

Chapter – 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is attempted in this research to answer some of the very basic questions surrounding media coverage of gender issues in a liberal democratic country like India. The study has sought to determine how issues related to gender discourses have been defined by the newspapers and news channels emanated from Delhi NCR. It explores the comparative stress and importance given to gender discussion by print and broadcast media. The coverage of gender discourses is examined over two time periods in the selected newspapers and TV news channels to determine ideological differences among them representing different interests and catering to different types of audiences.

As discussed in the Research Methodology chapter, a critical eclectic approach combines with the Agenda setting; Framing and Feminist media perspectives have been taken with constructionist and organisational perspectives of news production. The eclectic approach is taken because it is felt that no single framework can explain the media's functioning in liberal democratic societies convincingly and with clarity. What unifies these seemingly diverse perspectives is the assumption that news is to be seen through the forces that produce it rather than through events it appears to be representing.

Another assumption which brings them together is that the media is a part of liberal democratic society's overall dynamics but not a prime mover. The present research has analysed news stories on gender issues in two newspapers (one English and one Hindi) and two news channels (one English and one Hindi) using their basic attributes to determine whether the coverage of similar events by these newspapers is ideologically different. A closer look at the language use of these papers confirms that the use of language is highly ideological. In the following pages the broad findings would be drawn together in order to present an overall understanding of the media coverage of gender issues.

The media now constitute a central and powerful force in societies across the world, and certainly in India. They are increasingly playing the roles once played by family, community, religion and formal education: not only disseminating information and knowledge, but also shaping values and norms, moulding attitudes and behaviour, and influencing the very

process of living. As the late American academic George Gerbner pointed out time and again, the stories the media tell – now virtually around the clock and through multiple channels of communication – “weave the seamless web of the cultural environment that cultivates most of what we think, what we do, and how we conduct our affairs.”¹

The findings of the present study confirm that women, who constitute at least half of the country’s population, are not proportionately or properly represented in the Indian media. While certain relatively small categories of women tend to be almost over-represented, the large numbers that make up other categories continue to be under-represented. With media content still, by and large, reflecting a male-centric view of the world and of what is important, many issues that are particularly crucial to women’s lives appear to feature low down in the scale of what is regarded as newsworthy. When women do appear on the media’s radar, they do so as the exception (in terms of success in any given field) or as potential consumers rather than as equal citizens who are affected by and must have a say in all the events and issues that make news, as well as the many that don’t.

Dominant perceptions of what constitutes news are among the most important determinants of coverage. According to generally accepted definitions, events rather than processes make news. A violent episode merits front-page coverage while a peaceful state of affairs is not considered nearly as important. The magnitude of the event, whether in terms of the area affected or the number of people involved, also determines its importance as news. An unusual, out of the ordinary event – of the man bites dog variety – is considered newsworthy, whereas normal, everyday life attracts less notice. By conventional standards people can also make news – but not all people. The activities of the wealthy and powerful rate more highly than those of the poor and marginalised, including women. The opinions of the dominant sections of the society are also given more weightage and, therefore, more coverage.

The unquestioning acceptance of such definitions by the majority of journalists affects the coverage of women and their concerns directly and adversely. Most issues of special concern to women do not fit into traditional concepts of what constitutes news. First, most women in India (and elsewhere) are neither affluent nor influential in positions of authority and dominance.

As American media analyst Harvey N. Molotch explains:

*“Women are not in control of society’s institutions. Traditional dependence by the media for spokesmen (literally) from the top of such institutions means that sexism which blocks women’s mobility in other realms accumulates to block women from even knowing that they exist as a public phenomenon.”*²

The absence of women from the news pages is what Gaye Tuchman terms ‘symbolic annihilation’ – a combination of condemnation, trivialisation and erasure.³ The invisibility and inaudibility of women in society is thus further perpetuated and enhanced by the media.

Second, event as opposed to process orientation necessarily results in the neglect of issues concerning women because many of them are linked to processes rather than events. A number of serious women’s issues are not overtly violent or dramatic and, although often involving large numbers, the affected persons are not necessarily part of a readily identifiable group or concentrated in a particular geographical area. Further, many aspects of women’s oppression are so commonplace and widely accepted that they’re not considered sufficiently extraordinary to merit coverage.

