

**Women and the Media: *An analysis of reportage of women's issues in
the English language Media in India 1986-2012***

Dissertation submitted to the Department of Mass Communication,
Sikkim University in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the award of the degree

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

**Submitted by
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SIKKIM UNIVERSITY

[A Central University established by an Act of Parliament of India in 2007]

Date:21/7/2014

Declaration

I, **Ugen Bhutia**, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of word done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other university/ institute.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**An Analysis of Reportage of Women’s Issues in the English Language Media in India 1986-2012**” submitted to **Sikkim University** in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of **Master of Philosophy in Mass Communication** embodies the results of *bona fide* research carried out by **Mr. Ugen Bhutia** under our guidance and supervision. No part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree, diploma, associate-ship, or fellowship.

All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledged by him.

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Introduction

Gender bias and discrimination, a face of the traditional Indian society, has not vanished even after the achievement of democracy which advocates for equality and justice. Injustice against women, including physical violence, is not a hidden phenomenon and time and again it becomes the subject matter of a national debate. An instance of this was on the rape and murder of a 23 year old girl on 16 December 2012 in Delhi. The incident generated widespread protests and was extensively covered by the national media, both print and television. However, neither the media coverage nor the widespread protests were able to stop violence against women that followed afterwards. Indeed, one can argue, that the media, having a significant role of educating masses, has failed in its responsibility when it comes to the issues of gender violence and injustice. Such a position, however, may be contested and the appropriate position would be to identify the flaws or the shortcomings in the manner in which the event was reported.

The reportage of the event was mostly based on the nature of punishment that the rapist should be given rather than analyzing how society looks at women and their problems. Most of the newspapers and television channels went on to advocate death penalty for the accused, which probably influenced the decision of the judges in the trial court to consider the case to be "the rarest of the rare". But a significant point to be noted here is that media did nothing to educate the masses on the patriarchal view through which we look into these events. In another case, in the past (Gudiya case), we saw the victim's husband was proclaimed dead in the Kargil war and she remarried; but her husband returned and a private TV channel (Zee TV) conducted what can be described as inquisition in one of its shows to condemn her.

In a democracy, one of the significant roles of the media is to educate the society against the retrograde aspects prevalent in the society and thus become the tool for social transformation, if needed. The educative role of media in Indian democracy is an imperative that flows out of the constitutional freedom which it enjoys under Article 19 (1) (a). There have been instances where the concerns of press freedom in the country

have not only been extensively discussed and advocated but have also been a major factor behind the judgments pronounced by the Supreme Court and thus rendering wide, the scope of Article 19 (1) (a). One such judgment, for instance, in the Sakal Papers case (1961), the Supreme Court struck down the Newspapers (Price and Pages) Act, 1956 on grounds that it violated the freedom guaranteed under Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution.¹ The judgment was indeed a victory for press freedom. Another instance of this was in the battle between the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India and the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) in 1995.² The judiciary again stood for the freedom of speech and expression, which can only be achieved through freedom to propagate ideas and views, until and unless those ideas and views infringe law under Article 19 (2). Therefore, these were the instances where one of the pillars of Indian democracy i.e. Judiciary stood by the freedom of another pillar of democracy i.e. media.

The reason behind such decisions by Judiciary for a free press was on the ground that the media has various responsibilities to fulfill. Its freedom comes with responsibilities. Among which is the responsibility to educate the society and the masses.

As gender injustice and discrimination exist in different forms which are mostly sanctioned by religion, social and such values, it becomes necessary in a democracy that the media focuses on and internalizes these factors and educate the people about them and their effects on society at large. Such pedagogy would definitely result in the participation of citizens for social transformation.

Women having been made the oppressed due to the 'myth' created by cultural imposition and societal norms need to initiate the 'cultural action for freedom' as enunciated by Paulo Friere.³ In this sense, the media as an integral part of the civil society needs to educate the oppressed about the 'false consciousness' that is rooted deep inside through societal norms and beliefs. However, such an action cannot be achieved through the 'banking' concept of education. Rather the 'problem posing' concept of education

¹ AIR 1962 SC 305

² AIR 1995-SC-1236

³ Paulo Friere, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Penguin, 1996

seem to be the best way for the liberation of women from such myths and oppression. It is only when women in particular and the rest of the society in general, are conscientised, a real initiative for cultural action for freedom can be achieved (Freire, 1970). The term “conscientization” refers to the process of developing a critical awareness of one’s social reality through reflection and action. Action becomes fundamentally significant because it is the process of changing the reality.⁴

Gender discrimination becomes more evident when it gets mixed with other forms of discrimination like caste discrimination. Due to the discriminations in castes, Indian society has been the platform for one caste’s exploitation of another. And it is the women from exploited caste who suffer more than her male counterpart. Though, gender discrimination does not differentiate between caste and class and women from any caste may face exploitation, it’s the woman from oppressed caste or class who faces double discrimination. At one point, she faces gender discrimination that exists in her caste or society. At another point, caste and class discrimination escalates the density of gender discrimination, present in her caste or society. Therefore, it also becomes necessary in a democracy, particularly in societies like ours, that the media looks into gender issues with the broad concept of caste discrimination.

As the status quo not only legitimizes gender discrimination and violence but also creates ambiguity about the idea of ‘justice’ when it comes to women’s issues, the term ‘justice’ has been limited to denote to some portions of freedom and rights for the women. Therefore, the real education system should be able to make both men and women clear about what justice actually means and should also spur them to participate in the women’s liberation movement which would be, as Lakshmi Lingam in her article, ‘Taking Stock: Women’s movement and the state’ states ‘broadly guided by an ideology of fighting the different forms of patriarchy existing in society with an aim to arrive at an egalitarian society’⁵. Hence, justice cannot be limited to the freedom of contemporary needs like education, employment and property. Indeed, these aspects of human needs

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Lingam, Lakshmi. Taking Stock: Women’s movement and the state. Ghanshyam Shah (ed) Social Movement and the State, Sage Publications. New Delhi 2002.

contribute to gender equality but to achieve a real justice for women, any attempt to create gender equality should also counter the patriarchal norms that exists the society.

Whenever we discuss about the role of media, it is also significant to note that media itself is a part of society. Though it may be influenced by several factors, it learns about the society through the actions of the society itself. In this way, media not only can spur the movement for the liberation of women but also can learn from such movements and redefine its positions and actions in the area of gender discourse. Even if any gender movement is not the result of the media's effort, it can always learn from it and become a part of it.

However, it depends upon how the media interprets these movements. The reportage of movement by the press, both in form and content, are usually based upon how the people in the media perceive these movements. The interpretation by media of such movements can make the issue vital or can also blur it. It is a fact that the women's issue is discussed in the media only when there is an unseemly incident or violence; the subject does not find mention in the media otherwise. This is a concern as much as the form and content of reportage in the context of an incident for the proposed research.

There is a vast ocean of research works done by various scholars in the gender in relation to other aspects but very few in regards to women issues and the media. However, the role of media in representation and empowerment of women has been the core issue in the works of those who have given their time and thought to it. Some of the books which deal with different aspects of women issues like education, empowerment, justice etc have been reviewed for this paper.

Paulo Freire's theory of 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' is dealt in detail in his book "Pedagogy of the oppressed"⁶. The aptitude of understanding the society is inherited into a person through education. Education not only should make a person conscious in identifying her/his oppressor but should also make him capable to participate in liberating himself and the others. Nonetheless, the education system which has been formed and fulfils the desires of the oppressors makes oppressed more dependent and followers of the

⁶Freire, Paulo, op.cit.

desires of their oppressors. In oppose to this kind of education system Paulo Friere advocates for new form of education system which erases the differentiation between the teacher and the students. In different situations, teacher becomes students and student becomes teacher. In simple, gradually both learn from each other. The interpretation of the world and things around should not be based on the mere thinking and understandings of the teacher but of student too. Through such education system, both student and teacher get conscientized.

Geraldine Forbes in her book “Women in modern India”⁷ discussed in details about the education system that was adopted for women in India during British rule and how educated women participated in various struggles before and after independence of the nation. The very first initiatives for the education of women were taken up by the Indian male reformers. The downtrodden condition of women during the nineteenth century was looked as a memento of Indian backwardness. This memento was also the sign of India’s weakness in achieving modernity. The education for Indian women was started to modernize them, so India can achieve modernity. Though these initiatives resulted in the questioning of some oppressive practices like sati, child marriage and widow remarriage, liberation of women and their will was not a major concern for these reformers. The major question during this period was how women can be modernized? Rather than what they want? Later, education for women became more significant when women themselves and British rulers started participating in the process. Apart from women reformers both British and Indian male reformers had their own reasons to participate in this process, and it was anything than the empowerment of women. However, education made Indian women capable enough to participate in the movements for civil rights and freedom struggle.

Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma in their book “Whose News? The media and women’s Issues”⁸ deal with this in the most comprehensive book that tries to see the relation between the women issues and its reportage in the media. In the era of Globalization and Liberalization the representation of women has been limited to gender

⁷ Forbes, Geraldine. Women in Modern India. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

⁸ Joshep, Ammu and Sharma, Kalpana. Whose News? The Media and Women’s Issues. Sage Publication, 1994.

violence or celebrity Page 3 news. The question today is not so much 'where are the women?' but 'who are these women?' and 'when, where, how and why do they appear?' The growth of women movement since 1970 and its interaction with media has been resulted in proliferation of the ideas and the information about the status of women in society. Women are being represented as victims of crime of conflicts, disasters or atrocities and occasionally, as a reception of charity of income generating programme. In the era of 24 hour news channels the stories of women are not only being oversimplified but often also sensationalized and even dramatised. Those women who make it to the news are usually a successful high profile, largely urban, female role models, and they also help to avoid featuring poor rural women.

This research will apply Paulo Freire's framework of "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" to internalize how the English language national media (print) in India has been educating its readers (also the citizens) on the issue of gender discrimination and violence which are omnipresent throughout the country.

Paulo Freire in his 'Pedagogy of the oppressed'⁹ framework analyzes the modern education system and defines the necessity of 'conscientization' process of education for liberation of the oppressed. According to him, the conventional education system has been produced by the oppressors and serves their purposes. This education system includes the 'Banking' concept of education is premised on considering that the students are considered to have an empty mind, where information that is produced by the oppressors needs to be filled into. In such kind of education system the creativity and critical thinking of the students are limited. He discusses at length some of the features of 'Banking' concept of education and the salient features of this, according to him are:

- The teacher teaches and the student are taught;
- The teacher knows everything and the student know nothing;
- The teacher thinks and the students are thought about;
- The teacher talks and the student listen-meekly;
- The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;

⁹Freire, Paulo.op. cit.

- The teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply;
- The teacher acts and the student have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;
- The teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it;
- The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority, which she and he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students;
- The teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects.¹⁰

Freire argues that the revolution for the true liberalization cannot be achieved through the Banking concept of education. Rather, true liberalization, occurs when the oppressed themselves identify the oppressive elements in their society and this identification of the oppressive elements cannot be achieved through banking concept of education.

Therefore, Freire introduces the 'Problem posing' concept of education where the contradiction between student and the teacher is erased. Through problem-posing concept of education 'people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation'.¹¹

It is only through the problem-posing concept of education that oppressed can be conscientized.¹² It is also significant to note here that the transformation of society brought by the oppressed should not turn them into new oppressors. If it happens, it would merely be the switching of the status of both the oppressor and the oppressed. The true revolution for the liberation of the oppressed occurs when the distinctions and the differences between the oppressed and oppressors are erased. The role of oppressed becomes more significant because the oppressed has the responsibility to not only liberate

¹⁰Ibid p-52.

