

Impact of Mass Media on Rural Women – A Sociological Study

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Abstract – India is a village nation where poverty rates are high. The rural women are in a position of greatest burden. Roughly 81 per cent of the nation's estimated female population lives in rural areas. Even after 70 years of independence, in fact, women continue to be marginalized with an unequal financial and political status. Its productive and regenerative sections remain largely imperceptible. Despite constitutional recognition of equal rights and benefits, there is no special case for Indian women in those worlds. In this way the importance of gender orientation and the affirmation of women has become an imperative topic of open deliberation in India's formative projects, particularly in the last few decades.

Keywords: Women, India, Mass Media, Print Media.

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INTRODUCTION

India is a developing country. Therefore, the importance of mass media in this country needs no exaggeration. Today media consciousness is in fact developing. During last few decades industrialization and scientific discoveries have changed to some extent the life style. Yet many people remain unaffected from it and continued to survive by observing same old method of living. However, the life style quit recently has once again started showing sign of change on account of the growing impact of mass media which is providing rapid transmission of information (Sharma, 1995). Media could help promote improved levels of communication, and shared information that enables sustainable development on a global scale. In sum, a sustainable society must be an informed community. Media is the fourth pillar of democracy as immense power to act as the watch dog of the society. It is the mirror of the society and reflects of happenings in the society. It can influence the mass and the convergence media has further enhanced its potential as a tool of creating public opinion and value (Sharda, 2014). Mass media however, not only reflects the value of our society, but also influence them. In a democratic society mass communication conveys information and opinion that ultimately enable citizens to make decision. That mass media do make an impact has been demonstrated time and again. The significant of the control not only of the ownership of mass media but also of their content is substantiated the contrast between totalitarian and democratic society (Verma, 2006).

India is still a country of rural base. Nearly 76 per cent of its population lives in the village, half of country's national income is derived from agriculture and its allied activities. It provides livelihood to about three fourths of the population. But at the same time, illiteracy in the village is very high. A large number of rural folk are living below the poverty line. The reason is that they don't know about their basic rights and duties. They are not aware of change that has taken place in the country for their benefit. They are still ill-informed and ignorant. They need information for their development. Although, we all know the potential of rural sector we have not given due importance to rural information service. Reason for this may be many. But now the time has come when we can no longer ignore the information needs of rural people (Parsad, 1998).

Media and women:

In mass media women are presented in positive and negative way. Women, who constitute half of the population, need particular attention of the media not only to raise the issues related to them but also to show their achievements, success stories and their struggle towards their dream of creating a sense of self respect, self-reliance, economic independence and equality in status with men. During the last two decades, proliferation of women in developmental research is remarkable but there is still a dearth of researches inquiring the sensitivity of media towards presentation of women in their content. Today's adolescents are most of the time exposed to one or other kind of media and

they learn through identifying themselves with their role model, most often the characters shown in news, films and serials (Kumari and Joshi, 2015).

Image of women in the Indian media has always been projected wrongly and unrealistically. Newspapers, magazines, radio, television and films etc all these mass medium are not putting any concert efforts to change the conventional image of Indian women. Instead of enhancing the prestige and respect of women in Indian media, these medium knowingly or unknowingly are contributing for lowering the image of women by projecting superficial, physical and ornamental characteristics of women. Whether it a advertisement of a cigarette like Wills, in which a half-dressed women with her male counterpart is seen enjoying the charm of cigarette, or of a soft drink like frooti, where a women is quenching her thirst in semi-nude dress in pool a distorted image of women in projected. It is fact that, in the male dominated Indian society we enjoy seeing women in sex-object in media. The simple reason is that obscene portrayal of women in advertisement is used to market the production in a better way. Women in advertisement are always young and attractive, frequently depicted as a sexual objects, and entertainment figures they are seldom shown as intelligent people. Since last one decade it has been noticed that advertising world continues to use women vigorously to peddle the products.

The rise in over glamour rising and exploitation of female character in television and films and their underrepresentation in a vital issues is a major cause of concern for the present time (Dhar and Pattnaik, 1998).

