GLOBALIZATION AND GENDER ISSUE

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Abstract

Globalization has become the defining condition of the world in the twenty-first century. Yet, the impact of this changing world on women needs to be questioned because of continued inequalities and divisions. This article assesses various issues related to both women in the media and women and media, both as social issues in general and gender issues in particular. It is argued that globalization and the advancement in new media technologies are transforming how sexuality is viewed and treated around the world. The result is the beaming of homogeneous images in the media and the tendency towards increased cultural and social uniformity. This is exemplified by the way films, television and glitzy advertisements which have helped the spread of sales of products. The result can be seen in discriminatory advertising, and the spread of imposed images of femininity and female roles. The objective of this article is therefore to renew the reflection and interrogation on the media, using the gender paradigm.

Keywords: media and gender, women in media, stereotype, status of women, orthodox portrayal

GLOBALISASI DAN ISU GENDER

Abstrak

Globalisasi telah menjadi suatu definisi penting dalam abad ke-21 ini. Namun impak perubahan di dunia berkenaan wanita perlu dipersoalkan memandangkan keadaan ketaksamarataan masih berterusan. Makalah ini menilai pelbagai isu berkaitan wanita dalam media, dan wanita dan media yang merupakan isu sosial dan gender. Adalah dikatakan globalisasi dan kemajuan dalam teknologi media baru telah mentransformasikan bagaimana seksualiti difahami seluruh dunia. Apa yang dilihat ialah pemaparan imej wanita yang homogen di media dan kecenderungan ke arah persamaan dari segi budaya dan sosial. Ini ditambah pula dengan pengeksploitan melalui filem, televisyen dan periklanan bagi melariskan produk. Pengamatan ini juga dilihat dalam periklanan yang mendiskriminasikan imej wanita dan peranan wanita. Objektif makalah ini adalah untuk sekali lagi melihat dan menyiasat tindakan media dengan menggunakan paradigma gender.

Kata kunci*: media dan gender, wanita dalam media, stereotaip, status wanita, penonjolan ortodoks*

Introduction

Gender perspective as an analytical framework examines the socially constructed, unequal, relationships between men and women, which influence their; roles, rights and responsibilities in society. Because of gender inequalities and discrimination in all parts of the world, women can be affected negatively by globalization processes to a greater extent than men. On the other hand, there can be significant gains for women with globalization. It is necessary to systematically monitor the gender impact of change so that the goals of gender equality and the expansion of human capabilities are not sacrificed. It uncovers the gender gaps in terms of access to social opportunities, services and resources, as well as levels of gender participation in decision making processes. Gender perspective aims at bridging the gender gaps, empowering both men and women so that they can participate in all societal processes as equal partners.

The relationship between globalization and gender equality, and the relevance of globalization for transforming gender relations has been increasingly well documented. Globalisation trends and related policies are often thought to be gender-neutral, that is, having similar impacts on women and men. However, a closer look at the way they affect people reveals significant gender-differentiated

impacts. Women and men are unequally placed at many different levels of social organization. From the macro level of the societal economy, through the institutions of society, to small groups and the individual, women and men are differently placed and differently rewarded. In other words, social organization is gendered. Democracy, globalization and the need for gender equality have put the issue of Gender and the Media in India at the forefront of the social science reflection. Revisiting this issue consists in placing it in a historical and political perspective that enables an understanding of its connection with the overall issue of development. The struggle for independence, in its political and trade-union dimensions, did not neglect the use of the media, especially the print media, even if those who had the chance to attend school were, at the time, very few in number. Subsequently, shortly after independence, the media played a major role in the political and ideological schemes that gave legitimacy to the progress of the public sphere in many Indian states.

Indeed, the growing impoverishment of populations and the drastic reduction in their access to social services (education, health, etc.), resulting from the policies of state disengagement, led to the erosion of its legitimacy. Subsequently, the wave of democratization that blew on the continent in the last two decades has resulted in a recovery of the freedom of expression which resulted, among others, in an opening of the media space. Since then, political and media pluralism has characterized the political and civic practice on the continent in varying degrees. Thus, we have moved from a context characterized by the omnipotence of the state-controlled media, resulting from their legal and/or de facto monopoly of the public space, to a situation of large media pluralism. Under the single-party system, the state-controlled media played a major role in the production and validation of a political, cultural and social 'truth' which no institutional or political mechanism could question. Yet, the liberalization of the media space and the proliferation of the media (print, television, radio) that accompanied it facilitated the construction of a citizenship spirit based on pluralistic information that enables citizens to take better position regarding public policies, and especially to open the debate on a variety of issues that were previously seen as taboos or simply ignored. Women are among the most affected in this regard, especially as visibility in the public sphere does not automatically translate into equal gender proportion in the media. For instance, women are rarely mentioned in articles with political and economic content. In fact, global statistics has shown that only 18% of people given media coverage or, more accurately, mentioned in the media in the world, are women. This shows that women hold less than one-quarter of the space occupied by men in the media. Nevertheless, women have been able to establish a new horizon of freedom, marked by advocacy for equality and equity that has greatly benefited the international environment. It is therefore important to examine how the media have redefined themselves in the context of democratic pluralism and openness to take charge of the need to create more room for women in the media.

While the social science reflection has often been interested in the relationship between the media and democracy and/or governance, it has put little emphasis on the gender dimension of this issue. We need to initiate a broad debate on women and the media, which will provide an opportunity to discuss the elimination of stereotypes in the media and stress the urgent need to counter the featuring of downgrading images about women as well as poor handling of information relating to women in the media. Developments in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) have opened up new possibilities for the participation of women in the world of communication and especially in the dissemination of information relating to women.

Empowerment presupposes the existence of weakness and subjugation. It has become incontrovertible and thoroughly documented that in gender relations; women occupy an inferior position all over the world. The results of a recent Gallop poll on equality between the sexes, broadcast on the Cable News Network (CNN) show that "there is nowhere in the world where women are considered to be equal to men" (CNN, 1996).1 Referring to findings from contemporary research on the condition of women, Abati (1996:27) says:

> *"Based on concerted research the conclusion has long been reached that women are a de-centred, de-natured sub-species of humanity; harassed by culture, intimated by politics and subsumed in helplessly patrilineal and patriarchal structures which pamper the male ego."*

In the present era the values of gender equality are being accepted and promoted in almost all regions of the world. The importance of gender equality for sustainable people-centered development is well accepted and it is widely recognized that gender inequalities create inefficiencies and hamper growth. Man and woman can neither reach excellence without the cooperation of the other. Although it is almost impossible now to speak about rights and equality without at least mentioning gender, the treatment is often superficial; as though by the mere mention of the word 'gender', or with a meager representation of women, gender issues through media is not enough. There is a need to uncover the various levels of unequal gender issues like- gender identity and television talk shows, the commercialisation of masculinity, historical portrayals of women in advertising, representing lesbians on television, the cult of femininity in women's magazines, gender and media violence, the sexualisation of the popular press, sexual stereotyping in Bollywood cinema, women in popular music, media production and the empowerment of women, soap opera audiences, girl gamers, the impact of media monitoring, pornography and masculine power, and women's historical relationship to the Internet. The implications are that the women are denied opportunities of equal growth, development and self realization.