The similar trend of event oriented media coverage on gender issues is witnessed in the content analysis of the present study with major percentage of such stories focussing on violence and crime. Even within the latter categories, certain themes such as rape, murder and harassment were more prevalent than others like dowry, trafficking and domestic violence. Many issues on gender discourses such as 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.

It was also found in the study that not only the crime against women constituted the highest category of news stories, but most of the news items related to gender issues were straight reports with little or no analysis or comment. Majority of rape stories published in the print media during the study were single column stories without analysing the consequence on the victim. The same pattern of crime reporting was witnessed in the news channels, with too much focus on ‘ideal victims’ perceived as vulnerable, defenceless, innocent and worthy of sympathy and compassion.

It is noteworthy that gang rapes had been paid particular attention by the mainstream media with a special focus on victims who are young, educated and middle class, even though horrifying situations are faced by impoverished village girls. Carter, cautioned that when newsmakers cease to report certain types of crime it creates the impression that they are no longer a cause for concern⁴. The lack of coverage to crime against ordinary village women appears to suggest that their stories are not dramatic or worthy enough to tell, that ordinary women's victimization is too routine or ordinary, and/or irrelevant to urban readers and viewers. The common news adage "if it bleeds it leads" is not an accurate one as "it really depends on who is bleeding"⁵.

The lack of coverage might also create a vicious cycle, whereby inattention to lower middle class or rural women's victimization by the police and community is reinforced by the lack of coverage. The amount of media attention given to a case could have an effect on the police investigation itself. For example, the more media attention that is afforded to a crime, the more police attention and resources presumably will be expended investigating, which increases the likelihood that the case will be solved.⁶ The systematic exclusion, trivialization, and marginalization of common women can be described as symbolic annihilation.⁷ This symbolic annihilation contributes to women's unequal treatment in other societal domains, further entrenching their marginalization in the society.⁸

Even after celebrity news and glamour coverage had moved into supplements or special telecast slots, the print as well the broadcast media failed to report many issues that concern women. These findings are in sync with the studies carried out by Sonia Bathla and Sumati Nagrath which are mentioned in the review of literature Chapter 2 of this research thesis.

The results of analysis of selected newspapers and news channels points out that the coverage of gender based crime especially sexual assaults were frequently structured and enriched in masculine terms and somehow maintained traditional stereotypes of femininity and masculinity. It is also observed that the news reporting's are a sort of duplication of the story telling styles where the first paragraph usually gives the details of who is assaulted by whom, where and when, the second paragraph narrates how the crime is committed and the next one lays emphasis on the police investigation, making the reporting routine and mundane.

Similar structures i.e. similar length of approximately 400 words, no or little coverage of public opinion, little background information, also few comments by any scholar, politician, social activists or women right advocates and similar sources i.e. police, undermines the

difference which media might have created. This makes the story powerless and meaningless and thus fails to trigger enough public concern.

In the present 24 hour news environment, with the news media in particular playing an ever more central role as the primary source of information, ideas and opinion for almost everyone nearly everywhere, the question of who and what is selected for news coverage-or not-and how events and issues, individuals and groups are represented-or not-is ever more significant. As the late American media critic, George Gerbner, had pointed out time and again, the stories the media tell – now virtually around the clock and through multiple channels of communication – ‘socialise us into roles of age, gender, class, vocation and lifestyle, and offer models of conformity or targets for rebellion. They weave the seamless web of the cultural environment that cultivates most of what we think, what we do, and how we conduct our affairs.’⁹

In addition, at the political level, the media have traditionally played a key role in democracy by creating the ‘public sphere’, where issues of importance to the public are discussed and debated, and where information essential to citizen participation in national and community life is presented. As Herman and McChesney point out, although the media are not the only instruments of a public sphere, they are the ‘pre-eminent vehicles of communication through which the public participates in the public process, and the quality of their contribution to the public sphere is an important determinant of the quality of democracy.’¹⁰

5.1 Exclusion of female and ordinary sources undermines the democratic space

This study traced certain perceptions regarding the absence of news sources from among the female and ordinary people. There is a general perception that women are mainly left out in the process of source selection for what was viewed as their own inability to speak to the media. Some termed them ‘media shy’ while others believed they are constrained by the patriarchal nature of family relationships, as well as the social structures in society. These constraints were believed to make it rather risky for them to get involved with news people.

