

CHAPTER 2

FEMINISM AND MEDIA

The Second Chapter analyses the inter-relationship between Media and women as performance and portrayal of women in Media indicate the status of women in a particular society. Secondly, this chapter explores different perspectives on Media to examine the Media's role towards women. Next, in regard to the Indian scene, the chapter rigorously analyses the Indian Feminist point of view on Media.

2.1 FEMINISM ON MEDIA

The *Women* and *Media* has been the subject of study for the *Feminists* all over the world. When one speaks of women and Media, the first question that strikes peoples' mind most often is why women are the subject of Media and why not men? Why Media and gender becomes the issue of discussion? The answer to these questions may be articulated thus — that, the Media's portrayal of women is one of the ways to measure the real status and position of women and the values attached to the concepts based on "*Gender*" and "*Sex*" in a particular society. It is a fact that, Media are the influential cultural elements that not only reflect the dominant attitudes and ideologies of a society but also shape approaches and ideas of the individuals. Hence, the role of Media towards creation of a "*gender-neutral*" society cannot be ignored.

But, contemporary Mass Media, under various pressures have become the commercial channels only and failed to reflect the social problems, especially, the problems faced by the women in particular, on one hand, and aspirations of the entire population, on the other. So, portrayal of women in Media — whether in Films, Television Programmes, Visual Advertisements or Newspapers and Magazines is becoming an area of great concern to the Feminists. Out of the multiple concerns of the Feminist critics, stereotyped portrayals of women in Media probably bother them the most. They object commodification of women in Media — either as objects of consumption and in over-simplified roles prorogating the private sphere for women.

Feminism as an ideology and as the chains of Movements for *Women's Empowerment*, in all the fields — Political, Cultural, Literary or Social, have a considerable effect in Media since the Feminists, over the couple of years, have established a body of reading strategies, analytical framework and theoretical models for better understanding of the crucial role that the Media is playing in the reproduction of gender inequality and stereotypes. It challenges the way Media is generating the age old perceptions regarding women and gender discriminations and stands deadly against media's Patriarchal Hegemonic role in which women at large are being subjected. So, Bell Hooks said,

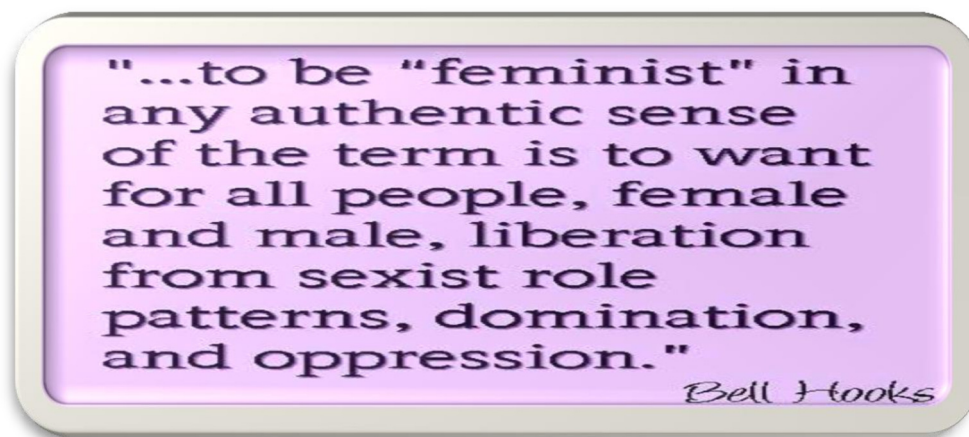


Figure 2.1 Bell Hooks and Feminism¹

Having started in the 1960s and 70s, the Feminists throughout this period, began to challenge Media's role in gender stereotyping and normalizing the dominant cultural values, customs that legitimized male dominance over women. It is well stated in the following:

[...] while numerous institution such as religion, the traditional family, politics and capitalism became the focus of feminist criticism in the 1960s, analysis of the media was a top priority to many feminists either because of the blatantly oppressive representations of women they projected or because of the almost

¹ Hooks Bell (n.d). Pinterest The Catalog of Ideas. Retrieved from <https://www.google.co.in/search?q=https://www.pinterest.com/djacademe/hooksbell/&num=30&client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla> on 12.07.2016.

total absence of women and their concern. (Smith: 1989, as quoted in Strutt:1994, p.70)²

In this particular point of time, the studies were based on the principle of Liberalism³ and by and large, advocated for equal participation of women in media for the positive portrayal of women. Out of manifold concerns of Feminist critics, portrayals of women in the socially and culturally sanctioned roles were the one that perturbed the Feminist most as it was posited as a bar against women to be liberated.

With a view to theorise the on-going objectifications of women as sex objects, and the portrayals of women in the mythical roles, Feminists came to the forefront. Several studies had been conducted examining the portrayal of women in the Media. The studies revealed the fact that women tended to be depicted in submissive traditional role models such as housewives, caring mothers or secretaries etc. whereas men as breadwinners, decision makers, independent or professionally employed. Besides, those reported images of women were mostly framed in the domestic sphere whereas work place or other public places as male place were not accessible to women. It is well stated in the following.

Feminists believe that the media often presents women as cleaners, housewives, domestic servants providing comfort and support for men: a man's sex object to service men's sexual needs, etc. Feminists believe that this gender representation is an aspect of patriarchy. They observe that the media suggests these roles are natural and normal. Feminists see this as an example of patriarchal ideology- a set of beliefs which distorts reality and supports male dominance⁴.

Two great Feminists of this period were *Betty Freidan* and *Germaine Greer*, who produced two remarkable works in the history of *Feminist Media Studies* — *The Feminist Mystique* and *The Female Eunuch* respectively. In her work, Betty Friedan raised the issue of promotion of myths and stereotypes of women as objects of

² Strutt S. M. (1994). Framing Feminisms: Feminist Critiques of Patriarchal News Media (Doctoral Thesis, Simon Fraser University). Retrieved from <https://www.google.co.in/search?q=Suzzane+Monique+Strutt+%281994%29> on 12.07.2016.

³ Liberal feminists have argued for the emancipation of women from what they perceive to be a male dominated society. Equality for liberal feminists means that women would have an equal place in society alongside men; for example an equal chance in the labour market. Nerisa Pillay:2008

⁴ Trueman C N (2015, May25). Feminism [Bolg post]. Retrieved from <http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/sociology/theories-in-sociology/feminism/> on 12.07.2016

domesticity, analysing the chapter in a magazine called *The Happy Housewife Heroine*. Similarly, Greer in *The Female Eunuch*, criticised the romantic novels for generating unrealistic ideals and beliefs on heterosexual romance. Friedan says,

[...] the image of [...] the suburban housewife with an up and coming husband and a station wagon full of children [...] this image created by women's magazines, by advertisements, television, movies [...] shapes women's lives today and mirrors their dreams. (Friedan: 1963,p. 30 as quoted in Rachael:2009, para 6)⁵

From that period on, continuous studies are being made on this field. Feminists assert that women's potential character is as essentially capable of and eligible for all successes and glories of the world and refuses to be seen as an object of desire, lust and consumption⁶. In the 1990s, the Feminist scholars recognized the importance of Gender, questioned the naturalization of masculinity and masculine discourse in Media Studies and argued for 'Feminine' as a new philosophy of study⁷. Dwivedi R.R observes:

Media is usually proven notorious for projecting women as stereotypical characters where they supposedly play an underrated role in the household ambience. Feminists' objections stand even more relevant when understanding of women as either object of consumption or in their oversimplified roles prevails in a time when women articulate their representations advocating their prerogative in public and private spheres. (Rajiv Ranjan Dwivedi: 2014,p.50)⁸

Further, Feminist issues gained remarkably more importance in the Media, especially after the Fourth World Conference of the UN on Women held at Beijing in 1995.

⁵ Rachael (2009, February 16). How has Feminist Media Theory discussed media representations of women? Which of these theoretical observations do you find most convincing? [Blog Post]. Retrieved from <http://rachaelx.jigsy.com/entries/general/how-has-feminist-media-theory-discussed-media-representations-of-women-which-of-these-theoretical-observations-do-you-find-most-convincing> on 12.07.2016. .

⁶Dwivedi Dr. R.R (2014). Women in Indian Television Advertisements :A Feminist Observation. *International Journal of Education and Psychological Research*. 3(1), 50-53. Retrieved from http://ijepr.org/doc/V3_Is1_March14/ij11.pdf on 12.07.2016.

⁷(McMillan: 2007)

⁸Dwivedi Dr. R.R (2014). Women in Indian Television Advertisements :A Feminist Observation. *International Journal of Education and Psychological Research*. 3(1), 50-53. Retrieved from http://ijepr.org/doc/V3_Is1_March14/ij11.pdf on 12.07.2016.

“The strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) were — Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision making in and through the Media and new technologies of communication; promote a balanced portrayal of women in the media.”

Thereafter, many women’s organizations began to voice their concerns against the negative portrayal of women as “*Commodity and Second Class Citizen*” through both Private and Government controlled Print and electronic media, and upheld the need for encouraging women to join the profession.

2.1.1 Liberal Feminist Perspective on Media

In Liberal Feminist Discourse, Media essentially cherish a reformist approach to the society that tends to see more equal gender relations being brought about by equal opportunities, policies and affirmative action programmes. It does appear to be bothered to question the power dimensions of the gender relations and patriarchal values that implicate male superiority and female inferiority. Instead, it concentrates on sex role stereotypes, prescriptions of sex-appropriate behaviour, appearance, interests, skills and self-perceptions.

So, Liberals stick to the point that, being a part of the large socio-cultural environment, Media are supposed to patronise maleness everywhere and set men as the standard for judging women — the truth once said by Simone De Beauvoir that women are the ‘others’ or ‘inessential’ while men are the ‘self’ or ‘essential’. It is rightly stated in the following.