The 'decentralization' or marginalization of women and their disadvantaged position are at the root of the global movement for the empowerment of women. For the emancipation of women in every field, economic independence is of

paramount importance along with creating awareness among them about their rights and responsibilities-the recognition of their vital role and the work they do at home. Of particular importance in this regard is the need to improve the portrayal of women in the communication media which are powerful vehicles for moulding public opinion and determining people's perception of social reality. Cognizant of this power of the media, the communication media become as a 'critical area of concern' - "one of the ten major obstacles to women's progress, and an area in which extensive strategic action must be taken if equality is to become a reality" (Gallagher, 1995:6). The media also help define how issues are interpreted and evaluated. It can work for the development of women and gender equality. Thus the relationship of the media and the women is important because whatever image women have in our country is influenced by media. It is thus vital, to utilize the media for improving the status of women in India and divulging their role in national development.

Literature Review: Portrayal of Women in Media

Representation of women in the media has been a topic of controversy and interest for decades, having been the focus of a number of research studies. Specifically, many case studies have examined the unintended effects of advertisements especially on young females with regard to body image; self-esteem and extreme dieting or eating disorders .Despite great strides towards equality, women all over the world are continually disadvantaged and marginalised in society. Much of the literature today points to the fact that among the root causes of gender inequality in society are the socio-cultural and economic systems that exist. It is therefore imperative that the factors that continue to reinforce these inequalities be critically examined. Women are perpetually stereotyped as domesticated, given to leisure, fashion and beauty interests. They are also invariably portrayed as brainless, dependent, indecisive, subservient and sports for men's pleasure. Women are persistently objectified as men's possessions. Educated working women activists are portrayed as audacious insubordinate agitators, while those who opt to remain single are portrayed as prostitutes, social degenerates, and immoral beings who sleep their way to top. Those who hold high political or administrative positions are branded as incompetent and inefficient. They are ultimately demonized and isolated as irrational snobs. The media's continued misrepresentation of women through negative stereotypes is a significant problem in society that needs critical analytical attention if efforts towards gender equality are to be meaningful.

   Women today are a bundle of contradictions because the media imagery we grew up with was itself filled with mixed messages about what women should and should not do, what women could and could not do" (9). Douglas argued that the media's most striking contribution to the women and girls is the erosion of any sort of unified self. "In a variety of ways the mass media helped make us the cultural schizophrenics we are today, women who rebel against yet submit

to prevailing images about what a desirable, worthwhile woman should be…the mass media has engendered in many women a kind of cultural identity crisis… We are ambivalent toward femininity on the one hand and…feminism in the other" (Douglas, 8). Women are a myriad of personalities, and they take on a multitude of roles. This becomes an inner strife that has been induced by the media, and according to Douglas these contradictions within women reflect our culture's indeterminate attitudes concerning the female gender.

Media representations of minority groups particularly representations of women has been a popular and contested area of research and an important issue in public debate. The way that the media represents women is a part of women's issues. These issues continue to feature prominently in policy and initiatives that emphasize the point that many of the issues that have faced women in the past require constant revisiting to understand the current state of women in society. A recent study of international media revealed that "79 percent of experts quoted in the news media around the world are men while a mere 21 percent are women" ("Media mirror," 2006, p. 11). In addition, only 25% of newsmakers were women; at this rate, observed the author of the report, it will take at least 75 years to achieve gender parity in all aspects of representation in newspaper reporting ("Media mirror," 2006). Feminist critics have long been concerned that the portrayals of women in advertising will have negative impact upon the way adults and children view the role of women in society. Advertising portrayals are criticized for depicting women in a narrow range of primarily traditional roles, encouraging the view of women as sexual or decorative objects, and creating unrealistic and undesirable ideals for women to uphold.

The decline of second wave feminism and the emergence of a more liberal society, along with the transformation of the cultural and media landscape, have given rise to a new discourse that can tentatively be entitled post-feminist. Our understanding of this term requires the utmost prudence, however. The post-feminist current posits equality between men and women as a given and the feminist struggle as no longer relevant. However, post-feminism is more a series of diffuse attitudes to be found within the media and related to second wave feminism's attachment to the past than an ideology or a form of activism. Nevertheless, it is not a backlash or a violent reaction against feminism since post-feminism acknowledges the complex relationships between culture, politics and feminism.

The fact remains, however, that one of the characteristics of post-feminism is its positing of a gender equality which is far from being experienced by women, whether in relation to salaries, political representation or access to certain professions, among other issues. Moreover, the secularisation of society has enabled new discursive approaches to the body and sex to emerge. The new media landscape presents the image of a hyper-sexualised woman, while male discourse tends to converge more than ever towards essentialism and biological determinism. Women may rightly have felt liberated but don't they now have

to struggle against the weight of a consumerist discourse which threatens to annihilate a fight for rights that they have never really obtained?

In the past two decades, sexual content on television and in the movies has become more pervasive and explicit. Being sexy and engaging in sexual intercourse is depicted as a normal part of a popular, exciting, and glamorous female's life. Very seldom are consequences of sexual engagement addressed; most sexual encounters, unless relevant to the immediate story line, have no lasting effects. And when consequences are included, they are generally limited to physical, rather than emotional or social, consequences (Kunkel, Cope & Biely, 1999). Concerns and preventions of sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy have only recently started to become addressed.

As well, in an examination of sexual consequences on teen programming, Aubrey (2004) found that there was a double standard with regards to the events that led up to and precipitated a detrimental outcome. She found that "negative consequences were more common in scenes in which female characters initiated sexual activities than in scenes in which males characters initiated sexual activities" (p. 505). 84 episodes of one-hour, prime-time, dramas that contained characters between the ages of 12 to 22 years were examined. It was found that if a male initiated sexual activities, 70% of the time there were no negative consequences. However, if a female initiated sexual activity, 60% of the time there were negative consequences. As well, females were the receivers of these negative consequences 65.7% of the time while males received negative consequences only 34.3% of the time. This double standard leaves adolescent females with the impression that bad things will happen if they initiate sexual activity. It is safer to simply follow the male's lead. As well, it was found that males initiated sexual activity 60.5% of the time. This, along with the messages of perpetual danger from female sexual initiation, perpetuates the stereotype that it is socially normal, acceptable, and even desirable for men to approach sex in a more proactive manner while women should remain more passive and reactive.

Teen magazines also present over-sexualized images and messages. Pierce (1990) found that images in Seventeen portrayed girls as being "neurotic, helpless, and timid beings who must rely on external sources, usually men, to make sense of their lives" (p. 372). Evans, Rutberg, Sather, and Turner (1991) found that teen magazines perpetuated the belief that the ability to achieve successful interpersonal interactions occurred through the use of sexualized manipulation. Girls are taught that seductive poses, pouts, and stances are acceptable and necessary ways to be successful and attain fulfillment.

However, teen magazines present a conflicting message. Magazines provide young girls with instructions on how to attract and please men (Pierce, 1990). They teach girls the power and persuasiveness of their sexuality, yet at the same time, warn them that they are not to give into, or even acknowledge, their sexual desire (Durham, 1998). Their sexuality is to be used as a manipulative tool, not as a means for social interaction or personal pleasure. Through the use of

provocative, yet innocently child-like, images, poses and dress, girls are taught to use their sexuality for gain but to resist all urges to follow through with sexual interactions.

In her study, Durham (1998) found many direct and indirect messages promoting adolescent girls to develop, maintain, and use their sexuality. Words such as "hot", "sexy", and "kissable" were displayed prominently on the cover. Articles on exercise promoted the achievement of sexy and touchable bodies, rather than health and fitness. Fashion and beauty articles also focused on pleasing males, and then ways of using that approval to their advantage. Images of females in teen magazines portray girls as sexy, yet reserved; passionately desirous, yet coy. The sexual images presented to adolescent females in teen magazines were acute, while at the same time mixed and conflicting.

