

## **Feminism on Media: Theorizing the ‘Uncanny’ state of women in men’s world**

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*The essence of Feminism has a strong fundamental case intended to mean only that there are excellent reasons for thinking that women suffer from systematic social injustice because of their sex, the proposition is to be regarded as constituting feminism.”-----Richards, Janet:1981*

As an ideology<sup>1</sup> and as the chains of movements<sup>2</sup> for women’s empowerment, the be all and end all of feminism, in all the fields-- political, cultural, literary or social, feminism emerges against the discriminatory<sup>3</sup> treatment of women in all aspects of life— social, economic, political etc. in consistent with the humanitarian perspective. It challenges the age old perceptions of people regarding women and gender<sup>4</sup> discrimination and stands dead against the patriarchal hegemonic phenomenon to which women at large are being subjected in every stage of their lives and besets itself with the charge of searching solutions. It also endeavours to edit the stereotypical perception of patriarchy for women asserting their identity as parallel to men in all walks of life in the teeth of the opposition of the fundamentalists of course. Having been emphasising on it Bhasin and Khan remark---

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“Feminism is an awareness of patriarchal control, exploitation and oppression at the material and ideological levels of women’s labour, fertility and sexuality, in the family, at the place of work and in society in general, and conscious action by women and men to transform the present situation” (Bhasin and Khan, 1999: 3).

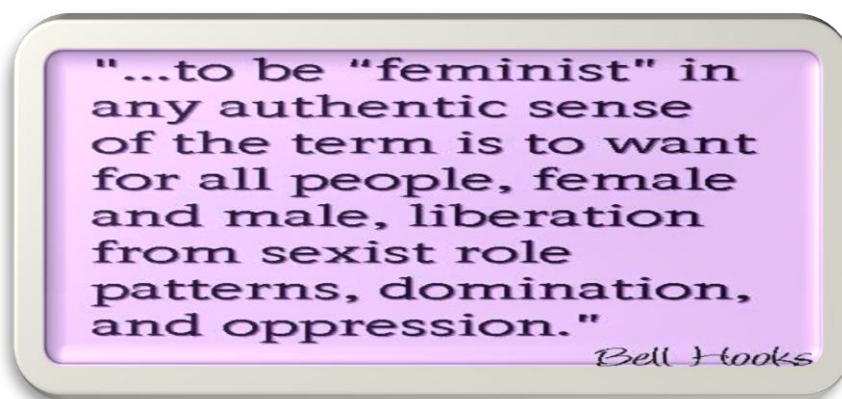
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<sup>1</sup>Feminism is an awareness of women’s oppression and exploitation at work, within the family and society, and conscious action by women and men to change this situation and uplift the life of women. Feminism has no specific abstract definition applicable to all women at all times, since it is based on historically and culturally concrete realities and levels consciousness, perceptions and actions. It can be articulated differently in different parts of the world, depending upon various backgrounds. Feminism is against patriarchy expressed in domination, selfishness, aggression, violence and oppression ( Singh, Ivy “Feminism: Various Approaches and Its Values”)

<sup>2</sup>The recent form of feminism that came after 1960s has become an evolving socio-political movement. It is a political project aiming to understanding the power structures and relations in the society and to challenge it as well, which is still working in the forms of male domination, through the transmitters of social practices, social institutions. So, as a movement it devices the strategies to emancipate and empower women out of this imbalanced environment. (<http://shodganga.inflibnit.ac.in>)

<sup>3</sup>The feminist movement “includes any form of opposition to any form of social, personal or economic discrimination which women suffer because of their sex (Bouchier, David, quoted in <http://shodganga.inflibnit.ac.in>)

<sup>4</sup>Gender is the cultural significance given to biological difference of reproductive organs. It refers to men and women, as well as to appropriate and less appropriate ways to be a man or a woman (masculinity and femininity). Often, gender is seen as the original difference and as a universal divide in all human groups. The construction of femininity and masculinity are part of dominant ideology that prescribes ‘proper behaviour for men and women. (Hermes, Joke:2007)



Media<sup>5</sup> have the power to energise the process for re-establishing the systems of whole society—social, political or economic on the basis of equality. But the growing dissatisfaction against media, among the feminists, has opened up a new angle to study and investigate the portrayal of women in media and attitude of media as well. And it is found in some researches been made on this, with a view to examine the portrayals of women that women have been treated as mere objects of consumption. Feminists assert women's potential character as essentially capable of and eligible for all successes and glories of the world and refuse to be seen as an object of desire, lust and consumption<sup>6</sup>. The emergence of writers in India like MadhuKishwar, Kamala Das, ManjuKapur, MamtaKalia, AmritaPritam, to name a few, whose works are but an assertive mirror of their creative potential with their pungent critique of pathetic treatment of women in patriarchal society<sup>7</sup>, is a potent testimony to the fact that women are today conscious enough to understand their position and accordingly prepared to confront their disgraceful and submissive status at the vicious hands of the ever empowered male dominated society (R.R Dwivedi:2014). Dupuis (2000:268) has elaborated it through mentioning about Simone D. Beauvoir's articulation on the age old oppression and under-developed status of women thus...