¹¹Ibid p-64.

¹²The term "conscientization" refers to the process of developing a critical awareness of one's social reality through reflection and action. Action becomes fundamentally significant because it is the process of changing the reality.

herself or himself but also liberate his/her oppressor because the oppressor from his/her position does not recognizes the process of oppression.

Some of the events which have been the examples of misrepresentation and stereotyping of women by media like Shah Banu Case, 16th December 2012 rape case, Aameena case, Roop Kanwar case will be taken for content analysis. This will be done with three major national newspapers.

The study focuses on following objective

- To examine how media is educating citizens about the women issues.
- To examine how media is tackling the gender violence, injustice and discrimination.
- To examine the initiatives taken by the media for social transformation.

The English language newspapers that have been analyzed are The Times of India, The Hindu and The Telegraph. The selections of these newspapers are based on their reach, particularly among the educated sections of our society, who are also in the thick of policy making and implementation. The choice is also determined by the spread of the core areas of circulation of these papers. Therefore, these may be taken as representatives for the Mumbai region (The Times of India), The Southern region (The Hindu) and the Eastern region (The Telegraph). All the three, in fact, also have an impact on the leaders of our political and civil society in Delhi, being national newspapers.

While the introduction gives the overview of the research including the rationale, objectives and question addressed, Chapter 1 deals with the women's education. It tries to historically analyse the status of the education system, particularly for women in India and make sense of its impact on the emancipation of women in patriarchal Indian society. Chapter 2 focuses on the significance of education by the media in the process of women empowerment. It analysis the role played by the media in various events and also discusses the various factors that influences media's role during various situation. Chapter 3 provides the content analysis of the newspapers discussed above for the select events. Analysis of these newspapers presents the role played by the media in various

women concerning issues; therefore, conclusion presents the analysis through the Paulo Freire's framework of "Pedagogy of the Oppressed".

Chapter I

Women Education and Emancipation in India

In our modern society, every nation, group and individual subscribes to the idea of education being a foremost tool for empowering, liberating and developing the lives of an individual *vis-a-vis* the nation. Soon after the end of Second World War, the 'importance of education' became a global discourse when the newly formed United Nations of Organization included Article 26 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Stressing on the significance of education in personal and national development, Article 26 of the UDHR reads (1) everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.¹

Similarly, emancipation of the oppressed sections of the society, particularly women, became a global concern too. Therefore, international bodies like Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)² and other initiatives like the United Nations Population Fund³ came into existence. The idea of education being an effective instrument in emancipating women became more prominent when a decade (1975 till 1985) was declared as Women's Decade as per U.N. General Assembly's resolution five month after the World Conference on Women held at Mexico City, in the International Women's year of 1975.⁴

The Conference was called by the United Nations General Assembly to identify three key objectives that would become the basis for the United Nations on behalf of women

¹(<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>) accessed on 11/11/13.

²(<http://www.unwomen.org/csw/>) accessed on 11/11/13.

³(<http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/about>) accessed on 11/11/13.

⁴(www.5wwc.org/conference_background/1975_WCW.html) accessed on 11/11/13.

1. Full gender equality and the elimination of gender discrimination.
2. The integration and full participation of women in development.
3. An increased contribution by women in the strengthening of world peace.

The CSW latter adopted a World Plan of Action, a document that offered guidelines for governments and the international community to follow for the next ten years in pursuit of the three key objectives set by the General Assembly. The Plan of Action set minimum targets, to be met by 1980, that focused on securing equal access for women to resources such as education, employment opportunities, political participation, health services, housing, nutrition and family planning.⁵

In 1994, another International Conference was held in Cairo, which arrived at what is commonly known as The Cairo Consensus. The Conference recognized education, especially for women, as a force for social and economic development. Chapter IV of its 'Programme of Action' deals with 'Gender Equality, Equity and Empowerment of Women'⁶. Highlighting the need of education for women empowerment, the chapter states "Women's decision making roles must be enhanced; women should receive the education necessary to meet their basic needs and exercise their basic rights"⁷.

Six years later, in year 2000, the United Nations Organization introduced 8 'Millennium Development Goals' to be achieved until 2015 which again emphasized on the need of education and empowerment of women. In the same year, the World Education Forum, held a Conference in Dakar in Senegal from 26th to 28th April. The conference was attended by 1,100 national leaders, including leaders from India. The forum set some goals and strategies to achieve 'education for all'⁸. One such goal advocated for 'ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality'⁹.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Adrienne, Germain and Rachel, Kyte. International Women's Health Coalition. The Cairo Consensus: The Right Agenda for the Right Time.

⁷ Ibid*

⁸The Education for All (EFA) movement is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults.

⁹(<http://www.unesco.org/education/wef/en-conf/dakframeng.shtm>) accessed on 11/11/13.

Initiatives for women's education in Post-independent India:

Women's education as an important tool for nation development was recognized well before independence and was an integral part of the freedom movement. Prior to the maturing of the freedom movement, advocacy for women's education had already started, simultaneously with the education movement in the country during colonial rule. In the words of our first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, 'If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered,' and this signified that newly independent India will be striving forward for the education and emancipation of the women in the country.

On this matter, the first committee that was set up for education in India was the University Education Commission headed by Prof. S. Radhakrishnan to 'suggest improvements and extensions that may be desirable to suit the requirements of the country' in 1948 by the Government of India. This committee dealt with the question of women's education and had a section 'women's education' in its report where it stated "Women have demonstrated their ability to think and work alongside of men. Why not take that ability for granted and begin to recognize the ways which the education of women can well be differentiated from that of men? It is time to realize that the finest family relations result from the association of a man and a woman who have had much of their education in common, but each of whom has developed according to his or her own nature, and not in imitation of the other."¹⁰ Its recommendations were:

- that the ordinary amenities and decencies of life should be provided for women in colleges originally planned for men, but to which women are being admitted in increasing numbers;
- that there should be no curtailment in educational opportunities for women, but rather a great increase;
- that there should be intelligent educational guidance, by qualified men and women, to help women to get a clearer view of their real educational interests, to the end that they shall not try to imitate men, but shall desire as good education as women as men get as men. Women's and men's education should have many

¹⁰The report of the university education commission (December 1948 – August 1949), volume I, Ministry of Education, Government of India 1962.p-344.

elements in common, but should not in general be identical in all respects, as is usually the case today;

- that women students in general should be helped to see their normal places in a normal society, both as citizens and as women and to prepare for it, and college programmes should be so designed that it will be possible for them to do so that through educational counsel and by example the prevailing prejudice against study of home economics and home management should be overcome;
- that standards of courtesy and social responsibility should be emphasized on the part of men in mixed colleges;
- that where new colleges are established to serve both men and women students, they should be truly co-educational institutions, with as much thought and consideration given to the life needs of women as to those of men. Except as such colleges come into existence there are no valid criteria for comparing segregated education with co- education;
- those women teachers should be paid the same salaries as men teachers for equal work.¹¹

The radical initiative for the development of education sector came in the form of The First Five Year Plan. It stated as follows:

“The main point of difference to be stressed is that there are particular spheres of life in which women have a distinctive role and in which they can make a special contribution. It is now universally recognised that in the management of the household, in bringing up children, in the field of social service, in nursing and midwifery, in teaching, especially in elementary schools, in certain crafts and industries like knitting, embroidery, etc., and in the field of fine arts, women have, by instinct, a better aptitude. This does not, however, mean that women should, whatever be their individual aptitudes and ambitions, be confined to these few spheres. They must have the same opportunities as men for taking to all kinds of work and this presupposes that they get equal educational facilities so that their entry into the professions and public services is in no way prejudiced”.¹²

¹¹ Ibid,p-351-352..

¹²5Years Plan, Planning Commission, (<http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/fiveyr/welcome.html>) accessed on 12/12/13.

Ultimately, the First Five Year Plan allocated 7.6% of national budget for education sector.

The National Committee on Women's Education was set up in May 1958, with Shrimati Durgabai Deshmukh as its Chairman on the recommendation of The Educational Panel of the Planning Commission, in July 1957 to appoint a suitable Committee to go into the various aspects of the question relating to the nature of education for girls at the elementary, secondary and adult stages and to examine whether the present system was helping them to lead a happier and more useful life. The Committee submitted its report on May 1958 where it recommended the following measures:

1. The education of women should be regarded as a major and special problem in education for a good many years to come, and that a bold and determinate effort should be made to face its difficulties;
2. Steps should be taken to constitute as early as possible a National Council for the Education of Girls and Women;
3. A separate unit for Women's Education, under a Educational Adviser, should be set up at the Centre;
4. In each State, a woman should be appointed as Joint Director and placed in charge of education of girls;
5. Lady teachers should be appointed in all schools where there are no women;
6. There should be identical curricula for boys and girls at the primary stage. At the secondary stage, there is need for differentiation of the courses;
7. Vocational training courses with 'Primary' as basic qualification may be conducted in school during the day, alongside general education. Courses with 'Middle' and 'Secondary as basic qualifications may be organised in vocational sections of middle and secondary schools, in multipurpose schools, in separate vocational schools, in apprenticeship classes, in training centres, in workshops and/or in continuation schools;
8. Educational facilities for adult women in the form of condensed courses (i) that prepare women for the middle school examination, and (ii) those that prepare them for the high school or higher secondary examination should be provided more extensively in all States; and

9. Part-time employment of women teachers should be encouraged as largely as possible in order to enable women to manage their responsibilities at home as well as to do some teaching work.¹³

As India had recently achieved its independence, it was important for its leaders and intellectuals to sort out new policies for different sectors of the country, including educational sector, several new committees were setup to look into the different levels of education system with their respective recommendations. The declaration of Women's Decade (1975-1985) however, once again spurred the discourse on women's education in India.

The international advocacy for women's education that emerged after the declaration of Women's Decade (1975-1985) had its impact in the developing countries like India. In 1977, Government of India "following the U.N. General Assembly's resolution on the World Plan Action during the decade 1975-85 prepared a National Plan of Action for Women"¹⁴

Education and the Status of women in India: An assessment

Despite the recommendations of various committees and inclusion of laws like Right to Education Act 2002, under article 21 A of the Constitution¹⁵ and the implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan¹⁶ the status of women (including girl child) is still low in Indian society. Though due to the introduction of such acts and policies the literacy rate (both fe/male) has increased, education per se has not been able to achieve the emancipation of women in the country yet. We shall now have a look at the progress made in the education sector as such from the following data.

¹³ Aggrawal, S.P and Aggrawal, J.C. Women's Education in India, Concept Publishing Company. New Delhi, 1992.p-38-40.

¹⁴ Pande, Balaji. Women's Education, Social Scientist-Monthly Journal of the Indian School of Social Science, 1985.

¹⁵ RTE Act 2002 states "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine".

¹⁶ SSA is Government of India's flagship programme for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner, as mandated by 86th amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory Education to the Children of 6-14 years age group, a Fundamental Right.

Table 2.1

| Census Year | Persons | Male | Female | Male-Female gap in Literacy rate. |
|-------------|---------|-------|--------|-----------------------------------|
| 1951 | 18.33 | 27.16 | 8.86 | 18.30 |
| 1961 | 28.3 | 40.4 | 15.35 | 25.05 |
| 1971 | 34.45 | 45.96 | 21.97 | 23.98 |
| 1981 | 43.57 | 56.38 | 29.76 | 26.62 |
| 1991 | 52.21 | 64.13 | 39.29 | 24.84 |
| 2001 | 64.83 | 75.26 | 53.67 | 21.59 |
| 2011 | 74.04 | 82.14 | 65.46 | 16.68 |

Source; Census data 2011.