Many media critics say in the portrayal of women in the Media that advertisements promote extreme thinness or a thin waist and big breasts, misleading because these models don't represent the majority of the population. These ads have women in them looking good but very seldom are they talking. These ads put pressure on women to get that "thin look". This extra pressure leads to low self-esteem and eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia. Women are also portrayed as domestic laborers. Women are very seldom showing as career oriented in these ads.(cited in Amber, S. 2002)

Hall et al. (1994) reports that in most of advertisement majority of women featured appeared in leisure wear or swimwear. Although the largest category of male apparel in work clothes; very few commercials showed women in work clothes.

In daytime soap operas, viewed primarily by women, characters also are presented in traditional and stereotypic ways, although the subject matter has become more contemporary in recent years. Women on such shows more often are depicted as nurturing, hopeless and displaying avoidance behaviors then are men on these shows. Men, more than women, are depicted as directive and problem solving, although at least one study suggests that neither sex demonstrates competent copying strategies on such shows.

Why Media and Why Gender?

Sex is about biological differences—the physical characteristics with which one is born. Gender—a relatively new and often misused term—is about socially constructed differences between men and women .Of the many influences on how we view men and women, media are the most pervasive and one of the most powerful. Woven throughout our daily lives, media insinuate their messages into our consciousness at every turn. All forms of media communicate images of the sexes, many of which perpetuate unrealistic, stereotypical, and limiting perceptions. Monitoring the media's portrayal of women and finding strategies to challenge gender stereotyping in the media have been long standing concerns of gender and media activists throughout the world. The common agreement

among these two groups is that the dominant notions about gender (as well as about race, or ethnicity, and other factors of differentiations among people) are strongly dependent on the media, since the process of representation is central to the media itself. While the media represents topics, events, situations, persons and groups it attributes to them a certain meaning. In relation to the process of representation, stereotyping (whether gender based, racial or ethnical) is precisely an attempt to fix 'the preferred' meaning. Although potentially having an important role to play in challenging the fixed meanings, the media has more often been part of the problem rather than the solution.

Gender bias in media is a topic society has been tiptoeing around since the women's liberation movement of the 1960s. Gender is not naturally determined, but cultivated. For example, take the case of the stereotypical belief that establishes a binary division of men vs. women as a division of public vs. private. By silencing certain groups in society, and marginalizing female voices within the public space, media makes it impossible for these voices to be heard and valued, and prevents readers from viewing women as people with ideas and expertise. This also prevents women from participating in democratic debates and discourses, and strips them of their social competence. Silencing women's voices and denying them the right to communicate is correctly seen as one of the methods of keeping women in "their place"- in private, where they do not have the authority to act as representatives or to speak as experts.

Gender as a social category is a social construct, which suggests that the creation of gender discourse is not completed or fixed, but a process, and one in which the media play an important role. Nevertheless we do not presume media distortion of reality because we accept gender to be socially constructed, which entails renouncing the media's distortion of either the "real" gender or the "real" meaning of gender that exists "out there." We don't come from the reflective approach, in which language functions like a mirror, reflecting true meaning as it already exists in the world. Nor do we adopt intentionalism, which postulates that the speaker, author or subject imposes his/her own unique meaning on the world through language with words that mean what the author intends them to mean. We espouse instead the constructivist approach and recognize the social character of language operating as a representational system central to the processes by which meaning is produced and as such offering a preferred reading or meaning. In the ongoing construction of gender discourse, media can be seen as *"(social) technologies of gender" that are, as "central sites at which discursive negotiation over gender takes place"*.

There are three areas of analysis of media texts to understand the relation of communication *processes* to socio-cultural environments - *representations, identities*, and *relations* - which have to do with the following:

1.   How is the world (events, relationships, etc.) represented?

2.   What identities are set up for those involved in the programme of the story (reporters, audiences, 'third parties' referred to or interviewed)?

3. What relationships are set up between those involved (e.g. reporter-audience, expert-audience or politician-audience relationships)?"

   Thus it is not only important how media represent the world, but also what sort of identities and what cultural values and social relations they establish. To say any text is multifunctional and is simultaneously representing and setting up identities and relations: "Language use - any text - is always simultaneously constitutive of (1) social identities, (2) social relations, (3) systems of knowledge and belief (corresponding respectively to identities, relationships and representations)". Following this train of thought, we want to see what "preferred" meanings are "encoded" in the media texts that we analyzed. The influential cultural theorists argue that "encoding will have the effect of constructing some of the limits and parameters within which decoding will operate" and as such offers a preferred reading or meaning. We want to see what can be "read" from the ways and forms of representation of gender in newspapers and what identities, relations and beliefs are attached to gender, i.e, what framework for the construction of gender identities, relations and beliefs is used in the media as the social technology of gender. In other words, the goal here is to describe the results of, and conditions under which "the discursive negotiation over gender" takes place in the media.

Social Construction of Gender

In a discussion of social construction of gender, we also need to ask how gender articulates with class, caste, race and ethnicity structures which, in different degrees and combinations, shape all societies. It does not require much effort to see how gender is inextricable from these vital determinants of any social organization. A gendered division of labour has long existed in western culture. Women have endured a tradition of being the domestic housewife and mother, roles associated with unpaid work. Men on the other hand, are assumed to be the provider of the family with their lives revolving around competition, ambition and paid work (Court, 1997). This has translated to the organisational world where:

> *" the constructs of leadership and management have been developed by males for male patterns of employment. Hence organisations can be said to be gendered, producing and reproducing gendered relations where the female is seen as less suited for senior roles, and as in need of protection (Singh & Point, 2006, p. 364)."*

   Socially constructed gender differences then advantage men where in the workforce "their assumed authority in leadership positions has been legitimized", while they are excused from taking responsibility for 'women's work' (Court, 1997, p. 18). This gendered division of labour continues to be upheld in modern society as women are underrepresented in male dominated occupations such as aero-space and defence, chemicals, construction and building materials (Li & Wearing, 2004), and academia (Williams, 2000; Thanacoody, Bartram, Barker

& Jacobs, 2002).

Gender inequality also creates a "glass ceiling". Women are often disadvantaged in that this transparent barrier prevents them from moving up the corporate hierarchy to achieve positions of prestige and power (Eyring & Stead, 1998; Oakley, 2000). The effectiveness of the "glass ceiling" is apparent given the small number of women holding senior management positions in organisations (Bilimoria & Wheeler, 2000; Pajo, McGregor & Cleland, 1997; Fawcett & Pringle, 2000; Oakley, 2000; van de Walt, Ingley, Shergill & Townsend, 2006; Li & Wearing, 2004). This can also reflect male cronyism which maintains "traditional and conservative approaches to recruitment of board members and the entrenched attachment to the status quo" (Pajo, McGregor & Cleland, 1997, p. 181; Fawcett & Pringle, 2000). Reasons for the under representation of women holding senior management position in New Zealand have been summarised by Fawcett and Pringle (2000) as including:

> *"sex-role stereotyping, a masculine executive culture, homosocial reproduction, and dependence on a traditional linear career model. Other factors specific to decision-making processes at senior levels such as networks, vague job requirements, informal selection and assessment are also important (p. 254). "*

The work-family balance also impacts female promotional opportunities and employment (Court, 1997; Auster, 2001; Kaminski & Reilly, 2004; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Women's promotional prospects are hindered by the need to raise children and to take care of family responsibilities. Although many women choose not to progress their careers, the sexual division of labour in the home which connects with a sexual division of labour in the workplace, contributes to men maintaining power and control (Game & Pringle, 1983; Li & Wearing, 2004).

