

Chapter – 2

Review of Literature

Any research on the topic of gender related media coverage should start with a synthesis of literature on gender and media. This chapter is dedicated to the question of gender representation, discussing gender and media at length, and reviewing literature on the media coverage of gender based themes, and how media had portrayed them. Specifically, a vast body of literature is discussed, analysing findings of various research studies on gender coverage both in verbal and visual news.

The position of women in the political, economic and social spheres is constantly evolving, and the mass-media need to keep pace with this increasing participation of women in public life. However, In spite of the undeniable progress with regards to the participation and visibility of women in the public sphere, Jaworska and Larrivé (2011)¹ point out that gendered conventions are still reflected in the media and that, in return, media reports are shaped by such conventions.

At the political level, for instance, research has showed that the media have tended to strongly differentiate the coverage of male and female politicians, using and reinforcing gender stereotypes (Kahn, 1992², 1996³; Robinson and Saint-Jean, 1995⁴; Ross, 1995⁵; Bystrom et al., 2001⁶; Gidengil and Everitt, 2003)⁷. It has been suggested that female politicians are less competent than their male counterparts (Serini et al.⁸, 1998; Gidengil and Everitt, 1999⁹; Scharrer, 2002¹⁰).

This is shown in the ways in which descriptions, denominations, and qualifications apply to women in positions of power. In contrast to male politicians who are often portrayed as dynamic, female politicians are often represented as passive. Frequent references are made to their appearance, emotions, marital and maternal status, while their professional achievements are downplayed. The way in which they are addressed and named often denotes a familiarity that is not used with men (Lithgow, 2000)¹¹.

In fact, inadequate women's coverage seems to be a worldwide phenomenon. In 2000 the Association of Women Journalists (Association des femmes journalistes – AFJ)¹² studied

news coverage of women and women's issues in 70 countries. It reported that only 18 per cent of stories quote women, and that the number of women-related stories came to barely 10 per cent of total news coverage. News talk shows are equally problematic. The White House Project (2009)¹³ reports that only 9 per cent of the guests on Sunday morning news shows such as *Meet the Press* and *Face the Nation* are women, and even then they only speak 10 per cent of the time—leaving 90 per cent of the discussion to the male guests.

In an investigation entitled 'women professionals in the media', the European parliament (2000)¹⁴ underlines the fact that the media plays an important role in the production of information, images and programmes having a strong influence on social behaviours. As such, the absence and invisibility of women in debates on key issues can have a negative impact on the involvement and commitment of the next generation of women. For this reason, the commission included in its proposals suggestions concerning the need to adopt measures aiming at equal participation and professional intervention of women on key economic and social issues.

On a more positive note, recent studies claim that the media have started to treat female political figures more equally. Everitt (2003)¹⁵, for instance, argues that contemporary national or large regional newspapers place less emphasis on gendered images due to the greater professionalism of journalists and the growing presence of women in politics. Kahn (1996)¹⁶ also shared the view that instances of biases and negative representation of female candidates have declined significantly in the media (especially newspapers with larger readerships) as a result of more professional reporting and sensitivity about gender biases.

2.1 Gender: An Understanding

During 70's the term gender came in limelight and since then many intellectuals enhance the concept of gender. Generally gender is defined as the socially constructed correlate of sex. The concept of gender as socially constructed has been theorized extensively and illustrated in a variety of arenas from the playground to the boardroom (Kessler 1990¹⁷; Lorber 1994¹⁸; Messner; 2000¹⁹). Although there is general consensus that gender is socially constructed and sex as its initiating point.

Wharton (2005)²⁰ believed that gender as a 'system of social practices' and explained three features. First, gender is as much a process as a fixed state. This implies that gender is being continually produced and reproduced. In other word gender is enacted or 'done', not merely expressed. Second, gender is not simply a characteristic of individuals, but occurs at all levels of the social structure. This is contained in the idea of gender as a system of practices that far reaching, interlocked and that exist independently of individuals. Gender is thus a multilevel phenomenon (Risman, 1998)²¹. This intends to explore how social process, such as interaction, and social institutions, such as work, embody and reproduce gender. Third, gender refers to its importance in organizing relations of inequality and it is subject of debate. But the important point is that, as principle of social organization, gender is one critical dimension upon which social resources are distributed.

2.2 Gender and Space

Massey (1994)²² tried to establish a relationship between space and place with gender and the construction of gender relations. She believes that "Geography matters to the construction of gender". She endorses the spatial difference and also cultural influence in the construction of gender along with space. In the continuum of space and place the term 'local' have been associated with gender.

It is intriguing to note that Indian geography, which has borrowed significantly from Western thoughts to the extent that it did not really develop an Indian perspective at all, in general appears to be resistant to gender studies in geography, which by now have established their stronghold in the Anglo-Saxon world (Datta, 2003)²³. Gender roles are thus seen as constricted in part through our culturally experienced bodies and the ways men and women experience their bodies become a part of their experience of gender and gender relations (Raju, 2001). R.W. Connell (2002) in his Book 'Gender'²⁴ offers very tentative perspective on gender studies and issues like individual life, social relation and culture. Connell award both intellectually and culturally to understand Gender.

The Book "Media-Space and Gender Construction"²⁵ is divided in two parts, part I and part II. A journeys start in the first chapter with the promising "*Discovering third space*" to forward a new thought 'how and why spatiality and the inquisitive spatial imagination have recently entered', as to understand the third mode, the author more relying on *Henri Le*

Febvre, a French 'metaphilosopher', who has been more influential than any other in exploring the third space. The chapter more enough arguing about the perception of Henri Lefebvre and considerably the title is 'the Extraordinary Voyages of Henri Lefebvre'.

Almost the first chapter appreciates the allegorical tour of the life of Henri Lefebvre, and his term "trans disciplinary" and his Marxist exploration of the spatiality and sociology of everyday life and urban condition what Lefebvre called in his work the social production of space as "rhythm analysis". As per Soja, Lefebvre throughout his life remained a restless intellectual nomad, and his reconceptualization of the relationship between centre and peripheries are most important ideas. As he always believed that, 'two terms are never enough, there is always an-Other term.'

This conceptualization from Lefebvre's to nurture a different thought that is third space. The author relies more upon, Lefebvre's (1991) *The production of Space*²⁶, arguably the most important script about the human spatiality and spatial imagination. The central argument about: the ontological, epistemological and theoretical rebalancing of spatiality, historicity, and sociality as all-embracing corner of human life. One of the important 'meta philosophies' by Lefebvre's preferred description was critically Soja (1996)²⁷ present "*Thirthing- as- othering*". Lefebvre in his work the *Production of space* was divided into a trialectics of spatiality, of spatial thinking, of the spatial imagination that vibrate the Lefebvre's three different kind of spaces: the perceived space of materialized spatial practice, the conceived space as representation of space; and he defined lived spaces of representation as representational spaces. A new kind of thinking about space became most clearly formulated in Paris. Edward Soja elaborates the 'Third Space' as a new thinking on spatiality and added on Foucault's "heterotopology" and "heterotopia".