The above data indeed shows us the growth in the literacy rate. However, there are some other factors that we need to look into.

For a beginning, it is important to note here that the Women's Decade was from 1975 till 1985 where the international agencies like the UN and national and state governments adopted the World Plan and a National Plan of Action for Women in world and in India respectively. Moreover, initiatives like the Right to Education and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and others are the products of the 21 century India. Thus it's important to analyze the above data and the situation of status of women and their education in different period of Independent Indian history.

First Period or the Post-Independence Period:-

Before going into Women's Decade, analyzing women's education prior to it will give us clearer picture. Therefore, the time frame set for this period is from 1947 and 1975; from independence to the beginning of the Women's Decade.

As stated earlier, Women's education as an important tool for nation development was recognized well before the independence during freedom movement. Therefore, committees like the University Education Commission headed by Prof. S. Radhakrishnan were setup to recommend for the development of education sector which would

eventually uplift the status of women and the education for them as part of the independent India's commitment to this legacy.

Another commission that was setup by the government of India in 1964-66 was the Kothari commission led by Professor D.S. Kothari. There are two recommendation made by the commission, among other, which is important to highlight here:

1. Strenuous efforts should be made for the early fulfilment of the Directive Principle under Article 45 of the Constitution seeking to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14. Suitable programmes should be developed to reduce the prevailing wastage and stagnation in schools and to ensure that every child who is enrolled in school successfully completes the prescribed course.
2. The education of girls should receive emphasis, not only on grounds of social justice, but also because it accelerates social transformation.¹⁷

It's is evident, from the data in Table 2.1 above that the Government of India failed to implement these two recommendation made by the committee during the period of time because the first recommendation was brought to be implemented only in year 2002 in the form of Right to Education Act of 2002. Meanwhile, the Committee on the Status of Women in India way back in 1974 recommended "phasing of this programme in the following manner;-

- By providing five years of effective education to all children by 1975-76 and seven years each of such education by 1985-86;
- By making part-time education for about one year compulsory for all children in the age group 11-14, who have not completed the lower-primary stage and are not attending schools. The aim will be to make these children functionally literate and stop all further additions to the ranks of adult non-literates;
- By effort to liquidate adult literacy."¹⁸

It is also important to note here that the second aspect of its recommendation was never taken seriously before the declaration of Women's Decade in 1975. It was only in year 1975 that the Government of India prepared a National Plan of Action for Women.

¹⁷ Education and National Development, Report of the Education Commission, 1964-66.

¹⁸ Towards Equality, Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, Government of India, Ministry of Education & Social Welfare, New Delhi 1974.

However, the data in Table 2.1 above shows the growth in both female literacy rates during the period between 1951 and 1971. Since, the rate of growth in this three decade was a mere one per cent per year, Balaji Pande, holds that “In the post-independence period, after 35 years of “planned” development in the country, the literacy rate has just reached nearly 36 per cent, a rate of increase of only 1 per cent per year”¹⁹.

This fact is further explained, in terms of the reasons behind this slow literacy growth rate ‘That there has not been a significant improvement in the educational sector can be related to the fact that there has been a constant reduction to the total plan and which has also evaded the recommendation of the Education Commission (1964-66) at any time during the plan periods.’²⁰ According to Pande, ‘The Education Commission had recommended that at least 6 per cent of the national income should be earmarked for education but the amount had never increased above 3.5 per cent of the national income.’²¹

Picking up on this, P. Sainath holds that ‘The first five year plan gave education 7.86 percent of its total outlay. The Second plan lowered it to 5.83 percent. By the fifth plan, education was making do with 3.27 percent of the outlay. In the seventh plan, the figure was 3.5 percent. As the problem of her children’s education grew more, India spent less and less on them.’²² The Committee on the Status of Women in India identified the major problems in the area of (women) education during the end of this period i.e. year 1974-75 on similar lines. These problems, according to the Committee, were:

- Illiteracy.
- Widening gap in access to elementary education.
- Problems of non-enrolment wastage and drop-outs
- Imbalance in educational developments
- Ideological imbalance among educational planners and administrators regarding the objectives of women’s education.²³

¹⁹Pande, Balaji.op.cit, p-11.

²⁰Ibid p-12.

²¹Ibid, taken from the reference note p-18.

²²Sainath, P. *Everybody Loves A Good Drought, Stories from India’s Poorest Districts*. Penguin Books, 1996.

²³Pande, Balaji.op.cit.

Second Period or the Post International Women's Year of 1975:

The declaration of Women's Decade from 1975 till 1985 (in the year of International Women's Year) in 1975, helped create awareness about the emancipation of women and the role of education in it, all around the world. Therefore, the time frame taken for this period is from 1975 beginning of women's decade till 1999, being end of twentieth century. India being the member of the UN since its existence in year 1948 was quick to introduce its own National Plan of Action for Women in India

The Plan outlined the following objectives for women's education:

- To prepare women to fully participate in socially productive work, and to be fully aware of family planning needs with a view to achieving her full integration with the democratic and developmental efforts of the country;
- To help break down overt and covert biases against women;
- To make women aware of the various legal, social and economic rights, provisions and privileges available to them and of the way they can take advantage of them for their advancement;
- To enable women to be self-reliant to achieve economic independence;
- To import the idea of equality between the sexes and participants by women in development through the education system;
- Above all, to find full expression for her talent, ability and personality and for this purpose, enable her to adopt a discriminating attitude so that she can escape the bounds of superstition and obscurantism.²⁴

But the irony is, even after this (and many other such plans) with lofty objectives aimed at the development of women's education, the Government of India did not implement the recommendations given by both the Kothari Commission and the Committee on the Status of Women on the issue of compulsory education. And the result was the same slow progress in the growth of literacy in general and of women in particular.

This aspect has been dealt with comprehensively by Pande: He states, "The number of illiterates female has been increasing steadily, the figures being 185.2 million in 1961,

²⁴ibid. p-14

215 million in 1971 and 241.6 million in 1981. According to the 1981 census, nearly 75 percent of the total female population is illiterate.²⁵

To see whether the Women's Decade was a favourable decade for the women in India we can also look into the sex ratio in India since 1971 to 1991, which is commonly agreed as a definite indicator of the status of women in the following table.

Table 2.2

| Census Year | Sex Ratio (Females per 1,000 males) |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1971 | 930 |
| 1981 | 934 |
| 1991 | 927 |

Source; Census Data 2011.

The data in Table 2.2 above shows that there was indeed an increase in the number of females in the country during the first five year of Women decade. But soon, it comes down until the 1991. There is an increase of four females to men in 1981 as compared with 1971, whereas there has been decrease of 7 females to men in 1991 as compared to 1981. Therefore, the decreasing rate has been the faster than the increasing rate. In fact, that the ratio of females in 1971 was 972, which continuously came down to 927 in 1991 despite the marginal improvement in 1981 is an indicator of a trend. The sex ratio is an important indicator of women emancipation and the continuous decrease in the number of men to women in each decade signifies the existence of gender discriminations and violence like female foeticide, dowry deaths, death while giving birth and honour killings.

Another source to understand the status of women may be the relevant data on crime against women. As it was only since 1989 that the separate chapter on "Crime against Women" began to be included in National Crime Record Bureau it is not possible to present the data of this decade on the number of deaths of women in different crimes against them. However, as "in 1971, rapes began to be recorded"²⁶ we can look into the available data on rapes and through it try to see the status of crime against women during Women's Decades.

²⁵Ibid. p- 15.

²⁶ A Prajnaya Report, Gender Violence in India, 2010.

Table 2.3

| Year | No of rape cases |
|------|------------------|
| 1975 | 3376 |
| 1985 | 7289 |

Source; APrajnya Report, Gender Violence in India 2010.

The above data in Table 2.3 shows that there has been an increase in the number of the rape cases in the decade of 1975-85. The increase in cases reported can also be taken as the impact of increasing literacy rate in the country. There is a greater chance that a woman, if educated, reports to the law enforcement about the sexual abuse from which she had to go through. However, the increasing number of cases also signifies that women, even after a decade being dedicated to them, are not free from such violence.

The same is evident from the data, available, on Dowry Deaths from 1989 to 1991. This may, apart from being taken as evidence on the status of women, also indicate one of the reasons for the fall in the ration of women against men in the population in 1991 as seen in Table 202 above.

Table 2.4

| Year | No of Cases |
|------|-------------|
| 1989 | 11.603 |
| 1990 | 13.450 |
| 1991 | 15.949 |

Source; National Crime Record Bureau.

Therefore, it won't be erroneous to say that despite the initiatives taken by the government of India during the Women's Decade and prior to that, the growth of literacy rate of women has been uniformly slow. However, the increasing incidence of Crime against women convey that this slow, no matter continuously, growing literacy rate has not been sufficient enough to liberate women in our country from gender discrimination and violence.

Third Period or 21st Century India;

In 2000, United Nations Organization introduced eight Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015 and these were:

- Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger.
- Achieve Universal Primary Education.
- Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women.
- Reduce Child Mortality.
- Improve Maternal Health.
- Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases.
- Ensure Environmental Sustainability.
- Global Partnership for Development.²⁷

To achieve each of these goals, one can easily say that, there has to be development in the educational sector, particularly in a country like India, because India having the proven history of women oppression and gender disparity could not think of achieving it without the full participation of women folk of the country. Taking note of this imperative, the Government of India brought the Constitution 86th Amendment Act by which Article 21A was inserted as among the Fundamental Rights and consequently the Right to Education Act 2002.²⁸

“The RTE Act provides for the following:

- Right of children to free and compulsory education till completion of elementary education in a neighbourhood school.
- It clarifies that ‘compulsory education’ means obligation of the appropriate government to provide free elementary education and ensure compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education to every child in the six to fourteen age group. ‘Free’ means that no child shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses

²⁷ We Can End Poverty. Millennium Development Goal and Beyond 2015 (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>) accessed on 14/11/13.

²⁸It may be stressed here that the amendment and the Act were the fallout of the Supreme Court judgment in the Unnikrishnan case.

which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education.

- It makes provisions for a non-admitted child to be admitted to an age appropriate class.
- It specifies the duties and responsibilities of appropriate Governments, local authority and parents in providing free and compulsory education, and sharing of financial and other responsibilities between the Central and State Governments.²⁹

In the same period, the Government of India also introduced Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which is a central Government's initiative to achieve the goal of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEF). Both the RTE Act and SSA are initiatives that were recommended by the various committees in the past. The objectives of the SSA are:

- All children in school, Education Guarantee Centre, Alternate School, 'to School' camp by 2003;
- All children complete five years of primary schooling by 2007
- All children complete eight years of schooling by 2010;
- Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life;
- Bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010;

It will be appropriate, from the scope of this chapter to examine as to whether initiatives like these were enough for developing the education sector (for both male and females)? To get the answer to this question we need to look into the implication of these policies.

The ASER survey report, in January 13, 2009 informs us that in rural India in 2008, 95.7% of children in the age group 6 to 4 were enrolled in schools.³⁰ This indicates that the objective of SSA to send all children to school by 2003 and ensure that they complete

²⁹ Right to Education, Elementary Education,, Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India (<http://mhrd.gov.in/rte>) accessed on 14/11/13.

³⁰ Annual Status of Education Report (rural), 2008.

their primary schooling by 2007 was not fulfilled in the targeted year. This is evident from the figures in the following table on Number of illiterates among population aged 7 and above and their change India 2001-2011

Table 2.5

| Illiterates | Persons | Male | Female |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 2001 | 30,41,46,862 | 11,06,43,001 | 19,35,03,861 |
| 2011 | 27,29,50,015 | 9,65,68,351 | 17,63,81,664 |
| Increased in 2011 over 2001 | -3,11,96,847 | -1,40,74,650 | -1,71,22,197 |

. Source; Census 2011.