Gender stereotyping has also been implicated in women not reaching their full potential (Browne, 1998; Fawcett & Pringle, 2000; Lane & Crane, 2002). Gender stereotypes are defined as "general beliefs about sex-linked traits (collections of psychological characteristics and behaviours characterizing men and women) and gender roles" (Browne, 1998, p. 84). Women are often stereotyped as being emotional and dependent, characteristics reinforced through gender roles. Advertising in the print media and in American television programmes portray women as passive, deferent, lacking credibility and intelligence. Stereotypical portrayals of men depict them as powerful, constructive, autonomous and achieving (Browne, 1998; Hentges, Bartsch & Meier, 2007). It should however be acknowledged that a number of the new American television dramas including "The Closer" and "Cold Case", portray women as powerful leaders and problem solvers. At the same time these women are stereotyped as young, beautiful and thin.

A gendered division of labour, gender inequity, and gender stereotyping are constantly being reproduced in various media forms. The 'gender gap' appears

frequently in media such as television advertisements. Studies have shown that males appear more often than females in advertisements, male voiceovers are more frequent than female, and males are generally portrayed in more dominant and active roles (Eaton, 1997; Browne, 1998; Furnham & Farragher, 2000; Ganahl, Prinsen & Netzley, 2003; Döring & Pöschl, 2006; Valls-Fernández & Martínez-Vicente, 2007). The most recently published study of television advertising sex-role stereotyping in New Zealand by Furnham and Farragher (2000) found it to be dominated by males. In print media advertising, recent trends simultaneously sexualise and victimise women (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). In occupational roles, research shows men portrayed outside the home while women are portrayed in domestic roles. Sexual stereotyping of women as scantily dressed, attractive and often an object of another's desire is detrimental to women (Lovdal, 1989; Davis, 1990; Signorielli, McLeod & Healy, 1994; Smith, 1994; Eaton, 1997). This form of stereotyping is about "preserving power and defining femininity as inferior" (Rigg & Sparrow, 1994, p. 11).

Depiction of Women in Media

It has been widely recognized that media can play a substantial role in promoting and disseminating information and are key players in the social and economic development of women. Therefore, media largely reflects the life styles, socialization patterns, participation levels, cultural boundaries, political maneuverings, religious manifestations, educational standards, social hierarchy, and of course, society images of any given society. Mass Communication media in India, like every modern and advanced country, comprises of the radio, the film, the television, the press, publications and advertising besides traditional media. The magic persuasiveness of its visual presentation and its admitted superiority over other media for propagation of social and economic objectives have together placed the television in India with great priority.

During the phases of economic liberalization in last two decades, the overall scenario of media in India has changed tremendously. The depiction of Women in Indian media, be it films, television serials, news, media, visual advertisement, or modernized traditional media, is indeed an area of great concern for people having interest in social science research and studies. Some studies found have that social issues related to women (equality of status and opportunity) got less than nine percent while sensational stories relating to women which were invariably crime stories got between 52 and 63 percent of items in newspapers.

More disquieting is the growing trend in media to portray women as victims. Some recent studies of news stories show that sex and sensation is the primary motivation behind the reportage. A study of four main English dailies in India finds that women's issues accounted for little over two percent of the total items in one of the dailies and even less in the other three. There has been much criticism of Television advertising of some commercial products like cigarettes, laxatives, pads, condoms or articles of intimate wearing apparel on moral

grounds. Comments in newspaper articles have found some of them objectionable and violating the requirements of good taste and sometimes offensive. Some objections have also been made to the appearance of scantly clad women in some commercials.(Ahuja & Batra). As the tentacles of globalization have trespassed into the electronic media, the advertising industry has been swept by the market forces with the result that sexist display depicting women in demeaning manner has become the norm.

There is growing concern about young people's exposure to sexual content through television and other electronic media and about its potential effects on their sexual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Researchers have documented the growing prevalence of sexual talk and portrayals of sexual behavior in televised media, as well as associations between adolescent viewing patterns and their sexual activities. Some have argued that we have moved past a media saturated society to a fully mediated society whose members are so inured to media manipulation that we refuse to believe anything we see or hear that we don't want to believe. Is this true? And if so, do stereotypical depictions in the media still have the power to affect us in our daily lives? How so? What is the media's RESPONSIBILITY regarding its depiction of gender and sexuality?

The pressure put on women through ads, television, film and new media to be sexually attractive—and sexually active—is profound. Provocative images of women's partly clothed or naked bodies are especially prevalent in advertising. Women's bodies are sexualized in ads in order to grab the viewer's attention. Women become sexual objects when their bodies and their sexuality are linked to products that are bought and sold. Women's bodies are often dismembered into legs, breasts or thighs, reinforcing the message that women are objects rather than whole human beings. Although women's sexuality is no longer a taboo subject, many researchers question whether or not the blatant sexualization of women's bodies in the media is liberating. The biggest problem with women's magazines is "how much we lie about sex" those "lies" continue to perpetuate the idea that women's sexuality is subservient to men's pleasure.   C h a l l e n g i n g trend that the lack of the gender sensitivity in the media is evidenced by the failure to eliminate the gender based stereotyping that can be found in media easily. Any attempt for change will have to concentrate mainly on changing the attitude of media by sensitizing them on gender issues and inducting women journalist at top positions. 'The News', that the women present by the media can easily be codified in categories such as, a women dependant on man , as an overachieving house wife, as physically beautiful and sexy. Newspapers, especially local language newspapers, are not careful about the importance of the style of the reporting, and tend to ignore the extremely adverse affect of sensational reporting on the victims and their families You will be shocked, bewildered and disgusted by what has happened to women's magazines since the days when the weeklies were the cosy end of the market, all about knitting patterns and 50 ways with leftovers. Now the images of women in magazines

are being marketed for sales and enhancing profits at the expense of serious treatment. It is observed that women magazines are focusing heavily on the domestic side of women and trying to prove that every woman needs to be a perfect cook, a tailor, and housekeeper and also be beautiful. The intellectual qualities of women are mentioned nowhere. Their abilities as equal partners in developments are lost between cooking oils and fairness creams.

There are many advertisements which cannot be termed as decent and you will be shocked, bewildered and disgusted by what has happened to women's magazines since the days when the weeklies were the cozy end of the market. Apart from this, it has been noticed that women are used in some of the advertising campaign of a product, which simply do not suit them .For example; there is an advertisement of a popular shaving cream (and also cement)in which a woman is used. .Such cases are indicative of the fact that women are used as a product for commercial purposes. To the extent, there are some magazines which make you feel embarrassed as if you have picked up a stash of porn.

A study concludes that over a period of time women's roles in television dramas have become secondary, passive and glamorous. Women's roles in "family" context lead to perpetuate the belief that women's true place is home. Roles of working women are cast dubiously. The same trend can be witnessed in the ever increasing numbers of teleplays that focus on women being the focal point of domestic peace and harmony. These practices are detrimental to women's rights movement.

Research studies dealing with the portrayal of women in Indian media are not always negative. The most well known study is a statistical compendium compiled by the Women's Division of India for formulating policies regarding the role and status of women in India shows that 75 percent of television commercials are aimed at women; only 25 percent are convicted as purely for male consumption. 48 percent commercials depict women only whereas 30 percent men only. Men and women together are depicted in 48 percent of commercials. In advertisement women show as dumb consumer who need advice. It shows that household is the task of women alone but this is their pride and happiness. The fact that women are never shown in any roles defines the proper place of women in the home. The advertisers have great responsibility because they portray the society. Women are portrayed in advertisement in stereotype roles whose duty is to serve and care about her family.