2.3 Media space: The Media as an Instrument of Representation

As per Griffin (2000:337–347)²⁸ Hall was influenced by the ideas of Karl Marx who criticised the capitalist system extensively and who also predicted that it would eventually fail. He believes that media representation of culture reproduce social inequalities and keeps the average person powerless. Corporate control of information prevents many stories from being told. Hall's focus is not on what information is being presented but rather whose information it is. In terms of this study it can be argued that if media do not provide an

accurate reflection of women then women will not be recognised for their achievements. Griffin (2000)²⁹ further elaborated Hall's view that the media does not represent the pleas of the powerless in society, and provides little coverage of the conditions under which the majority of the world's population live.

It is evident that there are a variety of ways that the media influences our lives and the positioning of gender in the society. One such area that the media influence is the way women are represented in the media. This study uses media effect theories specifically Agenda setting theory and Framing theory to explore the media coverage of gender related issues. In doing so it further addresses how the representation of women in the media shapes public opinion. This study also looks at feminist media theory that lends a gendered inflection to this study.

The agenda-setting process involves different components to gain attention of media professionals and the public (Rogers & Dearing, 1988³⁰). Agenda-setting offers the reason why some information about some issues is highlighted while other information is left out. The agenda-setting process helps define how public opinion is formed through highlighting certain aspects of issues in media coverage. The coverage of specific issues often leads to policy action by politicians due to the publicity received from the media. Social problems must receive adequate media attention to be deemed "public issues" (Rogers & Dearing, 1992)³¹.

Rodgers and Dearing (in McQuail, 2000:456)³² further claim that agenda setting is related to several other kinds of effects, including: the bandwagon effect, the spiral of silence, diffusion of news, and media gate-keeping. An important question is who sets the agenda for agenda setters. Media scholars such as Fourie (2001)³³ and McQuail (2000)³⁴ target major news editors or 'gatekeepers' who can open or close the 'gate' on a story. Each medium has its own set of gatekeepers. According to Straubhaar and La Rose (2003:49)³⁵ in this regard newspapers, books and magazines have their own hierarchies of editors who swing the gate on new events and new ideas. Fourie (2001: 196)³⁶ states gatekeeping can be defined as the process through which certain information passes a series of checkpoints before finally being accepted as news material.

Although McCombs's (1972)³⁷ research is mainly related to political issues, he presented insight on how the public comes to an agreement on which issues are the most important and prominent. According to McCombs (1997)³⁸ there are four visions of agenda-setting that should be identified. These four visions describe "both what the agenda-setting role of the news media is and the professional views of journalists about what the agenda-setting role of the news media should be" (McCombs, 1997)³⁹. The first vision is called professional detachment.

In short, this vision states that the main focus of a journalist is to only report the news and to stand apart from the public (McCombs, 1997)⁴⁰. McCombs commented that vision challenges the understanding of agenda-setting because most of the time the news media cannot stand apart from the community. "Whatever the media do, they have an effect on the community they serve" (McCombs, 1997)⁴¹. News media may try to objectively report the news; however, the community will still be interested and feel the effects of how the news was portrayed to them.

In the book, 'A vision unveiled: women on Television', Prasad (1994)⁴² thought about women's issues require the support of this powerful medium for creating a social climate where policies and programmes related to women's empowerment can be implemented effectively, it is important to look into the manner in which women and her issues are being portrayed.

In chapter one she is talking about 'women in India', the demography and constitutional rights as well as women's active participation in industry and political milieu. In addition to the Book in chapter second she emphasizes the quantitative data about 'Mass media in India', along with day to day activities regarding programmes, organization, etc. In further she is adding about 'Television and women's issues' in which more embracing is that now Television can play an effective role toward focusing women's issues. Even the forthcoming chapter also dedicated to the portrayal of women's in the Television and about transmission time to reflect the images of women's in the society. Although despite vague data, the Book supplemented very authentic picture of women's and related their issues.

Literature, which analyses the ways in which women are portrayed in media, has gradually been emerging in recent years. More frightening than the direct reach of media however it is

indirect influence. With the time, media influence the process of Gender relations are constricted differently in different cultures. Kinship system often seems to contain the most change -resistant aspects of social organization (Dube, 2001).

The main thrust of the study was to find out the effects of television watching on the viewers having different social class background. The impact of television watching was seen with regard to intra and interfamily social interaction as well as on the children who are likely to be the most vulnerable section among the viewers (Gupta, 2000)⁴³.

Mannekar (1993)⁴⁴, "Reconstituting Indian womanhood: An Ethnography of TV viewers in a North Indian City", is a feminist ethnography of how lower - middle class and upwardly class women living in New Delhi interpreted dramatic serials shown on Doordarshan (DD), the state run Television in India. She was interested in examining the role Indian Television serials played in the construction of women viewers as gendered and national subjects - while explicating the notion of Indian women viewers as gendered subjects as Indian television. She touched on the role of Indian TV commercials in the construction of femininity. Femininity, according to her, was commodified in Indian TV commercial where "notion of femininity, embedded in discovers about modesty and sexuality, tradition and community, class and 'national culture', were inscribed in the bodies of many of the women featured in advertisements on Television", Mannekar further observed that the commercials aimed at married women generally used models whose dress and appearance indicated their national states as well as their Hindu ideality. Further marital status as well as their Hindu society. Further, femininity was constructed in these Indian Television commercials by featuring in stereotypical gender and roles of mother and wives.

Presenting a paper in South.Korea on 'The changing image of man in Indian advertising' Shelat's in 1994 focused on the changing images of males in Indian advertising. She observed that advertisements in India in the 1990s were changing, but the change was slow. Although there are few advertisements that portrayed Indian men and women as equals, the stereotypically negative images of Indian women were still very much in existence.

2.4 Media, Gender and popular culture in India

Tracking change and continuity in the book 'Media, Gender and popular culture in India', Sanjukta Dasgupta, Dipankar Sinha and Sudeshna Chakravarti⁴⁵ elucidate the struggle faced by Indian media between modernization and traditional society in a diverse and heterogeneous social context. The book centers on the multi-dimensional aspects of sociocultural diversities prevailing in the Indian society with distorted images of women. With the economic reforms in 1990's, the increase in competition led media to change its facets in society and adopt a more modern and commercial approach.

The 'women element' has always been marginalized in the media firstly due to the patriarchal system prevalent in society and secondly due to the media's subtle adherence to this system. With the advent of modernization and globalization newspapers, films, televisions adopted a contemporary approach with women playing an important role. Though, the media failed to take into consideration the 'other sex' into positive frame keeping in mind the traditional orientation of Indian society, commercialization, sensationalism and trivia contributed to further downfall in women's portrayal.

What sells has to be covered as media is after all a business and it too keeps profit margins. One of the prominent arguments in the book is "In the changing world and India people no longer preoccupy themselves with the question 'why should media do business?' rather the question that occupies their mind is "to what extent the media should indulge into business?".

The book brings forth realities from the world of media and gender. However, the focus is a bit lopsided towards historical aspects on the theme. Some examples are western which are relevant and worthy of mention but since the book is in the Indian context, it would have been better if more Indian illustrations were highlighted. Media has a bigger part to play in society where it can educate and sensitize people with regard to politico-socio-cultural aspects. Rightly said by the authors in this book that "Indian Media is in the transition of change"; the transition where media is still in dilemma whether to continue with modernization, which is need of the hour in the present globalized world or to remain tradition centric.