The data in Table 2.5 tells us the same old story of slow growth in literacy. There has, no doubt, been a decrease in the number of persons who are illiterates in 2011 in comparison to 2001. Similarly, the number of female illiterates too decreased; but this rate is lesser than the number of male illiterates. However, the initiatives and policies taken after the 2000 have not shown any radical changes in this data. By and large, the rate of growth in literacy in the country has been same in all the three periods. The policies which the various committees appointed during post-independence period and during 70s-90s recommended were implemented after 2000. However, even after this, the result has been the same. Neither there has been any major success in achieving universalization of elementary education nor has the marginal increase in literacy rate been able to emancipate women folk in our society.

Moreover, there have been numerous instances where different forms of women oppression have been witnessed even after the growth in literacy. Similarly, there have been instances of the kind of women oppression which were considered to have been eliminated insofar as oppression of women is concerned.

As for instance, *sati*, the practice of a widow burning herself or being burnt on the funeral pyre of her husband was once again reported after the end of just two years of the women's decade began, in 1987. On 4th September 1987, in the village of Deworala in Rajasthan, 19 year old Roop Kanwar was forced to burn herself on her husband's funeral

pyre.³¹ Sati was first banned in 1829 by the colonial government and later by Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987. But shockingly all the 32 accused in that gory crime against Roop Kanwar were acquitted by the Sessions Court in Rajasthan.

Where one version of this tragic incident argues that Roop Kanwar offered herself for *sati* to her father-in-law Sumer Singh, another argues that she was thrown into the fire of her husband's pyre. No matter what the fact may be, the Roop Kanwar case leads us to realize that both the increasing rate in literacy and women's education has not been able to defy the patriarchy, which is the major source of women oppression in India and other parts of the world. It is interesting to note here that Roop Kanwar herself was matriculate and her husband Mall Singh was a graduate. Moreover, her father-in-law Sumer Singh, to whom according to one of the version, she offered herself for *sati* was also a School teacher. The impunity that all the 32 accused enjoyed was the proof that even the modern education system has been insufficient to liberate women folk from patriarchal oppression.

Roop Kanwar case, for which content analysis of three major national newspapers has been done in following chapters, is not the only case of sati in 'modern India'. There have been a few instances of sati in Rajasthan (1987), Utter Pradesh (2006) Madhya Pradesh (2002 and 2006) and in Chattisgarh (2008).³²

Dowry is another of the major patriarchal elements of Indian society. A dowry is money, property, or goods that a woman brings as a gift to her husband upon marriage. The misuse of this practice has led to the abuse of women. Even today, it is one of the most omnipresent forms of women's oppression in India. In several instances, it has been reported that the wife has been physically assaulted or killed or has committed suicide in relation to this custom.

A recent case of wife's suicide was reported on September 29th 2013. 'Sanoj Kumar Soni, Economics teacher at a government high school, was arrested after 20-year-old Sheta Kumari's Father brought allegations of Dowry torture on his daughter against

³¹Trial by Fire. A Report on Roop Kanwar's Death, The Woman and Media Committee, Bombay Union of Journalist, 1987.

³² Ahmed, Nehaluddin. Sati Tradition- Widow Burning in India: A Socio- Legal Examination. Web Journal of Current Legal Issues (<http://webjcli.ncl.ac.uk/2009/issue2/ahmad2.html>) accessed on 14/11/13.

Soni.³³ The fact is that `Sheta committed suicide on Thursday (September 26) by consuming poison.³⁴ In this case too, we can see that the person who was accused of torturing his wife who ultimately was unable to bear it and committed suicide was an educated person.

Human Trafficking, which has been widely criticized all over the world, has led to enactment of laws like Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act (ITP Act) in India. Because the most victimized section of the society is the women folk, all those initiatives that were adopted for women's emancipation should have eradicated this practice from Indian society. However, The Indian Express reporter Ashwini Sarin, exposed human trafficking, by breaking the law himself, when he bought a tribal girl `Kamala' in 1981 to show how easy it was to buy humans, particularly women in India. His work attracted a lot of interest and created a discourse around trafficking. His work also inspired the movie and play named `Kamala'. Very recently on 9th November 2013, the news on rescue of girls from human trafficking was reported.³⁵

These are the few instances, among others, which show us that even after the realization of education as a significant tool for emancipating women folk and even after the various initiatives taken for the growth in literacy rate to achieve universalization of elementary education globally, access to education alone have not given the desired results in the developing countries like India. Therefore, this forces us, to look into the nature of education itself to analyze why even after the growth in women's education, women folk in our country are not free from different forms of oppression and why those oppressive elements persist in modern India. For which we need to go back to the history of women's education.

History of women's education

The history of women's education starts simultaneously with the history of education movement during colonial rule. During the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, the concept of 'national education' became the prime agenda in the national

³³“Teacher Held in Dowry Death Case”. The Times of India (http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-09-29/ranchi/42501693_1_dowry-death-case-hazaribag-sadar-police-sadar-hospital) accessed on 14/11/13.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵“Human trafficking rampant in coastal Andhra”. The Times of India, (http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-11-09/visakhapatnam/43854131_1_human-trafficking-underage-girls-itpa) accessed on 14/11/13.

discourse. Women's education or education for women found its minor space within this discourse. The very first initiatives for the education of women were taken up by the Indian male reformers like Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Raja Rammohun Roy and others. The downtrodden condition of women during the nineteenth century was looked as an evidence of India's backwardness. This was also the sign of India's weakness in achieving modernity. The education for Indian women was started to modernize them, so that India can achieve modernity.³⁶

Though these initiatives resulted in the questioning of some oppressive practices like sati, child marriage and widow remarriage, liberation of women and their will was not a major concern for these reformers. The major question during this period was how women can be modernized. It 'was not the question of what do women want but rather how they can be modernized?'³⁷ Later, education for women became more significant when women themselves and British rulers started participating in the process. Both the British and Indian male reformers had their own reasons to participate in this process, and it was anything but the empowerment of women.

For British reformers, educated females would further the loyalty of Indians. And for Indian male reformers it was the sign of progress of an individual and of nation. Due to these two dominant reasons, women's education has broadly incorporated to rest on western ideologies in itself. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya in the introduction of the book 'Educating the Nation' states:

"It was not easy to challenge the cognitive authority of a culture that was globally dominant and still more difficult to enter the domain of knowledge-production, within the constraints of limited opportunities offered by the colonial education system. The valorization of 'English education' could be denied by heroic rhetoric, but that was the key to jobs, professions, career advancement and social mobility for the members of the intelligentsia".³⁸

In 1833, after a Charter by colonial rule, English became the official language and 'in 1844 Lord Hardinge announced that English-educated Indians would be given preference in governmental appointments.'³⁹ Therefore, education in colonial India became a commodity due to the heavy influence of colonial policies. Education in India

³⁶ Forbes Geraldine, *Women in Modern India*, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

³⁷ *Ibid* p-12.

³⁸ Bhattacharya, Sabyasachi. *Educating The Nation, Documents on the Discourse of National Education in India, 1880-1920*. Kanishka Publishers, Distributors, Educational Records Research Unit, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2003.

³⁹ Forbes, Geraldine. *op.cit.* p-36.

which was the result of nationalist consciousness was soon converted into profit seeking practice. Though women's education led to the demands of women's rights by some educated female reformers and participation of women in political sphere, soon educated women and organizations themselves started to visualize education as a job oriented process.

In 1918, where female reformists like Sarojini Naidu and Saraladevi Chaudhurani were voicing for women's franchise in political process, in 1920s women organizations were demanding educational and medical services for females. 'Women leaders insisted new institutions be staffed by female professionals.'⁴⁰ But this cannot overshadow the women's participation in various movements from movements for women's rights to freedom movement.

In the words of Forbes, 'These campaigns-for the franchise and for legal rights-show women in an activist stance. They may have been misguided, acting out of their own narrow caste and class view of the world, but they were not puppets. They made choices in the final analysis to support the nationalist project, but they were conscious of what they were doing.'⁴¹ In this argument though Forbes, rightly so, does not consider early women activists as puppets of male reformers, she still cannot refuse the fact that they were misguided. And that what has happened when it comes to women's education and emancipation during colonial rule. Women reformers were directly or indirectly forced to see women's education and emancipation in the very narrow view from where it was either pro or anti western modernism. Because of this they were unable to identify and counter the aspects of patriarchy that has existed since centuries in India.

At one level, where the absence of women franchise in the modern political process was identified as an expression of patriarchal domination, this at another level was also complemented by such Western women activists, like Annie Besant, who were advising that 'national movement for girls' education must be on national lines; it must accept the general Hindu conceptions of women's place in the national life, not the dwarfed modern views but the ancient ideal. It must see in the women the mother and the wife, or, as in some cases, the learned and pious ascetic, the Brahmavadini outside and

⁴⁰Ibid p-161.

⁴¹Ibid. p-120.

public employment, as women, under different economic conditions, is coming to be, more and more, in the west'.⁴²

B.G. Tilak's journal *Mahratta*, in its editorial note on 20th February 1916, stated this without ambiguity. It said:

"We must contemplate the average Hindu girls as a daughter-in-law having special duties in relation towards the inmates of her husband's households. She must be considered in this special relation in addition to the relations which are common to Hindu and non-Hindu societies. A Hindu girl must grow to be a good daughter-in-law in addition to her being a good wife, a good mother and so forth".⁴³

Therefore, it can be argued that the debate over women's education and emancipation was divided into two categories: One which saw western modernism as a way of development of an individual and nation and recognized the role of education in mere employment and economic terms; another which saw western modernism as a danger to Indian culture and tradition and advocated for the subjugation of women's role in mere household works. Ultimately, education for women had not so much role in emancipating women folk in India during the colonial rule. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya argues that "the ideal 'Hindu women' was reproduced in a 'modern package'; hence the outcome was the creation of new forms of patriarchy by the colonial elite. In short, women's education reinforced tradition, instead of challenging and changing it."⁴⁴

Due to education more and more women were being appointed in various industries as part of the workforce which in some way may be regarded as the equal participation of females with males during the 1920s. However, if we look into the total number of women working in professional jobs, we will realize that these women were the privileged few who were able to attend schools and get into the better jobs. According to Forbes, in year 1921 'there were 68,000 medical professionals, 30,000 women employed in educational and scientific fields, and 6,000 women in law and business'⁴⁵. Hence, women's education during colonial rule helped, in some part, to serve the materialistic fruits to very small portion of educated women rather than liberating them from various oppressions sanctioned by religion, social and such values.

⁴² Bhattacharya, Sabyasachi.op.cit, p-213.

⁴³Ibid. p- 219.

⁴⁴Ibid, Quotation taken from the introduction.

⁴⁵ Forbes, Geraldine.op.cit, p- 157.

Independence of India, in 1947, did not bring any changes in the nature of education. Pande argues that 'the Indian education system as well as other aspects of development by and large are the legacy of the colonial past'.⁴⁶ In fact, the initiatives that were taken after independence were on similar lines as the initiatives that were suggested during colonial rule itself. For instance, the recommendation of various committees during post-independent period for compulsory education till age of 14 was the product of Gopal Krishna Gokhale's Compulsory Primary Education Bill 1911.⁴⁷ Then the bill was refused, whereas today it exists in form of law known as Right to Education Act 2002.