The depiction of women in Indian media is simply shoddy and at times vulgar. Commodification of women as a sex object has been relentlessly portrayed in audio-visual media. The overtones of sexual equation are much more explicit these days in our media. The orthodox presentations and the conventional inhibitions seem to overpower the orientations of media planners. The women in Indian media are depicted generally as scrupulous, religiously intolerant, craving only for their own family, politically naïve, socially inevitable and culturally ultra-modern. Some criticism of advertising using women as sex objects can be

seen in letters to the editor and very mild criticism of the cheapness and vulgarity in the display of women in advertising can be found in our literature on media. Often the criticism of the advertising stems out of big business game, believing the advertisements, rising prices and creation of artificial needs.

The consequences of allowing globalization to continue uncontrolled are hard to predict but would certainly include massive and irreversible damage to the cultural ethos of developing countries by spreading unrestricted westernization. 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. This scenario may lead anyone to comprehend a totally un-Indian view of Indian with big heart keeping in mind the requirements of present day modernization as well as the needs of reinforcement of Indian cultural ethos. This, only, can help solve many of present days our socio-political problems, as these are simple outcomes of misconception of grand old Indian Society by our policy planners.

Employment of Women in Media

How media represents women has been a question of debate since media became a popular factor in the life of Indians. Throughout the culture of every country, women were given a secondary status, branding them as the 'weaker sex'. With the arrival of modern thought, a new feeling has rouse that women are not secondary compared to men and both are equal. Gender equality and women's empowerment are two sides of the same coin: progress toward gender equality requires women's empowerment and women's empowerment requires increases in gender equality. Since the 1960s, feminists have argued that "it matters who makes it." When it comes to the mass media, "who makes it" continues to be men. Women working in the media have certainly made some inroads and now more women are working than ever before, but they are also more likely than men to get low-productivity, low-paid and vulnerable jobs, with no social protection, basic rights nor voice at work according to a new report by the International Labour Office (ILO) issued for International Women's Day. Women's issues appear to have little coverage in mainstream media and are classed as soft beat. As a result media is not emerging as potent instrument of doing justice to the true role of women in society. It is the responsibility of media that it should ethically report to fight gender stereotype, to combat aggressive behaviour, harassment, inequality in promotion, training and pay to stand up for dignity of women in the world of work which include women journalists and media professionals. The workplace and the world of work are at the centre of global solutions to address gender equality and the advancement of women in society. By promoting decent work for women, we will be empowering societies and advancing the cause of economic and social development for all.

Recently a groundbreaking Global Report on the Status Women in the News Media examining more than 500 companies in nearly 60 countries shows that men

occupy the vast majority of the management jobs and news-gathering positions in most nations. In this long-awaited extensive study, researchers found that 73% of the top management jobs are occupied by men compared to 27% occupied by women. Among the ranks of reporters, men hold nearly two-thirds of the jobs, compared to 36% held by women. However, among senior professionals, women are nearing parity with 41% of the newsgathering, editing and writing jobs.

The International Women's Media Foundation commissioned the study to closely examine gender equity in the news media around the world, and inform the development of a formal Plan of Action to improve the status of women. The global study looked at women in the workforce, pay differences, terms of employment and pro-equality policies in newsrooms.

Women have increased their ranks in the top management jobs, compared to a Margaret Gallagher study in 1995 that showed women occupying on average of only 12% of the top management positions in 239 nations. The new global study shows women in 26% of the governing and 27% of the top management jobs. The two-year study covering 170,000 people in the news media found a higher representation of women in both governance and top management within both Eastern Europe (33% and 43%, respectively) and Nordic Europe (36% and 37%, respectively), compared to other regions. In the Asia and Oceana region, women are barely 13% of those in senior management, but in some individual nations women exceed men at that level, e.g., in South Africa women are 79.5% of those in senior management. In Lithuania women dominate the reporting ranks of junior and senior professional levels (78.5% and 70.6%, respectively), and their representation is nearing parity in the middle and top management ranks.The global study identified glass ceilings for women in 20 of 59 nations studied. Most commonly these invisible barriers were found in middle and senior management levels. Slightly more than half of the companies surveyed have an established company-wide policy on gender equity. These ranged from 16% of companies surveyed in Eastern Europe to 69% in Western Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa.

At all levels in media organizations in India, women are under-represented. There are more men around than women with an impression that men are more important, competent, dominant, dependable, and studious than women. Women who are working in the field of media often do not occupy decision-making or top positions. They are propelled into specific areas which are relatively powerless." In media industry women are often unrecognized and concealed within the limits.

Gender discrimination in division of work is evident through the beats assigned to the employees in media. 'Soft' issues like fashion, culture, arts, women institutions, and lifestyle are often consigned to women media practitioners, whereas 'hard' and what is considered 'serious' beats like finance, economics, law, court, crime and politics are often assigned to their male counterparts. Consequently the main or headline stories that appear on front or back pages are reported by male journalists confirm their professionalism that strengthen

their position and credibility. On the other hand, news on soft issues reported by women is push to inner pages or supplementary segments of the media. Thus the women are not enjoying a position to demonstrate their potential.

With the introduction of private sector in electronic media a lot of new TV channels and FM radios are now working in India. These TV and FM radio channels in contrary to the traditional attitude of media are hiring more women than men at variety of position e.g. producer, assistant producer, reporter, editor, designer etc. They are satisfied with their performance and comment that women workers are not only competent but more dedicated, hard worker and sensible.

In India, the focus of feminist communication research has been the negative portrayal of women in mass media. As far as "Doordarshan" is concerned, a first systematic study on women's employment was undertaken in 1987 and the study revealed unequal pattern of women's employment in Doordarshan. Representation of women in senior management positions was limited. There were hardly any women, who could play a crucial role in decision making. However, in production categories, women accounted for a relatively high proportion of producers. About 28 percent of producers were women. This was significant as producers play an important role in programme content and presentation. A study by MAG (1994) revealed that there are now more women in the media workforce than they were twenty years ago.

The decision making in these organizations remain overwhelmingly the domain of man. With the exception of a few, women are underrepresented in senior positions in Doordarshan and AIR. Most women employees in this organization are in the lower levels of organizational hierarchy. In order to improve images of men and women in television and radio, representation of women as decision makers needs to be strengthened. It does matter who makes programmes and who make decisions about them. Senior decision makers and powerful media moguls with a gender sensitive perspective can use their persuasive power to empower others and change the image and status of women in media organizations.

As far as print media is concerned, late seventies and eighties in India witnessed the emergence of lot of women journalists. The choice of many educated women to take to this profession which was till recently considered a bastion of men is a sign of women of India joining the main stream decision making process in an important way. The last twenty years of print media is a story of women's participation in an area that focuses on the national agenda of great public interest.

Unfortunately very limited research is undertaken on women's employment in various media organizations, or media industries. No data is available as to what percentage of women take up career in freelancing media production or with NGO's working on media production. Thus, there is paucity of research in this area. Communication researchers should take up studies on women's employment in various mass media. This may provide guideline for bringing gender equality in the employment in mass media.

It is true that women are lagging behind men in the media work force. AT the same time, it is also a fact that there has been progress in this regard. There is more number of women employed now in media organization and in senior positions. Once they acquire power positions in the media workforce, the task of improving women's images in media will become easier.

