
Women And Media

Dr. Harish Kumar Verma¹

¹Assistant Professor (Department of Sociology) Govt. Degree college Mahadeva, Basti (Uttar Pradesh)

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Abstract

Media play a vital role in distribution of information about various programme related to all human beings-men as well as women. Media play an important role in social development mass media are by now undoubtedly among the major socialising agents in modern society. Over the past 20 years media's role in promoting gender equality and fostering change in the societal attitudes towards women has been universally recognised. The present paper is based on women and media. The paper tries to focus on the measurement of empowerment of women through media.

Key Words: Women, Media, Mainstream, Critical Mass, Advertising, Women empowerment.

Introduction

During the past decade, advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes and behaviour, especially of children and young adults. Everywhere the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women. The media too is getting increasingly concerned with women's issue. Besides, a large number of women are actively involved in various activities and practices relating to media.

An increase in the number of women working in the mainstream of media has been recorded almost everywhere. Unfortunately the inroads of women in media and media presentation on women's issues have not altered the situation in any significant manner. That is why it matters who controls and who has access to production of media content. The blunt truth is that power to develop media policy and to determine the nature and shape of media content continues to elude women. The number of women joining the media organisation still constitute a low percentage of active journalists often with unexciting desk-bound beats and rarely have they progressed to managerial levels.

It is also by no means clear that increased number of women employed in the print and electronic media has led to improved representation. There is considerable evidence that an increase in number of women employed in media does not get itself reflected in any kind of qualitative difference in programming or a radically altered news agenda of priorities. For most of Asia the growing number of women journalists has not made a significant change in the content, style or presentation of information, especially on women's issues, News decisions are still made by men even if news, is increasingly reported and edited by women. The fact is that the euphoria on the increasing number of women in the media is misplaced as media women have not been able to radically alter the news agenda and its priorities. Their capacity to influence the decisions that shape media content is still extremely limited. Whether their influence will increase with their growing number in the years to come is still a debatable issue. What really matters is not the proportion but the positions of managerial responsibility that women actually hold in media.

Another issue of critical importance to be considered in this regard pertains to media content on women Available information gives the impression that not much has changed. Major concern of the media about women is still about stereotypes that is the narrowness of the range of representation of women in the media.

The reality complexity and multi-cultural dimension of gender roles is still not addressed directly. The dominant images of women in the mass media worldwide still remain stereotypical and unrepresentative. Across Asia the portrayal of women and the representation of feminine values and attitudes towards men in media is governed by indigenous societal norms and cultural and religious traditions. Exceptions apart women are rarely projected as rational active or decisive. The presentation of women as role models in respective walks of life is still a rarity.

The level of gender sensitivity in media evidenced by the failure to eliminate the gender-based stereotyping that can be found in public as well as private as also in local national and international media organizations. Reports on women and media (both print as well as electronic) reveal a very discouraging scenario. The international conferences on the subject ever that media in most countries do not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contribution to society. In addition violent and degrading or pornographic media products are also negatively affecting women and their participation in society. Programming that reinforces women's traditional roles can be equally limiting. The world-wide trend towards consumerism has created a climate in which advertisements and commercial messages often portray women primarily as consumers and target girls and women of all ages appropriately.

An essential concern today is that media should reflect arrange of realistic and diverse representations of the complexities and variations in women's lives. It should highlight the significant roles and functions performed by women occupying positions of authority in different walks of life-politics, bureaucracy, judiciary, economy, education etc. in order that they may be taken as role models by general mass of women and girls who may be able to derive inspiration from them and make endeavours to bring about desired improvements in their own lives. Another set of concern relates to media's projection of violence and vulgarity that has serious repercussions for women. The situation in the tradition bound developing societies has been made worse by the trans-national media conglomerates who are projecting a sexually permissive culture and violent gender imagery-depicting women as objects of male gaze, male sexuality and male violence. These global media organisations have different sets of priorities concerning obscenity since for them, the sex sells. Now the most relevant issue is how to make media an instrument of right kind of societal transformation, especially in changing the prevalent attitudes beliefs and practices that discriminate against women and hinder the progress in the direction of gender equality through empowerment. Who will change the media practices? is another serious issue to examine. One thing is however, very clear: we need to define areas needing attention and action and review existing media policies with a view to integrating gender perspective in them How it is to be done is the issue of pivotal significance.

Analysis: In democratic societies, no body would like to agree that media be controlled since that is the worst remedy. The best option is that media bosses (proprietor's managers and senior executives) should themselves devise self-regulatory machanisms to eliminate gender biased programming and reporting. The roles and responsibilities that media people themselves may like to discharge an many and some of these which are relatively more important, are:

- Facilitating gender sensitive, realistic reporting/programming and thus promoting gender sensitisation.
- Turning media spotlight on women to act as catalyst for change and strengthening its advocacy role.
- Changing the continued projection of negative and degrading images of women.
- Enhancing women's skill knowledge and access to information technology.

- Promoting women's full and equal participation in the media including management, programming training and research.
- Increasing the number of programmes for and by women to see that women's need and concerns are properly addressed to.
- Encouraging gender-sensitive training for media professionals including media owners and managers to encourage the creation and use of non-stereotyped balanced and diverse images of women in the media.
- Encouraging media to refrain from presenting women as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and commodities.
- Developing, Consistent with freedom professional guidelines and codes of conduct and other forms of self regulations of promote the presentations of non stereotyped images of women.
- Realising the importance of "critical mass" ie at least 30 percent presentation of women on the staff to make a noticeable difference.
- Increasing access of women to electronic and print media.
- Promoting "alternative media"-Women-owned and women managed media structures-newspapers, journals magazines as collaborators to "mainstream media".

Conclusion: Women breaking through the glass ceiling to reach leadership positions are rising at a slow pace many efforts to be put in this direction. Technological evolution has to play a very important role. As we can see new media forms are creating an alternative culture. Greater mobility and acceptance of women in public spaces is a necessary condition of a healthy and modern democracy. There can be no full freedom of the press until women have an equal voice in the news-gathering process.

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