This book is a substantive work on how media portrays women in a culture-laden Indian society. Many interesting examples have been highlighted depicting the other side of the picture. .

2.5 Gender Stereotypes

According to Desai and Patel (1990)⁴⁶, the Indian woman was depicted as a sex symbol or stereotypical housewife. She was either featured in a sexually alluring manner or as a traditional housewife whose place was in the kitchen or around the four wall of house.

Krishnan (1984), in her analysis of Indian advertisements, pointed that Indian woman was typically portrayed as a home bound house wife or a mother. As a housewife, she was depicted as being obsessive about domestic management and keep husband happy. Motherhood was another important facet of Indian womanhood. He realized that, Indian advertisement treated women as commodities by juxtaposing images of brides with image of products. Krishnan also observed that Indian advertisements frequently promoted the image of a woman as a sex slave who was shown in "varying stages of undress", especially the advertisements for women's undergarments and jeans which were "doubly exploitative, offering images of bondage and vulnerability as images of liberation."

In her book, Balasubramanyam (1988) focused on the depiction of Indian women in mass media. According to her, Indian commercials were mostly sexist in depicting women in the stereotypical roles of "mother wife sex object roles".

The few formal studies on the representation of women and coverage of gender issues in the Indian print media suggests that progress, if any, has been slow and unsteady.

For instance, Sonia Bathla's (1998)⁴⁷ book *Women Democracy and the Media*, is an empirical study of gender representation in media and attempts to find deep socio- cultural explanations for numerical data. Establishing the integral connections between democracy and the media and demarcating a space for women within this public sphere, she draws the fallacious nature of a popular impression: that the press has played an important role in highlighting gender issues like violence and rape. In fact, Bathla contends rather convincingly that the national press has actively contributed towards perpetuating patriarchal cultural and

political practices by ‘silencing’ the women’s movement and making its various concerns invisible.

Through content analysis of news reports filtered through interviews with journalists and activists, Bathla examines the treatment of women issues. While her research methodology uses feminism as a frame, she had clarified distinctions between western and Indian contexts. In an ultimate exposition of this distinction, she offers a Gramsci inspired Indian cultural paradigm of ‘Brahminical hegemony’ to explain the subordination of women.

Bhatla found the press coverage of women’s in the course of four years during the period between 1981 and 1993 was predominantly event-oriented, with a major percentage of such stories, 57% to be precise, focusing on violence and crime. Even within the latter category, certain themes such as bride-burning, rape and suicide were more prevalent than others like domestic violence, female infanticide/foeticide and police atrocities against women. The other category of stories that made it to the papers obviously had news value because they dealt mainly with the activities of the “known”.

Many issues on the agenda of the women’s movement, such as property rights, personal laws, the impact of economic, development and population policies on women, women’s work and wages, the absence of support structures and services, the impact of fundamentalism and communalism on women, women’s participation in politics, and so on, were either missing or minimally present. According to Bathla, the media, by and large, ignored the women’s movement.

Although the scope of the study is somewhat limited by its consideration of the English language press alone, even so, Bathla succeeds in sowing seeds of persistent discontent regarding gender representation in the media.

Feminist media theory has also challenged the ideas of neutrality and objectivity in media creation. The perspective of feminist media theory is that contemporary media present images of women, of feminism, and gendered issues that do not represent women’s lived experiences. Media create archetypes of female characters into which women are then categorically placed – as victims, as wives, as mothers and so on. The objectives of the

researchers, academics and activists who align with the Feminist media theory are to change the boundaries of such categories, to create new categories or even to move past categorization all together. The goal is to create media that are more reflective of the world and more capable of acting in a way that reduces power inequities, instead of transmitting and reproducing such inequities. Van Zoonen, a leading feminist media theorist, argues that

Feminists have claimed that objectivity, value-freeness and neutrality are offspring of the hegemony of masculine modes of thinking that cherish dichotomies such as objectivity vs subjectivity, reason vs emotion, expert vs lay knowledge, abstract vs concrete, etc. It is argued that traditional science not only ignores women's themes and experiences, it also denies the validity of women's ways of knowing (Van Zoonen, 1994: 14)⁴⁸.

Several of the Bhatla's findings were corroborated by Sumati Nagrath's study⁴⁹ of three English newspapers over a period of six weeks in 2001. The study found that crime against women constituted the highest category of news stories on women and that most of the news items relating to gender issues were straight reports with little or no analysis or comment. According to Nagrath, even after celebrity news and glamour coverage had moved into supplements, the papers failed to report many issues that concern women. Further, there was neither a single story on any of the women's movements or their agenda, nor was there a single story on any women's issue appeared in the study period.

A mini- survey of the Bengaluru editions of six English newspapers, conducted by Ammu Joseph, during the first 10 days of March 2005 revealed both sides of the gender coverage coin. The survey period was picked mainly because it included International Women's Day(8 March), which habitually leads to a peak in women related news coverage. But it also enabled a look at press coverage of the Union Budget for 2005-06, presented in Parliament on 28 February, to see whether or not women's views were taken on board in reporting and analysis of one of the most significant economic stories of the year. The survey findings confirm that gender awareness has yet to be integrated into mainstream "hard news" media coverage. They also reveal the overwhelming influence of commercialism, the presence of lifestyle or celebrity journalism and the blending of news with entertainment in much of the media today.

To what degree is the news media democratic, inclusive and participatory from a gender perspective, was explored in “Who makes the News? Global Media Monitoring Project 2010” by Margaret Gallagher et al.⁵⁰ This report presents findings of a survey taken on one 'ordinary' news day to record the portrayal and representation of women and men in the news media. The results are compared with previous surveys, taken every four years since 1995, to illustrate longitudinal trends. The findings summarises that women are underrepresented in news coverage, resulting in an unbalanced representation of the world.

News can influence policy agendas and public debate. Consequently, under-representation, insufficient media coverage and the prevalence of stereotypical information are obstacles to the equal enjoyment of freedom of expression. The GMMR report suggests that only 24 per cent of the people heard or read about in print, radio and television news are female. Whilst this is a significant improvement from 17 per cent in 1995, but at this pace, it will take 40 years to reach parity if the rate of change observed since 2000 is maintained. Furthermore, the survey reflected that women were the focus of only 19% of news stories in politics and government in 2010. It had also highlighted that the percentage of stories reported by female reporters on radio, television and newspapers is 37 per cent, a figure which has not increased since 2005.

Of the 84 news websites monitored by the Global Media Monitoring Project, women comprise only 23% of news subject in online news stories and sixteen per cent of female online news subjects were depicted as victims, in comparison to only five per cent of male news subjects. The survey points out that only six per cent of stories highlight issues of gender equality or inequality. This reflects that men are not only largely in charge of the government and news in all aspects of society, but they also dominate the voices and news exposed to the broader world. .

Fair gender portrayal in the media should be a professional and ethical aspiration, similar to respect for accuracy, fairness and honesty (White, 2009). Yet, unbalanced gender portrayal is widespread. The Global Media Monitoring Project finds that women are more likely than men to be featured as victims in news stories (with the exception of domestic and sexual

violence, which receives little media coverage) and to be identified according to family status. Women are also far less likely than men to be featured in the world's news headlines, and to be relied upon as 'spokespeople' or as 'experts'. Certain categories of women, such as the poor, older women, or those belonging to ethnic minorities, are even less visible.

