stated that nowadays globalization has left profound impact upon the India. With the passing of time profound changes in social, economic, cultural and political arena has taken place. According to the author the companies are so busy in competition and using the bodies and faces of beautiful women to popularize their brands and products. These type of producers always producing masses of products everyday and there is competitive spirit everywhere to become the best seller. For this purpose they are using women in a cheap way whether necessary or not. For example, producers are using women in the advertisements of man's underwear, cigarette, man's shaving cream etc. They are portraying women incorrectly to fulfill their own purpose.

Kaur (2013) suggested that mass media needs to be a lot more sensitive regarding the coverage of crime against women and general public requires to be more verbal and conscious to tackle these cases in more

efficient manner. Primary data of the study highlighted that mass media representation of rape cases was often sensational and not have the sensitive approach. The rationale behind sensational coverage includes hunger for popularity, lack of sensitive training to compact with such type of issues and lack of apprehension for one who is raped.

Jonjua (2014) analyzed different types of newspapers for the stories published concerning to women and noticed that these were highly covered by Hindustan Times (64), followed by Times of India (62), The Hindu (45) and The Indian Express (44). The cases with respect to female feticide and infanticide were ignored and insufficiently covered as compared to the cases of gang rape, rape, social abuse and dowry deaths. All the four national dailies normally did not covered stories about crime done by women. These newspapers published stories mainly about suicide, murder, fraud and terrorist activities. Most important rationale behind the crimes of suicides and murders by middle aged group women generally due to family problems and extra marital affairs.

Nwaolikpe (2014) conducted a study and found that the portray of women in media represented undermine the status of women and negatively representation limits the women to areas traditionally intended for them, and enforcing gender discrimination & gender stereotype. Further Findings suggested that media stakeholders should come up with constructive policy on the portrayal of photographic descriptions of women in the mass media.

Sahu and Shah (2015) concluded from a study on Agenda Setting Role of Hindi Dailies (Dainik Jagran and Amar Ujala) on Women's issues and in the comparative analysis found that although women problems had covered by selected newspapers but most of the time they are negative issues like domestic violence against women, and cases of dowry deaths. The newspapers had mainly paying attention upon covering sensational issues instead of giving a lot more importance to women empowerment and further researcher reported that both the newspapers did not confer adequate importance to the s issues which are directly related to women.

III. CONCLUSION

Thus it can be concluded that on the whole result of the portrayal of women in media is to reinforce rather than lessen stereo types and prejudices. The mass media in India has not made sufficient attempts to discuss about the serious issues related to women and to contribute in preparing women to play their lawful and equal role in society. We have in some way taken the whole range of stories, dialogues and representation of women as mode of our life or as if of no significances. Therefore the most important objectives of media should be to create the awareness about the programmes related to the improvement of women's status that they must free themselves to assert as human beings, socially, morally, co-equal and politically with men. There must be encouraging portrayal of women making a note of of their role in all aspects of life. To revolutionize this condition, it is needed to monitor the media and point out the merits and demerits constantly.

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