As convincing as these perceptions may seem, much research drawing mainly from feminists perspectives have challenged these claims. They argue, for instance, that universal access, which in this sense means the media being a public sphere where different groups can be accessed and their views can be debated, was constructed through the significant exclusion of

women¹¹. Scholars working from this perspective are inclined to suggest that the news media is a gendered structure. The views they express are significant in terms of scrutinising the news media within the paradigm of democratic ideals. Taking into account the arguments that support the media as a public sphere, which is seen as a foundation for democracy, Carter et al (1998)¹² and Van Zoonen (2000)¹³ have made a significant contribution in this regard.

From their views one would infer that the selection of sources should include accounting “for the participation of women in various public spaces”¹⁴ and this should include offering their views in news. But it is not the case with the Indian print and broadcast media.

It seems that Indian media, although ideally acting as a public space, does not count female perspectives in source selection as equally important to the news agenda as those of men.

Similar observations are made by McNair (1998). He postulates that, “journalistic definition of who is and who is not an important or legitimate validating source” is reinforced by their accessing some over others, and this “may lead to the exclusion of voices which have something relevant to say on the issue”¹⁵. This study confirmed McNair’s suspicion. The findings show that, on one hand, female sources are severely diminished as sources of leading news even when they can offer. The content analysis of print and broadcast media also revealed the artificial and dubious classification of news into ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ carries on and the women continues to be under represented in the ‘hard’ news segment which is considered as more prestigious, especially as source of information and opinion. The expert opinion in the news is still overwhelmingly male, with men making up 80 per cent of all expert opinion and spokespersons quoted in the news stories.¹⁶

If women do appear at all, it is generally in their personal capacity, narrating personal experiences or voicing popular opinion. Women’s point of view is rarely heard on topics that dominates the news agenda, such as politics and economics. Even in stories that affect women directly and profoundly, such as gender based violence, it is the male voice that tends to prevail. The present study has reiterated this trend as 76 out of total 85 stories on rape had no by-lines and 7 had male by-line and only 2 stories had female journalist by-line. This could be the reason of the insensitivity reflected in the media towards rape while covering such a heinous crime.

In terms of the role of the press in democracy, the media seems to have ignored the importance associated with what is viewed as true diversity in democratic societies. In more

contemporary terms, Carter et al (1998) suggest that the public space that media offers to citizens should be a “space in which differences are predominantly managed today... and “this might be referred to as ‘media event space’ filled with groups and interests that require representation through the communication media”. These groups “would not seem to exist in the absence of media representation”¹⁷.

Given the well-documented under-reporting of women’s sports, the confirmation of previous reports by this study, and the fact that there are many women’s events and athletes that could be reported, the obvious question is: Why aren’t more stories written about women’s sport? To answer this question researchers must move beyond the kinds of quantitative and qualitative studies of the media which, to date have characterised research in the area. One key to the answer must be the attitudes, opinions and practices of newspaper sport editors. Sport editors are, after all, the arbiters of what gets reported and how it gets reported. The under-reporting of women in sport is a tragic undervaluing of the sacrifices, dedication and extraordinary talent of exceptional Indian sportswomen

The content analysis of the newspapers suggests that as far as the quantum of news stories on gender issues is concerned, the English newspaper The Times of India was ahead from the Hindi newspaper Hindustan. However, in terms of the prominence given to the gender related themes, the study found that Hindi newspaper Hindustan had less single column and more double column stories on gender themes as compared to The Times of India, indicating some sort of background and context added to the stories instead of presented bare boned facts.¹⁸ On the contrary, the analysis of prime time television newscasts reflects that Hindi news channel AajTak covered more stories on gender related themes than English news channel Times Now.¹⁹