It has been observed that women issues generally do not get a chance to come up on the front page, unless they are rape cases, crime, sexual harassment, abuse of women or other atrocities. Even in news on issues related to women they are presented as passive victims or passive reactors to public event in news media. Visibility of women in news is widely covered on some specific days like Mother's Day, Women's Day etc. On other day's news related to women generally occupied with sensational stories of glamour, sex, domestic violence and other forms of violence. Besides Sunday and Saturday special glossy editions on women's leisure, fashion, beauty and other luxurious news items with erotic photographs are issued from time to time by daily newspapers (Kumari and Joshi, 2015).

Women's law and media:

Media plays a critical role in changing gender stereotypes. The approach to strategy in India has been to use it as an instrument of change and to control its possible misuse. Media is encouraged to develop a code of conduct, professional guidelines, others self-regulating mechanism to remove gender

stereotypes and promote a balanced portrayal of women and men.

The existing law on regulating content in the media is contained in different sources. Thus, Article 51A of the constitution state that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. Similarly, Section 294 of the IPC provides for penalties for obscene act or conduct. The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 prohibits indecent representation of women through advertisements or in a publication, writing, painting and figure or in any manner. The Act was enacted in the year 1986 and since then the issue of what is obscene has been a subject of great debate. The Act it-self mostly revolves around how the object will affect society and the public mortality rather than how it offends women (Mishra and Pandey, 2012).

Cable Television (Network) Regulation Act, 1994, cable in India continues to be a thriving illegal business despite the cable television act, 1994, while cable operators in the metropolitan areas might register their companies with the post office as required under the act, they do not pay too much attention to the copyright Act and continues to screen Indian and foreign films in different to the video and cable rights of films production companies (French and Richard, 2000).

The Indian Information Technology Act, 2000 has declared on line pornography a punishable offence. Media policy needs to be gender protective. There is a need to encourage media to project positive image and balanced portrayal of women and girls to enable attitudinal change. The media policy should also help in generating awareness on gender issues and concerns so that the process of societal reorientation towards creating a gender just society gets widely disseminated (Mishra and Pandey, 2012).

History of Mass Media:

In general "Media" refer to means of communication. The term can also be used as a collective noun for the press or news reporting agencies. Media includes all types of mass communication available (Attri, 2015). "Mass media is any medium specifically designed to reach a very large audience such as the population of a nation state." According to Wilbur Schramm 'a mass medium is essentially a working group organized around some device for circulating the same message, at about same time, to a large number of people' (Ponmeni, 2013).

The main characteristics of mass media are the mass production, mass distribution and profit. The various mass media or mediums especially audio-visual and print are: television, Radio and newspaper. These mass media report on world

development, entertainment and information on relevant subject to general public as well as targeted population. The several types of mass

Media:

- Print Media:
 - o Newspaper
 - o Magazines
 - o Periodicals
 - o Books etc.
- Electronic Media:
 - o Radio
 - o Cinema
 - o Television

Let us discuss the history and development of these mass media in India in shortly.

Print Media:

Indian newspaper had their birth during the British rule. On January 29, 1780 The Bengal Gazette was brought out by James Augustus Hicky. He was the founder editor, publisher, printer of this first Indian newspaper. Many others newspapers were started soon. These include the Calcutta Gazette (1784), and the Bengal Journal (1785). Magazine started as an alternate to newspaper, magazines made their appearance in the late 17th and early 18th century in Europe.

The first magazine in America was Andrew Bradford's American Magazines that was closely followed by Benjamin Franklin's General Magazines and historical Chronicle. These two magazines were started in 1741. In India, like newspaper, magazines also appeared late. Raja Ram Mohan Roy published perhaps the first magazine in India. It was an English Magazine(Bharti, 2008).