The category ‘woman’ has thus no substance, being merely a projection of male fantasies (the ‘myth of the eternal feminine’) and fears. But since all cultural representations of the world presently available to us — whether in myth, religion, literature or popular culture — are the work of men, women too have internalised these definitions and learned to ‘dream through the dreams of men’. Indeed, a ‘true woman’ is *required* to accept herself as Other for man: she must ‘make herself object...renounce her autonomy’. (Thornham S.:1998, p.29)⁹

⁹ Thornham Sue The Second Wave Feminism. In Gamble Sarah (eds.)*The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism*.pp.15-24 London: Routledge

So, the clash between the “real” and the “ideal” women, which is created by the media for *Market purpose*, to sometimes sell the products from the beauty range to men’s underwear, from shaving cream to car, are the signs of *male dominance, male centeredness and male identification* where women are trapped as caged birds. Real women, who cannot be the way they are, as whatever they achieve are judged and compared to men by men, because of the prevailed notion of women — between which women are becoming the toys in the hand of men in all the structures, systems (socio-political and economic), institutions of our Patriarchy, be it family, marriage, religion, rituals, government or media.

Women, through their continuing struggle, over the couple of centuries, are trying get rid of the prevailing discrepancies and oppressions, which are taking the forms of violation and crimes against women in the forms of rape, dowry or dowry deaths, witch craft, honour killings, sexual harassment, battering and so on—but hardly they get positive representations and coverage in media. Though women have a meagre representations in media, if not for anything else, but likely to prove women to be inferior subservient to men, in other words, in men’s world, by and large, has been identified as a problem by the social scientists and even harmful also.

As for example, Indian Media, being implicated in the stringent Patriarchal values portrayed women in popular stereotypes as traditional role models glorifying as mothers and daughter-in-laws wearing heavy sarees and ornaments to look typical house wife to be called “Ideal” women in the society. It is well stated in the following:

The picture that is portrayed in the media does not portray the true picture of the Indian woman. Thousands of year back in the mythological story of Ramayana *Goddess Sita* had to give “*Agni Pariksha*” (a test for truth by burning oneself in the fire), to prove her loyalty towards her husband¹⁰.

Moreover, where women are portrayed as modern and independent, they are shown either in hyper-sexualised roles or not very well educated. These double standards of showing women either as traditional role model or hyper-sexy , in a way, perpetuate the sex role stereotypes and attribute stereotypical behaviour and values to women’s

¹⁰*Gender and Media: Different Perspective (n.d)*. Retrieved from http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/21309/6/06_chapter%202.pdf on 13.07.2016.

nature and sexuality which in turn create clashes between real and ideal women pursuing women as identity-less.

So, Liberal Feminists suggest that, women should acquire greater equality in society and power by entering in male dominated fields. They suggest media should contribute to the change by portraying more women and men in non-traditional roles and by using nonsexist language. It is well stated in the following.

Liberal feminists have argued for the emancipation of women from what they perceive to be a male dominated society. Equality for liberal feminists means that women would have an equal place in society alongside men; for example an equal chance in the labour market. (Pillay: 2008)¹¹

As a result a new stereotype of '*superwoman*' has been created, which is the response of commercial culture to demand of Liberal Feminism. Women's magazines and advertisements portray them as independent and assertive career women, successful wives and mothers who are still beautiful and have kept the body she had as a girl in perfect shape. Real women trying to live up to this image end up suffering from serious burn-out symptoms¹².

2.1.2 Radical Feminist Perspective on Media

A very significant perspective but one, perhaps, much distorted by the media, is the Radical Feminist Perspective about women's subordination in society. Although the beginnings of Radical Feminism are considered to coincide with the beginnings of the Second Wave of Feminism around 1969-1970, it has been contended that Radical Feminism has important ties with Liberal Feminism, the Feminists who spoke of sexual politics before Kate Millett. However, Liberal Feminism overlooked the necessary connection between sexual oppression, sexual division of labour and the economic class structure. Hence, their claims remained reformist. Radical Feminism is a perspective within Feminism that focuses on the hypothesis of patriarchy as a

¹¹ Pillay Nerisa (2008). The Portrayal of Women in Television Advertisements on Sabc3: A Reflection on Stereotypical Representation. Faculty of Humanities. University of the Witwatersrand. Johannesburg. Retrieved from <http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10539/8264/Corrections%20final%20draft%20copy.pdf?sequence=1> on 13.07.2016.

¹² Liesbet Van Zoonen in (n.d) Feminist Perspectives on the Media. Retrieved from http://is.muni.cz/el/1423/podzim2013/gen125/um/zoonen-Feminist_Perspective_on_the_Media.pdf on 12.08.2015.

system of power that organizes society into a complex of relationships based on the assertion that male supremacy oppresses women. Radical Feminism aims to challenge and overthrow Patriarchy by opposing standard gender roles and oppression of women and calls for a radical reordering of society. (Dr. Sara Neena: 2011)¹³

Radical Feminism perceives Patriarchal society to be suppressing and distorting on the part of women's experiences where all men directly or indirectly dominate and oppress all women. So, Radical Feminists observe media as an institution based on Patriarchy. They are particularly concerned about the media's role in the construction of consciousness and gender identities instead of specific stereotypes. The Radicals, to analyse the male dominance in media and other social institutions identify the need for women to separate themselves from the dominance of the male controlled systems and create their own social structures and organizations. It is well stated in the following.

According to the Radical Feminist Media Studies assumption mass media are in the hands of male owners and producers, so they will operate to the benefit of a patriarchal society. In Radical Feminist Media analysis the power of media to affect men's behavior towards woman and women's perception of themselves is beyond discussion.¹⁴

Radical feminists' one of the tentacles towards women's liberation from the age old oppression is that *personal is political*. They support by exposing the abuses towards a woman by a man – abuses that are considered to be private. They politicise the issues of women and it is well stated in the following.

Radical feminists confront the exposing of female abuse by male and politicizing issues considered as private such as sexual violence, wife battering, incest pornography, women trafficking and sex tourism etc.

¹³ Neena Dr. Sara (2011) Women and Society, Module I. Core Course of B.A, Sociology, University of Calicut. Retrieved from http://www.universityofcalicut.info/SDE/BASociology_VI_Sem_Core_course_Women_Society.pdf on 15.07.2016.

¹⁴ *Frame work of the study* (n.d) . Retrieved from http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/94963/8/08_chapter%201.pdf on 13.07.2016.

Lesbianism is also an example of the radical politicization of the personal.
(Zoonen : 1991)¹⁵

Another key concern of Radical Feminism is Pornography. Radicals perceive that pornographies show the subservient position of women. It also symbolizes the male control over women. Similar to the above views, most of the Radical Feminists reveal, through their studies that women's lives are only partially reflected and represented by the media and in those meager representations. Most of the times they are shown as distorted and misleading. It is well stated in the following.

Coward (1984:64-66) point out, images and articles in popular magazines such as *Better Homes and Gardens* relate to home-improvements. They have a definite style of writing of which any idea of domestic labor is represented. Labor is there but it is the labor of decorating, designing and painting which leads to the house ending up in the perfect state. Turner (1997:330-331) suggests that this misrepresentation of the 'Real Home Environment' not only represses women's labor but women are made to believe that they are, for the most part, responsible for domestic life. Any deviation from this 'norm' connotes 'inadequacy'¹⁶.

According to the Radical Feminists, globalization and liberalization with its technological advancement have further lowered the image and status and position of women by redefining the gender roles and gender hierarchies on the basis of Patriarchy. Though it is claimed that through the flow of opportunities, education, cultural exchanges have opened up a new arena for women to be liberated and emancipated from the sufferings for being women. But, in reality, these changes are termed as fake by the Radical Feminists as uneven distribution of sources between men and women and widespread gender discriminations are still prevalent in human relationships.

2.1.3 Socialist Feminist Perspective on Media

The Socialist Feminists identify media to be in the hands of the male owners and producers and they operate it for nothing but the continuation and perpetuation of

¹⁵ *Gender and Media: Different Perspective (n.d)*. Retrieved from http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/21309/6/06_chapter%202.pdf on 13.07.2016.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Patriarchy. The Socialist Feminist Communication Model adheres to radical models in which media are perceived to be ideological instruments presenting the capitalist and patriarchal society as the natural order. They concentrate on how and in which ways the concept is formed in media through its contents—languages, figures and symbols. It is well stated in the following:

Socialist Media Theory focuses on things such as the nurturing role that women must play capitalist society. This role is essential because a capitalist society needs healthy able workers, men, in order to function. The media plays an important role in enforcing these ideas, and socialist theorists believe that it positions women in this nurturing role, and also positions them to willingly do unpaid labour, in their roles as “housewife” or “mother”. (Rachael: 2009, para 12)¹⁷

Socialist Feminists concentrate on the ways in which gender is constructed through language and imagery of the media contents. It is based within a Marxist framework of reference, namely Gramsci’s (1971) theory of ‘*Hegemony*’. The ways of media is representing women in prostitution, child marriage, rape are seductive and sensual rather than important problems which needs to be eradicated from the society to reduce the sufferings of women and glorify women as human beings. Women’s issues do not get coverage as the media personnel quarrel over which should be telecast for raising TRPs.

Media, in constructing subjective perspective on gender, play a very crucial role providing role models, scripts and behaviours or activities given to the male-female characters. Viewers being active actors as social being and copier everyday try to imitate the behaviour and life style given to the characters or any description given in both Print and Visual Media without taking into consideration the originality and reality of the humans, both men and women. The main problem of the researchers with the media is the stereotypical construction of image of women—which is the starting point of all kind of oppressions on and discrepancies with women, where

¹⁷ Rachael (2009, February 16). How has Feminist Media Theory discussed media representations of women? Which of these theoretical observations do you find most convincing? [Blog Post]. Retrieved from <http://rachaelx.jigsy.com/entries/general/how-has-feminist-media-theory-discussed-media-representations-of-women-which-of-these-theoretical-observations-do-you-find-most-convincing> on 12.07.2016.

women become a hoax between the “Real” and “Ideal” that ends up in identity crisis, according to the Feminist scholars.

2.2 MEDIA THROUGH DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

2.2.1 Functionalist Perspective

In the Functionalist perspective societies are thought to function like the organisms with various social institutions working together like organs to maintain the society. Functionalism explains social practices and institutions in terms of the structures and functions of society with its institutions. Society and individuals have needs that are fulfilled by the institutions of a society. Thus, mass media, being an institution itself, fulfil the needs of individuals regarding information, motivation, adaptation, socialization, continuity, social order, integration, and so on. Relatively, Functionalist approach holds that society is system of which media is a sub system that contributes to the maintenance of continuity. It also uniformly orders the assumption that social life requires social integration, status quo maintenance, and harmony, consistent and complete picture of society and of social environment¹⁸.