Stereotypes are also prevalent in every day media. Women are often portrayed solely as homemakers and carers of the family, dependent on men, or as objects of male attention. Stories by female reporters are more likely to challenge stereotypes than those filed by male reporters (Gallagher et al., 2010)⁵¹. As such, there is a link between the participation of women in the media and improvements in the representation of women.

Men are also subjected to stereotyping in the media. They are typically characterised as powerful and dominant. There is little room for alternative visions of masculinity. The media tends to demean men in caring or domestic roles, or those who oppose violence. Such portrayals can influence perceptions in terms of what society may expect from men and women, but also what they may expect from themselves. They promote an unbalanced vision of the roles of women and men in society.

The media is seen as a crucial actor in shaping the trend, focus and the public perception about women caught up in the trap of violence. According to Nancy Berns in her study, "Degendering the problem and gendering the blame: Political Discourse on women and violence" analyzing popular representations of social problems is important because individuals draw on these sources when constructing their understanding of issues such as violence against women.

Berns (2001)⁵² notes that; "Newspaper columns, magazine articles, films made for TV movies, television special reports and talk shows are all public arenas where images of domestic violence are constructed, debated and reproduced. From these resources, individuals construct their own conceptions of what is normal and acceptable." Ironically, while women represent fewer than half of several fundamental media occupations, women have outnumbered men in statistics of Journalism and Mass Communication graduates. From 1999

to 2010, women have consistently represented more than half of the graduates among journalism and mass communication Majors.

An essential point is salience or the process of emphasizing certain information and making it more significant so that the audience will notice it more easily (Entman, 1993)⁵³. Whereas a text inevitably contains elements that are incongruent with the dominant frame, the frame does have the effect of making elements that are congruent more salient, so that the receiver is more likely to notice them (Entman, 1991⁵⁴). In other words, selection and construction are basic procedures in the framing of a message. As the main function of the manifest framing devices is to trigger the schema, therefore salience is crucial, whereas the reasoning devices and the cultural phenomena that carry the true weight of the frame package and the framing process need not even be present and certainly not repeated within media content.

Most often an article portraying the woman as victim of violence always poses many questions in the minds of the reader. What went wrong? Why did she accept the lift? Why didn't she smell a rat in the first place? Why did she indulge in passive and risky behaviour? Where were the neighbours or caretakers? The consequences of media coverage, either detrimental or beneficial, are sometimes a result of other tendencies within society. Sociologists would agree that the power of the media lies in its ability to construct, and circulate social understanding and social imagery in modern societies.

Therefore it is argued that the mass media is used as an instrument, both more powerful and more flexible than anything in previous existence, for influencing people into certain modes of belief and understanding within society". It is worth noting that any article on violence against woman is covered as a crime story and the reason such an article is brought into the public domain is because of what has characteristically become to be known as the news values that act as the compass for news selection. The story on violence reflects such news values as conflict, sex, prominence and sometimes unusualness or novelty.

Meyers (1997)⁵⁵ says that " Violence against women is framed by the news so as to support, sustain and reproduce male supremacy...the result is that the representation of women who

are the victims of sexist violence polarizes around the culturally defined " virgin whore" or " good-bad-girl" dichotomy so that the women appear to be either innocent or to blame for their victimization"

Entman (1993, 2007)⁵⁶ has provided more than one definition for framing by media. His famous definition of framing is ‘to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.’ (Entman, 1993 cited in Weaver, 2007:142⁵⁷) Using the same theme, Entman (2007) defines framing as “the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation.” In other words, framing is intended to make the audience think or feel in a certain way about the issue under discussion.

According to Entman’s definitions, well developed frames usually have four functions: problem definition, causal analysis, moral judgment, and remedy promotion. First, frames define problems that are salient to the public. Then, they determine and highlight causes of the problem. Next, they encourage moral evaluations by providing the causal analysis. Finally, they promote remedies so the concerned bodies can come up with favoured policies. (Entman, 2007)⁵⁸.

As frames need to be seen as ways for both presenting and comprehending news, Scheufel (1999)⁵⁹ identifies two concepts of framing: media frames and individual frames. Media frames are “devices embedded in political discourse”. On the other hand, individual frames are “internal structures of the mind”. (Kinder and Sanders cited in Scheufele, 1999)⁶⁰ For Chong and Durckman (2007: 101)⁶¹, individual frames are “what an audience member believes to be the most salient aspect of an issue.” For Entman cited in Scheufel (1999)⁶² individual frames are “information –processing schemata” of individuals and media frames are “attributes of the news itself”.

Framing theory considers how the news media cover events and issues, and—in another component of the approach – how individuals make sense of these events and issues, drawing partially (but not exclusively) on media representations. Two relevant, common sense

understandings of what it means to “frame” demonstrate the theory. First, the media can be said to frame events and issues in the same way as a photographer frames a photograph, choosing what aspects to highlight or draw attention to, and what parts to leave out (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997)⁶³. Similarly, a media frame can be likened to the frame of a house, providing the structure around which everything else fits, and influencing the overall style of the construction (Tankard, 2001)⁶⁴.

Iyengar (1991)⁶⁵ posits that all news stories can be classified as either episodic or thematic based on their presentation. The episodic news frame entails a case study or event-oriented report. These are reported in terms of concrete instances. The thematic news frames uses a more general or abstract context. Shanto Iyengar hypothesizes that different ways of framing news stories have different effects on how viewers attribute responsibility for both the cause of and solution to social problems. In order to communicate effectively about social issues, a basic understanding of these typical media frames and their effects is essential. Iyengar found that most news coverage of public issues is what he termed *episodic*.

In short, episodic news frames are those that apply a telephoto lens to the coverage of the issue – focusing on individual case studies and discrete events. In contrast, thematic news frames are those that apply a wide-angle lens to the coverage of the issue – focusing on trends over time, and highlighting contexts and environments. An episodic frame presents a portrait, while a thematic frame pulls the camera back to present a landscape. The importance of this distinction is that the two types of frames have very different effects on how people view a given problem--and whether people will see the need for individual-level and/or broader social or institutional solutions to that problem.. These frames are not used exclusive but one is usually predominant. Because television news is limited by time, an episodic report is usually preferred over a thematic report.

The combination of individual and media frames is what makes framing successful. The effect of framing is feasible when “a communication increases the weight of a new or existing belief in the formation of one’s overall attitude” (Chong and Druckman, 2007:107)⁶⁶. The authors further assert that when there is an existing belief, the framing effect results from “a reweighting of the set of prior beliefs associated with the object; on the other hand, if the [media] promote a new belief about the object, the framing effect produced by the recipient’s accepting the new consideration and giving it priority in his or her all over attitude.” Entman

(in Shen, 2004)⁶⁷ also shares the idea that “a framing effect is more likely to occur when the media frames comport with the existing beliefs of the audience, rendering related concepts more salient and more cognitively accessible than others.” Thus, both individual and media frames must be taken into consideration in terms of clarifying the concept of framing. (Scheufel, 1999)⁶⁸ For example, people’s existing knowledge and attitude towards gender is important in making the framing of the issue by the media to have some impact on them.