Out of the studied duration of 24 days each of prime time news telecast, the Times Now had a story on gender related theme only in 8 days, meaning no story on gender related issues in 16 days of prime time telecast, whereas on AajTak ,a gender related story has been telecast in 14 out of 24 days . However, there is a surprise contrast in the findings. On the one hand, the Hindi channel AajTak leads in the coverage of gender issues but it had a poor representation of women presence as reporters as compared to the English news channel Times Now.²⁰ Similar trend is observed in terms of women seen as source of opinion or as a spokesperson in which AajTak fared very low as compared to Times Now.²¹

The broadcast media, like the print media, have an ethical obligation to serve the public interest issues and make a positive contribution to the development of the society. The general normative principles and social responsibilities are even more prominent, representing the core of the media function²². A possible explanation for the different perceptions of print and broadcast media towards gender issues may be the fact that broadcasting traditionally has operated under a different regulatory model than the print media. This difference extends from the fact that broadcasters receive spectrum licenses from the government. As licensees of a scarce public resource (the broadcast spectrum), broadcasters have an obligation to provide programming that enhances the knowledge of the citizenry and improves their ability to participate effectively in creating an egalitarian and equitable society. On the contrary, the present study finds print media to be more conscious of its social responsibility as compared to the broadcast media, when it comes to the quality and the quantity of the coverage of gender themes.

One of the important objective of this research study is to gauge the perception of the media houses of the studied newspapers and news channels towards gender issues, and the observations of the content analysis has been found to be anything than encouraging. Editorial pages are an integral part of the newspaper in providing analysis and opinion. They cultivate connections within the community and help determine and reflect its values by the reciprocal trading of ideas among social, economic, and political leaders and citizens within the community (Mott, 1940)²³. With the editorial pages representing a forum for the marketplace of ideas in the newspapers, understanding what gender issues are given exposure and how they are presented can give insight into how the public is served by that particular newspaper and what are the policy orientations of the respective media house towards gender discourses.

In terms of quality of coverage, the number of editorial articles is particularly telling because it indicates how seriously the editorial hierarchy of a paper takes note of an issue. They constitute in one way or the other to the visibility of and debate on a particular issue. The content analysis of the studied newspapers revealed that only 2.6% of the total gender stories found place on the editorial page. Hindustan fared better as it had 11 or 4.3% of the stories on the edit page whereas TOI has only 4 i.e. 1.2% stories on the editorial page.

It is evident from the study that the leading newspaper of the English press, The Times of India, failed to deliver any opinion or editorial on important gender issues like oppression against women, their empowerment or social and welfare issues related to women, which only reiterates that the mainstream newspaper lacks or even may not even have a conscious policy towards gender parity and sensitivity and does not ensure the incorporation of the perspectives of women and other powerless groups into press coverage

As compared to TOI, the Hindi newspaper ‘Hindustan’, is found to be better when the quantum and contents of its editorial page were analysed. During the study period, the paper published 11 (eleven) articles on different issues ranging from crime against women to malnutrition, women discourses in Rajendra Yadav’s writings and society’s approach towards sex crimes.

The tone of the editorial positions may correlate to the tone of coverage in the newspaper’s hard-news pages. Kahn and Kenney (2002)²⁴ looked at the interplay between opinions expressed on editorial pages and coverage in the news pages during senatorial campaigns over three election years. They found that news coverage of editorially endorsed incumbent senators was more favourable than challengers who were not endorsed; non endorsed incumbents received more negative coverage. Brewer and McCombs (1996)²⁵ looked at a Texas daily newspaper’s attempt to influence the community agenda.

The newspaper ran a full-page editorial that proposed the community focus on eight issues affecting children, followed by further news coverage of each issue. Comparing community spending before and after this campaign revealed that programs dealing with these issues increased, some substantially, after the campaign. Similar impressions are echoed in the present study, where on one hand there was very low coverage found in the print media on gender issues and on the other hand, the editorial positions has also come out to be insignificant.

Television is a major source of most people's information about the world, and this is especially true in India. . Since television is one of the most influential forms of mass media, it serves as a great starting point when exploring representation in mainstream media. The observation of prime time news of Times Now and Aajtak reveals the structural changes that

have taken place in the broadcast industry in India. Now commentary and opinion are far more prevalent on the air than straight news reporting. This shift means that a good deal of on screen reporting has been replaced with debates and interviews, which, although sometimes may be live, are far less expensive to produce and do not require a correspondent or crew.