Through the book *Mass Communication: A Sociological Perspective* (1959) Sociologist Charles Wright directly applied Functionalism in Mass communication. He wrote:

[...] media theorists “noted three activities of communication specialists: (1) surveillance of the environment, (2) correlation of the parts of society in responding to the environment, and (3) transmission of the social heritage from one generation to the next” (p. 16). Wright added a fourth, entertainment. These became known as the “classic four functions of the media. (para 6)¹⁹.

Wright’s particular contribution was to draw a distinction between the intended purpose of media activity and its consequences (its functions). Nonetheless, for most communication scholars, functions became synonymous with the aims or goals of the

¹⁸ Tamakuwala S.J. (2010).The Third Chapter. Retrieved from http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/2563/9/09_chapter%203.pdf on 13.07.2016.

¹⁹ *Functions of Media* (n.d). Retrieved from <http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/articles/pages/6540/Functions-of-the-Media.html#ixzz3nLCGef91> on 15.07.2016.

media industries themselves. As a result, many critics saw Functionalism as doing little more than legitimizing the status quo. For example, surveillance of the environment refers to the collection and distribution of information by the media. People know the fate of the government appropriations bill because they saw it on the news. Correlation of parts of society refers to the interpretive or analytical activities of the media. People know from the newspaper that the bill's failure to pass means no raises for teachers this year. Transmission of the social heritage refers to the ability of the media to communicate values, norms, and styles across time and between groups. What were typical attitudes toward racial minorities in the 1950s? People can see them manifested in old movies and television shows. Finally, entertainment refers to the ability of the media to amuse or entertain. (para.7)²⁰

2.2.2 Structural Perspective

The Structural Perspective of media analysis enhances dominance to the ideological role of the media independent of the economic structure. As Structural Perspective analyses the form and content of cultural artefacts and then it links to the economic base. In this approach emphasis lies on ideas rather than on material structure, analyzing the ideological effects of media in the interest of ruling class. Thus, it proves that mass media reproduce essentially exploitative relations while sanctioning the dominance of Capitalism and the subordination of the working class. Correspondingly, the main contribution of the media is to stimulate and then satisfy the false needs, leading to the assimilation of groups who have no material interest in general society. Instead of starting from a concrete analysis of economic relations and the ways in which they structure both the processes and results of cultural production, structuralism starts by analyzing the form and content of cultural artefacts and then working backwards to describe their economic base. The characteristic outcome is a top heavy base analysis in which an elaborate autonomy of cultural forms balances insecurely on a schematic account of economic forces shaping their production. (Mudock & Golding: 1977, as quoted in Tamakuwala: 2010, p.136)²¹.

²⁰ *Functions of Media* (n.d). Retrieved from <http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/articles/pages/6540/Functions-of-the-Media.html#ixzz3nLEeJoL0> on 14.07.2016.

²¹ Tamakuwala S.J. (2010). The Third Chapter. Retrieved from http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/2563/9/09_chapter%203.pdf on 13.07.2016.

Structuralism emphasises its relative autonomy with cultural sphere irrespective of class interests but tries to be connected to the power structure of the capitalist state through its relations. To be precise, the emphasis is on the semiological analysis and not on the material practices. The concept of hegemony refers to a ubiquitous and internally consistent culture and ideology which are openly and implicitly favourable to a dominant class or elite, although less closely and consciously organized. (Gramsci: 1971)²²

Any sort of analysis in which mass media operates as ideological agencies, is bound to be partial. Likewise in India, the centre of gravity lays significantly with the communication conglomerates. Structuralists are concerned with the system reducing media research to a textual analysis; television programme and literary text. Accordingly, Structuralism shows a concern to establish the autonomy and effectiveness of film and television form, enhancing (promoting) the idea that ideology embodied in film and television is an important and necessary area of ideological struggle.

2.2.3 Marxist Perspective

Marxism and Feminism are the theories of power and its distribution and the focus is on inequality. They provide accounts of how social arrangements of patterned disparity can be internally rational yet unjust. But, their specificity is not identical. Marxism deals with deprivation of one's work whereas Feminism of one's sexuality. They define each one's conception of lack of power per se (Mackinnon: 1982). Marxist perspective being a theory of history is rather more concerned with the whole of people's social life compared to the above perspectives as it symmetrically discerns the stages of history and social life. According to this approach, under capitalism media is the ideological tool for propaganda. Thus, transnational corporations use media to serve the interests of the capitalists by circulating their ideas and world view. The net result is there is a large concentration of media ownership by capitalist entrepreneurs (Bag di kian: 1988²³). Besides, media studies reveal correlative

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

evidence of conservative tendencies in content of media so organized. (Hermen & Chomsky: 1988)²⁴

The larger part of economic infrastructure and power base are controlled by the economic dimensions of media institutions whereas the integral part of culture in capitalism is formed by images, ideas and information circulated by the media. In true words, media is related to the prevailing structure of political and economic power. Simultaneously media is observed as an effective instrument of power to reinforce and apply influence in various ways. The real potentiality of media can be observed in its context of ideas and values.

The Marxist approach emphasises on control of media and the way media market forces operate because the primary focus is on the relationship between economic structure and the ideological content of media. Concluding, we can state that amongst the rest, media ranks the highest position in the commercial organizations that produce and distribute the commodities with in capitalist economic framework. As media is an economic interface between producers of goods and services, they form integral part of the strategy for the circulation of economic commodities within capitalist economy through advertising. Thus, we can conclude that as a whole media is a large scale commercial enterprise in capitalism. Economic interests of multinational corporations are fed by media. Media create enhancement of structural inequalities in wealth and power for the interest of class which is owned and controlled by media itself.

Thus, their central function is, “to maintain the financial equilibrium of a deeply institutionalized social system which is highly integrated with the economic institutions” (Defleus: 1970). The content of media then depends on “the exchange value of different content, under pressure to expand markets and by the underlying economic interests of owners and decision makers” (Garnham: 1979). Media has its own ideology with regard to profit making business .i.e. low investment in less profitable media tasks and consequently neglects the economically poorer section who is neither subscribers nor advertisers. Never ever media reflects and concentrates the concerns of the marginalized in the society, and if so, there must be profit hidden stunt behind it. Meanwhile media highlights only those celebrities and politicians that

²⁴ Ibid

return crores of profit to them. Media have already established the position of groups of those whose market is consolidated and excluded those who lack capital base required for the successful entry. Another perspective highlighted by Smith (1977) is that of the primary product of the media being the audience attention, which is sold to advertisers. People spend hours and all their leisure time watching television, which includes use value and exchange value. Television creates interest and power of an audience is reproduced in the necessary time and surplus watching time of the audience works for capital. Capitalism first creates the dichotomy between work time and leisure time and then it exploits the leisure time.

Audience watches advertisements which become an activity for consumer economy that is crucial for the market economy. In the same way attention to advertisements in the print media cannot be controlled and measured accurately, while attention of radio and television can be measured and sold to gain profit in advertising. Smythe considers the huge advertising industry (in India it was rupees 102.30 billion in the year 2002. Kohli, 2003: 4) as a creation of the exchange value with the audience being one element of the labour that creates it. The attachment of people's time creates advertising value. The manner in which media exploits, traps the audience as the market is very dehumanizing and therefore their world view, lifestyles and needs are further manipulated accordingly. The Marxist approach examines the relationship between media and structures of power and dominance, and, thus, it is necessary to analyse the ownership of multinational media with regard to globalization to study media critically and its impact on the society. Hence, these theoretical base .i.e. functionalism, empiricism and structuralism will help in approaching mass media in a different way.

2.3 MEDIA AND PORTRAYAL: THE POLITICS OF POWER

Feminist Theorists believe that Patriarchy constitutes a system of relations based on male authority, power and privilege and it has been identified as the main ideological power operating both in culture and society that places gendered expectation on both men and women. Feminists, with a view to examine media's portrayal of women, emphasise the social norms that are implemented by Patriarchal power relations present in media as a socio-cultural institution. It is well stated in the following:

Within a hegemonic order where the ways in which we think about ourselves and our society are shaped and distributed by specialised work particularly of schools and media that form the “ideological apparatus of society” and in this context of hierarchical gender relations, “the universe of ideas, images and themes—the symbolic modes which are the general currency of thought—have been either produced and controlled by men. (Strutt: 1987, p.66)²⁵

Feminists perceive Patriarchy as intertwined and interdependent with Capitalism, where the former refers the sexual relations and social reproduction, the latter economic relations and social production. So, in the modern era of Capitalism plus Globalisation, Media organisations are largely privately owned, profit motivated and transnational businesses mostly handled and controlled by men. This makes Feminists argue that only because the ownership and production control are in the hands of the men, they perpetuate certain representations of women with a view to serve their dominant mode of thinking and to maintain the status quo. Feminists agree on the point that, power relation revolves around the concept of gender and does operated in social, cultural, economic and political fields. Patriarchy recapitulates those relations and perpetuates the biased gender representations in every field. So, it is well stated in the following:

Feminist arguments stated that media content to some extent was an extension or projection of existing ideological power relations that operated consistently and continuously on social and cultural level. (Pillay: 2008, p.20)²⁶

2.4 STEREOTYPES AND SYMBOLIC ANNIHILATION

The issue of gender stereotyping in media was first place on Canada’s Public Agenda in 1973, when Women for Political Action and the Ontario Committee on the status of women intervened at the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications

²⁵ Strutt S. M. (1994). Framing Feminisms: Feminist Critiques of Patriarchal News Media (Doctoral Thesis, Simon Fraser University). Retrieved from <https://www.google.co.in/search?q=Suzzane+Monique+Strutt+%281994%29> on 17.07.2016.

²⁶ Pillay Nerisa (2008). The Portrayal of Women in Television Advertisements on Sabc3: A Reflection on Stereotypical Representation. Faculty of Humanities. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Retrieved from <http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10539/8264/Corrections%20final%20draft%20copy.pdf?sequence=1> on 13.07.2016.