[In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Simone De Beauvoir's book 'The Second Sex' was published and she clearly established that the problems and the poor images of women arose from the affirmation of the past and a gross neglect of the growth, development, the talents and opportunities of women in specific societies.] Betty Friedan in 1960 had brought out a book titled "The Feminine Mystique" with its major emphasis on the consequences of the treatment of women as objects or commodity in advertisements. Before the paper progresses to illustrate the service of media to women through its different manifestations, it is but imperative to analyse the feminists' major concerns in order to lend a critical assessment of the role of media vis-s-vis priorities of feminism redefined through many a feminist critic of world repute.

The major contradiction made on men and women in a patriarchy is either the concept of gender or sex<sup>8</sup>: stereotyped conceptions regarding these are cultivated in the minds of the people. In consequence of this, those norms are becoming culture in which women are structured as inferior in comparison to men. The following citations will exert some light on it...

In pursuance of this, Feminists being aware are trying to regenerate the ideas of equality and justice, in the form of Ideology and movements. From a philosophical point of view, the term 'feminism' generally designates a mindset that is not limited to women or to gender in its definition. Rather, the core of the definition of feminism is in discrimination on the basis of gender (Nagel-Docekal 1999: 8).

[T]he principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes – the legal subordination of one sex to the other – is wrong in itself and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and [...]

<sup>5</sup>Media play an important role in that they inform and instruct their audiences about current issues and happenings around them or affecting them. The media are, therefore, a central part of human relations and an essential tool in communication as they play a critical role in educating the masses. Further, societies and cultures greatly influenced and transformed through media (Okiring :2013)

<sup>6</sup>As cited in Dwivedi, Dr. R. R: 2014. Women in Indian Television Advertisement: A Feminist Observation.

<sup>7</sup>Feminist studies emphasized the major role of institutions for gender inequality early and repeatedly (Elson:1991; Marchand and Parpart :1995; Parpart:1993; Johannes and Morrison:2005). They argued that patriarchal structures perpetuate gender inequality. To overcome it women must challenge existing power relations and change or abolish Patriarchal institutions.(Johannes and Morrison:2005)

<sup>8</sup>The term gender role refers to society's concept of how men and women are expected to act and how they should behave. These roles are based on the norms or standards by the society. William Little in Introduction to Sociology in the chapter titled Gender, sex and sexuality <http://opentextbc.ca/introductiontosociology/chapter/chapter12-gender-sex-and-sexuality/>.

ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other. (Mill, 1984: 261)

It was during the 1960 and 70s when the feminists in US, at large, looked into the images and portrayal of women in media as a concern for making in-depth studies. In this particular point of time, the studies were based on the principle of liberalism and by and large advocated for equal participation of women in media for the positive portrayal of women. Out of multiple concerns of feminist critics, stereotyping of women is the one which perhaps bothers them the most. With a view to theorise the on-going objectifications of women as sex objects, and the representation of women in the mythical roles, feminists come to forefront. That is why the necessity and viability of Feminist approach to the media is being acknowledged in the present day situation. R.R Dwivedi observes,

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

In India also, in 1970 with the advent of the second wave of Feminism, and the emergency period during Indira Gandhi's tenure, women of India were making voices against the domination of male in everywhere and demanded democratisation of every fields and equal distribution of the resources. It is noteworthy that the space assigned by the society towards women in patriarchal society of the world in general and India in particular is defined by two characters, firstly as sex objects, for satisfying the men and secondly as their all pervasive stereotypical roles as good mother, house wives, and daughter etc.

In regard to the stereotype roles, it is seen that, women might be attributed some ultra modern qualities or some traditional qualities inspired from the myths of culture and religion, but in both cases women are not portrayed in a positive way.