Previous research on frames in the news shares little conceptual ground and most studies draw on tentative working definitions or operational definitions of frames designed for the purpose of the specific study. Therefore there is little consensus as how to identify frames in the news. One approach is *inductive* in nature and refrains from analysing news stories with a prior defined news frames in mind (e.g., Ganson 1992: Neuman et al.,1992)⁶⁹. Frames emerge from the material during the course of analysis. Studies taking an inductive approach have been criticized for relying on too small a sample and for being difficult to replicate (Hertog & McLeod, 2001)⁷⁰. A second approach is rather *deductive* in nature and investigates frames that are defined and operationalized prior to the investigation.

Scholars have argued in favour of applying concise, a prior defined operationalization of frames in content analyses. Cappella and Jamieson (1997)⁷¹ state that considering *any* production feature of verbal or visual texts as a candidate for news frames is a too broad view. They suggest four criteria that a frame must meet. First, a news frame must have identifiable conceptual and linguistic characteristics. Second, it should be commonly observed in journalistic practice. Third, it must be possible to distinguish the frame reliably from other frames. Fourth, a frame must have representational validity (i.e.be recognized by others) and not be merely a figment of a researcher’s imagination (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997)⁷².

Framing can be affected by various factors. According to Scheufel (1999), journalists’ framing of an issue may be influenced by several social-structural or organizational reasons and by individual or ideological factors. Based on previous research, the author further identifies five variables that may potentially affect journalists’ framing of an issue or an event: social norms and values, organizational pressures and constraints, pressure of interest groups, journalistic routines, and journalists’ ideological or political orientations.

Likewise, McLeod, Kosicki, and McLeod in Shen (2004: 125)⁷³ point out framing social and political issues and events can be affected by “journalists’ individual values, ideological constraints, and market forces.” In case of journalists, their “common reliance on politicians, interest groups and other experts for quotes and analysis means that the news media may serve as conduits for individuals and interest groups eager to promote their perspectives.” (Nelson et al., cited in Shen, 2004: 125)⁷⁴. Consequently, journalists adopt frames suggested by interest groups or political actors as sound bites and incorporate them in their report of an issue or event. Furthermore, type and political orientation of the medium can also influence news framing. (Gans 1979 in Scheufel, 1999) As mentioned earlier, framing plays a prominent role in presenting and comprehending salient issues like gender to the public.

2.6 Gender Sensitivity and Relevance of Framing theory and Media Agenda Setting

Media framing theory and the agenda-setting theory of communication both provide an insight to how the media can influence their audience. To sum up these two theories, De Vreese (2005)⁷⁵ explained that, “a frame is an emphasis in salience of different aspects of a topic, while agenda-setting theory deals with the salience of issues, framing is concerned with the presentation of issues” (p. 53). The main purpose of this study was to examine the importance given by the media to the gender issues after the heightened awareness created because of the “Delhi Gang rape case”, and these communication theories provides an appropriate framework to carry out the present research.

In a series of studies conducted by Ericson et al (1987, 1989, and 1991)⁷⁶ in presenting a violent story the journalists act less like a simple sender of a social fact and more as a gate keeper. I agree with this argument for as long as the social factor is used as the journalists peg line to construct a story and deliver it to the audience. But this argument also must be seen in light of the fact that sometimes journalists in covering the story on violence are not simply senders but rather triggers of reactions. The social fact must have a strong basis as to why the journalist must pull the trigger of his pen and this leads us again to the look at the news values.

The print media has also seen a growth spurt in the recent years particularly with regard to women and development magazines. The journals are mostly qualified for modern society and could be said to be positively harmful to the development of women as conscious individuals aware of themselves and aware of the society around them. If a woman wins a beauty contest, magazines or newspapers in particular give much importance to the news and even take her photographs on cover page but, at the same time if a woman gets the Nobel Prize she gets limited coverage. Here the difference of judgment in women's issues is quite marked in our media. Similarly the daily newspapers rarely put women's news and their development. Rather they prefer reporting on rape, atrocities, crime, sexual harassment and abuse of women prominently in their columns. Besides Sunday and Saturday special glossy editions on women's leisure, fashion, beauty and other luxurious news items with erotic photographs are issued from time to time by daily newspapers (Dhar, Pattnaik ; 1996)⁷⁷.

However, the scenario is not so depressing and some researchers hold a more encouraging view. According to Joseph, Sharma, 1991⁷⁸, the advent of women reporters and the presence of some senior women journalists in positions of responsibility have made a significant difference to the coverage of women's issues in the press. They have observed that in the past ten years, women's issues have increasingly, though sporadically begun to make news and to be considered worthy of comment. This is due to the growth of the contemporary, women's movement in India, with women's groups becoming steadily more active and vocal. While these changes could be perceived through the print media they were particularly evident in the English language press, which occupies a position of special privilege and eminence in India, although its audience is substantially smaller than that of the regional language press.

The lack of gender sensitivity in the media is evidenced in the failure to eliminate gender-based stereotyping. Generally, the media do not provide a balanced portrayal of women's diverse lives and their contributions to society in a changing world, often reinforcing stereotyped images of women and their roles in society. It is a common practice additionally to assess the professional success of a woman through questions and claims about her related to being a good mother and a wife. This is exactly the type of writing in the media that undermines the efforts of activists, who aim to establish gender equality in all areas of society.

The prevailing portrayal of women in mainstream daily newspapers has the following characteristics:

- Positive images of women have a narrow scope and are based on new stereotypes of women's success: a pop star, a beauty queen, and a sport's woman with an outstanding result.
- There is an absence of the image of an active, assertive working woman, of a successful businesswoman, or a positive image of a woman politician.
- Average women are nearly always portrayed as victims of poverty, social injustice, domestic violence, and organized crime.
- Misogyny in the form of rude jokes, mockery or open verbal aggression have become an accepted way of a systematic backlash against women activists working for women's political empowerment or individual (freedom of abortion, freedom of sexual orientation) human rights.

According to Guru (1996), vast majority of Indian magazines are known for the portrayal of women as sex objects, consumers and slaves. Women journals are mostly elitist and sexist. They are not in a position to advocate the course of women and rejuvenate our socio-political economic and cultural orders. The targeted readerships of these magazines are the upper and lower middle classes living in cities. 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 to define their concerns, pre-occupations and aspirations with an arbitrarily imposed 'feminine framework'. 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 them.

M. Ferguson (1983)⁷⁹, in her book entitled 'Women Magazine and Cult of Feminity' has said that, women's magazine collectively comprise a social institution which serves to foster and maintain a cult of Feminity. This cult is manifested both as a social group to which all those born female can belong, and as a set of practices and beliefs, rites and rituals, sacrifices and ceremonies whose periodic performance reaffirms a common Feminity. In promoting

femininity these magazines are not merely reflecting the female Role in society; they are also supplying one source of definitions of and socialization into that role.

“Current Perspectives in Feminist Media Studies” brings together thought-provoking considerations at the intersections between gender and media. The eighteen chapters compiled and introduced by Lisa McLaughlin and Cynthia Carter address the past, present and future of feminist media scholarship, pointing out some of the most recent developments and some of the major challenges still faced in the field. One of the most valuable contributions of *Current Perspectives* lies in the diversity of subjects and contexts addressed. Besides considering both conventional and interactive media from theoretical, methodological and practical perspectives, the book also moves beyond Western debates and includes Arab, African, Asian and Latin-American media studies.