This explains why majority of gender related stories were confined to the headlines or were the anchor only stories as compared to stories with location shots and the reporters brief.²⁶ The research study also found that the dominance of the debates is more prevalent on the English news channel Times Now as compared to the Hindi news channel AajTak, which still put more resources on straight news reporting. However, the structural change in the news delivery has not positively impacted the coverage on gender issues which remained pathetically low in the broadcast media. Results of the content analysis shows that AajTak failed to generate a single studio discussion on gender related theme during the entire study period while Times Now could only arrange a couple of studio debates on gender related themes.²⁷

Content analysis of the prime time newscasts also reveals a huge gender imbalance in terms of sources selected by the news channels for information and opinion on varied issues of national and international interests. The male voices exceeds four times than female voices as source of opinion and information²⁸. Even the prime time debates were heavily male centric as less than 20 per cent of the invitee experts or spokespersons were female²⁹. It could be predicted that, as long as women are kept out of the news as reporters and sources, women will continue to hold a lower status compared to men (Armstrong, 2004)³⁰. This could continue to project the perception that men are more credible than women (Weibel et al., 2008)³¹, and that women need to be sexualized objects in order to gain male attention (Nitz et al., 2007)³².

When women are excluded from hard news stories as reporters and sources, their viewpoint is short changed and thus is easily ignored. This study has clearly demonstrated that the studied news channels out rightly lacks a gender sensitive and parity approach and tends to report or debate gender issues in a limited and superficial manner. Overall, it is concluded that out-dated attitudes towards gender roles still persists in the Indian television broadcasting industry.

As regards to the framing of gender based news by media, the empirical data indicates that the print as well as broadcast media examined for this framing analysis had a propensity to frame. The use of episodic framing was abundantly used by the newspapers as well as the news channels. The study reveals that relative to the English newspaper *The Times of India*, the Hindi newspaper *Hindustan* provided more thematic stories on gender related themes. This has also been substantiated by the number of features or opinion articles published by both the newspapers on their editorial pages.³³ On the contrary, the content analysis of news channels reflects that the English news channel *Times Now* was ahead from the Hindi news channel *AajTak* in presenting gender related stories in thematic frame.³⁴ The finding that episodic framing is far more common than thematic framing suggests that news constructs gender-based issues as an individual/personal issues rather than a broader social issue. This tendency to individualise gender related issues has consequences for the public's understanding of social issues. Dorfman et al. (1997)³⁵, in their American study of gender and youth violence, argue that if 'news continues to report on violence and other gender related issues primarily through crime stories or individualised stories isolated from their social context, the chance for widespread support for grass root solutions will be diminished'.

One of the arguments usually given for the proficient use of episodic frame in news production is the importance attached to timeliness of the news. The emphasis placed on 'timeliness' means that recent events – usually occurring in the previous 24 hours – are favoured by journalists (Allan 1999: 57)³⁶. The outcome of this focus is that news tends to be 'event' rather than 'issue' driven. Iyengar (1991)³⁷, in his book about television news, explains how the prevalence of 'episodic' (events-based) over 'thematic' framing in coverage of violence against women means the issue tends to be discussed in personalised and individualised terms rather than through contextualized accounts. Researchers have found that the journalistic values of 'timeliness' and 'personalisation' mean that coverage of gendered violence tends to focus on individuals, lacks context, and very rarely addresses these 'events' as part of a larger societal problem (Berns 2004³⁸; Bullock & Cubert 2002³⁹; Carlyle, Slater & Chakroff 2008; Consalvo 1998⁴⁰; Gallagher 2001; Maxwell et al. 2000; Media Watch 1993; Michelle & Weaver 2003⁴¹; Taylor 2009⁴²). Furthermore, the value placed upon 'simplification' in news culture (Chibnall 1977)⁴³ renders 'thematic' frames less appealing than simple attributions of individual blame for concrete events. In addition, episodic framing is considered a consequence of journalistic norms, such as objectivity, that place a premium on the reporting of 'hard' news as specific events. Claims to journalistic

norms, and especially objectivity, then, are played out within the structure of the frame itself. Yet, although thematic framing, with its interpretative qualities, is considered much more vulnerable to charges of bias (Iyengar & Simon 1993)⁴⁴, accounts of bias are similarly evidenced in both episodic and thematic framing.