Women's Portrayal in the Media

 While it's arguable whether the media truly reflects the society or not, there's no doubt that media has a big sociocultural influence on the society. By and large the media scene in India is that media does not address serious issues about exploitation and unequal treatment to women in different spheres but is keen in reporting sex related incidents by way of sensationalizing news of atrocities on women. Thus instead of highlighting the exploitation of woman they end up becoming one of the reasons in increase of violence as their coverage more often than not tend to glorify the crime against women. It is true that media has brought to light, as never before, certain misdemeanours against women but in a very subtle manner it also perpetuated the stereotyped image of woman as a householder and an inconsequential entity in the traditional value system. Generally, women's problems never figure on the front page of a newspaper unless it is a gruesome murder or a case of rape. Newspapers even on women's page does not usually address relevant issues for women empowerment but reporting is concerned with beauty tips recipes, fashion syndrome etc.

The media as discussed has and is very powerful over women and their body perception. The media has its way of conveying messages and having the audience believe in them. Consistently throughout Asia, women have been portrayed in the media as we all know the stereotypes—the femme fatale, the supermom, the sex kitten, the nasty corporate climber. Whatever the role, television, film and popular magazines are full of images of women and girls who are typically white, desperately thin, and made up to the hilt—even after slaying a gang of vampires or dressing down a Greek phalanx.. This not only inaccurately represents the diversity of women's lives, roles and experiences within this complex and rich region, women's contributions to the socio-political and economic development of society are often neglected.

The media has constructed their own definition of what a woman should be. Since the media is so powerful over many especially young women it creates a goal that is unattainable. Many young girls watch the media for advice. Advice on fashion, make up, boys, sex, and the list can go on. Instead of trusting their parents on these topics they rather take what they see as "reality". Print and broadcast media in India present females and males in stereotyped ways. Most of the time it project that men are important for their intellect and personality, and women are important for their general attractiveness and figure. Men are often portrayed as serious and estranged, but the women are portrayed as light-hearted and spontaneous. It does not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives

and contribution to society in a changing world. The typical Hindustani female lead in our Popular Media (print and broadcast) was submissive economically dependent, in need of affiliation and more often shown in home bound activities such as cooking, cleaning, knitting, gardening, etc. Women are depicted in far fewer situations, are less likely to be working, and more often are shown in a negative way.

That media is today conceived as a culture industry, which manufactures and sells images of masculinity and femininity is the truth. But the image of women portrayed by the media through TV serials, pop shows and films, is not to be found in real life. The media should refrain from portraying women as commodities and sex objects. Media itself a watchdog, does it need another watchdog to monitor it?

Portrayal of Women in Print Media

The print media which include newspapers, periodicals, newsletters and other channels are relied upon by the people as credible source of information, education and entertainment. The print media are known for fearless criticism and service. The media reflects events taking place in society and provides a platform for dialogue and debate on issues which can generate social changes. While electronic media carries more immediate weight on focusing attention on various issues, it is print media which has more persistent and lasting effect. It is felt that the way women are being projected in the print and electronic media is a reflection on the whole society.   Various studies have been carried out and articles published in national dailies regarding portrayal of women in print media have proved that portrayal of women is stereotype and needs to be improved. In all forms of media, we come across images of women as weak, childish, dependent, domestic, gullible, irrational, and scheming creatures. Such roles persuade women that there role in society, regardless of their education or aspirations, is only that of a house wife and lacking intellect. There is a patronizing tone in every printed feature, communicating a feeling of inferiority in women. They are represented as not being able to make important decision or do important things".

As things stand at present, the worst elements of the press have stereotyped and de-humanized women, turning them into commodities to be voyeuristically 'consumed. It is said that bare breasts are used to sell everything, be it drinks, jeans, kitchen faucets, cars, medicines, juice," and India is no exception. Only, in our print media, the bare breasts are made more prominent by the black ink used by the publications that want to sell their newspapers through women's bodies. So much so even magazines devoted explicitly to women have failed to respond significantly to the reality of changing roles of women. A content analysis of editorial samples from several leading English language monthlies published exclusively for women clearly indicates that most of the articles contain material to teach women how to be a super mom, how to get thin thighs in thirty days,

fashion boss, make-up tips and show-biz, gossip.

Similarly the regional language short story magazines particularly portray a submissive and docile pictures of women, whose ultimate achievements in life is to get married and serve their husbands and in–laws till death. When you ask the editors they reply: "This is what our readers want". Photo features published in press also centre on social functions and comparatively little importance is given to sensitive issues. Letters to editors and stories, although claiming a less significant position, do indicate the interest taken by viewers in women and activities or issues linked to them. If more attention is paid in this direction, the interest of readers as well as writers can be positively enhanced.

Women's rights campaigners have condemned the use of harmful women stereotypes in newspapers, urging the press to take greater responsibility for the portrayal of females. The regulation of print media to be made "consistent with other forms of media", so that any content "that would not pass the test" for television watersheds "should not be allowed to be printed within unrestricted newspapers."

As women have crossed the boundary from the domestic sphere to the professional arena, expectations and representations of women have changed as well. Further, in some discourses, the stereotypic character traits attributed to women have shifted from weak and dependent to strong and autonomous (Kates, Shaw-Garlock 1999). With this change the imperative need is to ensure that social responsibility and gender justice inform all innovative strategies and programmes of social concern and state building. In today's world gender digital divide threatens to increase inequalities between men and women following the communication revolution. Hence gender advocates worldwide who have been striving for gender equality must come forward with their insights and expertise to draw a blue print of e-access, e-readiness, e-quality and above all e-commerce and e-governance with a view to fulfilling diverse societal perspectives and needs.

Portrayal of Women in Television

The only professional category of the media in which women predominate is as presenters on television. Presenters are invariably household names and therefore exercise a powerful influence.The growth of the mass media, with television becoming a powerful medium, have had a great impact on the lives of many people. Television is widely known to represent and reinforce the mainstream ideology of contemporary western culture: patriarchy. While television representations of women have changed greatly in the last twenty years alone, in order to accommodate the changing role of women in society, one is led to ask how much the ideology has changed behind the more modern representations of women. Television is regarded by many viewers to be the most 'real' form of media. If this is the case, then it is important for us to question how real the representations of women are on television and how this affects the attitudes of

those who watch. All of us have a social responsibility. Since serial makers are ignoring theirs, it is up to the common people to raise their voice against the negative portrayal of women in the so-called family dramas." Sex stereotype is also very much evident in television portrayal of men and women in their appointed roles.

For quite number of years the private sector is allowed to own electronic media in India. Therefore the current scenario of the electronic media is entirely changed. Various new TV and FM radio channels are working and competing with local and foreign channels successfully. Number of women working behind and in front of the camera is increasing day by day. The facility of cable television foreign and Indian satellite channels is accessible and affordable to people of all income groups. It provides the variety of channels and the choice lies with the viewers, therefore every channel is emphasizing on programmes of entertainment and glamour. Thus the increasing shades of violence and glamour on the electronic media can be seen with the passage of time due to the competition among the channels which enhances the undue projection of attractive and beautiful women faces.

Television is portraying the gender issue in negative manner in the society. Women folk make more than 50 per cent of population and they deserve better treatment. The national electronic media is presenting women as sex symbols while they are making their mark in other fields of life as well. The role of the women should be acknowledged at all levels. The national electronic media should restrain some limits while using females in modeling and other certain activities. Women can be better economists, banker, journalists and what not but they are being presented as a mere showpiece to sell commodities, from children's nappies to modern cars and what not, in the national print and electronic media.