The atrocious discrimination in India or any other society towards women is born of the sadist and miserable treatment showed to them by the male society in general as the males always carve for victimising women. This has led to the emergence of many a literary feminist critic in defence of their cause. Simone de Beauvoir's opinion in this respect is amply suitable when she says:

"One is not born but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in the society; it is civilization as whole that produces this creature."(Beauvoir, 457)

"While stating a sharp distinction between "sex" and "gender" being biological and cultural/social/psychological construct respectively, Kate Millet in her *Sexual Politics* observes the repression and subordination of a woman as "a most ingenious form of interior colonization". (Kate Millet)

J.S. Mill, the ardent supporter of women's liberty expressed his critical concern reflecting on the pathetic and sadist condition of women in society at large. In his book, *The Subjection of Women*, Mill writes about the problems of women's inequality in society and stated—"What is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing the result of forced repression in some directions".

In the 1990s, the feminist intrusions in the media have gained more attention in the field of cultural studies group of centre for contemporary cultural studies (CCCS) at Birmingham. The feminist scholars recognised the importance of Gender, questioned the naturalization of masculinity and masculine discourse in media studies and argued for 'Feminine' as a new philosophy of study. (McMillan: 2007)

Further feminist issues gained remarkably more importance in the media, especially after the UN Fourth World conference on Women held at Beijing in 1995. "The strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action were—Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision making in and through the media and new technologies of communication; promote a balanced portrayal of women in the media." Thereafter, many women's organisations began to voice their concerns against the negative portrayal of women as "Commodity and Second Class Citizen" through both private and government controlled Print and electronic media, and the crying need for encouraging women to join the profession.

Feminist Media studies differs from other studies such as Post-modernism, Pluralism, Neo-Marxism because of its absolute focus on analysing gender as a mechanism that structures material and symbolic worlds and our experiences of them.(Van Zoonen)

As a matter of fact, Feminist is someone who cherishes the thought that the reason behind all the sufferings of discrimination by women is due to their sex and the value laden concept of gender. The words 'Feminist' and 'Feminism' are all political brands<sup>9</sup> emerged in the late 1960 aiming the support of the new women's movement. Feminist criticism was then a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender in literature. According to Millet.....

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<sup>9</sup>Gallagher, Margaret. (2006) *Feminist Media Perspective*.

“.....feminists have politicised existing critical methods (in much the same sort of way that Marxist have) and it is on this basis that feminist criticism has grown to become a new branch of literary studies . Feminist reader looks towards politics of gender. French version of ‘Feminine’ refers to ‘Femaleness’ and ‘Femininity’” (Millet).

### **I. The History of Gendered Media: Stereotypification of women through it**

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

Gender roles are prevalent in media, often portraying women as nurturing, gentle, cooperative, concerned with appearance, and sensitive to others; while men are viewed as logical, competitive, independent, assertive, financial providers, skilled in business (Foss, 1989; Wood & Reich, 2006), and dominant over women (Morris, 2006)”.

As far as India is concerned, the age of gendered media started from the period from the Vedic period, where written contents are found writing on women. The available media, being in the form of text, like the Vedic text, Dharma Sutras etc. had located the status and position of both men and women in their specialised roles. Kumkum Roy<sup>10</sup>, discussing on the specified roles assigned to both men and women says that...

.....looking at the historical context when media in the form of text was available, like the later Vedic texts, the Dharma Sutras and the Grihya Sutras signify the role of the grhapati or the male head of the household or the family defined roles and obligations of each of its members. The household was also taken as a unit that controlled and used productive resources, including land and cattle, ensured transmission of such resources from one generation to the next through the process of patrilineage. In the process, the existing gender relations which were unequal in nature were passed on to next generation.” (Roy, Dr. Kumkum: 2010)

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

During the Gupta period (400-500 AD), the plays of Kalidasa would show that the gender relation existing at that time was the future trend as it is revealed in the present day situation. In his plays, the dressing pattern of the characters playing the role of the queen is according to the situations they are in. Hence, the dresses and attires were part and parcel of womanhood and depicted one of the important components of the presentation and identity of women. It also reinforced the attributes associated with them being women. Similarly, the gestures were also used so as to maintain the gender roles (e.g. salutations or touching the feet confined only to women). Again, the language used was also gendered in the sense that Sanskrit was considered as “high” language and Prakrit as “low” language and the dialogue delivery was done according to the prescribed status of men and women, i.e., men characters spoke Sanskrit language, while women spoke Prakrit language, thus maintaining the gender bias of the high and the low. These forms of media strengthen the existing stereotypes prevailing in the society (Roy, Dr. Kumkum (2010).