Current Perspectives effectively responds to the complexity of the role that media play in the construction of gender as well as the role that gender plays in the appropriation of media. Furthermore, the contributions convincingly show that feminist media scholarship should not be just about women’s views on media production and reception. Rather, it must address first and foremost the construction of mediated forms of empowering women, i.e. the construction of media for women. The major achievement of *Current Perspectives* lies in its successful reminders of this imperative.

2.7 Whose news?

The Indian journalists Kampala Sharma and Ammu Joseph carried out a study on how the Indian press reported on five gender issues between 1979 and 1988. They examined the coverage given by a cross section of newspapers and magazines to five women's issues that attracted media attention over a period of ten years.⁸⁰ In 2006, the authors published a revised edition of the study, which looked at how these same issues were addressed by the print media in the first years of the new millennium. The issues were dowry deaths, rape, sex determination tests, sati⁸¹ (widow-burning) and the Shah Bano controversy.

The reporting on each issue was studied over a period of three to four months, when media attention was at its height. Both English and Indian language newspapers were included in

the study. Among the English newspapers were *Hindustan Times*, *The Hindu* and *Times of India*.⁸² The vast study comprised both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the news items. Among other things the authors looked at to what extent women's perspectives were promoted in the articles and how women were portrayed in the news.⁸³

The issue that received most coverage was sati. This ancient practice has been outlawed in India since 1829. Though it is very rare, incidents with widows dying on their husbands' funeral pyres still occur. This ritual was highlighted when an 18-year-old widow, Roop Kanwar, died a macabre death on her deceased husband's pyre in 1987. An action that seemed to be a socially sanctioned murder or society induced suicide. This tragedy made its way to the front pages of all the newspapers in the study.

Another sati-case in 2005 resulted in a brief spurt in media coverage of sati-related issues. After sati, the Shah Bano controversy was the issue that merited most coverage. In 1985 the divorced Muslim woman Shah Bano was entitled maintenance from her ex-husband by the court. This eventually led to the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill⁸⁴. The Shah Bano controversy came into national focus because of the issue's religious and political dimensions and the question of having different civil codes for different religions.⁸⁵

Issues of dowry deaths and rape were given almost equal coverage. In the late 1970s, a rise in the cases of dowry deaths came to public notice in India. A visible change in the reporting on dowry issues could be seen in the following years. From being two line items under crime briefs in the newspapers, the issue merited in-depth articles towards the middle of the 1980s. Joseph and Sharma concluded that women's groups campaigning against these harassments and violence against women resulted in an increased coverage of these incidents. This also applies to rape issues. In their earliest study, Joseph and Sharma found that the question of sex selection and female foeticide received the least attention among the five issues examined. They claimed that this was because sex selection is not an event, but the consequence of a process comprising various elements of gender inequality: women's status in general, women's rights to inherit property, etc.⁸⁶ The follow-up of the study showed that the print media took up the issue to a greater extent in this past decade. According to the authors, this was because of a census carried out in 2001 that showed a declining sex ratio in the country.

Joseph and Sharma found that events and issues involving politics, economics, law, and religion -in that order - were those topics considered most newsworthy. The Shah Bano controversy had such an impact on the press mainly because it was viewed as a legal, religious and political question rather than as a women's issue.⁸⁷

The authors point out that events rather than processes are considered newsworthy. They mean that this is why the Shah Bano controversy and the sati⁸⁸ issue earned much wider coverage than any of the other five issues in the study⁸⁹. Issues concerning women's work, health, position in society and experiences within the family are less covered. Joseph and Sharma state that when such issues became news, it was because they were referred to by traditional sources such as the Government, the police, the Parliament, courts, international organisations, etc.⁹⁰

According to Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma the mass media is today playing the role once played by for example family and religion, not only when it comes to information but it is also influencing norms and values. Joseph and Sharma argue that the media is a “powerful force” and that it has a massive impact on people's thoughts and actions. What is, and what is not, covered by media is therefore of major significance⁹¹.

2.8 Women in Print

In the study *Women in Print – the change over the last half century in reporting on women and gender issues by Indian newspapers* the media researcher, consultant and former journalist Shree Venkatram highlights media's potential as a contributor in the gender equality process. Venkatram stresses that media has “enormous power to change and shape attitudes and to influence socialisation processes”⁹². The purpose of the study *Women in Print*, performed in 2003 in co-operation with UNIFEM (part of UN Women), was to see how the reporting on women in Indian Hindi and English newspapers changed over 50 years⁹³.

The study was conducted on a random selection of 84 national and region-specific newspapers over three time periods: the early Fifties, the mid-Seventies and 2000-2001. Both news material and features were included in the study⁹⁴. The result shows that women make Page One news mostly as victims, for example when murder or rape is committed. Women

politicians are the second largest category⁹⁵. Venkatram also concludes that news items about crime on women are often very short and seldom discussed or followed up. She also points out that "dowry is not an issue for the English print media"⁹⁶. The study shows that women are rare on business and edit pages⁹⁷ and that none of the papers carried a single article on women's health⁹⁸.

Shree Venkatram found that women got only about 13% space in English newspapers and 11% in Hindi dailies. Indeed, when glossy supplements were taken out of the reckoning, women occupied a mere 10.3% of the space. Women figured mostly in crime news, especially cases of sexual violence and rape. Beauty queens, models and actresses were the single largest group of women given space in both English and Hindi papers, while politicians and sportsmen dominated among men. According to Venkatram, while the affluent and the famous figured in the news, ordinary people, especially ordinary women, found very little space. Although the Hindi press was in general more inclusive of common people, the common woman found little representation there either.

Out of the stories appearing on the front pages in 2000-2001, 6.9% mentioned women⁹⁹. Venkatram writes, "Page One in Indian newspapers is still a male preserve. Women make front-page news mostly as victims. It is usually when some drastic crime, like murder and rape is done to them, that they are put on Page 1."¹⁰⁰

In the book *Gender and the Media* by Rosalind Gill¹⁰¹, Professor of Social and Cultural Analysis at the Centre for Cultural, Media and Creative Industries Research at King's College London, offers a critical introduction to the study of gender in the media, and an up-to-date assessment of the key issues and debates.

The book explores the contradictory character of contemporary gender representations, where confident expressions of girl power sit alongside reports of epidemic levels of anorexia among young women, moral panics about the impact on men of idealized representations of the 'six-pack', but near silence about the pervasive re-sexualisation of women's bodies, along with a growing use of irony and playfulness that render critique extremely difficult.

The book looks in depth at five areas of media - talk shows, magazines, news, advertising, and contemporary screen and paperback romances - to examine how representations of

women and men are changing in the twenty-first century, partly in response to feminist, queer and anti-racist critique. Essentially, this book addresses representations of gender in our media in their individual form, whilst synthesizing the notion and pertinence of post feminism. It also examines the ways in which our media have developed and demonstrates new ways of considering the content and contexts of the media in terms of gender.

The book also dealt with the theoretical tools available for analysing representations. A range of approaches from semiotics to postcolonial theory are discussed, and Gill asks how useful notions such as objectification, backlash, and positive images are for making sense of gender in today's Western media. Finally, *Gender and the Media* also raises questions about cultural politics - namely, what forms of critique and intervention are effective at a moment when ironic quotation marks seem to protect much media content from criticism and when much media content can be labelled postfeminist.