Commission regarding the licence renewal hearing of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. (Strutt: 1987, p.71)²⁷

According to gender stereotypical perception women are supposed to be dependent, submissive, emotional, and indecisive whereas men are aggressive, dominant, independent or logical. Regarding the portrayal of women in media Feminists focus on true depictions of women's qualities and nature to dignify women as according to them stereotypes are the ways to generalizing the myths on masculinity and femininity. It is well stated in the following:

Feminists believed the presence of sex-role stereotyping in media the negative portrayal of women in comparison to positive portrayal of men and that patriarchy was still a dominant ideology embedded in media content. (Pillay: 2008, p.25)²⁸

Social scientists define stereotypes as the negative idea or image thought to be real or true regarding a specific group. DeFleur and Dennis remark that stereotypes function to keep minority people in positions of low power and prestige. It is well stated in the following:

In society, stereotypes become comfortable and easy ways for those in the majority to refer to those in the minority. They are unrealistic at times, but they are also unreliable generalizations that give rise to negative feelings and associations of negative qualities with certain groups. For this reason, prejudice often finds its way into society through stereotypes. (Kanahara: 2006, as quoted in Brewer: 2005, p.9)²⁹

²⁷ Strutt S. M. (1994) Framing Feminisms: Feminist Critiques of Patriarchal News Media (Doctoral Thesis, Simon Fraser University). Retrieved from

<https://www.google.co.in/search?q=Suzzane+Monique+Strutt+%281994%29> on 12.07.2016.

²⁸ Pillay Nerisa (2008). The Portrayal of Women in Television Advertisements on Sabc3: A Reflection on Stereotypical Representation. Faculty of Humanities. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Retrieved from <http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10539/8264/Corrections%20final%20draft%20copy.pdf?sequence=1> on 13.07.2016.

²⁹ Brewer Chad (2005) The Stereotypic Portrayal Of Women In Slasher Films: Then Versus Now (Master Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University B.S., Louisiana State University). Retrieved from http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-04092009-105427/unrestricted/Brewer_thesis.pdf on 12.07.2016.

Traditional Gender Stereotypes.

<i>Feminine.</i>	<i>Masculine.</i>
<i>Not aggressive.</i>	<i>Aggressive.</i>
<i>Dependent.</i>	<i>Independent.</i>
<i>Easily influenced.</i>	<i>Not easily influenced.</i>
<i>Submissive.</i>	<i>Dominant.</i>
<i>Passive.</i>	<i>Active.</i>
<i>Home-oriented.</i>	<i>Worldly.</i>
<i>Easily hurt emotionally.</i>	<i>Not easily hurt emotionally.</i>
<i>Indecisive.</i>	<i>Decisive.</i>
<i>Talkative.</i>	<i>Not at all talkative.</i>
<i>Gentle.</i>	<i>Tough.</i>
<i>Sensitive to other's feelings.</i>	<i>Less sensitive to other's feelings.</i>
<i>Very desirous of security.</i>	<i>Not very desirous of security.</i>
<i>Cries a lot.</i>	<i>Rarely cries.</i>
<i>Emotional.</i>	<i>Logical.</i>
<i>Verbal.</i>	<i>Analytical.</i>
<i>Kind.</i>	<i>Cruel.</i>
<i>Tactful.</i>	<i>Blunt.</i>
<i>Nurturing.</i>	<i>Not nurturing.</i>

Figure 2.2 Gender stereotypes

It is well stated in the following:

Many feminist studies on media and society focus on the relationship between media portrayals of women and social reality. Much attention has been given to the gender-role messages in television programs newspaper and magazine content and advertising. These studies found that women are often underrepresented or stereotypically portrayed as playing passive, submissive and dependent roles. (Zoonen: 1996)³⁰

Stereotypes have become the important means to judging to what and which extend women are misrepresented in media. According to Hall, “stereotyping occurs where there are gross inequalities, and are the parts of the great ideological system where “otherness” of women is prevalent”. The following perfectly describes it:

Lippmann (Kim and Lowry, 2005)) defined stereotypes to originally mean erroneous content that includes pejorative content about groups and minority groups that are simple, rigid and structurally reinforced. Furthermore

³⁰ Media Portrayal of Women and Social Change: A Case Study of Women of China (2004). Retrieved from http://www.wunrn.org/news/2009/02_09/02_16_09/021609_china_files/Media%20Portrayals%20of%20Women%20&%20Social%20Change-China%20Case%20Study.pdf on 14.07.2016.

stereotypes are also a process of otherness and exclusion and therefore linked to power (De Beauvoir 1953)³¹.

Furthermore, stereotypical portrayals have become the expected gendered role legitimized in the patriarchal gender expectations. In such stereotyping women are generally shown in passive and lowly roles where men are presented in a higher position which depicts women's helplessness and powerlessness in social hierarchical society.

In this regard, Feminists use the term "Symbolic Annihilation". The concept of "Symbolic Annihilation" was first used by George Gerbner (1972) to examine how the representations in the media cultivate dominant assumptions. *Gaye Tuchman* added this concept in her "*The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media*" (1978). Tuchman, seeing the media's role towards women as deeply implicated in the patterns of discrimination, operating against women, claims media to produce the stereotypes and generalisations which goes problematic for women to prove real self within them. According to her, Mass Media deal in symbols and the symbols used in it are not up to date. As a matter of fact, Mass Media have failed to reflect the change taking place in the society including the women within it. It is well stated in the following:

The concept of symbolic annihilation refers to the condemnation, trivialisation or absence of women from mass media. Such patterns of representation are central to the means by which social inequality is maintained since they contribute to the overall impression that the public sphere is overwhelmingly male and women therefore do not belong. (Harmer: 2012, p.35)³²

According to the Liberal Feminists, women may be denigrated, trivialized or condemned in contents of media, or in text. So, in Media contents or texts, wherever

³¹ Pillay Nerisa (2008). The Portrayal of Women in Television Advertisements on Sabc3: A Reflection on Stereotypical Representation. Faculty of Humanities. University of the Witwatersrand. Johannesburg. Retrieved from <http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10539/8264/Corrections%20final%20draft%20copy.pdf?sequence=1> on 13.07.2016.

³² Harmer Emily (2012) Gendered Election Coverage: The Representation of Women in British Newspapers, 1918-2010 (A Doctoral Thesis , Loughborough University). Retrieved from <https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/dspace-jspui/bitstream/2134/12302/4/Thesis-2013-Harmer.pdf> on 12.07.2016.

women are presented on the basis of stereotypes or shown as minority or under-represented it means women are being annihilated or denigrated. Tuchman says:

[...] the small portion of women that are present in media texts are represented in a negative way, they are condemned or trivialized, and in short, they are misrepresented. This is problematic, and a huge social setback, because these sorts of representations, or lack of, are in fact stereotypes and will be applied relentlessly to all females creating widespread misunderstanding of the roles that women play within the home, within the work place and even in a society as a whole³³.

2.5. HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY AFFECTING WOMEN

“Hegemony is defined as the influences, power or domination of one social group over another. It refers to the state in which the individual becomes unaware of the domination force which includes traditions, institutions, family, education, socialisation etc., which forms the basic ground for hegemony.” ((Burnsdon 2000; Haskell 1987; Shaltuc 1997).

Gramscian concept of Hegemony can be described as social, cultural, ideological or economic influence exerted by the dominant group over a minority group and masculinity is a socially constructed role embodied by men. So, the concept of Hegemonic Masculinity refers to an ideal form of masculinity characterized by dominance and influential over femininity. One of the basic sources of these concepts is the Feminist Theories of Patriarchy. This concept Hegemonic Masculinity was formulated in two and a half decades ago by Australian Sociologist Raewyn Connell (1987). According to Connell:

[...] hegemonic masculinity to refer to those traits that various cultures ascribe to ‘real men’ and which not only set out such ‘real men’ from women and all other men, but also justify all men to generally be in a position of domination

³³ Rachael (2009, February 16). How has Feminist Media Theory discussed media representations of women? Which of these theoretical observations do you find most convincing? [Blog Post]. Retrieved from <http://rachaelx.jigsy.com/entries/general/how-has-feminist-media-theory-discussed-media-representations-of-women-which-of-these-theoretical-observations-do-you-find-most-convincing> on 12.07.2016.

over women. (As stated in Peter J. Kareithi's "Hegemonic Masculinity in media contents"³⁴).

Media play an important role in enforcing and normalizing the concept of Hegemonic Masculinity. As a transmitter of culture and cultural norms, Media, cannot be out of the effects of the concept of Hegemony of the masculinity as it is a universal phenomenon. So, social scientists remark media portrayal as Hegemonic Masculinity, which is popular perspective in a society run by a dominant culture. It is well stated in the following:

According to Hall's work, these culture industries (media) consist of the producers of television, radio, film, fashion, magazines, and newspapers, so it is not surprising that the media have such a significant voice in our lives. [...] their culture industries are seen as influential apparatuses of social control that ultimately produce hegemony, and although it is not a conscious plot, the mass media are able to preserve the dominance of the most powerful members of society. (Flanagan³⁵)

On a global scale, Hegemonic Masculinity is a representation of society's ideal of how male behaviour should be. In reality, its function is to legitimate the social ascendancy of men over women in all aspects of life, which is evident in many societies all over the world. (Connell and Messerschmidt: 2005, p.832)³⁶

In addition, Hegemonic Masculinity also emphasises superiority of 'manly' men over the 'not-so-manly' men and this social ascendancy is often portrayed through socio-cultural values, religious practices, the mass media, business and even through

³⁴Kareithi P.J Hegemonic Masculinity in Media Contents. In Media and gender: a scholarly agenda for the Global Alliance on Media and Gender by UNESCO, International Association for Media and Communication Research. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/publications/gamag_research_agenda_kareithi.pdf on 12.07.2016.

³⁵ Flanagan Kevin Hegemonic Masculinity Portrayal in the Media: Analysis and Critique of a Cultural Studies Ideology. Retrieved from http://kevinflanagan.weebly.com/uploads/4/6/0/0/46009243/hegemonic_masculinity_portrayal_in_the_media.pdf on 13.07.2016.

³⁶ Kareithi P.J Hegemonic Masculinity in Media Contents. In Media and gender: a scholarly agenda for the Global Alliance on Media and Gender by UNESCO, International Association for Media and Communication Research. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/publications/gamag_research_agenda_kareithi.pdf on 12.07.2016.

Government policies and practices. This ideology honours the ideal man who embodies the qualities of a manly man. So, it requires all other men to position themselves in relation to it and this in turn ideologically legitimates the global subordination of women to men.