During colonial rule, education was considered as the commodity; similarly even today in the name of employment, it is regarded as a commodity and is provided to those who can afford it. 'Post-independence educational development in the country has created a large force of educated job seekers uprooted from their traditional workplace rather than bringing people into the field of the educational system so as to enable them to participate in the process of nation building'.⁴⁸

Governments and other advocates of women's empowerment still believe in the significance of education; but the problem is that they do not realize some other factors which become the hurdle between a girl and her education. Together with poverty, Wahidul Hasan Khan, identifies some other major hurdles in the way of a girl's education. According to him, they are:

1. Inadequate School Facilities
2. Lack Of qualified female teachers
3. Lack of transport facilities
4. Lack of hostel facilities for girls
5. Fear of sexual harassment
6. Fixed schooling hours"⁴⁹.

⁴⁶Pande, Balaji.op.cit.

⁴⁷It was Gopal Krishna Gokhale who moved a resolution at the Imperial Legislative Council on 18 March 1910 seeking provision for "Free and compulsory education". His speech in Imperial Legislative Council while placing the resolution can be read in Bhattacharya, Sabyasachi.op.cit, p-140-141.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹Khan Hasan Wahidul, "Barriers to girls' education". India together (<http://www.indiatogether.org/2004/jun/edu-barriers.htm>) accessed on 16/11/13.

As there are various factors which has led to the slow growth in women's education, education as a sole element for uplifting status of women seems to be insufficient. Therefore, we need to look into other forces that can contribute to this process of women's emancipation. The Mass Media, particularly newspapers, which has shown its capability in social and political transformation in the past and the present has its democratic role to educate society about the pros and cons of societal norms. Let us look into this in the following chapter.

Chapter 2

Media as Educator

Educative Role of Media in Indian Democracy and the Gender Discourse.

On May 30 1974, the sixth American communications technology satellite, also known as ATS-6, was launched from the American soil towards the geostationary orbit. It was one of the first educational satellites that were to be used for the transmission of educational programmes. Anticipation for the success of the mission loomed large, not only in the heart and the minds of American scientists, but also of Indian government. Because through the satellite, Government of India was going to initiate broadcasting of educational programmes in six Indian states namely Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan. The programme was known as Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE). It was conducted between August 1975 and July 1976. The significant point to be noted here is that the experiment, though was a failure due to various reasons, was initiated due to the general acceptance of the notion, that television as a modern mass medium, could serve the society, if used for educational purposes.¹

Much before television came to India, as an experiment in 1959, print media was already held to have the potential as well an integral role to play in educating the society. The democratic principles on which independent India came into existence as a nation, guaranteed freedom of speech and expression to its citizens under the Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution. Various interpretation of Article 19 (1) (a) by the Supreme Court, also provided freedom of the press in the country because it was accepted that it was only when the media in general and press in particular educates the society, the society becomes more capable to express itself and enjoy the freedom under this provision completely.

¹ Palmer. "Television for Learning: Our Foremost Tool in the 21st Century". Opinion Article 7, [www.unesco.org \(http://www.unesco.org/education/lwfi/doc/portfolio/opinion7.htm\)](http://www.unesco.org/education/lwfi/doc/portfolio/opinion7.htm)

Therefore, the educative role of media in Indian democracy is an imperative that flows out of the constitutional guarantee of freedom that it enjoys under Article 19 (1) (a). There have been instances where the concerns of press freedom in the country have not only been extensively discussed and advocated but have also been a major factor behind the judgments pronounced by the Supreme Court and thus rendering wide, the scope of Article 19 (1) (a). One such judgment, for instance, is the Sakal Papers case (1961), when the Supreme Court struck down the Newspapers (Price and Pages) Act, 1956, on grounds that it violated the freedom guaranteed under Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution.² The judgment was indeed a victory for the press freedom. Another instance, most recent in this regard, was in the battle between the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India and the Cricket Association of Bengal in 1995.³ In these two and the many other instances between the two cases, the Supreme Court stood for the freedom of speech and expression, which can only be achieved through freedom to propagate ideas and views until and unless those ideas and views infringe law under Article 19 (2). And in this process, the apex court expanded the scope of Article 19 (1) (a) to its widest extent and held the only restriction to be as provided under Article 19 (2) of the Constitution.⁴ Therefore, these were the instances where one of the pillars of Indian democracy i.e. the Judiciary stood by the freedom of another pillar of democracy i.e. the media.

The Judiciary pitched these decisions in favour of a free press on the ground that the media has various responsibilities to fulfill. Its freedom comes with responsibilities. Among which is the responsibility to educate the society and the masses.

²Sakal Papers vs Union of India.AIR-1962-SC- 305.Sakal, a weekly newspaper in Marathi from Poona and its two other shareholder challenged the constitutionality of the Newspaper (price and Pages) Act of 1956 which empowered the Central Government to regulate the prices of newspapers in relation to their pages and sizes and to regulate the allocation of space for advertising matter. In this case, the judgement struck down the Newspaper (Price and Pages) Act, since then the act remains null and void.

³The Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting vs Cricket Association of Bengal & ANR.AIR 1995-SC-1236.

⁴Few other Supreme Court judgments that stood for the freedom of speech and expression and the press came during Brij Bhusanvs State of Delhi 1950, AIR 129, 1950 SCR 605 and Romesh Thaparvs State of Madras 1950, AIR 124, 1950 SCR 594.

In the previous chapter, the need for an educative role of media in democratic India for the empowerment of women has been outlined in elaborate terms. This chapter will analyze how the media performed its role in accordance with this and where and how are the discourse on women's emancipation being treated by the media, particularly the print media under the democratic framework of the nation.

For this purpose, the first section of this chapter will broadly analyze the role played by the media in Indian democracy till now, while the second section will analyze the relationship between the media and the issues like gender discrimination, women representation, violence against women, in the context of women's emancipation within the discourse of democratic principles in the country.

Media in Democratic India.

William A. Rough writes 'The press, in short, is part of the political process and is rooted in the political culture of each country.'⁵ There is reason behind accepting this framework as set by Rough: That is if there is anything that has influenced the role of media in India then surely it would be the political processes in the country. However, since 1991, Indian media has also been greatly influenced by the liberalisation of the economic policy and the consequent domination of the market principles have also resulted in the media itself being influenced by the principles of market economy.

The role that Indian media played during freedom struggle is cherished even now. Print, the only media which could easily reach to the masses, was used not only for the fight against the colonial rulers but also for the emancipation of society at large. Gandhi started the '*Young India*' and '*Navjivan*' with a clear objective which was to campaign for freedom and publicise the principles of Satyagraha. Similarly, he started '*Harijan*', '*Harijanbandhu*' and '*Harijansevak*' in English, Gujarati and Hindi, respectively as part of his campaign against untouchability and poverty.⁶ The role of the media, even before Independence, was recognized to have an impact on various issues including political,

⁵ Rough, A William. Arab Culture and Newspaper, The Function of Newspapers in Society: A Global Perspective. Ed by Shannon E. Martin and David A. Coperland. P- 14.

⁶ Prof. Gupta, "Mahatma Gandhi And Mass Media". Compherensive Site by Gandhian Institute Bombay SarvodayaMandal& Gandhi Research Foundation (http://www.mkgandhi.org/mass_media.htm) Accessed on 7/3/2014.

social, educational and so on; the most important among them being the campaign for social reforms and it is a fact that the emancipation of women formed an important part of this campaign.⁷

After independence, freedom of the press became such an important issue for the protagonists of democratic principles in the country and it was argued that freedom of speech and expression, guaranteed under Article 19 (1) (a), cannot be enjoyed completely in a country where freedom of press is not guaranteed under the provision of the constitution. Mr. Somnath Lahiri in the Constituent Assembly argued that "One vital thing which our people have been suffering from in the past has been the curtailment of the liberty of the press by means of securities and by other methods. The press has been crushed completely. This is a thing against which every patriotic Indian is up in arms, including every congressman, and, therefore, in his heart of hearts every Indian feels that in a free India in order that people may feel freedom and act up to it, there should not be such drastic curtailment of liberties of the press".⁸

Though there were several voices that were raised for the specific provision in the constitution to be added for freedom of press, it was only as late as in the year 1986 that the judiciary, on December 6 that year, in the *Indian Express Newspapers vs Union Of India & Others*⁹ came to recognize that 'Freedom of Speech and Expression' includes 'Freedom of Press'. Therefore, unlike the American constitution, in which through its First Amendment to the American Constitution (the Bill of Rights), specifically guarantees a free press (The First Amendment prohibits the making of any law infringing on the freedom of the press), the Indian constitution actually upholds the freedom of press through interpretation of the Constitution, by the highest court, of freedom of Speech and Expression under article 19 (1) (a). In other words, press freedom is a derived right in India.

⁷ Together with Gandhi, the names of other male reformists like Rammohun Roy and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar is also taken as the pioneer of women's education in India who not only advocated for women's education but also advocated for legalization of widow remarriage. Though in their own way, few well recognized Hindu organizations like Brahmo Samaj with its leader Keshub Chandra Sen and Arya Samaj with its leader Swami Dayananda Sarawati also spurred women's education and condemned the customs that were degrading the lives of women in India.

⁸ Constituent Assembly Debates, Book No.1, 9 December, 1946 to 27th January 1948, Lok Sabha Secretariat. P.404

⁹ 1986 AIR 515, 1985 SCR (2) 287

The nationalist feelings that dominated the thought process of our people at the dawn of independence, however, was not as intense with the press; it may be argued that the press, at the dawn of independence, was evasive when it came to the responsibilities which it should have taken upon as an institution and thus furthered the cause of democracy. The so-called nation-building project swallowed up the energies of the media and this even rendered the media to end up as a tool of government propaganda. All India Radio was already disseminating information on development projects and ended up becoming a propaganda tool for the ruling Congress party. The print media was in the hands of private players but the government made sure that it could be gagged by keeping some colonial laws intact and also holding on to its control over advertisements. This in an industry where advertisement revenue was critical to a business model had serious implications for the evolution of a free press.

Notwithstanding the adversarial role that the media played in such instances as the Jeep Scandal (in 1948), when the media used its space for criticism of the government, it was not until the 1974 (the Maruti Scam) that the media was actually bold enough to criticize the government, particularly the Nehru family. One of the main reasons behind the media's refusal, by the 1970s, to remain silence was that the political scenario for the first time in Independent India was changing. This was a time when opposition parties were more vocal than before. It happened in the years after the Congress split of 1969. Till 1974, the Indira Gandhi-led Congress faced opposition from many sides including from within, from a group led by Morarji Desai.

This was the initial era when media, particularly the press for the first time in Independent India, was performing one of its democratic responsibilities as watch dog. However, the boldness of the media, even at this stage, was limited merely to criticizing the government on issues of political corruption. Social issues like gender discrimination were still to enter into the domain of media responsibilities. And these social issues, particularly gender issues, had to wait until the end of the emergency in India.

The imposition of the Internal Emergency and press censorship alongside, on June 25 1975, made the Indian press realize that now it should fight for its own freedom. It was necessary, then, to gather a consensus in its favour among the people. And to get

their support it was, therefore, necessary to deal with the issues involving the common people. Similarly, in the words of media analyst, Ammu Joseph:

“The years following the emergency witnessed the beginnings of nationwide campaigns by women's groups, who coalesced to demand changes in the law, beginning with those relating to dowry and moving on to others of special concern to women”.¹⁰

Therefore, the end of the emergency, on 21 March 1977, brought about the various social issues, including women's issues, to the fore in the Indian media and this happened in close interaction with the general discourse in the nation.