Gender and the Media reiterates many of the feminist and postfeminist arguments regarding portrayals of gendered women to society, consolidating these within the context of the media (the second school, favourite pastime and companion of the masses) and frames these within an up-to-the-minute illustration of the causes/effects of the media and their contributions to contemporary gender(in)equality

2.9 From Print to Web: Blogs on Gender and Media

The Women's Media Center—founded by Jane Fonda, Robin Morgan, and Gloria Steinem in US¹⁰²—has the goal of making women visible and powerful in the media. They believe that media is the single most powerful tool at our disposal; it has the power to educate, effect social change, and determine the political policies and elections that shape our lives. The work of diversifying the media landscape is critical to the health of our culture and democracy. Through their blogs, features and project initiatives, they have constantly reminded the world that there is a crisis of representation in the media. In a racially and ethnically diverse nation that has half of the female population, the news media remains staggeringly limited to a single demographic.

Women Media Center have undertaken many projects on media and gender issues and their *Women Under Siege* is a media project that investigates how rape and other forms of sexualized violence are used as tools in genocide and conflict throughout the 20th century

and into the 21st. Originated by Gloria Steinem, it builds on the lessons revealed in the anthology *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust* by Sonja Hedgepeth and Rochelle Saidel, and also in *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape and Resistance—a New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* by Danielle McGuire. In the belief that understanding what happened then might have helped us prevent or prepare for the mass sexual assaults of other conflicts, from Bosnia to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, this Women's Media Center project is exploring this linkage to heighten public consciousness of causes and preventions.

Through their endeavours, The Women's Media Center shows us what we don't see. By training women and girls to be media ready and media savvy, the Women's Media Center is changing the face of media. Also by curating original content from extraordinary women writers, this blog amplifies the voices and concerns of women. They put women in the picture in all their diversity. By monitoring and calling out media sexism, launching petitions, inviting watch-ins, organizing tweet-ups, and other activist campaigns, they are constantly holding media accountable for an equal voice and equal participation.

The Writers' Bloc¹⁰³ created by blog makers Harshit Sahay, Chavi Rastogi, Nishit Dedhia, Devang Thakkar, Jay Marda and Tanmoy Srivastava have created a platform for people with a flair with the pen and a desire to give expressions to their thoughts. The blog encourages people to write, write and write.

In one of their blog, *The Women: Portrayal of women in the Indian Media*, written by Madhavi Gokhale, the writer has analysed the portrayal of women in entertainment media and advertising and was highly critical of the one dimensional caricatures of the Indian women on the Bollywood screens. The blogger traces the journey of women portrayal in Indian cinema and finds that though the heroine has shed her demure looks for a bolder stance with strong overtones of the sexuality of the vamp, but her essential role is still the same. She is the sidekick, the candy floss that fills the yawning gap in the hero's arm, the catalyst, an interesting add-on when the story line slackens.' The bastions of a society scripted by males still remain what they are: bastions'.

Madhavi Gokhale opined that the reasons behind this one dimensionality of the portrayal of women in Bollywood can be not having many women directors, script-writers, women producers who could give the liberated version of the modern Indian women in her own right. Madhavi feels that perpetuating traditional images in the entertainment media not only have

proven to be a wise business strategy but have also reinforced stereotypes in the society. On shifting focus to TV serials the deep gender stereotypes and the carefully contrived artificiality is even more glaring and obvious. ‘ The jewellery- submerged female artistes are light years away from the present day Indian women; they are either downcast, suppressed victims of fate and circumstances, or conniving bad-for-everything who would outdo Lady Macbeth in sheer evil and malice’.

Focusing on the advertising world, Madhvai Gokhale observed that the whiff of tradition is stronger in the world of ‘ tell and sell’ than in the Indian cinema.’ Women are home-makers, care givers, baby sitters; they buy the right health drinks, the right cholesterol free for chubby husbands, the right detergent for stained clothes and are shown washing them too, and also the right cosmetics for themselves’

The blogger concludes that Indian media works in a confusing world where values and intentions clash with images and depictions; where the creators’ egos collude with what the audience wants. In this criss-cross terrain, the Indian women still stands on the wrong side of the threshold of the real and genuine.

In her blog, Adite Banerjie¹⁰⁴, first a journalist and then a creator of the content, Adite Banerjie, first a journalist and then a creator of the content, analyzed the role that media plays in creating and disseminating gender- sensitive environment in the aftermath of the infamous Delhi Gang rape case of December 2012. The story of the girl who was brutally gang raped leading to her death triggered a raging debate in Indian society on issues as diverse as ineffective policing, social attitudes, status of women, the dangerously skewed sex ratio in India, patriarchy to the misogynistic lyrics of a rap-singer who lustily sang Main Hoon Balatkari (I am a Rapist). It has also led to some of the most ludicrous statements – mostly from politicians and self-proclaimed gurus – pinning blame for sexual assaults on the victims

The blogger felt that traditional stereotyping of the *abla nari* has continued to be regurgitated in modern Indian society. Politicians routinely hark back to the lessons that Ramayana taught us and wag their fingers at today’s women chastising them to “stay within the lakshman rekha or else...” So the blame-the-victim game that was played out aeons ago is still being propagated by our leaders, both political and societal. But even as cinema and TV blindly follow the dictates of “popular tastes”, Adite Banerjie points out that one TV channel, STAR World, telecast a path breaking program in May 2012. *Satyamev Jayate* was a series of 13 episodes on burning issues such as female foeticide, child sexual abuse, domestic violence,

intolerance to inter-faith marriages, and more. (www.satyamevjayate.in) Hosted by Bollywood actor, Aamir Khan, the program asked tough questions in its “quest to face the truth” and urged audiences to introspect on social norms that discriminated against women and other underprivileged sections of society. The program was a huge success – raking in viewership across the country. It also energised governments and politicians to take action in several cases that were highlighted by the program. According to the blogger, Satyamev Jayate demonstrated that message-driven entertainment does work – if done with sensitivity and creativity. By dealing openly with ‘issues’ that had been pushed back to the fringes of our consciousness, it was a showcase of how powerfully media could be used

In the second and concluding part of her blog, Adite focused on the role of social media as a catalyst of change. She strongly feels that the sustained campaign in the aftermath of the Delhi rape, on Facebook and Twitter, has led to unprecedented coverage in the press and on TV news channels, resulting in the government shedding its lackadaisical approach. According to her, this was for the first time in the history of Indian media that social networking sites have taken the lead in analysing the government’s response to the situation on a day to day basis. She also put a word of caution to traditional as well as entertainment media that it is high time to reset the approach towards gender issues or else might risk losing support base of young India.

The blog on Women and Media¹⁰⁵ written by Lee Wie Mien Jackson traces the tremendous changes in the lifestyles of men and women across all over the globe and particularly so in India. Globalization, market economics and above all, fast strides in technology have affected virtually all facets of life be it religion or education, politics or employment, fashion or health care. With the advent of computers and telecommunications, media has also undergone a sea of change. The blogger opines that media in India, which until a few years back used to comprise of the morning newspaper, the radio broadcasts and the sole television network screen images of “Doordarshan”, comprises today of a dazzling and at times mind boggling array of communication devices. The media, which was earlier merely a reporting device, is today a vibrant means of shaping, moulding and influencing public opinion.