2.6. MEDIA CONTENT AND MEDIA EFFECTS

Media Effect Studies attempt to analyze how people use the information they get from media. Scholars who are engaged in analyzing the media try to find out the patterns of media effects to quantify the effects of the contents of the media upon its audience. The study of the media effects came with the concept that the media have different effects on different types of people. David M. Potter and McLuhan made provocative assertions in studying effects of media over people. Schramm observed:

“Media cannot simply be seen as stenciling images on a blank mind. That is too superficial a view of the communication process”³⁷.

In today’s mediated society much of what comes from the narratives, stories, series, soap operas, advertisements—which influence viewers’ mentality to form own ideas and conception on a specific topic. The women question in media is very much confusing as media adheres to creating the image of ideal women ignoring the real emotions of a real woman. In this regard, media are focusing on what the cultural beliefs presume women to be and what the patriarchy construct the image of women to be—all are regenerated in media contents leaving women as inferior and subservient. In Visual Media such as the Films, Television, or in the advertisements, those women are monitored as slim and beautiful, independent but care free as if women are nothing but the objects to be projected as men want and need. The media do not portray women’s assertiveness and firmness or the fact that they have equal status with men. Instead, they look down upon woman as a “thing” or “object” that is easily accessible.

In other words, media’s portrayal of women as objects or things signifies the social and cultural construction of women as “Thing” or “Object” due to their “Femaleness” or the “Procreative Power” to give immortality, continuity and purity to the “Male

³⁷ Biagi , Shirley (2007). *Media/Impact: An Introduction to Mass Media: An Introduction to Mass Media*. U.S.A: Thomson wadsworth.

line”. Women sexuality is being trapped in so-called “Production” which divides women as upper, middle or lower and “Reproduction”(which differentiates women from men) systems of the society facilitating patriarchy in the minds of the general people: patriarchy is planted deep to express, interpret, and define what it means to be men and women. In a research by *Gerda Lerner* about the *Mesopotamian civilization*, she saw that though women were from different economic status and often enjoyed economic independence, still their sexuality was strictly controlled by men—which even can be visualised in every society. Traditional or modern, women must have to be controlled by men—this is the universal norm of society: anyone who goes against it she is labeled as “Desperate” or “Feminist” or “Errant” by the so called Patriarchal society.

So, seeing the activities of media, it appears that, it is not out of the influence of Patriarchy. Traditionally, women are thought to be and adored in almost all the religions and civilizations as caring mother, wife or good homemaker where media has also a share of it to show women as so. And now there is shift to show women as slim, beautiful or stylish and economically independent but in turn in the name independence women are being pushed as objects of entertainment and sex—media are re-establishing the traditional concept of women who never are independent but it was not so long ago that women on the screens were solely portrayed as submissive housewives taking care of their children and family. The confusion is well stated in the following:

Many scholars who study the gender role construction of women in mass media fear the consequences of the “ideal woman,” who is usually depicted as a hyper-sexualized, domestic, and obedient creature (Charlebois as quoted in Murray: 2014, p.2).

2.7 THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA LITERACY

Media Literacy is the ability to access, enjoy, interpret, analyse, produce, and evaluate messages in all varieties and combinations of Print, Visual, and Digital formats. Media literate individuals can use communication Media to solve problems. They have a critical, informed understanding of the way that both individuals and organizations construct media messages. In addition, they recognize the role of the audience in both processing those messages and creating meaning from them. They

are aware of the political, social, cultural, economic, and educational role of the mass media in society including knowledge of how media organizations operate. Through these understandings, media literate individuals are able to assess their own relationship to the media, and assign value, worth and meaning to media use and media messages (NCA, 1998)³⁸. Sharda Adhikari observes:

[...] it becomes imperative for us, as the ‘consumers’ of information to become fully aware and conscious about what we are imbibing through the various channels of the media. To what extent and to what purpose and in what way does the information affect our thought process, attitude and behavior – these are questions we need to ask ourselves. This is where ‘Media Literacy’ or ‘Media Education’ or ‘Media Awareness’ comes as a help. As the media grows and expands, Media Literacy as a movement is also growing throughout the world.

It has become especially important and necessary for women and girls to be conscious and knowledgeable about media. It is because there are genuine concerns that although life has changed for women in leaps and bounds in the last three/four decades due to several powerful women and a few men demanding equality and empowerment for women, much has to be done. By and large, women have been denied basic human rights like good health, respect, livelihood, equality, genuine and positive self-esteem, their comfort and understanding of their own sexuality, safety from domestic and sexual violence, participation in the democratic processes and overall power-sharing in society³⁹.

It is worth mentioning that Media and its contents influence the social image and the self-image of women. Media affect the choices they make, what they eat and what they wear. It influences their behavioural attitude, their learning processes and ultimately what they become. Media has clearly discouraged the emergence of a new confident, assertive woman. Such differential media treatment increases their isolation, disempowers them, and weakens them. They remain unheard, unrepresented

³⁸ ‘*Defining Media Literacy*’ (n.d). Retrieved from <http://www.ivyrun.com/FinalDefinition.pdf> on 12.07.2016.

³⁹Adhikari, Sharda, (2014) ‘Media and Gender Stereotyping : The need for media literacy’.

and ‘incommunicable’ (Sharda, Adhikari: 2014; Dr.V. Deepa, Nair⁴⁰). To liberate and emancipate women from the age old inequality and in-equal practices, Media have to play a positive and constructive role in promoting intellectual growth rather than physical beauty. The craze for Zero size figures and obsession of fair skin⁴¹ for women in global set up in general and India in particular, have left many psychologically traumatized by the distorted or unrealistic self-image. Unchecked, these can lead to various fatal diseases like anorexia nervosa⁴².

2.8 SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS INFLUENCING MEDIA

Social and cultural factors play an important role in the treatment of women and women’s issues. The belief system, the social practices, the social settings go a long way in shaping the social attitude towards women. Some of these issues are elaborated in the following discussions—

2.8.1 Cultural Beliefs and Ideologies

“Women in the third world countries suffer inequality and exploitation not only because of their class and sex but also because of the way in which these countries are linked to the international economic order.”

There are several gender practices that are practised in the world. It has been quite questionable that those practices always undermine women’s sexuality. Religious scriptures, even science also assess that women are inferior to men. Sometimes, it is said that, women are devoid of all qualities of decision making. They have no talents, qualities to be recognised as superior as men. The whole world is bent on proving that the fair sex is inferior. The women have been left in the lurch in this patriarchal world. The power system is centred in the hands of the male sexuality. These systems have diminished the possibility for women to become empowered and developed. The women of the whole world are living life under hardship in this world.

⁴⁰Dr.V. Deepa Nair in Gender Sensitisation <http://www.mcrhrdi.gov.in/DR%20Assistants%20final-%20Batch%20II/material/Gender%20Sentization%20Presentation1.pdf> on 15.07.2016.

⁴¹ Media “helps to shape beauty ideals by showing certain body sizes [as...] beautiful and desirable (Rumsey 217). It can perpetuate images through a variety of distribution vehicles and can more easily the cultural standard for appearance in the society. (Kendyl M.Klein:2013)

⁴²Anorexia nervosa is a disorder mostly affecting young female adolescents and adults of normal weight. It is characterized by excessive weight loss, refusal to eat and obsessively exercising. Despite evidence to the contrary, consumers view themselves as fat. Death occurs more often with this disorder than any other psychiatric ailment. (‘Disability Guide’
retrieved from <http://www.seasidechamber.com/docs/disabilityguide.pdf> on 12.07.2016.)

Every now and then, it is interpreted variously that, men and women have different genitalia, which is making hash of everything among us, because of which the world treats these two sections differently. Men are always thought to be stronger and pious. On the other hand, women are regarded as weaker and sinful, which cannot be acceptable at all in the age of globalized world.

But, it is quite disgraceful for women that they are treated as puppets, dependent on others for everything. If men and women are inherently different, from each other, as religion and religion-inspired secular ideas claim what should a woman do? According to Mary Wollstonecraft, *“If women appeared stupid and passive, this was not because of some innate lack of intelligence but because women had not been told to cultivate their minds.”*

2.8.2 Religion and Women

Religious ideologies remain the most dominant factor in determining social conduct towards the whole idea of women’s sexuality in the world. It has been a significant contributor to the oppression of women for millennia. For most religions, particularly monotheistic religions, God is depicted as a male and addressed as “Father”. Religious institutions and their respective ideologies have contributed to patriarchal cultures around the world. While some religions are backing away from such patriarch (e.g., Unitarian Universalists, many religions are continuing to repress women⁴³.

Moreover, almost all the religious scriptures designate women as inferior while men are superior—women are thought to be created as an “After-thought”. *Manusmriti*⁴⁴ occupies a significant place in Hinduism where the inferior status of women has been emphasised. It reads:

In childhood must a female be dependent on her father; in youth, on her husband; her lord being dead, on her sons; if she has no sons, on the near kinsmen of her father; if she has no paternal kinsmen, on the sovereign; a woman must never seek independence. (V. Geetha: 2009,p- 48)

⁴³ Wolska Malgorzata (2011). Gender Stereotypes in Mass Media: Analysis of the Gender Stereotyping Phenomenon in TV Commercials. Retrieved from <http://krytyka.org/gender-stereotypes-in-mass-media-case-study-analysis-of-the-gender-stereotyping-phenomenon-in-tv-commercials> / on 17.07.2016.

⁴⁴ It was written by Manu and is the first Law Book in Hinduism.

In Quran also women's inferiority is established under the superiority of men where women are just seen as the objects to satisfy the men sexually and provide them with their children. It says:

Men are superior to women on account of the qualities with which God had gifted the one above the other. Virtuous women are obedient, careful during the husband's absence, because God hath on them been careful. (Rodwell: 415)

In this regard, Bible is not behind to prioritize men over women asking women to surrender to their husbands as women were created out of men, so men are superior and women are the subservient.

So, reform of such social structure facilitating women's sufferings and oppressions—lies in what the agents of social change accomplish in changing the situation for the women folk in today's digital world. Media, the powerful means to socialisation and change, though vital in communicating and covering some areas, but from women's perspective, it seems, have failed in doing so. So, Banadana Rana writes:

[...]the women's movement and the use of media got further impetus after the Beijing Conference in 1995. Many women's organisations then began to voice their concerns against the negative portrayal of women as a commodity and as second-class citizens through both private- and government-controlled print and electronic media, and the need for encouraging women to join the profession.