Recent studies conducted on private TV channels regarding portrayal of women in television conclude that these channels are in process to gradually change the stereotypical portrayal of women. In some of the programmes women are shown in diversified and against orthodox roles. Career women are exposed in positive roles and authoritative in various programmes. Some of the dramas have shown positive roles of urban working women. Creative drama productions are allowed to show the lives of heterogeneous population instead of limiting it to any particular group. Women are participating in discussions and heard. More programmes on gender issues are being telecasted by the television channels. Thus the situation is encouraging and supportive to the gender cause.

Portrayal of Women in Advertising

Women are also used as entertainment tool in the media. They have always been a big selling point for the commercial media around the world. They are used to advertise multinational products and are used as cheap labours. We live in a time when advertisements have taken on a completely different meaning than when they were first created. It is no longer a simple black and white ad trying

to sell a household product. Now we are bombarded by images selling anything from common household products to vacations in Shimla or Ooty. Thousands of rupees are spent to research what it is the public wants and how to sell it to them in the most appealing way. Images are in color, high tech, and sometimes it's even difficult to see exactly what is being sold.

Since the birth of the women's movement in the 1960s, critics consistently have raged against the way advertising treats women. Scantily clad, suggestively portrayed women sell every different type of product on television, in magazines, and now on personal computer screens, in increasing numbers, since the 1980s. In the past, young, educated women were the strongest critics of advertisements. Many of the changes in the advertising industry occurred because these women raised their voices in protest. This study examines how today's generation of young, educated females feels about the portrayal of women in advertisements and the consequences of those attitudes.

For women born in the early 1980s, sex in the media has been a constant companion. Sex is everywhere, on prime time television programs, movies, and music videos. It is rare to view an hour of television and not see a suggestively dressed or undressed female, whether in a program or a commercial. Sexual imagery appears in magazine articles and advertisements. A recent issue of Cosmopolitan might contain hundreds of half-naked women, stories of sexual mishaps, and even instructions for the ancient art of Kama Sutra..Everywhere we turn, advertising is telling people, women especially, what it means to be desirable. Many of these messages share a common theme: women must be "beautiful." Women have always been measured against cultural ideals of beauty, but advertising often uses sexism to make images of "ideal beauty" more prevalent and increasingly unattainable. .A quick glance through newspapers and TV gives a strong indication of how society views women. It is observed that many advertisements portray women in stereotypical roles that limit their capabilities. This is true to a large extent, and the trend has existed since ages. But these days there are significantly more overt portrayals of women as sex objects and advertisements that contained sexual objectification. Critics expressed that gender stereotypes are even more explicit in TV commercials then in regular programming. In order of frequency, women are depicted as predominantly concerned with their appearance, their housework, and family matters. In contrast, men are more likely to be shown working, playing, eating or being nursed.

What does this mean? Does it mean that Indian advertisers do suffer from an innovative lag and failed to respond to societal change? Does it mean that Indian consumers suffer from a psychological lag and are just now becoming sensitive to the issue of women and their portrayal in advertising? Or is it that Indian advertisers may have changed the way they advertise but consumers do not perceive the change? One can speculate, but one thing is certain: women do not believe that females are portrayed accurately or realistically in advertising.

These negative attitudes have important implications for advertisers. This predisposition toward advertising in general may limit the receptiveness to, and thus the effectiveness of, specific advertisements. Companies using advertising that depicts women in a narrowly defined social or occupational context, or those using advertising with any other inaccurate portrayals, may find that women will not only be offended but they may reject new products or boycott existing products.

Women are more often shown as submissive, men are more often shown taking up authoritarian roles. There are certain characteristics that can be seen in most advertisements that have woman in them. The woman is usually the center of attention. She is viewed as a sex object. She is normally wearing something very revealing. The camera usually takes the view of the male eye, looking the woman up and down. The woman is both childlike and needy, the object of desire for the man, or seen in a maternal light. She is taking care of the kids, cooking in the kitchen and waiting on the male. She is often portrayed as ditzy, unintelligent, irrational, or demanding. Her voice is generally low and seductive. She usually is willing to give the guy in the ad sex as a reward if she gets what she wants which is generally something stereotypical such as flowers or a ring. If you look closely she is generally portrayed in an unintelligent way. In real life no one prances around their kitchen in their underwear talking seductively about their shampoo, but that is usually what happens in advertisements. Thus again, males are depicted as the competent working authority; female as vain home makers and consumers.

Today's college females were raised in a much sexualized world. Sexual content dominates the media, and new feminists see female sexuality as power. It would only naturally follow that advertisements portray women as sex objects. These portrayals apparently do not offend young, educated women because of this culture. They were and are constantly surrounded by sexual images of females, and many have adopted views of third wave feminists, which interpret these formerly negative and sometimes harmful images as acceptable ones. Women are being presented as an object for selling commodities in television commercials and newspapers advertisements and it is an unfair illustration of the women folk in the media. This kind of projection reinforces notions of the women as sexual objects that have been placed in this world for the pleasure of the male. Every step, move and touch is slow, hesitant and unsure as though she does not exist as material being, is totally incapable of doing anything. It shows the impression of a weak, helpless creature that can have no confidence in herself and her abilities to do anything but to be a manufactured dream. Another category is the western oriented women. She embodies evil. She may be a part of a gang of criminals or their leader just like in cigarette ads. Her western bold dress and looks suggests that she is a loose, immoral woman and a danger to men's morals and to the society.

This may sound a little drastic, but I don't believe it is too far from the truth.

When is the last time you saw an average looking woman without the perfect figure on an advertisement? When did the last time you saw a sports channel advertisement with the woman portrayed in an intelligent light know a lot about sports? When was the last time you took a look at the clothes and things young girls are buying and how they are dressing? I believe that we need to start training people to be critical thinkers. To understand what the representation of woman and men in the media means, we need to point out the ideologies that are taken for granted and we need to change the way we think. Only then are woman's bodies not going to be exploited in the media, only then will advertisements like the Sprite: Lingerie ad be an outrage and not something for guys to drool over and woman to live up too. I hope that we one day can reach the point where we look at the visual culture around us and see people, not just objects. Our advertisements tend to be more glamorous and neglect the fact that they are violating the prevailing societal norms. Ironically, it is through this format that women continue to receive the maximum exposure. The effects of such a market-oriented exposure can never benefit women in the long run. By presenting stereotypical/traditional portrayals of women, their serious and grave issues resulting from changing times can never be addressed forcefully."

Media Coverage of Gender Issues

In our consumption-oriented, mediated society, much of what comes to pass as important is based often on the stories produced and disseminated by media institutions. Much of what audiences know and care about is based on the images, symbols, and narratives in radio, television, film, music, and other media. How individuals construct their social identities, how they come to understand what it means to be male, female, black, white, Asian, Latino, Native American—even rural or urban—is shaped by commodified texts produced by media for audiences that are increasingly segmented by the social constructions of race and gender. Media, in short, are central to what ultimately come to represent our social realities.