In present day also women are presented as the same way before the twenty years ago. Media are still reinforcing the patriarchal norms, putting men as dominant and women as powerless and victims of the entire oppressions duo to patriarchal culture. Kumkum Roy says,

It fulfils and protects the corporate interest. It is trying to maintain and keep the political and cultural situation of the country intact through the presentation of various issues. Media does not talk about the diagnosis or the treatment of the social problem. Rather it creates a space for disillusionment. Women are considered and further projected as weak persons in terms of physical strength, emotional space and intellectual sphere.

### **II. Failure of media as an agency of social change and status of women**

“Feminist studies emphasised the major role of institutions for gender inequality early and repeatedly (Elson, 1991; Marchand and Parpart, 1995; Parpart, 1993). They argued that patriarchal structures perpetuate gender inequality” (As cited in Johanness Juting & Christian Morrison).

Media, one of the powerful institutions of today’s world through which ideas are shared and opinions get the shape of policies, is still in the hands of male owners. As a result, women are still in the position of victims rather than decision makers: media are projecting women as the objects of entertainment and sex. The obsession

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<sup>10</sup>As cited in “Women, Media and Gender Equality”: R. Sujata

for fair skin still marching ahead, the number of fairness cosmetics flooded in the market and rich sponsorships in the form of advertisements uncountable. In this regard Dr. P.C. Joshi says---

“Women are still projected as beauty objects. Still she has to look beautiful and fresh all the time from rising from the bed till she drops dead after working the whole day playing the dutiful role of many of the status, she is holding. She is managing business empire but when returns home “the dutiful bahu” is the expected role” (Joshi, P.C: 1989).

Women, at the global level and in India particular, by and large, are presented as glamorous or elegant having the capabilities of handling jobs like compeer, newsreader and anchor person, where women are shown as mere objects of entertainment and lagging behind men in regard to the intellectual power. Women appear in magazines, fictions and in television soap operas, and films as self deprecating and dependent, irrational, and overemotional along with being beautiful. Present day, children grow up, reared and beared in the constant interaction with role models from mass media. They follow them every inch and want to be like the way they are. In this regard Routray says,

How many of us know about Homai Vyrawalla, the first woman press photographer, who took many memorable pictures of the old India at various important stages of its history? Similarly, in print media, news related to atrocities on women is published to gain on TRPs. It is sensationalized and the core issue is rarely focused (Sujaya Routray: 2011).

According to her the issues which need to be addressed to assess the role of media in transformation of the society are:

- Is media presenting woman as an object of desire or a strong individual with specific needs and requirements?
- How media is portraying women – confining her to traditional private domain or showcasing their eligibility as befitting members negotiating for space in the public domain which is considered as a male domain?
- Are “personal issues” of the common women made political?
- What kind of social messages are being spread through media? The quality of coverage of women's issues in news media.
- Is media an agent of social change or just social policing – maintaining the existing order in accordance to the desired and approved social control of the dominating group i.e. men ?  
The necessary structural change within media will certainly help in reducing the existing gender bias in the society as well change in the gendered role of men and women as prescribed by the society (ibid). These are described below:
  - The folk media/grass root media or the alternative media should be encouraged so that issues happening at community level which are empowering in itself can have a wider viewership.
  - There should be proper presentation of the role of feminist movement in any small form it might be taking place in a small hamlet to worldwide, the efforts made by village women in curbing the menace of alcoholism, dowry, and environmental degradation and so on.
  - Women consist of a heterogeneous group but are the tribal and dalit women given a space to raise their concern, their voice. All the women faces should be discussed frankly and neutrally.
  - Highlight the success stories of women in respective fields as well as in their contribution in bringing a gender just society.
  - Women should not be treated as objects that the other half desires and accordingly get used and exploited for marketing, advertisement and promotion.
  - There should be avoidance of any media presentation of women which is sexist and gender bias in nature.
  - There should be an increased number of women journalists in the media scenario further more there should be gender sensitization among the male journalist. The female journalist should have the courage to discuss and cover issues responsibly.
  - Sexist advertisement and messages which are humiliating to womanhood and out of context should be prevented.
  - Need for campaign for media literacy in rural areas which teaches the common people to analyze the messages conveyed through media and also the ability to react to the information in a rational and conscious manner.