2.8.3 Role Conflict

Since ages women have been relegated to the position of home maker and child rearer while men have retained control over the means of production. Women had responsible roles, where intelligence and initiative were hardly required to be used; whereas decision-making was done by others, either men or elderly women in the family; where they would not be allowed to go beyond the doors of the home alone.

The man is generally viewed as the breadwinner, with work being considered as the man's primary responsibility. Some theorists suggest that roles are defined by genetic

selection and biological tendencies – for example, the nurturing qualities of women as opposed to the more aggressive temperament of men.⁴⁵

But, with the arrival of the feminist movements opposing the traditional roles of women based on sex has transformed the society to a subsequent manner. Several researches have been undertaken over the years to look into the origin of male and female roles within society and the opposing views that these roles are either predetermined biologically or stem from socialization.

So, the changing demographics in the lives of women have brought about many positives but this social change has led to another phenomenon: role conflict. This is the result of the transformation that has swept across the role of women in society, something that began to change in the Western world over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly with the feminist movements in the early 1900s that sought social, political and economic equality⁴⁶.

It is well stated in the following--

Role conflict stems from the sex-typing of behaviors and socially constructed expectations regarding males and females. Sex typing of behaviors encourages a 'normalization' of typical behaviors in the genders; if the majority of people who behave in a certain way are of one gender, then this become the expected or accepted behavior of that group. In most societies family and domestic obligations are still considered to be a women's domain⁴⁷.

2.8.4 Gender Bias

Gender biasness is a preference or prejudice of one gender over one. Women have been the victims of the age old biasness in terms of socio-cultural, political and economic concerns. They are thought to be inferior to men in intelligence and are incapable or unwilling to participate in society fully. Though women have the role and responsibility in respects of production and reproduction of labour force her work is under-valued or not un-valued. To break the hold of centuries-old patterns of sexual

⁴⁵ Women and Role Conflict (n.d). Retrieved from <https://www.questia.com/library/psychology/social-psychology/women-and-role-conflict> on 23.11.2015.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid

bias, women have to think beyond complex network of rituals, mythology, customs and religious sanctions. It is well stated in the following:

Gender biases and gender based discriminations therefore, result in a stereotyped attitudes, sexual harassment, pay inequalities, discriminatory treatment in assignments and promotions, traditional gender hierarchies, including a premium on a family responsibilities, lack of support mechanisms for working women and low education that deter women from joining the media or assume decision-making positions. (Perrumpally: 2005, p.21)⁴⁸

One of the obstacles to be portrayed positively in media is the gender biasness towards women to men. The biasness is being articulated as stereotypes in media—where men are shown as tough, hard or assertive, women are fragile, soft and submissive.

2.9 GLOBALIZATION AND ITS IMPACT ON MEDIA

Feminists critique globalization as a process being inter-twined with Patriarchy and Capitalism. Globalization with high technological advancement has left ineradicable impact upon women—as it has created male dominated market system, open economy and privatization. The chief aim of this neo-liberal economy is to roll back the state in the belief that only market capitalism will deliver efficiency, growth and prosperity. Under the realm of Globalization, Market Economy runs with an extreme motive of profit; numerous attempts are being taken up to promote its business interest which has also left a deep impact in the media industries.

As a result of the wide marketisation, numerous entertainment channels have sprung up leading to the rise in entertainment programmes and advertisements as well. Through rising of the channels women's body gets objectified and sexualised by media industries for the market purpose. Women's bodies are being used to sell cigarettes, liquors, cars, male perfume, and other male-identified products, as well as, magazines, newspapers and television programmes. In the globalization Mass media are being used to project the products and services to provoke the public.

⁴⁸ Perumpally L. (2005) Mediated Images of Women and their Gender Status in Contemporary Society. In Prasad K. (eds.) *Women and Media: Challenging Feminist Discourse*. New Delhi: The women Press.

With male owned and dominated market system portrayal of women in media contents be it films, television soaps, newspapers or magazines, reflects what men want to see in women characters. It is well stated in the following:

The media is to some extent generating sexual meaning of women's body through the sensuous scenes, combined with songs create erotic meaning of the woman's body which heightens further with the male gazing or selective exposure of certain body parts. This creates market forces which generate and supply demands of people for articles which make body expose in the image of media representation. (Dworkin, 1980:289)

The portrayals of women in media contents may be it cinema, advertisements, television or news media, as glamour girls having "Zero Size figure", long legs and in fashionable get up, have reduced women as mere commodity to serve the male gazes—all these make women to be gazed through and by the experiences and thinking of males. The sexual presentation of women will regenerate the negative and derogatory aspects on the part of the inherent nature of women to be called dignified human beings. Such types of depictions, as sex objects or as objects of entertainment arise male dominance over women's sexuality. It is well stated in the following:

It is not always lust that motivates rape but custody rapes are also adopted by males to mask their superiority and woman her place. Other than rape, divorce, dowry, wife beating are also sorts of violence against women, this mask the inequality between the sexes. But the masculine point of view is that, it is prevalent simply because men control the industry. Pornography exists because men despise women (Dworkin, 1980:289).

In this era media have also played an important role in manipulating and manufacturing ideological transformation and transmission in the public domain. Ideological manipulation in a free society is done so as to perpetuate the hegemony of dominant classes. Gramsci in his *Prison Note Books* put forward the theory of hegemony. Capitalist class resorts to the means by which it obtains the consent of the subordinate groups. The ruling ideas are presented before the society in such a manner that it appears as the ideas of the whole society. "The world view of the ruling class, in other words, was so thoroughly diffused by its intellectuals as to become the common sense of the whole of society"(McLellan, David: 2008).

2.10. FEMINISM IN INDIA: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

“Against the masculine democratic foundations embedded in Western history, this society was based on caste.”-----Sonia Bathla

“.....a systematic inequality between the sexes therefore exists in the social practice of sexual violence, subjection to which defines the women’s status, and victims of which are largely women and in the operation of the State, which de jure out laws sexual violence, but de facto permits men to engage in it on a wide scale” (Mackinnon: 1989).

“Feminism incorporates a doctrine of equal rights for women, an organised movement to attain these rights, and an ideology of social transformation aimed at creating a world for women beyond simple social equality.”(Basu, A:1995)

In Indian Context, it can be said that Feminism means, an awareness against the women’s oppression and writing their experiences of exploitation in male dominated society especially at work places, at home due to the religious norms, patriarchy and caste/class system etc. It also builds awareness among women to change the situation of women subjugation and suppression on the basis of gender and sex (Dr. Siva Nagaiah Bolleddu: 2013). Walby defines patriarchy thus:

[...] I shall define patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women...the use of the term social structure is important here, since it clearly implies rejection both of biological determinism, and the notion that every individual man is in a subordinate one

[...] patriarchy is composed of six structures: the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relation in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions⁴⁹.

The history of Indian Feminism can be divided into three phases—the first phase started from 1850 to 1915. One of the important characteristics of this phase was that

⁴⁹ Johannsdottir N.K (2009) *Patriarchy and subordination of women: From Radical Feminist point of view*. Haskoli Islands. Retrieved from http://skemman.is/stream/get/1946/3017/9955/1/Nina_Katrin_Johannsdottir_fixed.pdf on 12.07.2016.

it was initiated by the European men, who raised their voice against the inhuman and social evils like Sati, gender inequalities born out of patriarchy and promoted widow re-marriage, worked for removing illiteracy and so on.

Besides social reformation, demand for socio-political and economic rights and participation in the freedom struggle also materialised in the pre-independence era. In the year 1918, Sarala Devi Choudhrani stressed the equal status of men and women regarding the enjoyment of rights, liberties and justice and questioned, “How do we get rights?” Then she answered:

“By the strength of our agitation we must force men to concede our demands and at the same time carry on propaganda among ourselves.”(Forbes: 1998).

The second phase started from 1915 to India’s Independence. This phase is one of the important landmarks from the Indian women’s perspective as this phase led the Indian women to organise themselves in some associations to voice against oppressions in the then Indian society.

The third phase, post-independence, focused on fair treatment of women in the work force and right to political parity. The Indian Constitution explicitly and categorically granted sex equality. There was provision for women’s upliftment through affirmative action, maternal health and child-care provision (crèches), equal pay for equal work, etc. The Constitution adopted a patronizing role towards women, who were considered to be “weaker section” of the society and, therefore, needed assistance to function as equals. (Choudhuri,2005).

The phases of Indian Women’s Movement can be discussed as the following.

The history of Women’s movement in India has a long sorted history, but there are divergent views regarding Indian women’s movement. But in the evaluation of women’s movement from women’s perspective is a difficult one because of the absence of the unanimity regarding the nature and characteristics of women movements in India. There are divergent views that prevailed in it. According to one group Indian women movement for liberation was initiated by the European men, who raised their voice against the inhuman practices out of the sanctioned socio-cultural and religious practices and worked for betterment of the situation from women’s point of view. It is well stated in the following:

The women's movement has a long history in India; much longer than the current 'second wave' movement, or even the 'first wave' of earlier this century. The Shakti cults go back centuries, and the concept of Shakti – the female power principle – was recognised thousands of years ago. In this form the women's movement represents, not merely an oppositional force fuelled by anger, a rather negative reaction to oppression, but the development of a distinctive female culture, a positive creative force inspiring men and women alike.

But, to another group women's Movement in India was initiated with the Reform Movement by the so-called intelligentsia, where attempts were attempted only to reduce the sufferings of the women folk as they had to be good mothers for the future generations, good wives to make the house—not for the women as human beings. The reformers of this period speak for women's equality but, at the same time, they wanted to preserve Brahminism. The documented history of Indian women makes it clear that untold sufferings and oppressions out of patriarchy and patriarchal practices were thrust upon women from the time immemorial.

Within the women's movement in India, it is worth mentioning, occurs various interpretations of the concept patriarchy of Indian kind. In a country like India where multifarious forms of caste hierarchy, class, religious sects live together there arise different meanings of the same concepts—all have made the Indian women's movement more complicated to take form of a well organised Feminist Movement like its counterparts in the West. In the West, feminism starts with Marry Wollstonecraft's "Vindication of the Right" where Marry urged the women folk to be intellectual rather than accept irrationally the social and cultural meaning of what it means to be men and women. The concept of woman was thought to be inferior and irrational and defective creation of God at that particular time. In India though the women's movement starts with the reform movement against the superstitious practices occurred mainly in the Hindu religion, yet due to the patriarchal nature of our documented history it did not permit Indian women to voice against all the inhuman and irrational practices upon women. In this regard the following can be cited:

Urvashi Butalia (1998) and Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin (1998) have discussed the deliberate absence of a record of women's voice and contribution to political situations in pre-independent India and of the patriarchal nature of our documented history⁵⁰

In India geography, language, religion and birth—all these attribute quite a peculiar nature to the women's movement.