The consequence of the dominance of episodic frames in media stories on gender issues, however, is that public knowledge regarding the issues and their ramification remains limited. Framing, it seemed, functioned more so to maintain the dominant discourse in gender relations instead of shaking them. Coleman and Thorson (2002)⁴⁵ examine whether the inclusion of contextual information about gender violence can shift readers' perceptions. They found that the incorporation of 'information on context, risk factors, and prevention strategies will help readers learn more about the context in which gender violence occurs, endorse prevention strategies in addition to punishment, and become more attuned to societal risk factors and causes of crime and violence'. These studies reinforce the importance of contextual information for people's understanding of social problems, and suggest that media can make a significant contribution to increasing public knowledge around gender related issues.

The result of content analysis reveals that the media provides a lop-sided picture of women and their meaningful participation and contribution to the society. However, comparing the print and the broadcast media's approach towards gender coverage, it becomes amply clear that although there might not be much difference in the overall percentage of gender based coverage in print and broadcast media, but as far as coverage under varied gender themes is concerned, the print media is way ahead than broadcast media⁴⁶. A possible explanation for this can be the historic legacy of the print media and its rich lineage of the independence struggle. Apart from that, Newspapers are one of the most influential and authoritative source that people rely on to get news. It is true that TV gets more audience than newspapers and statistics have shown that viewers outnumber considerably than newspaper readers. However readership of newspapers is also sufficiently high for the medium to have a significant effect on the belief of the population. Also, there is a general adherence to the idea that newspapers have permanency. The reader can refer to a newspaper article as many times as he or she wants and read and discuss them with friends. They can be archived to be easily accessible to the public. TV and Radio texts are exposed only once. Besides, TV and Radio cannot talk in depth about a story because of time limits, whereas newspapers can accommodate far more

details. (Dominick 1996)⁴⁷. Similar opinions have been expressed by other scholars according to whom newspapers still provide some of the most comprehensive news coverage and prestigious journalistic work (Just et al., 1997). Editorial pages are an integral part of the newspaper in providing analysis and opinion. They cultivate connections within the community and help determine and reflect its values by the reciprocal trading of ideas among social, economic, and political leaders and citizens within the community (Mott, 1940)⁴⁸.

By comparing the content analysis of English and Hindi newspaper, one cannot escape with the fact that the English newspaper The Times of India has published more news stories on gender based themes as compared to the Hindi newspaper Hindustan.⁴⁹ One of the reasons for this could be that the English press is often considered as 'elite' in its approach and orientations with overt openness for modern ideas and thought processes. It therefore, is more balanced and liberal in its coverage and analysis of issues like gender than are the major publications in Hindi. English newspapers are also seen as window to the outside world and have discourses with liberal, democratic values. They can also act as a moderating influence on women's' empowerment and liberation. However, while the English press can be more informed and liberal in its views than the vernacular press, it is essentially more alienated from the ordinary people whose worldview, values and emotions it often ignores.

On the contrary, the news channels analysis reveals that the Hindi news channel AajTak covered more news stories on gender issues as compared to the English news channel Times Now⁵⁰. A plausible explanation might be that The English news channels have created new programming and expanded the understanding and knowledge of a class of people who were already a part of India's deliberative sphere through newspapers and other print media. But Hindi and other Indian language channels seem to have created a brand new deliberative space with space for citizens who were previously unable to participate in the debates of Indian democracy. Hindi news television thrives on programming genres that marry older argumentative traditions with new technology and notions of liberal democracy, to create new hybrid forms that strengthen democratic culture. Apart from that, since Hindi news channels have sizeable female viewership, it also makes a good business sense to cater to the aspirations of the women's viewpoint, may be in token form, by covering their issues.