### **III. The philosophy of Social Responsibility: The control on Media**

The philosophy of Social Responsibility theory of mass media is an extension of the libertarian philosophy in that the media recognize their responsibility to resolve conflict through discussion and to promote public opinion, consumer action, private rights, and important social interests. This theory has its major premise that freedom carries concomitant obligations (Ravi, BK). The media (including social media) have an obligation to be responsible to the public. If it is not so, then some agency of the public should enforce it. Public opinion and

consumer action can guarantee that the press behaves. This theory led to the establishment of Press Councils, drawing up of Codes of Ethics and anti-monopoly laws in many countries( Gangte,T.M: 2015)

One of the foremost Communication scholars Denis McQuailsummarized the basic principles of Social Responsibility Theory as the following:

- Media should accept and fulfil certain obligations to society.
- These obligations are mainly to be met by setting high or professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance.
- In accepting and applying these obligations, media should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions.
- The media should avoid offensive content triggering crime, violence, or civil disorder or harm to minority groups.
- The media as a whole should be pluralist and reflect the diversity of their society, giving access to various points of view and rights of reply.
- Society and the public have a right to expect high standards of performance, and intervention can be justified to secure the, or a, public good.
- Journalists and media professionals should be accountable to society as well as to employers and the market.

In this regard the social responsibility of media towards women should be to emancipate women from the age old tradition of subordination of women. SujayaRoutray says

The challenge is to liberate women from the inequality and injustice of the traditional society without taking away from them the ingredients of sense of security, dignity and partnership which had become a part of the modern industrialized society creating a consciousness among women and men. This new society will be distinguished from the past societies by the fact that not hierarchical and power relation.”

#### **IV. Indian version of Feminism on Media: Historical Background**

The media and the cultural productions of the women's movements in India crisscross the subcontinent's ethnic, linguistic, regional, caste, the class divisions, challenging patriarchal norms in Indian legal, political and cultural arenas. They range from speeches, pamphlets, posters, opinion essays and columns, theatrical forms of resistance, songs, and plays to periodicals, books, videos and on-line resources<sup>11</sup>.

The women's movement in India can be traced to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>12</sup>social reform movement progressed through the period of nationalism and freedom struggle towards the milieu of democracy which was established in India with the achievementof independence. The achievement of the constitutional guarantee of equal rights for women could not fully realize thefeminist aims in India providing a new momentum to the Indian women's movement. The new women's movement isexpressing itself in the form of new organizations and groups which are emerging, new agitations and campaigns whichare taking place to fulfill the dream of women being emancipated (R.Gull&Shafi, A:2014<sup>13</sup>).

In the early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, public consciousness of women's emancipation spread as Indian male social reformers campaigned to liberate Indian women from practices that the British colonizers had deemed “barbaric”—sati or widow burning, isolation of widow, child marriage, and polygamy<sup>14</sup>.

Gradually, the more pressing issue of women's education began to take center stage and as women gained the benefits of literary and form of public participation, the seeds were sown for the rise of the modern women's movement in post colonial India. The resumption of thewomen's movement saw the involvementof women in various campaigns and agitations. The state wasconfronted with many questions that the women's movementswere raising regarding land rights; the gender-blinded nature ofdevelopment; laws pertaining to dowry, rape, divorce, etc (As cited in G. Rashida& A. Shafi<sup>15</sup>).

Although male reformers in the urban centers of India initially were the primary agents of change, educated middle and upper class/caste Indian women in urban centers across India began to assume leadership roles in the movement by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The establishment of women's service associations like the women's

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<sup>11</sup>As cited in Women's Movement in Media (India), in John D.H. Dowing, John Derek and Hall Downing (ed), Encyclopaedia of Social Movement Media.(2011)

<sup>12</sup>ibid

<sup>13</sup>As cited in 'Indian Women's Movement after Independence' (2014) International Research Journal of Social Sciences, Vol -3(5), pp-46-54.

<sup>14</sup>As cited in Women's Movement in Media (India), in John D.H. Dowing, John Derek and Hall Downing (ed), Encyclopaedia of Social Movement Media.

<sup>15</sup>Which was originally taken from Choudhury, M., (2003) Gender in the making Indian Nation State in SharmilaRege (ed), *Sociology of Gender: The Challenge of Feminist of Sociological Knowledge*. New Deldi: Sage Publication

service associations like the Women's Indian Association, SaktiSamiti, AryaMahilaSamaj, SevaSadan, PrayagMahilaSamiti, MahilaSevaSamaj, and the Hindu Ladies Social and Literary Club extended the movement into wider regional and National Networks<sup>16</sup>.