2.10.1 Phase I

The nineteenth century reform movement led by the upper caste elite group were primarily concerned with the issues relating to urban upper caste, middle class women such as sati, purdah, education, age of marriage and widow marriage who argued for the upliftment of women because they are the mother of the future generation. The nineteenth century social reformers supported women education so that women could become good wives and mothers. Regarding the nineteenth century social reform, Uma Chakravarti commented, although the women's question dominated the nineteenth century social reform in India, only two major critiques of dominant class ideologies on gender in the 19th century. Both these critiques originated in western India and focused their attention on the structure of Brahminical Patriarchy which was identified as the locus of gender oppression. One came from Jyotiba Phule, the non-Brahman leader from Maharashtra and the other from Pandita Ramabai.

Pandita Ramabai, a Brahmin widow, who is regarded as one of India's earliest feminists, was the first Indian woman to declare on the basis of her study of the Hindu shastras that the Sanskritic brahminical texts that were the core of Hinduism were irrevocably and essentially anti-women. Phule was the only person who came forward to support Pandita Ramabai's struggle. Phule applauded her effort for education among high caste women. Phule also pointed out that Ramabai was not the first to defend women's rights and dignity even before her Tarabai Shinde of Buldhana in Baron wrote a book against the patriarchal order. Tarabai's 'Stree-Purush Tulna' was the first feminist work in India.

⁵⁰Mapping the Women's Movement in India (n.d). Retrieved from http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/2722/13/13_chapter%204.pdf on 16.07.2016.

In this context names of Sarala Devi Choudhrani, Savitri Bai Phule, B.R. Ambedkar should be taken for their literary works and activities towards the upliftment of women. Though, these social reformers were not successful in getting widespread support for these reforms, their efforts established various prerequisite conditions necessary for the development of the Indian women's movement. In the modern period Uma Chakravarti, Madhu Kishwar, Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy just to name a few, who hold their stepping in the women's world. The following perfectly speaks on it:

The women's movement in pre-independent India has been often called the first wave feminism. In this phase, women blamed tradition and religion for their suffering and sought redress in education and legal change. They were feminists in the sense that they recognized women as oppressed because of their sex. They looked upon women as biologically, psychologically and spiritually different from men and based their claim for representation in public life on the complementarity of this difference⁵¹.

There were many organisations formed in the nineteenth century who advocated equality and rights of women but failed to work in attaining equal status for women in Indian society. These included the Bharat Ashram (Indian Hermitage) in Bengal, formed by Keshab Chunder Sen (Brahma Samaj) in the 1870s; Arya Mahila Samaj (The Aryan Women's Association) in Bombay, formed by Pandita Ramabai and Justice Ranade in the 1880s; Bharat Mahila Parishad (Ladies' Social Conference), formed as part of the National Social Conference in 1905; and Anjuman-e-Khawatin-e- Islam (The Muslim Women's Association) in Punjab, formed by Amir-un-Nisa of the Mian family. Apart from these organizations, there were national associations formed later such as: the Women's Indian Association (1917), followed by the National Council of Indian Women (1925); and the All-India Women's Conference (1927). All these organizations mainly worked for training women to make them good Hindu house wives and mothers rather than equal human beings with men. But, the problems women faced within the Brahminical social order were never treated as the fundamental source of all the problems. The Indian political leadership which also

⁵¹ Basu A. (n.d) "Indian Women's Movement". Retrieved from <http://gpsctaiyari.com/Books/pdf> on 15.07.2016.

comes from the upper castes tried to attain their own political advancement and also made efforts to depoliticize the social issues simultaneously.

Geraldine Forbes recognised the period from 1880 to 1940 as the period of first wave feminism in India. In this phase several organisations formed women's wings which not only cherished the cause of women but gave women space and opportunity to secure the desired changes.

2.10.2 Phase II

In post independent period the nature and strategy of women's movement changed as there was no more foreign rule in India. Several women organisations were formed. Though independence comes with many promises of creating equality, a society based on justice, democracy, equal values would be distributed to both men and women—which made Indian Government to play a paternalistic role towards women, but in reality, there is lack of implementation of the promises. As a matter of fact, Patriarchy, the focal theme of the women's movement takes a different shape after the eradication of sati, child marriage or widow remarriage were done in pen and paper after the independence. It is well stated in the following:

It was thus that the 1960s and 1970s saw a spate of movements in which women took part: campaigns against rising prices, movements for land rights, peasant movements. Everywhere, their participation resulted in transforming the movements from within. One of the first issues to receive countrywide attention from women's groups was violence against women, specifically in the form of rape, and what came to be known in India as 'dowry deaths' – the killing of young married women for the 'dowry' or money/goods they brought with them at the time of marriage⁵².

2.10.3 Phase III

From the mid-60s, several socio-political movements were staged as an outcome of the growing dissatisfaction with government policies and prevailing economic and social conditions of Indian women. Women actively participated in various

⁵² Sen S. (2000) Toward a Feminist Politics? The Indian Women's Movement in Historical Perspective. Retrieved from <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/wp9.pdf> 16.07.2016.

movements such as Tebhaga Movement, the Nav Nirman Movement and Chipko Movement etc. The following will perfectly light on it:

According to Vina Mazumdar (1985: 4) after Indian independence, ‘for all practical purposes, the women’s question disappeared from the public arena for ... over twenty years’. With the Constitution guaranteeing ‘equality’ to all citizens irrespective of caste, creed or gender (Articles 14 and 16), the need for the same demand from the women’s movement seemed redundant. Then the new government development programmes temporarily silenced the militant feelings of unrest that prevailed pre-independence⁵³.

But, with the coming of the real turning point in the 1970’s, the women’s movements in the western countries found its place in India, too. In this particular time though the Independent India was trying to develop internally with the broken socio-political and economic systems out of the exploitation of the foreign invasion and in diplomacy, but the development in the real sense was far away from the women’s perspective. Gender disparities increased in every field—employment, health, education and in political participation—which once again proved the deep-rooted patriarchy existent in Indian society. In 1974, the publication “Towards Equality”, the Report of the Committee on the status of women and the United Nations declaration of 1975 as the Women’s Year opened a new platform to debate on the women issues. And the CSW revealed a gloomy picture of the women’s development in India. In this regard Aparna Basu writes:

The data collected by CSW Report after exhaustive countrywide investigation revealed that the *de jure* equality granted by the Indian Constitution had not been translated into reality and large masses of women had remained unaffected by the rights granted to them more than 25 years earlier. It provided the intellectual foundation of a new women’s movement that found expression both in activism and the academia⁵⁴.

With this report women’s movement had another beginning, the *Second Wave Feminism*, towards the attainment of gender equality. It highlighted the need for a

⁵³“Mapping the Women’s Movement in India”. Retrieved from http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/2722/13/13_chapter%204.pdf on 16.07.2016.

⁵⁴ Basu A. (n.d). Indian Women’s Movement. Retrieved from <http://gpsctaiyari.com/Books/pdf> on 15.07.2016.

rigorous effort to do away with the oppressive practices such as dowry, polygamy, bigamy, child marriage, ostentatious expenditure on weddings, and it emphasised the need for a campaign on legal awareness, the provisions of crèches, better working conditions for women including equal remuneration for equal work, the compulsory registration of marriages, law reform on aspects concerning divorce, maintenance, inheritance, adoption, guardianship maternity benefits, the universalisation of education, etc. The report reiterated the constitutional goal of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) for the country. But, much of its recommendations have not seen the light and much remained unimplemented.

In the mid 80's the women's movement of India challenged further by the Shah Bano case, which once again catapulted women's movement in India, making questions on Uniform Civil Code, proved the deep rooted patriarchy in Indian society irrespective of religion. The Shah Bano case had intensified the communal politics. It is well stated in the following:

This backlash was complicated by rising majority fundamentalism, which spawned its own women's organizations and its own "feminist" language. These challenges fragmented the broad perceptions of unity that had underwritten notions of sisterhood and political alliances with low castes and the poor. They demonstrated how fragile was the collectivity based on gender politics and how vulnerable it was to challenges of community, class, and caste interests⁵⁵.

The Shah Bano case powered the Indian women's movement and gender issues became the concern of the Indian feminists and women's studies in academia. In 90's, Indian women's movement was inextricably linked with the principle social, economic and political problems in terms of gender issues experienced by the Indian women. In this particular globalized era in India, women's struggle for basic food security, health, education, women's employment, livelihood and conditions of work, declining child sex ratios, commoditization of women and human relations with attendant growth in violence against women, expansion of dowry, etc. had got momentum against the economic liberalization as globalization had endorsed the

⁵⁵ Sen S. (2000) Toward a Feminist Politics? The Indian Women's Movement in Historical Perspective. Retrieved from <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/wp9.pdf> on 16.07.2016.

disconnections between the local or economic interests of women and the wider movements of the oppressed and exploited classes and communities.

Women, against these larger networks of globalization, began to voice their experiences regarding globalization or the economic liberalization. As a result, in 2004, the World Social Forum (WSF, 2004) provided a meeting ground for peasant, workers', women's, dalit's and environmental movements to come together against what was termed "capitalist led globalization"⁷. Though globalization opens up new possibilities for development of India, yet the question of gender equity is still a major problem for women as globalized initiatives based on patriarchy are being taken. Hence, male dominance is still on in every field, though there are few women who possibly get economic opportunities. But, it is true that women are becoming subjects of economic imperialism under globalization.

So, Indian women's movement needs to be in such a position to understand the nature of globalization and its effects affecting women's lives and endorsing the age old sufferings for deep rooted patriarchy in Indian society. The major concern of Indian women's movement is status and position of women from early reform movement to modern era— which has to get its goal to be fulfilled with self-determination, statehood, democracy, progress, modernity, and development.