The difference between English and Hindi news channels is not simply in language, but also in the culture of news presentation, correspondingly their impact is also very different. Hindi news channels have, engendered a transformation in India's political and public culture, the nature of the state and expressions of Indian nationhood. An interesting inference can be drawn from this study that the changed format of debate centric news presentation of the leading English news channel Times Now has even failed to generate a matching and equal gender based coverage of the straight reporting style of news presentation of the Hindi news channel AajTak.

5.2 Highlights of the research study

- Dominant perceptions of what constitutes news are among the most important determinants of coverage. The unquestioning acceptance of such definitions by the majority of journalists affects the coverage of women and their concerns directly and adversely. The result is that women and gender concerns are yet to be integrated into the broad news agenda.
- Print as well as broadcast media's penchant for event as opposed to process orientation necessarily results in the neglect of issues concerning women because many of them are linked to processes rather than events. Many issues on gender discourses such as 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 in the media discourses.
- The artificial and dubious classification of news into 'hard' and 'soft' carries on, with women under represented in the former, more prestigious areas, especially as source of information and opinion.
- The focus of media is primarily on individual women rather than on women as a collective or as female member of diverse communities with some shared experiences and concerns, needs and opinions.

- Experiences and opinions of ordinary women are either missing or represented almost exclusively by urban middle class women. Socially, economically, geographically and otherwise disadvantaged women, and their experiences and opinions are virtually absent.
- Majority of the front page stories were reports on crime against women. Issues like development, women's representation and social or welfare related stories found their place only once on the front page in the entire study period. The plight of domestic workers also made a page one story on three occasions, thanks to the high profile people involved in the abuse of their domestic help. But major gender concerns like women's right, women entrepreneurs, their participation in decision making, even their health issues are either not found newsworthy or conveniently pushed to the other pages of the newspaper.
- Out of the meagre coverage on women and sports, more emphasis was laid on international women sports events as compared to national sports events. The abject apathy towards the coverage of the national women sports events shows the biased approach of the Indian media and the society as well, which considers sports as a male bastion and gives little importance to women sports. Prime time broadcast news has no place for women sports.
- Women movements missed the media glare completely and Feminism and other NGO's actions received less than 1 per cent coverage. News stories on women politicians were grossly inadequate even though an important national political party's president has been a woman and we have three women chief ministers ruling in three important states of India.
- In majority of the themes and sub themes related to the gender discourses, broadcast media is way behind the print media, both in terms of quantity as well as quality.
- The construction of the public sphere by broadcast media so clearly reflects bias that it raises the issue of whether women's expertise, experience, insight, understanding,

knowledge, and power is disregarded, denied, perhaps ignored in the constructed public sphere.

- Unusually high rate of unattributed news stories on gender issues. While some of the stories were strictly news related, many of them were more general, social pieces, meaning that naming of the author was not considered important. It reflects the casual approach towards gender themes by print media.
- Almost half of the gender related news stories broadcast on the prime time were confined to the headlines only without subsequent detailing or discussion on the issue.
- The media's focus on episodic framing reinforces the dominant ideology of individual responsibility for their problems. By giving only episodic information about some social problems, the media give cues that there is nothing citizens can do, thus ignoring research to the contrary, increasing the public's fear, and reinforcing the dominant ideology of blaming the individual with only vague references to greater social causes.
- A noticeable trend found in the study is that print as well as broadcast media , instead of interpreting or analysing on controversial legal positions or pronouncements concerning gender issues, usually remains reticent and do not question or comment on the these judgements. When covering gender and legal issues, the penchant for legal developments in the international arena was unequivocally reflected in the English newspaper The Times of India, whereas, barring a couple of similar reports, the Hindi newspaper Hindustan placed more focus on the legal developments within India. Broadcast media drew a blank on this theme.
- Weekend newspapers and newscasts have been considered special as they supposedly cater to an increased number of readership or viewership. However. This study doesn't find any qualitative or quantitative change in terms of gender discourses in the weekend editions of the selected newspapers. Television news channels fared even worse on weekend prime time, with low on news content, supplemented sometimes with infotainment or celebrity interview, and devoid of their star news anchors,