The media are one of the most important yet challenging areas of work for advancing gender equality. As a consequence, the coverage of gender issues in the media today has to be viewed and evaluated against the background of globalization in general and media globalization in particular. As "formal" or legislated discrimination against women falls away, the key challenge confronting us is how to change mindsets hardened by centuries of socialization and cemented by custom, culture and religion. Women's groups from around the world report that gender discrimination in the workplace, combined with a general lack of respect for women's human rights in many cultures, creates barriers for women entering the industry. In addition to appearing in a limited number of roles, women are often simply missing in the media. They are much less likely to be featured in news stories and less likely to be interviewed and asked for an opinion than men. Certain categories of women receive even less attention in the media, such

as elderly women, and women from minority ethnicities and religious groups, the working class, and women with different sexual orientations. This raises the interesting question of what precisely constitutes a "women's issue"? Why are issues that concern half the world's population not included in mainstream news? Why is the mainstream news not considered of interest to women? Why are some issues considered "hard" and others "soft"? The answers lie in the fact that the dominant voices in society have defined what is newsworthy and what is not, and these voices have seldom been female.

To the extent that the mainstream media covers "women's issues" content analyses show that the bulk of coverage concerns violence against women and domestic issues. There is a huge range of missing stories: women battling the oppression of culture and tradition; women as the primary producers of food; traders; proponents of peace; primary providers of unwaged care work in the economy; builders of shattered communities; managers of household resources and so forth. There is little or no coverage of men's domestic responsibilities- as care givers, parents and partners. To the extent that women are genuinely physically absent from certain categories such as sport and politics, the media seldom raises critical questions as to why this is so. Is the media only about policy makers, or is it also about the people affected by policy? What about giving voice to the voiceless? And is it true that women are only objects of beauty or victims of violence? Eighty percent of the food in Southern Africa is grown and produced by women. When last did you hear a woman farmer being interviewed on agricultural prices? Then again, is the media some mindless puppy that is just there to follow, or does it have a responsibility to lead? Do the media simply reflect society, with all its imperfections, or does it also set agendas?

English press is giving supportive treatment to women related news. Its reporting is balanced, unbiased and based on facts. Its coverage of gender issues is extensive and positive. English press portrayed women and their achievements and other issues objectively. This is encouraging for all concerned and there is hope that situation will improve over time." If newspapers are serious about the representation of women, letting their voices be heard, giving them space and visibility, then they need to go a little further than they are doing now. It is not enough to have a little page filler on some woman. The challenges are more on how to present the stories, the headlines and what they reflect, the amount of space, which gets to speak and has the last word, and the kind of analysis. In summary, it is about access, representation, participation, visibility, space, language and interpretation"

There have been several different approaches to the issue of gender and the media. These include:

- Empowering women journalists;

- Creating alternative media for women's voices to be heard;

- Seeking to bring about gender balance in the institution of the media as

well as in its editorial content.

- None of these approaches is mutually exclusive. Each has an important role to play in ensuring a fair representation and portrayal of women in the media. Gender Links has, however, specifically chosen to focus on the latter because:

- In the long term there is no alternative to ensuring that the mainstream media reflects and   promotes gender equality;

- We believe that male and female journalists need gender training;

- Several organizations- such as the various media women's associations in India focusing on the first two of these approaches. We welcome these as important and complementary initiatives. But we believe our niche is to engage with the mainstream media as well as seek to bridge the gap between gender activists and media practitioners.

Analysis and Conclusion

Gender-equality analysis is about understanding women's and men's distinct situations and experiences in society, and using this knowledge to uncover potential gender-equality problems and design solutions in our daily work. Analysis of gender issues demands a scrutiny of the information as is available on the status of women in different spheres of life and activity, in formal and informal capacities. Much has been written and researched on these issues, generating data sets on what is described as "gender gaps. The significant gender differences and disparities with respect to decision-making powers, participation, and returns for effort that prevail in different societies need to be taken into account when responding to the forces of globalization. Because of gender inequalities and discrimination in all parts of the world, women can be affected negatively by globalization processes to a greater extent than men. On the other hand, there can be significant gains for women with globalization. It is necessary to systematically monitor the gender impact of change so that the goals of gender equality and the expansion of human capabilities are not sacrificed.

The relationship between globalization and gender equality, and the relevance of globalization for transforming gender relations has been increasingly well documented. Recent developments in the media highlight the importance of examining and understanding issues relating to gender in the media against the backdrop of globalisation, in general, and media globalisation, in particular. This is easier said than done because it is relatively uncharted territory. While both globalisation and media globalisation have received considerable attention from scholars and activists in recent times, the process of developing a gender analysis of media globalisation is still a work in progress. However, clearly it is an important process that requires the participation and contribution from people involved in both media and gender-related issues in the global South.

We live in communication age and mass media has become an integral part of our daily life. Media, the agent of social change, both reflects and shapes society and is extremely influential. The power of mass media in forming opinion cannot be underestimated. We make our daily decisions and even determine our ideological beliefs based on media content reflected to us. Of all the sources of gender stereotypes, the media are the most persistent. Thus its role in projecting images and role of women cannot be ignored. Gender discrimination and gender sensitization in India are stormily debated issues. No doubt, awareness of gender discrimination is there but the issue of its elimination is still undecided. Gender patterns in India media are analyzed on the basis of the participation and position of women in the media. The media in India continues to be male dominated as the ratio of male-female workers is heavily imbalanced in favor of men.

Less than five per cent of the total journalists' fraternity is women and very few of them have made it to the top ladder, this indicates that the 'male world' view prevails and holds sway in the media discourse. Women journalists are not preferred to a part of policy making team. They are not assigned hard beats and rarely selected for overseas trainings/courses/study visits which discourage them for pursuing careers in journalism. Women's under-representation in media outlets is hurdle in their better portrayal. It is media's institutional flaw that it has not taken up the issue of gender balance in employment as it should have taken up. This gender imbalance is directly connected with various issues including low salaries, absence of a congenial atmosphere to female journalists, sexual harassment at work places and late working hours required in this profession carry a social stigma for women.

All forms of mass media, from newspapers to radio and television, have accepted as the pioneer of modernity. But as far as portrayal of women in the media is concerned, modernity of appearance and presentation is found only and not of intellect, thought and content. For years research into gender portrayal has consistently revealed the pattern that men appear in roles with a higher status, e.g. as experts and authorities, while women appear principally in lower-status roles as e.g. victims and passers-by. Reporting on the changing roles of men and women in society often implicitly assumes that women are principally responsible for child-rearing and home-making while men are responsible for income and management. Images of women in the media mostly depict women as sex objects, in domestic roles, or in less active postures than men deeply influence the understanding of women and the society in which they live.

The electronic media have more important role in this regard as it has an enormous impact in shaping the psyche of the people in India. The encouraging element is that television channels in India, to some extent, has started airing some programmes which are women-oriented and are depicting a positive image of women. But the overall picture still is far from objectivity and mostly their image is fairly stereotypical. Women appear on screen less often and hold the floor for less time than men especially in talk shows on national issues. There

is no limit of negative portrayal of women in television commercials which is damaging, both for the country and for the women folk.

Media is biased against women in many areas which affects their images and hamper women's development in society. A popular belief and justification for stereotypical images of women and making gender issues sensational is that it is the demand of masses. This is a lame excuse on the part of the media professionals. They should realize that it is destroying the morality of the society whereas a gender sensitive media can influence the policy-makers and equip women through information; particularly rural women that can help them make better decisions about their lives. What required is certain level of commitment to put up good work for have-nots.

Even though significant gains have been made in many areas, there is still much room for improvement. Policies and strategies on gender equality and empowerment of women are only useful if there is systematic and effective implementation. This requires political will, resources and mechanisms for following-up and securing accountability. The establishment of specific mechanisms to work on gender equality and empowerment of women can only have a positive impact if these mechanisms are provided with clear mandates, adequate resources and appropriate political support.

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