Electronic Media:

In India, as early as August 1921, the Times of India in collaboration with the Post and Telegraph Department broadcasted a special programme from its Bombay office: This was at the request of Sir George Llyord, Governor, who listened to the programme in Pune. The first radio programme in India was broadcast by the Radio Club of Bombay in June 1923. It was followed by the setting up of a broadcasting service that began broadcasting in India in June 1927 on an experimental basis at Bombay and Calcutta simultaneously under an

agreement between Government of India and a private company called the Indian Broadcasting Company Limited.

The transistor was invented during World War 2nd. This made hand sized radio and on the go listening possible and an important car radio for driving listener. In 1930, Indian Broadcasting Company handed over Bombay station to the Government and it was renamed the Indian State Broadcasting Service (ISSB). It was renamed as all India radio on June, 1936 (Kundra, 2005).

Idea of television existed long before the actual invention of television. Several inventors were working on the creation of a technology which could transmit sound as well as visual. Thought many pioneers have contributed to make it possible. Johan Baird is generally regarded as the father of television (Ramanujam, 2011). For more than a decade, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting managed to hold out against demands from educational, institution, industrialists, politicians and indeed the middle class in urban areas for the introduction of television. But then in 1959, Philips (India) made an offer to the Government of the transmitter at a reduced cost.

Earlier, Philips demonstrated its use at an exhibition in New Delhi. The Government gave in, with the aim of employing it on an experimental basis 'to train personal' and partly to discover what TV could achieve in community development and formal education.' A UNESCO grant of 20,000 for the purchase of community receiver and a United State offer of some equipment proved much too tempting to resist, and September 15, 1959, the Delhi Television Centre went on air (Kundra, 2005).

Limited Media coverage

Newspapers cover the issues of women that draw attention to Politicians struggle with problems that need urgent attention, such as adverse sex Ratio between child and maternal mortality, female crime and the consequences of Poverty impacting women and their families. But coverage with this is very small The rest of the cinema room is filled by actors, models and video jockeys The wealthy women (veejays) and their hobbies. Many of them are women Magazines devoted to fashion, glamour, beauty aids, weight loss, Cooking and how to sharpen the 'feminine impulses' in order to keep people satisfied with their inlaws. There are far fewer papers on career chances, Risk education, entrepreneurship, legal aid, counseling, child care Services, and management of money.

A research was conducted in that respect Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Uttaranchal, Jammu and Cashmir, Uttar Pradesh. Two national and two English-language newspapers have been chosen

for the Studies. Prominent newspapers publish just 5 per cent of women's issues and The remaining 8 percent are released on the main page and put inside. Study showed no importance is given to development issues of women. In the television serials women are the central characters, but they are portrayed largely as tormentors or the victims while the men very often take sideline and just seem caught in a web of unfavourable circumstances. Television culture has portrayed a breed of weak, indecisive men ensnared by sexy women when in reality men also play an active role in oppressing women in various ways including subjecting them to physical assault, rape, pushing They get into and even abandon the sex trade. It is just wünschenswert Serials should be similar to reality, and should send viewers a message where and How things go wrong in society.

This portrayal of women in the media led the National Commission for Women propose change in the Indecent Women's Representation (Loi sur l'interdiction), 1986. The NCW is looking to use emerging technologies such as MMS And the online media and others that have been left out of the frame Function as posters and TV serials perpetuating women's stereotypes.

Explaining the reason for including soaps in proposed amendment in the Act, The National Commission for Women has reported that "either women are portrayed as Sita (Ramayana) or as Kaikayee (Ramayana) and there seems to be nothing in between the two extreme characters being shown in Soaps. Divorces, adultery are highlighted frequently in Soaps where characters break the law without repercussion." Negative images or just portraying reality is not enough. Infact, it can often be harmful. It has been observed that sheer duplication of the dark side of life can often lead to apathy and passivity. This can be avoided by 10 depicting the positive images or success stories of women in whatever sphere they happen.