A burgeoning body of women's print culture emerged from this closely knit web of pioneering woman leaders and formal women's organisations. Women's periodicals, non-fiction books, novels, memoirs, essays, poetry, and letters and columns in the mainstream press transported the ideas and philosophies of the nascent Indian Women's movement into hundreds of homes, clubs and libraries<sup>17</sup>.

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

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

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

According to Raja Rao one of the biggest obstacles to women's access, participation and control of the media is the patriarchal structure of societies where men continue to see women as subordinate to them. Patriarchal attitudes of governments and media are manifest in their being predominantly male institutions which tend to view women as an undifferentiated mass of low status of society. Gender biases and gender-based discriminations therefore result in stereotyped attitudes, sexual harassment, pay inequities, discriminatory treatment in assignments and promotions, traditional gender hierarchies, including a premium on family responsibilities, lack of support mechanisms for working women and low education that deter women from joining the media or assume decision-making positions.

There is an on-going trend in Indian Media to portray women as busy and concerned with beautifying herself, choosing make-up, new fashions, jewellery, cosmetics, constantly watching her weight, worried about good figure and skin colour, proud of advertising and selling latest products. She is hardly portrayed as having social commitments, capable of intelligent decision making, or as capable leaders and policy makers. Usually she is shown to accompany her husband like a shadow or as a decorative piece. Manu's dictum that 'a woman is protected by her father in childhood, husband in adulthood and son in old age' is perpetuated in all media representation. In most representations she is tactfully domesticated, and her place is 'home and hearth' by unwritten codes of society. Everything around her is arranged in such a way that she can't let herself loose. Women who break this unwritten code and re-arrange their day are considered feminists or rebels. And media is playing their role perfectly to preserve the societal concepts. As a result, most of the mediated women are "weak, passive, needy and subservient, or vain, irrational and hot-headed. But the question is how to turn the media into an effective tool for promoting constructive change and faithfully representing the multiple roles of the women today---as achiever both at home and in the labour force.

Most mainstream newspapers do not pursue an openly anti-women line. This is at least partly because of the ideal of the equality of sexes is enshrined in the Indian Constitutional and because measures to ensure equal participation in national life as well as to dominate discrimination and oppression are among the accepted goals of the country. The Shah Bano controversy received highest media attention mainly because it was viewed as legal, religious and political issue. Dowry deaths, rape and sati are the other issues which is gaining media attention. The problems of women in education, employment, politics and other important spheres do not fit into the traditional concepts of what constitute news. The advent of the women reporters and presence of some senior journalists in positions of responsibility have made significance, if limited, difference to the coverage of women's issues in the press.

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<sup>16</sup>As cited in Women's Movement in Media (India), in John D.H. Dowing, John Derek and Hall Downing (ed), Encyclopaedia of Social Movement Media.(2011)

<sup>17</sup> ibid



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

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that Media and its contents influence the social image and the self image of women. Media affects the choices they make, what they eat and what they wear. It influences their behavioural attitude, their learning processes and ultimately what they become. Media has clearly discouraged the emergence of a new confident, assertive woman. Such differential media treatment increases their isolation, disempowers them, and weakens them. They remain unheard, unrepresented and 'incommunicable' (Sharda, Adhikari: 2014; Dr.V. Deepa, Nair<sup>18</sup>). To liberate and emancipate women from the age old inequality and unequal practices, Media have to play a positive and constructive role in promoting intellectual growth rather than physical beauty. The craze for Zero size figures and obsession of fair skin<sup>19</sup> for women in global set up in general and India in particular, have left many psychologically traumatized by the distorted or unrealistic self-image. Unchecked, these can lead to various fatal diseases like anorexia nervosa<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup>Dr.V. Deepa Nair in Gender Sensitisation <http://www.mcrhrdi.gov.in/DR%20Assistants%20final-%20Batch%20II/material/Gender%20Sentization%20Presentation1.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Media "helps to shape beauty ideals by showing certain body sizes [as...] beautiful and desirable (Rumsey 217). It can perpetuate images through a variety of distribution vehicles and can more easily the cultural standard for appearance in the society. (Kendyl M.Klein:2013)

<sup>20</sup>Anorexia nervosa is a disorder mostly affecting young female adolescents and adults of normal weight. It is characterized by excessive weight loss, refusal to eat and obsessively exercising. Despite evidence to the contrary, consumers view themselves as fat. Death occurs more often with this disorder than any other psychiatric ailment. ('Disability Guide' <http://www.seasidechamber.com/docs/disabilityguide.pdf>)