However, the end of the emergency was not the only reason for the foregrounding of the women's issues in news debate. The UN declaration of year 1975, as women's year and 1975-1985 as women's decade, compelled the government of India to look into the status of women in India. The international advocacy for women's empowerment that emerged after the declaration of the Women's Decade (1975-1985) had its impact in the developing countries in general and India in particular. The government of India had to introduce its own National Plan of Action for Women in India in 1975. All these, together, gave the Indian press enough reasons to look into the various social issues including women's issues.

Discourse on Women Issues

The discourse on women's issue or women empowerment started much earlier than the independence of India. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, it was primarily focused on modernizing them rather than their emancipation. Therefore, in reality nothing changed and women were still compelled to live under the patriarchal umbrella of Indian society.

It was not until the women's movements in 1970s that the concerns for women's empowerment became a part of the national debate. These movements after independence advocated for the empowerment of women through legal reforms. ChitraSinha,

¹⁰ Joseph, Ammu and Sharma, Kalpana. *Between the Lines Women's Issues in English Language Newspapers*, Economic and Political Weekly.

presenting the reasons behind the demands of legal reforms, cites the observation by the National Committee on the status of Women in India that held as follows:

“The social status of women in India is a typical example of this gap between the position and roles accorded to them by the Constitution and the laws, and those imposed on them by social traditions. What is possible for women in theory, is seldom within their reach”¹¹

As a result, few legal reforms were taken up for discussion and fewer were adopted to raise the status of women in Indian society. Among these reforms, some were marked for their unconventional effort to empower women; while some others have been criticized for making things more difficult for women in Indian society. For the purpose of this chapter, the debates over the Hindu Code Act 1955-56 and the Muslim Personal Law since the Shah Bano case judgment will be focused to highlight on how the varying views of opinion leaders in the patriarchal Indian society resulted in the preservation of the *status quo*, where the status of women is still caught between the two flawed paradigms, namely modernity and tradition.

The Hindu Code Act 1955-56

In less than a decade after independence, there was an instance where the empowerment of women became a commitment for both the government and the people in India. The government believed that the codification of the Hindu Personal Law were necessary even from the concerns of the Hindu society itself. In the words of Madhu Kishwar, Feminist writer and activist:

“In the first decades of Indian independence, the codification and reform of the Hindu personal law was hailed as the symbol of the new government's supposed commitment to the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination enshrined in the constitution.”¹²

Therefore, after much debate and discussions the Hindu Code Bill was passed, after prolonged debates, between the years 1955-56.

¹¹ICSSR, Status of Women in India: A Synopsis of the Report of the National Committee on the Status of Women (1971-74), Allied Publishers, New Delhi, p 13. Quoted in Sinha, Chitra. Debating Patriarchy, The Hindu Code Bill Controversy in India (1941-1956) Oxford University Press New Delhi, 2012, p-2.

¹²Kiswar, Madhu. Codified Hindu Law, Myth and Reality, Economic and Political Weekly.

To understand how the Hindu Code Act too has failed to uplift the status of women in Hindu society, we need to discuss the Hindu Code Act in two different phases. The first phase was when it was discussed as a Bill inside and outside the Parliament; and the second phase would be the time since it was passed as an Act in 1955-56.

First Phase

The first phase (or the discussion phase) brought out various issues revolving around the status of women in Indian society. It also signified how Indian society looks into the issues of women. The arguments both in support and against the bill showcased the polarization of Indian society, when it came to debate over the Hindu Code Bill.

There is no disagreement over the time when the attempts of Codifying the Hindu Personal Law started. Most of the researchers and writers trace it back to the 18th century, when attempts were initiated towards codification of Hindu Personal Law. Madhu Kishwar writes:

“The attempt to codify Hindu law began in the late 18th century because the colonial rulers wanted to bring under their judicial purview aspects of the social and political life of diverse communities which all erstwhile rulers had never encroached upon. The establishment of British rule marked an unprecedented break from the past.”¹³

Similarly, Chitra Sinha states:

“The initial efforts of enacting a Hindu Code Bill, comprehensively covering all aspects of Hindu customary practices, can be traced back to the efforts of the Indian Legislative Council in the 1920s.”¹⁴

The debate, at a later stage, when the Bill was introduced in the 1920s, broadly revolved around the issues like Marriage and Divorce, Property rights of the daughter and the widow and Monogamy. As there were no bases for these issues in the ancient Hindu tradition, most of the religious organizations opposed it. In the words of Chitra Sinha:

“It will be fair to note that the religious groups were overwhelmingly against the Hindu Code Bill. The Code was seen as an encroachment of ultra modern elements in society into the religious activities of the Hindus.”¹⁵

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Sinha, Chitra. *Debating Patriarchy, The Hindu Code Bill Controversy in India (1941-1956)*. Oxford University Press. New Delhi, 2012, p-45.

Those who were opposed to the bill, in the 1920s, did not only include the religious heads and leaders but also some of the well educated people and their organizations. For instance, the Ahmedabad Bar Association opposed the bill on the following grounds among others:

“The Hindu law is based not on mere proprietary claims or mere social fabric of the family property as under English law or any other personal law but is primarily grounded on the sacred principles of religion which have from time immemorial been the basis of conduct of a Hindu born as such. The statutory enactment which revolutionizes these principles is fundamentally contravening the solemn promises of Her Majesty Queen Victoria’s proclamation that in matters of religion and personal law her subject in India shall have the fullest liberty.”¹⁶

It could be stated that the Religious organizations opposed the bill on the basis that the bill was actually introducing some major initiatives for women empowerment which was in sharp contrast to the essence of the religion itself. But the opposition to the bill from well educated opinion leaders only highlights that the patriarchal Indian society was happy to sustain gender discrimination which have been sanctioned through their religion.

This was also seen in some of the women groups too. ChitraShina discusses broadly about the three groups of the Hindu society

“The first group comprised ladies from the aristocracy, used to lives of luxury and confinement and even when educated, generally at peace with their purdahnishin existence (i.e. existence behind the veil). They were largely in opposition to the Hindu Code, though there were a few exceptions. The second group of women were generally committed to the religious ways of life, and in most cases affiliated to broader religious groups. Their views reflected the views of broader religious bodies, which were more often than not, against the Hindu Code. The third group were the women’s organizations, who had expanded their network among educated women since the early 20th century and became a vocal force in favour of the proposed Code.”¹⁷

¹⁵Ibid, p- 79.

¹⁶Comment of a Bar Association Submitted to the Hindu Law Committee in 1945. Written Evidence, p-62. Quoted in Sinha, Chitra. *Debating Patriarchy, The Hindu Code Bill Controversy in India (1941-1956)* Oxford University Press New Delhi 2012, p-77

¹⁷SinhaChitra, op.cit, p-80.

Apart from the third group, the first and the second groups categorized by Sinha explains the reality of Indian society and the deficiency of the traditional education system in the empowerment of women, which has been discussed in the previous chapter.

Another major aspect of the Hindu Code Bill debate in India was of the proliferation of the 'motherhood' image of women. Opposition groups used the image of traditional Indian motherhood image to legitimize their opposition to the bill. Whereas, liberal activists, including women activists and groups, who also supported the bill on the basis that it can put an end to gender discrimination and raise the status of women in India, tried to reframe the image of the motherhood in the modern context. Sinha makes this point with clarity. In her words:

“In the debate over the Hindu Code Bill, the motherhood identity became a contested notion. The “*pativrata*” (domesticated ideal mother) dedicated to progeny became the signifier for the immense virtues of Hindu religion. At the same time, a new identity of motherhood gained ground, a mother who was placed both in the private and the public spheres, a mother whose education generated several positive externalities in the family, and as a companion to her husband, she made the Indian family worthwhile to live.”¹⁸

It is to be noted here that the redefining of motherhood was actually redefining of the characteristics of motherhood. A woman becoming a woman may be a natural fact; but the characteristics of motherhood or the visualization of the functioning of a woman as a mother is the product of the social structure. Before the Hindu Code Bill, traditional Hindu society defined the characteristics of motherhood merely as an element of reproductive function. After the debate over the Hindu Code Bill, liberal advocates tried to reconstruct the very image of the motherhood presented by traditional society.

The reconstruction of the very image of motherhood became the prime concern of the Indian society while dealing with various laws pertaining to the several rights of the women. 'These rights encompassed property rights, marriage rights such as monogamy and divorce, rights of guardianship and custody of children, rights relating to adopting a child and giving away a child in adoption, and women's rights to maintenance'.¹⁹

¹⁸Ibid p113-114.

¹⁹Ibid p-116.

Second Phase

The Hindu Code Bill was passed and consequently four Acts, namely The Hindu Marriage Act 1955, The Hindu Succession Act, 1956, The Minority and Guardianship among Hindus Act, 1956 and the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956 with much enthusiasm for the empowerment of women in Indian society. However, there are many who still criticize it on various issues like the introduction of monogamy and marriage ceremony.

It is to be noted here that that the urge or the sense of necessity of codifying the Hindu Personal Law actually came up during the British rule in India; even those who supported the Bill after independence did so from a colonial mentality until it was passed in mid 1950s.

When the Hindu Code Bill was passed in newly independent India it was regarded as the modernization of the Indian society through the socialist approach, where the elements of gender injustice and discrimination were to be made things of the past. However, if we look into provisions like monogamy and marriage ceremony the reality remains something else.

The very first problem of the Hindu Code Bill was that it was the product of the British Empire in India and the new elite leaders of Independent India visualized the bill through the lenses of their past rulers. At the very first level, this gave the ample opportunity to the opposition. Many in the opposition saw the bill as a product of the British Administration during colonial rule. For instance, the Darbhanga Bar Association opposed the Bill on the basis that the code was:

“not framed by Hindu member well versed in Hindu *shastras* with the result that a revolutionary anti-*shastric* Hindu Code is produced adversely touching the very structure of Hindu society, giving a violent shock to people’s religion, belief and traditional modes of succession.”²⁰

Madhu Kiswar highlights this colonial mentality in the following terms:

²⁰Comment of a Bar Association Submitted to the Hindu Law Committee in 1945. Written Evidence, p-165. Quoted in Sinha Chitra, *Debating Patriarchy, The Hindu Code Bill Controversy in India (1941-1956)*. Oxford University Press New Delhi 2012, p-78.

“The Englishmen who came as traders in the 17th century were befuddled at the vast diversity and complexity of Indian society. Having come from a society where some aspects of family and community affairs came under the jurisdiction of canon law, they looked for similar sources of authority in India. Thus began a new kind of study of ancient 'shastras' to help the British develop a set of rules for governing contemporary Indian society.”²¹

As a matter of fact, the first draft of the Hindu Code bill was prepared under the supervision of British rulers who did not have enough knowledge about the various Hindu customs that were needed to prepare a bill. In the result, today Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 consists such provisions like Section 7 of the Hindu Marriage Act that recognises that there may be different, but equally valid ceremonies and customs of marriage. As such, Hindu marriage may be solemnized in accordance with the customary rites and ceremonies of either the bride or the groom. These rites and ceremonies include the *Saptapadi* (the taking of seven steps by the bridegroom and the bride jointly before the sacred fire) and *Kreva*.

According to legal scholar and activist, Flavia Agnes, the Act was deficient in many ways. In her words:

“Since the act recognised all customary forms of marriage and divorce, the uniformity among Hindus was a legal fiction created by the act. The ambiguity of the act provided ample scope for a Hindu man to escape both from the criminal consequences of a bigamous marriage and from the economic responsibility towards the second wife. Prior to the act, since polygamy was validated by the ancient Hindu law and customs, women in bigamous marriages had a right of residence and maintenance. By introducing monogamy, women in bigamous relationships lost their right to maintenance, legitimacy and respectability.”²²

To substantiate her argument, Agnes presents various case studies among which is the very first judgment of the Supreme Court after the enactment of the Hindu Marriage Act 1955. In this case the first wife pleaded that the second marriage was performed in the *gandharva* form aka 'pat' marriage. The first wife pleaded that a person going through any form of marriage during the lifetime of his wife would be guilty of the offence and all the ceremonies of a Hindu marriage need not be strictly proved. The trial court convicted the husband and the second wife. This was upheld by the session court

²¹Kiswar, Madhu. op.cit.