There is need to produce programmes that talk about income generating schemes for women. Unfortunately, in these kinds of ventures typical "womanly jobs" like papad-making, sewing, embroidery, pickles making etc. are propagated. Stress should be given on non-traditional skills which can break the myth that women are suited to certain kinds of jobs only. A systematic survey of the existing schemes (Government/nonGovernment) and presentation of the analysis and changes needed to upgrade the schemes which would make them more purposeful is essential.

The distance between women and media not only deprives the women of their right to information and knowledge but also keeps the women in the dark regarding the blatant misuse of the female and the distortion of the truth. Although the images of women as reflected by the different mass media in the country are not very different, it will be an interesting

exercise to study how these images feed and reinforce the stereotypes.

The distortion of realities by the media has increased the gap of understanding between the different sections of society. Effective informative communication is one of the most important channels for the growth and development of women in the informal or unorganized sector, as without information regarding services and benefits available through legislation, government schemes, banks and voluntary organizations, women can hardly take advantage of them. Thus the media should take into consideration the following points.

- (i) The media must project the working women in the unorganized sector as worker and not merely as performing the duties of wife/daughter. They being major earners, they must be projected as producers and not merely consumers.
- (ii) The media should make deliberate attempts to not only project the problems of women in poverty, but should monitor in such a way that conflicting role models are not depicted, nor derogatory references to their work are made.
- (iii) To improve content and coverage, coordinated efforts for increased interaction between NGO's, women's social action group, research organizations, institutes of mass communication, and the media personnel should be developed.

There are quite a few Reports findings on the complex issues relating to women empowerment. Very often the media come up with study on women related subjects which more often than not are driven by market forces. One study claims that women prefer men with hybrid cars while another says women are genetically devised to shop. Then there is a study which says women are more attracted to bad boy types. This reveals that women have become new research subject mostly in less significant areas. In fact, research is necessary to understand women in its potentiality to usher in a new era. It is difficult to distinguish between genuine research and studies that are gimmicks more so when news reports do not identify where these studies are coming from. A large proportion of the research findings published in major news outlets today is sensationally packaged to drawm attention.

This is where the media must step in to help readers to know relevant facts concerning women empowerment. It will be only appropriate if in the interests of full disclosure, they should make clear in their reports who was funding the study and which scientific journal published it. This

information can help readers to decide for themselves which pieces of research are closer to the truth and which are not. Various studies were undertaken on the women and media to ascertain how the media portrays women and how the women related issues are presented, how much significance is given to them. Such study has revealed that issues pertaining to development of women are never emphasized adequately. Women are portrayed not for feminine beauty and artistic portrayal but for infusing sex appeal more often than not entering the arena of obscenity. It is necessary to have dispassionate in-depth study by social activists and media to ascertain why obscenity has risen so much in media. Unless there is any change in the social perception of women, it will be difficult to curtail obscenity in media.

CONCLUSION

In today's culture the mass media has a strong impact. It affected Almost every facet of our social life. From print media to audio-visual Video, it has Catalytic intervention for the society at large. Irrespective of literacy it serves as a mass mobilizer. It Distributes abrupt post. Mass media hit the heart of where administration cannot meet Darkest location on the world. There was a time when rural India didn't have to think about a Daily newspaper, whereupon the rural and urban divisions had a large distance. But now it's time

In rural India rural culture prevails with an urban taste. And we need to go a long way to generate Rural Awareness (Biswal, 2012). Media pays heed to all types of viewers Whether they're teenagers, young people, women, elderly people, farmers, industrial workers, our students too Illiterates, and only after a variety of platforms and services for everyone. Television Networks Many such subject-specific services are known as special subject programmes Includes services for girls, women's programmes, youth programmes, education programs and schools Televisions (Ramanujam, (2011).

In India, women make up 52 % of the total population and with the arrival of the 21st The role of women is century and its advances in different scientific and technological eras Changing rapidly, too, but we cannot disregard the very reality of a society in which women are Discriminated, exploited and oppressed by various problems split between the sexes. Females are Human capital vital to enhancing the quality of life. Overall production for the country The inclusion of women in its development process depends heavily on it. They were the Culture broadcasters across all cultures.

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