2.11. FEMINISM ON MEDIA: THE INDIAN VARIANT

*The media and the cultural productions of the women's movements in India crisscross the subcontinent's ethnic, linguistic, regional, caste, the class divisions, challenging patriarchal norms in Indian legal, political and cultural arenas.*⁵⁶.

It has been already mentioned that from early to mid-nineteenth century, public consciousness of women's emancipation spread as Indian male social reformers campaigned to liberate Indian women from practices that the British colonizers had deemed "barbaric"—sati or widow burning, isolation of widow, child marriage, and polygamy.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ John D.H. Dowing, John Derek and Hall Downing (2011) Women's Movement in Media (India). In Encyclopaedia of Social Movement Media

⁵⁷Ibid.

Gradually, the more pressing issue of women's education began to take center stage and as a burgeoning body of women were able to get English education, had also gained the benefits of literary works such as periodicals, non-fiction books, novels, memoirs, essays, poetry, and letters and columns in the mainstream press and transported the ideas and philosophies of the nascent Indian Women's movement into every heart and from that on the seeds of modern women's movement in post-colonial India.

The resurgence of women's movement of 1970's, which has also been termed as the 'new wave' or 'second wave' of Indian women's struggles, opened a new era for Indian women as it had raised many issues. The issues that women's groups have taken are wide ranging—health, law, access to land and other productive resources, environmental degradation, media, rape, violence, dowry deaths, sati, wife beating, alcoholism, trafficking, police atrocities, prostitution, devdasi, women prisoners, communal and caste conflicts and gang rape of tribal and dalit women. The agitations being made to protest against the crimes and violence against women had focussed on the role of media to mirror women's problems and raise awareness among the masses. It is well stated in the following:

Agitations since 70's on issues such as dowry/rape/crime and violence against women, have also shown the vital role played by information generation, sharing and dissemination by the women's movement and the media and the need for joint action. Acts of violence against women (Mathura rape case, Sudha Goel dowry murder case, Deorala Sati incidence) have drawn so much attention and emerged as rallying point for women's groups, rather than day to day oppression of millions of women in their homes and workplaces. (K. Sharma)

The first National Conference of Women's Groups (NCWG) in India held in Bombay in 1980 listed several women's issues which were presented as the sexual harassment in work places, needs for more jobs, job reservation, parity of pay and literacy. Similarly, the delegates at the **South Asian Regional Workshop** held in Delhi in 1986 criticised the stereotyping of gender in media and demanded equal opportunity and representation in decision making bodies. It is well stated in following:

The decade of the 90s truly belongs to women...women activists maintained that portrayal of women has remained distorted and it leaves much to be desired. They attribute these to be the media hierarchy, wherein men decide what women should see, read and listen. (Singh:2001, p.17)⁵⁸

Similarly, there are several writers who have criticized the role played by media towards women. A Feminist group in Delhi formed by Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin called **The Committee of portrayal of women in the Media** rightly claims that it is not only the physical exposure of women that is derogatory but also the reinforcement of their stereotypes that are more damaging to image and the dignity of womanhood. Television ads go on harping about good mothers who feed their children with health drinks and instant noodles, ideal wives who care about their husband's shirts and cholesterols, mothers who wash their babies with soft soap to ensure soft bottoms and little girls who say they choose certain soap so that it makes them as beautiful as their mother. These are damaging, insulting and humiliating to the woman-image and takes all talks of women's progress, education, political participation, and several steps backwards, going back to where we began. Geeta Seshu describes the latest media's image of women in the following words:

Short skirts and noodle-strap tops, see-through shirts with shorts that barely cover her derriere, hard drinking and hard partying, impossibly slim and dizzyingly tall, a go-getter career girl with snazzy mobile phones to match every outfit.

Shabana Azmi, renowned actress and activist of India said:

A matter of grave concern is that, when it comes to films, women are shown to be completely dormant, totally subservient persons. It reinforces the notion that Indian women are supposed to be that. I think the only way in which we can counter these images is to portray a woman not just as a body but also an intelligent being.

Indian feminists critique Indian media for portraying women as busy and concerned with beautifying themselves, choosing make-up, new fashions, jewellery, cosmetics, constantly watching her weight, worried about good figure and skin colour, proud of

⁵⁸ Singh Uma (2001) *The New Women and Mass Media*. Jaipur: Surabhi Publications.

advertising and selling latest products. They become aware of the fact that women are hardly portrayed as an intelligent decision maker, or as capable leaders and policy makers. Usually she is shown to accompany her husband like a shadow or as a decorative piece.

As a result, it can be said that, in most of the portrayals she is tactfully domesticated to place her in 'home and hearth' by unwritten codes of society. Everything around her is arranged in such a way that she can't let herself loose. Women who break this unwritten code and re-arrange their day are considered feminists or rebels. And media is playing their role perfectly to preserve the societal concepts. Hence, most of the mediated women are "weak, passive, needy and subservient, or vain, irrational and hot-headed. But the question is how to turn the media into an effective tool for promoting constructive change and faithfully representing the multiple roles of the women today---as achiever both at home and in the labour force.

A study carried out for the Second Press Commission of the contents and performance of women's journals, says that most of women's journals consistently seek to direct women's energies into a narrow channel and defines their concern, preoccupations and aspirations with an arbitrarily imposed feminine frame work. The study says that the impression created is that the outside world belongs to men and the issues which arise there do not affect women except indirectly through the men related to them⁵⁹.

2.12 THE HISTORY OF GENDERED MEDIA IN INDIA

The Gendered Media articulates the Masculine biasness towards women, focussing narrowly women in a "Biological" category, and ignore its critical role in challenging the historical understanding of sexuality and capabilities and assertiveness in the intellectual field. Though Media are being designated as the public sphere where critical analysis should be conveyed, yet this mode of media was only focussing on the existed and pre-destined stereotyped images of both men and women.

It is well stated in the following:

Gender roles are prevalent in media, often portraying women as nurturing, gentle, cooperative, concerned with appearance, and sensitive to others; while

⁵⁹*Introduction (n.d)*. Retrieved from <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/49977/4/chapter%201.pdf> on 15.07.2016.

men are viewed as logical, competitive, independent, assertive, financial providers, skilled in business (Foss, 1989; Wood & Reich, 2006), and dominant over women (Morris, 2006).

As far as India is concerned, the age of gendered media started from the period from the Vedic period, where written contents are found on women. The available media, being in the form of text, like the Vedic text, Dharma Sutras etc. had located the status and position of both men and women in their specialised roles—men as superior and women as inferior. Roy⁶⁰ observes:

[...] looking at the historical context when media in the form of text was available, like the later Vedic texts, the Dharma Sutras and the Grhya Sutras signify the role of the grhapati or the male head of the household or the family defined roles and obligations of each of its members. In the process, the existing gender relations which were unequal in nature were passed on to next generation. (Roy, Dr. Kumkum: 2010, as quoted in Routray:2011,p.3)⁶¹

There are other examples such as the “Jatakas” which are around 550 in numbers and are the stories of Lord Buddha’s previous births. These had presented women as subordinate to men, engaged in various agricultural and household works, where men did the important jobs like “setthi” or banker and the “sarthavaha” or merchant. It can be assumed that since then stereotype occupational differences between men and women and associated gender division of labour carved out.

During the Gupta period (400-500 AD), the plays of Kalidasa would show that the gender relation existing at that time was the future trend as it is revealed in the present day situation. In his plays, the dressing pattern of the characters playing the role of the queen was according to the situations they are in. Hence, the dresses and attires were part and parcel of womanhood and depicted one of the important components of the presentation and identity of women. It also reinforced the attributes associated with them being women. Similarly, the gestures were also used so as to maintain the gender roles (e.g. salutations or touching the feet confined only to women). Again, the language used was also gendered in the sense that Sanskrit was considered as “high”

⁶⁰Routray Sujaya (2011) Women, Media and Gender Equality. *Women’s Link*. 17(2). Retrieved from <http://isidelihi.org.in/wl/article/2011-02.pdf> on 17.07.2016.

⁶¹ Ibid.

language and Prakrit as “low” language and the dialogue delivery was done according to the prescribed status of men and women, i.e., men characters spoke Sanskrit language, while women spoke Prakrit language, thus maintaining the gender bias of the high and the low. These forms of media strengthen the existing stereotypes prevailing in the society. (Routray: 2011, p.3)⁶²

Women are still being projected as mere transmitter of societal norms and values through womanhood and femaleness, in various modern writings in the form of stories, novels, articles, books, and in modern media, which are in a way reinforcing the patriarchal norms, putting men as dominant and women as powerless and victims of the entire oppressions due to patriarchal culture. It is well stated in the following:

It is not the femaleness of the woman’s body that is the problem. The problem is patriarchal structure and attitudes which would sooner permit violence against woman than acknowledge her full power and personhood. (Chawla Juliet: n.d)⁶³.

2.13. CONCLUSION

At the end, it can be said that the Feminist theories have scrutinized the original formulations of women’s subordinate status in different societies and have theorized the socio-political economic and cultural sufferings of women focusing on imbalanced power relations between the sexes. In its different variations, feminism has attempted to explain the relations between sexes. By virtue of its common objective be it liberal, radical or socialist, all share certain characteristics: from challenging the unsatisfactory hierarchical gender relations, to a desire not merely to expose female subordination but to transform relations between women and men. According to the feminists, media are the powerful socialization agents and they have been welcomed as the watch dog of the society and this term bestows upon them the social responsibility to mirror and guide the process of social change. So, positive and constructive portrayals of women in media will lead women to be empowered and liberated from the age old sufferings and subordinate position. Through the portrayals of women in media certain symbols are associated. With these symbols an image of

⁶² Routray Sujaya (2011) Women, Media and Gender Equality. *Women’s Link*. 17(2). Retrieved from <http://isidelihi.org.in/wl/article/2011-02.pdf> on 17.07.2016.

⁶³ Singh Uma (2001). *New Media and Mass Media*. Jaipur: Surabhi Publications.

this particular group is also exerted—which carries the dignity, respects in positive portrayals and submissive or inferior in the negatives. If gender stereotypes posit media to be biased against women, then media will exert the recreation of the socio-cultural and politically limited access of women everywhere. Today's reality goes on the part of media simply because they are the agent to recreate women's image as they are in men's world—women are projected in three roles—biological, domestic and decorative. This feminist movement of the west touched the Indian women also and Indian women created its own version to theorize Indian women's problem.