However, in spite of all these changes, the media has not managed to overcome the typical stereotypes that are associated with women in India. While there are certain departures from this, the fact remains that by and large, there is a huge potential for better and a more realistic projection of women. It does not require any detailed analysis to conclude that the media is in

a state of confusion and are perhaps unsure of the way they want to see women. On the one hand they still have this eternal image of a woman who is confined to the boundaries, duties and responsibilities of her home and her family.

Lee expressed the strong view that the media does not see and project the image of a woman as a serious partner in decision-making, a serious contender as a professional: doctor, engineer, teacher or a computer specialist, a serious politician or leader. This is so in spite of the fact that we have today a large number of working women, and there is hardly any field that does not have women representatives. We have women administrators, entrepreneurs, doctors, police women, computer specialists, politicians and most surprising the entire media business is full of women practically performing all types of activities.

The blogger concluded that though “India is shining” and we have progressed by leaps and bounds, the fact remains that the portrayal of women in the Indian media oscillates between these two extremes: the “mother India” and the “glamour girl” image.

A freelance journalist and writer Nita. J. Kulkarni in her blog¹⁰⁶ accuses media of deciding the context in which a woman should be placed, and reinforces it constantly. ‘Though the media purports to project the modern, liberated woman, it is actually endorsing women as consumers.’ This is derogatory to the image of women and is only remotely linked with their real concerns.

The blog details a study conducted by the Delhi based Media Advocacy group which highlighted instances of stereotyping and of discrimination. Interviews of men in newspapers, says the study, hardly ever mentions their marital status or their dress sense. The focus is on their work. By contrast, women achievers are subject to irrelevant, even distasteful queries. Take for example the interview of Tarjani Vakil, a banker, which was carried in a leading daily. The interview treated the reader to colourful details about her appearance and personal life, such as her penchant for beautiful sarees, her decision to stay single, and her living in an extended joint family. Her feminine qualities like her soft voice were emphasised and she (so said the article) was ‘no power lady.’

The amount of coverage women get overall is also much less that men do. The study reveals that men are provided with a larger number of opportunities to present their viewpoints and shown in diverse roles...in all areas like administration, law, business, science and technology. Representation of women varies from negligible to total exclusions and women

in certain accepted professions are interviewed and talked about. If they are interviewed for achieving success in a 'male' profession, then the article often goes to great pains to point out her 'femininity'.

The blogger stressed that even when the expert opinion is sought on an issue, 90 per cent of the people interviewed by the media are men. She further elaborated that when the issue of reservation of seats for women in panchayats was discussed on television, it was men who did the talking while women sat as silent spectators.

The 50 Million Missing Campaign, an award winning, fund-free, grassroots, global campaign to end the on-going female genocide in India, founded by author and gender activist, Rita Banerji in 2006 contributed a blog titled, 'why are sexist television soaps in India so popular with the public'?'¹⁰⁷

The blogger feels that deep down, among a huge section of Indians, there is an internalizing, and a positive avowal of the thought process that reinforces patriarchal values which these character represents. This is disturbing and portends more and more violence against women. What is far more dangerous is that people might admire such behaviours and choose to adopt them and even call it love. It is a great disservice to society and to our collective struggle to allow a popular character to indulge in these behaviours. There is nothing great about treating another human being as your property and this cannot be justified in any way. It is very surprising that such regressive and violent storylines and portrayal can get so much funding while causes to end human distress does not get adequate funding Sourinee concludes that these Indian soap operas, no matter how you slice it, are reinforcing sexist and conservative stereotypes

The blog written by Gopika Nair¹⁰⁸ points out that objectification of women is all over in mainstream media whether it is in advertising, calendars, pictures, movies, in magazines and so on. Most of these pictures are not those of women scientists, writers and thinkers but those of young stylish models pictured to sell products, attract attention and please the audience. They fail to portray a representative range of women's real skills and occupations, particularly in positions of authority or fail to reflect the increasing diversity and richness of women's lives, or the range of women's contributions and achievements. There is a tendency for women to be shown: as secondary to men, as pretty objects, or as appealing sex objects.

Gopika Nair has mentioned the blog of noted Economist and leading Columnist Swaminthan Anklesaria Iyer written in the Times of India website, where the columnist says “What’s truly terrible is the manner in which film heroes have for decades pestered, stalked and forced their unwanted attentions on heroines in a thousand films, yet ended up getting the girl. That sends the most outrageous of all messages to the public: pestering girls is what heroes do, and a girl’s ‘no’ actually means ‘yes’.” The recent super hit film ‘Rowdy Rathore’ the hero is shown pinching the woman on her waist. Now, this is what is seen by a kid, and this is what he thinks is right. And these are not under any scanner. But when films which talks of Child Abuse or homosexuality release there is a huge uproar.”

The blogger concludes that we are indulging in commodification of women on the silver screen just to make it a commercial proposition and have a long way to go to ensure respect for women in entertainment and mainstream media.

Shilpa Jamkhandikar’s blog¹⁰⁹ examines the two faces of Indian woman. The two women in Mumbai and Aurangabad, and the subjects of their scrutiny are at the crux of Nisha Pahuja’s film “ The World Before Her,” . The documentary juxtaposes two training camps — one for the Durga Vahini,,the women’s unit of the right-wing Vishva Hindu Parishad , and the other for the annual Miss India beauty pageant.This film tries to explore a common theme in two worlds that at first look like they are opposites. What they have in common, is that women are constantly being told, often by women themselves, that they are not good enough, whether they are being judged for their perfect legs or being pushed to give in to the patriarchal society. In the words of the film maker “ that’s what makes it more dangerous, because it’s a combination of these two extreme perspectives and they are married to each other. That is terrifying. It is regressive ideology masquerading as progress. It will create this bubble, and people won’t be able to see beyond it,” .

The blogger has mentioned that according to Pahuja, her film was evidence that the two ideologies — the perceived superficial consumerism of the pageant and the fundamentalism of right-wing Hindu groups — co-existed in India. “Right now, both are winning, because of who’s coming into power,”

2.10 Researcher's perspective

A look at the previous research shows that violence, such as dowry, rape and sati has been the focal point of content analysis in the reporting on gender inequalities and women's empowerment.

Venkatram read up on what extent the media reports on issues of violence against women¹¹⁰. But there is a void to fill within the research here. As far as we can see, there has not been a study on the extent of media's reporting on gender inequality issues, which stretches over various categories of content. Joseph's and Sharma's study ranged over five issues. Since gender inequalities are a problem within all spheres of society, the researcher finds it important to study the media reporting on these issues from a broader perspective.

Therefore, several categories of content are added to this research. This study looks at how frequently gender inequality issues are highlighted in other categories of content, such as education, political power and reproductive health. Among others, these issues are crucial in the women's empowerment process, and it is interesting to see what topics of content that benefit most coverage in the print media.

Joseph and Sharma state that events rather than processes become news, which also counts for gender issues. This is an interesting remark, which raises the question of what events that merits coverage as well as what processes that become invisible in the reporting on gender issues. This study comprises of several categories of content, in which both news of events and processes can be included.

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