5.3 Recommendations

- It is important to create the potential to conduct research which is comparable across member states, provides contextual information and allows key trends to be discerned over time. Methodologies need to be improved and sample sizes increased to produce representative and replicable results.
- There is also a need to branch out research to provide data and information, not only on news organisations as is the case in most current studies, but also on the wider media and communications industry such as film, marketing, public relations and publishing.
- Despite the increased feminisation of the media sector in recent years, the masculine culture remains, possibly because of the lack of women in decision-making posts in the sector. Efforts to increase the representation of women in these posts should be promoted.
- Emphasize systemic problems and solutions. Stories about individual women can be powerful hooks to engage reporters and the public, but whenever possible, those individual stories should be linked to the need for systemic solutions
- Gender orientation workshops can be held with media professionals to discourage gender insensitivity and to promote issue-centric rather than event-centric coverage.
- Promoting gender equality as a module in the school syllabus, for training and university studies of journalism and communication
- Media and advertising organisations should actively promote gender neutral codes of ethics and gender sensitive vision and language among their members at both internal and public level communications

- There is a need to promote networking between media organisations, government organisations and women's associations to create a semblance between the code of conduct drafted by them
- It is vital to use traditional media like puppetry and street theatre to promote gender-awareness-raising campaigns aimed at children, students and citizens
- Violent and degrading images of women have a negative effect on women and their participation in society. Thus screening of the photographs, advertisements and news content along with the material circulated online with a gender based approach is utmost required for the media practitioners. The picture of women should not appear only at the covers of the magazines and newspapers to brighten a black world but also recognized as a guiding light for others

A holistic media education is also the need of the hour, one that sensitizes students to gender issues and human rights within the socio-political reality. It is said that to stamp your foot, you first need a leg to stand on. Therefore, it is important to conduct research – surveys, content analysis – to monitor how the media covers the issue of gender and the reaction of the audience to it. The data, collected scientifically, lends its weight to any lobbying that is done with policy makers.

5.4 Limitations of this study and suggestions for further research

The main disadvantage of this study is the absence of a variety of newspapers published in both languages i.e. English, and Hindi. From a development perspective it would be interesting to examine the function of Hindi newspapers in the rural areas of India. These newspapers reach a remarkable number of people and we presume that their impact on the public opinion is wider than the English press'. This kind of study could possibly include an audience study. It would give significant information on the readers' perception of the newspaper content and women's empowerment issues.

Furthermore, to obtain information from another perspective it could be interesting to do an ethnographical study of the newsrooms. How do the reporters discuss gender inequality issues? How do they argue? This study could also include editors and news directors. How do they approach these issues? Since the editors and news directors have the final say on what to publish it is relevant to observe their views.

Another limitation of this study includes the scope of the analysis. I chose to focus on two television news channels. From there I narrowed the extent of my research to one specific daily newscast time slot i.e. prime time (9.00 pm-10.00 pm). This allowed me to closely examine how the gender based stories were covered through qualitative as well as quantitative data. A study that included all of 24x7 newscasts across all time slots of both the news channels might have yielded different information. Some of the coverage areas I found lacking in the prime time broadcasts may have been addressed in other shows.

Access to the previously-aired broadcasts was another limitation to this analysis. The government owned agency Electronic Media Monitoring Cell, doesn't have any provision for media researchers to have an access to their archives and the costs to acquire copies of all the newscasts would have been prohibitive.

In order to further build upon this body of knowledge in gender and media studies and in order to gain a more comprehensive and sophisticated understanding of the highly complex and ever expanding media industry, it is important to extend the scope to the online and digital media sectors that has revolutionised the way information and news is distributed which this study has not focused. The current research study focused only on the large-scale media organisations but the explosion in online and digital technologies means that the reach of many new media forms such as Twitter and Facebook is significant and the ways in which new media and digital technologies more generally are structured, and the way they cater to women as both consumers and producers of content. Understanding the potential of the internet as a source of employment, a vehicle for women's visible empowerment but also a medium through which sex-based discrimination continues to be played out, should be an important aspect of any future research agenda

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²⁷ See graph 4.G14, Chapter 4

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