²²Agnes, Flavia. Hindu Men. Monogamy and Uniform Civil Code, Economic and Political Weekly.

and the high court. At the final appeal, the Supreme Court acquitted the husband and held that the marriage was not performed in accordance with the requirements of the law and hence it was not solemnised.²³

Therefore, it seems that justice for the women is still a far cry. The Hindu Marriage Act, which should be providing justice to the women in reality has not given the expected results.

Muslim Personal Law

The Debate over the Muslim Personal Law which got spurred after the Shah Bano Case in 1985 presents before us a more retrograde reality of Indian society where a woman has no permission to speak and is treated according to the wishes of men, particularly when they belong to the under-privileged minority community.

70 year old Shah Bano was divorced in the Muslim *Shariat* legal requirements for a lawful divorce. According to the Muslim *Shariat* Ahmed Khan, her ex-husband after the divorce was willing to restore the 'bride price' originally paid by her parents to him at the time of marriage. And also pay the maintenance for three months. Shah Bano, an uneducated and unemployed woman, filed a petition in the Judicial First Class Magistrate's Court at Indore under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code for maintenance of Rs.500/- per month. The Magistrate ordered Ahmed Khan under Section 125 Cr. P.C. to pay a monthly maintenance of a "princely sum" of Rs.25/- in 1979. Then Shah Bano appealed to the Madhya Pradesh High Court and got it increased to Rs.179.20. Ahmed Khan approached the Supreme Court but this amount was upheld there with a judgment which hurt the feelings of the Muslim community.²⁴

The decision of the Supreme Court was presented by the clergy from the community as interference into the centuries old tradition of Muslim community. This generated wide protest, mostly orchestrated by the members of the community themselves. The then Congress government found it difficult to go against the tide and

²³Ibid.

²⁴ New Age Islam, Islamic Sharia Laws; A Relook at the Shah Bano Case Lest We Forget It(<http://newageislam.com/More-Comments.aspx?ID=6982>) Accessed on 28/11/13.

brought the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill, 1986. The Bill sought to exclude Muslim women from the preview of Section 125 CrPC and held Wakf board or the community responsible for the support of the divorced women. Therefore, the former husband has no obligation to pay maintenance beyond 3 months stipulated by Muslim *Shariat* Laws.

The Shah Bano case became a major issue in national political sphere. From Hindu hardliners to opposition parties like the BJP, used this as an opportunity to criticize both the Congress government and the Muslim Personal Laws for their own interests. But even after the much debate and criticism over the Muslim Personal Law, no attempt was made to codify it. The most favoured reason given behind such a lukewarm attitude of policy makers and opinion leaders is that India is a secular country where the State respects and recognizes each and every religion and has no rights to intervene in matters.

However, such a skewed explanation or definition of secularism has led to much violence against the Muslim women in India. One such case was of the sexual assault of a 28 year old Indian Muslim woman by her father in law on 6th June 2005 in Charthawal village in Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh. When the woman complained about the incident, she was asked to treat her husband as her son and her father-in-law as her husband by the local Muslim Panchayat. To make matter worst,

“the leading Islamic seminary Darul Uloom Deoband also issued a fatwa or opinion, which quote from Quran 4:22: wa la tankihoo ma nakahaaaba-o-kum, “and marry not women whom your fathers married”, and not distinguishing between rape and adultery, said that as a result of her father-in-law’s act, she should now be treated as the mother of her husband and she could no longer live with him even though Imrana had not married her father in law”.²⁵

Even if the convict was sentenced to 10 year of imprisonment, the case showcases many gaps between the attempts to liberalize the women folk and reality in Indian society.

The reason behind discussing the Hindu Code Bill and Shah Bano Case together with the rape case of 28 year old Muslim woman was that these events provide us the

²⁵ Imrana Rape Case; The Mindset (<http://themindset.wordpress.com/2011/04/18/imrana-rape-case/>) Accessed on 14/3/2014.

contradiction on the views of decision makers of the country, when it comes to the legal reforms for women from different communities. Where, after much opposition, the Government of India had no dilemma over the need of Codifying the Hindu Law, when it comes to unification of Muslim Personal Law for the gender equality, it seems that the Government is happy to remain static. Dhananjay Mahapatra writes:

“So, after 63 years of independence and 60 years of the Constitution, our political leadership has not been brave enough to introduce reforms in the social practices of Muslim community.”²⁶

This attitude certainly militates against the constitution, particularly if we look into the provision of Article 44 of the Constitution. This, part of the Directive Principles of the State Policy, reads ‘The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India’.²⁷ One can say that codifying the Personal Law of any community for the benefit of any particular section like women or children cannot be considered as an obstacle to the secular stance of Indian society because Article 44 also clearly states that. To quote an authentic commentary on this, ‘Article 44 is based on the concept that there is no necessary connection between religion and personal law in a civilised society.’²⁸

Media and the Gender Discourse

Seen against this context, the role of the media in gender discourse becomes more important in a patriarchal society like in India where the issue of gender equality has to be looked from various realities like religion, caste and class. As discussed earlier, the gender discourse particularly entered the domain of media discussions and debates only after the emergency of 1975-77 and also where the International Year of women year and the decade. However, it will be erroneous to ignore the media’s role during Hindu Code Bill.

²⁶ Mahapatra, Dhananjay. “Is govt ready for uniform civil code after 63 yrs?”. Times of India (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Is-govt-ready-for-uniform-civil-code-after-63-yrs/articleshow/6316723.cms?referral=PM>) Accessed on 3/10/2014.

²⁷ Basu, Das Durga. Shorter Constitution of India, Wadhwa and Company Law Publishers. New Delhi. P-465-57.

²⁸ Ibid.

During the debate on the Hindu Code Bill, Indian media, particularly the press, played a significant role of being a platform where it was possible to express different views. In other words, the media served as the platform for a discourse. At one level, 'The women's conferences organized by AIWC and other women's association were reported in the press'.²⁹ At another level 'Several reports of opposition to the Hindu Code Bill can be traced through the press coverage'.³⁰

However, the liberalization of Indian market seemed to have had its impact on this aspect of the media in a big way. Therefore, it will be inappropriate to analyse the gender discourse in the Indian media without the reference to the Indian market since the shift in the economic policy since 1991, particularly because it was after the 1991 liberalization that the dilemma over status of women once again sprung up. This dilemma was on the question whether the empowerment of women should be on traditional lines or in terms of modernity or even more so in a post-modern framework?

Modernization of Indian society after liberalization took a different tone. Due to the growing entry of Western media in Indian society, the modernization of Indian society, particularly of women folk, started to be looked in comparison to the western countries. Also, the market principles had its influences on the issues that were taken by the media. For instance we can take the example of Miss Universe and Miss World contests. It will be appropriate here to quote from a recent study on the media by Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma to illustrate this:

"After the double bill in 1994, when two young Indian women were crowned Miss Universe and Miss World respectively, a succession of indigenous beauties came home now with international beauty titles. The extraordinary winning spree, trumpeted in a cross-section of media with unprecedented enthusiasm, was obviously connected to the entry of global brands of beauty products in the sizeable, potentially lucrative Indian market that was just opening up to multinational corporations."³¹

Therefore, the discourse on gender equality in the Indian media was more focused on individual achievements. These individuals and achievements were given prominence

²⁹Sinha, Chitra.op.cit, p-103

³⁰Ibid,p-105

³¹Joseph, Ammu and Sharma, Kalpana. Whose News? Sage Publication New Delhi,p-22

in such a way that could serve the market. The result of such prominence given by the media for winners of these international beauty contests was 'the spurt in the growth of the cosmetics industry in India from Rs 23.1 billion to Rs 189.5 billion in the decade between 1990 and 2000'.³²

The impact of liberalization and Globalization has affected the Indian media that it could no more go beyond the notion of individuality. The focus of the media on the individual woman was actually started much before liberalization of Indian market. Because of political situation in the country a woman who dominated the print media during the 1970s was the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. According to a study by Shree Venkatram, 'A single woman dominated Page One in the Seventies. Of the four 'Women Alone' photos, three were of Prime Minister Indra Gandhi'.³³ However, the focus on individual women became more pronounced and common-place after the liberalization and globalization.

Another example of individual achievements and bravery came in the case of Nisha Sharma. Nisha Sharma a Software engineer dared to call the police to complain against the demand for dowry by her in-laws. This episode, in the words of a perceptive analysis in *The Hoot*, meant that:

"By doing the right thing, the young woman of not-so-modest means has become an instant celebrity. In the days that followed, says Sharma, speaking from her house in Sector 56 in Noida, she was interviewed, grilled, stalked, interrogated by an army of media persons."³⁴

Both the national and international media went into such a craze in covering her case that it seemed they were more concerned with any sensational news than going into the depth of a matter. Whereas, in reality 'the truth was that only when the demand went above the danger level, in the case Rs 12 million, did Sharma and her family react'.³⁵ An important point that also needs to be noted here is that 'her father, Dev Dutta Sharma, who runs a machine manufacturing factory and her mother, Hemlata Sharma, were also culpable

³²Anita, Anand (2002). Quoted in Joseph, Ammu and Sharma, Kalpana. *Whose News?* Sage Publication New Delhi. p-23

³³Venkatram, Shree. *Women in Print*, UNNATI Features, UNIFEM. p-16.

³⁴Chopra, Manika. Ed Ninan, Sevanti and Chattarji, Subarno. *The Hoot reader*, Oxford University Press, 2013 p-153.

³⁵Ibid p-154.

under the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1962 for 'giving' dowry initially, even though they said they were gifts for their daughter,'³⁶ but this was not the concern for the media then.

The case of Nisha Sharma was not just the case of dowry but also the reality of how the Indian woman, even if she is educated, accepted the patriarchal system of our society. Media could have gone into depth and could have tried to raise these issues. However, in this case it was pleased to sensationalise the event.

Therefore, when it comes to dealing with the events or an incident concerning the women, media usually sensationalises it and presents it in such a way that can raise its readership or the viewership.

The coverage of beauty contests and Nisha Sharma case could be taken as examples of media's preference in representing those women, who have qualified the standard requirements like education, and employment. In a simple way, it is the middle and upper middle class women who are actually represented in the media. Now the question that arises is that why the media does focus more on elite centric news and information? And to get the answer to this question we need to analyze the 'filters' presented in 'Propaganda Model' by Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman in context to the women representation in Indian media.

Propaganda Model and Indian media

The early critics of mass media Walter Lippmann in 1920s claimed that the propaganda had already become 'a regular organ of popular government'. The 'Propaganda Model' brought by Herman and Chomsky focuses on the inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects on mass media's interest and choices which states that the money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print and allow the government and dominant private players to get their message across to the people. Propaganda model presents five filters which are:

1. the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms;

³⁶Ibid.

2. advertising as the primary income source of the mass media;
3. the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power;
4. "flak" as a means of disciplining the media; and
5. "anti communism" as a national religion and control mechanism"³⁷.

Among these five filters, we can use first two filters for the purpose of analyzing the women representation in Indian media.

Size, concentrated ownership

Propaganda model's first filter explains that the ownership of the media houses all around the world is concentrated in the hands of few individuals. It's fits perfectly in case of the Indian media houses too. Paranjoy Guha Thakurta provides some features of media ownership in India:

- The sheer number of media organizations and outlets often conceals the fact there is dominance over specific markets and market segments by a few players – in other words, the markets are often oligopolistic in character.
- The absence of restrictions on cross-media ownership implies that particular companies or groups or conglomerates dominate markets both vertically (that is, across different media such as print, radio, television and the internet) as well as horizontally (namely, in particular geographical regions).
- Political parties and persons with political affiliation own/control increasing sections of the media in India.
- The promoters and controllers of media groups have traditionally held interests in many other business interests and continue to do so, often using their media outlets to further these. There are a few instances of promoters who have used the profits from their media operations to diversify into other (unrelated) businesses.
- The growing corporatization of the Indian media is manifest in the manner in which large industrial conglomerates are acquiring direct and indirect interest

³⁷Hermann, S. Edward and Chomsky, Noam. *Manufacturing Consent*. Pantheon Books. New York. P-2

in media groups. There is also a growing convergence between creators/producers of media content and those who distribute/disseminate the content.³⁸

The features presented by the Thakurta about the media ownership in India presents substantive similarities between the media houses with that of the first filter in the Propaganda model. Because of the cross-media ownership, the powerful few are able to control the media industry. Naturally, the information disseminated from such media houses would be in the interest of those powerful groups and individuals.

Therefore, it's also due to such ownership pattern in India that only those issues revolving around middle and upper-middle class women are able to get its space in the media and press which are of interest of these powerful groups and individuals. Such ownership removes the diversity of news contents, in results the news of the marginalized sections are usually blackout. This is the reason why the women from upper class get more represented in the media than the women in the lower classes.

Because of the gigantic capacity of the media in public relations and in profit making more and more powerful individuals and groups from the corporate sector are gaining ownership of the media. This has resulted in the commercialization of media and press. Now businessmen are the owners whose ultimate aim is profit. Therefore, it's the upper middle class and the elite section of the society who can afford to purchase the communication technologies like television, DTH services, computers and internet which are also the prime targets of these media houses. Naturally, the news and information disseminated needs to get the attention of these sections of the society. Apart from these two sections, people belonging to other low income classes are totally ignored. Any event that occurs in the high profile society becomes the 'headlines'.

One example of such news coverage was of first 'Formula 1' racing in Indian in 2011. Prior to the race, every news channel and newspaper started talking about the history and the champions of Formula 1. After the event, on 30 October 2011, they went

³⁸ Thakurta, GuhaParanjy. Media ownership trends in India, The Hoot (<http://thehoot.org/web/MediaownershiptrendsinIndia/6053-1-1-16-true.html>) Accessed on 12/3/2014.

further and congratulated F1 organizers for a successful event. Limits were crossed when F1 was stated to be better in comparison to the Commonwealth Games in India in terms of organizing the event. Though it was true that CWG brought many controversies and corruption, there is another way to look at the issue. Private news channels whose owners are business tycoons will surely advocate for the privatization of the sports too. And they could do this through criticizing the government organized sports events. Even F1 was not a clean event. Many controversies companioned it. But the elite-favoured media did its best to hide it. One such controversy was of land. Farmers whose agricultural lands were taken for constructing the 'Buddha circuit' had grievances about the compensation given to them for their land. However, the media did not highlight this aspect of first F1 race in India.

The events like beauty contest are the symbols of modern or the post-modern societies like that of F1 racing. From the organizers to contestants the consumers of the news of these events, each and every individual belong to the middle and upper-middle class. Therefore, the media is more interested in covering it than covering the problems of women in rural or marginalized sections of our society.

It will not be erroneous to say here that if Nisha Sharma had been an uneducated daughter of a rural-poor farmer, she would not have got such a media coverage for her so-called bravery. Her case would not have been of so much concern for the elite media owners and its employees.

Advertisements

Advertisements are the one of the main filters through which each and every bit of news and information has to be filtered. With the growing capital market in the globalized and liberalized Indian society, media is becoming more and more dependent on advertisements for its revenue. Every news channels and papers want to achieve highest viewership and readership because through this they can attract more numbers of advertisers.

And because of this, news contents are usually the kind which revolves around the elite section of the society. It is only those upper middle class and elites who can

purchase the information technology equipment can also buy the products that are advertised in the media. Therefore, when it comes to the news about women, it is only about the women from the well settled urban societies that draw the attention of the media. The coverage of individual winners of international beauty contest resulting in the growth of market for the cosmetic industry in India can be an example of advertisement being the filter of news and information dissemination. Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma explain this in so many words:

“Indeed, the process of creating the three Miss India winners who go on to compete in the Miss World, Miss Universe and Miss Asia Pacific pageants begins when advertisements and entry forms are printed in the magazine, as well as in The Times of India..”³⁹

Therefore, we can see that because the media also gets huge amount of advertisements from the beauty industry, it gives much attention to it. This also explains the nexus between the media and the market.

One of the main reasons behind the media hype over the individual achievements is that it is actually creating an icon for the particular section of the society. For instance, a cricket player is given such a media hype that it creates a favourable image of that player in the minds of the youth in the society. Then the market uses that image of the player to advertise their product. And these advertisements are advertised in the media. In simple words, media and market contributes in profit making of each other.

Similarly, the winners of the international beauty contest were represented as a symbol of empowered women of modern India. But in reality media is actually creating individuals who can be used by the market for the promotions of their products which can later be advertised in the media. That is also the reason why after the gigantic coverage of the beauty contest, we can see these winners in the media promoting the cosmetic and other products.

We can see that there are three major factors behind the media's choice in selection of the news and information which needs to be disseminated.

³⁹Joseph, Ammu and Sharma, Kalpana. Whose News? Op.cit.p-206.

First, because it's the elite section of the society that has ownership over the media industry and also has the capacity to buy both the communication technologies and the products advertised in the media, they are mostly represented in the media.

Second, due to the advertisements, media covers the issues and events which have capacity to attract more and more advertisers for them.

Third, media gives much hype to those individual achievers who can be used by the market for the promotion of their product.

It's also to be noted here that if any information does not fit into these three factors the information is discarded. For instance, a member of Indian Hockey team can well fit into the third factor. However, he/she does not fit into first factor because majority of the elite or middle class section does not play or follow hockey in India. Therefore, media does not give any concerns for the individual player from the low fan club sports like hockey; whereas, cricket and the cinema industry has large amount of fan club in India. It is a profitable and effective move for the market to use individuals from these particular industries, hence, media too gives much coverage to the achievers from cricket and bolly-wood.

Similarly, when it comes to the representation of women in media, it is necessary for a woman to qualify each of these factors to receive media coverage. One of the major effects of advertisements being the filters of news and information in the media has been the commoditisation of female body.

Commodification of the Female Body

In a democracy where media is expected to educate the society against the gender stereotypes, it actually through various messages in its programmes and advertisements builds this stereotype of the female body stronger. Sexuality and dependency of women on men is usually the core messages given through the media. In most of the cases, women are presented as sex object who has no capacity or role in decision making. A common trend in all of the advertisements is that it tends to highlight female beauty.

However, even the female beauty is stereotyped and usually thin, tall and with fair complexion women is showcased as beautiful women.

One of the reasons behind such commodification of the female body is that the market produces the products which claim to provide such stereotyped beautiful bodies. Commodification of women can also be considered as a result of patriarchal values in the society where women are being prohibited from taking any decisions and holding any powerful positions. It's the result of patriarchal views that women are limited to as an object of sexual pleasure. 'Specifically looking at this idea of objectifying women in relation to power', Naomi Wolf argues 'that all the images around us tend to make women devalue themselves, thus keeping their status lower'. In her words:

"There is no legitimate historical or biological justification for the beauty myth; what it is doing to women today is a result of nothing more exalted than the need of today's power structure, economy, and culture to mount a counteroffensive against women... The beauty myth is not about women at all. It is about men's institutions and institutional power". In other words, the beauty myth is about maintaining patriarchy."⁴⁰

The commodification of women's image makes women more vulnerable towards patriarchal systems in the countries like India because here women are commodified in two different ways.

- First, they are explored towards the modernized version of women's beauty through stereotyping of thin and fair bodies.
- Second, they are explored towards the traditionally stereotyped images of women.

In India women are also being encouraged to follow such patriarchal traditions by the media which from the past has been one of the main reasons behind for their marginalization. One such example is of promotion of '*Purdah*' system by the print media in Kerala. A perceptive comment on this reads as follows:

"The editorial support and moral patronage from Muslim publication, especially the Madhyamam group, were immense help in spreading the message of *purdah*."

⁴⁰ Wolf, N. (2002). *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women*. New York: Harper. Quoted in Meganck, Shana. *Sex and Violence in Advertising: How Commodifying and Sexualizing Women Leads to Gender Violence*.

The middle-class Muslim women form a common target, our consumers and their readers, says Rasool Gafoor, of the Hoorulyn, with gratitude”.⁴¹

This clearly shows how magazines are contributing in the process of spreading *pardah* system.

There can be no problem if a woman decides to wear *Purdah* in place of other outfits. But the problem arises when propaganda is spread through the media in favour of particular dress code. At one level, where the media represents sexual image of a woman, at another level, it also advocates for the particular dress code. And in the process the decision of the women themselves are discarded. It is not about what a woman wants to wear? Rather it becomes important to decide what she should wear. M.P. Basheer highlights the survey which revealed that ‘the number of the Muslim women who use *pardah* in the five districts of the Malabar region increased from 3.5 per cent in 1990 to 32.5 in 2000’.⁴²

Here too, the individuals were given much focus “The conversion of the famous writer and poetess Kamala Das, alias Madhavi Kutty, to Islam three years ago triggered a boom in the burqa in *pardah*”⁴³

Conclusion

The media which has the responsibility to further the democratic principle in India has also the moral and social responsibility to fight against the patriarchal norms and thus towards the empowerment of women. However, due to the political and the overwhelming concerns to enrich themselves rather than educate the people and serve as a platform for a discourse, the media in India has not performed its responsibility towards half the population of the nation i.e. women.

The declaration of the Emergency and the Women’s year and decade in year 1975 somehow brought some changes in the media’s attitude as some stage in its history to focus on women issues. The discourse on women’s issues which has recently caught

⁴¹Basheer, M. Malayalam Magazines Drive Women Into Purdah. Ed by Ninan, Sevanti and Chattarji, Subarno. The Hoot reader, Oxford University Press 2013.p-148.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid,p-150.

some space and time in the Indian media, however, is heavily influenced by the perspective of the liberalization and the globalization agenda. Since 1991, the issues of women empowerment and discrimination were taken up by the media but again the decision in selecting such issues were greatly influenced by the profit making ability of the issues. And in the process, media actually mocked the notion called “empowerment of women”. It manipulated the issue of women empowerment for its own profits.

Therefore, whenever media raised some issues revolving around women injustice and discrimination it has by and large been in favour of particular section ignoring other sections of the societies.

Chapter 3

Women and the Media

An analysis of newspaper reports on women issues

Violence, injustice, discrimination and inequality against the women have perhaps existed since the existence of human kind. However, education developed by the humans themselves empowered human beings to identify each of these as social evils and find a solution and end to it. For the betterment of the society, few educated men and women, rightfully, thought it was significant to communicate about these social evils with the masses. And the ever-increasing number of literacy and communication technologies provided a great assistance for it.

The increase in the literacy rate has however merely assisted in the identification of such social evils. The solution and the end of it is still to be achieved. This is the reason why almost every literate and illiterate individual knows about gender based discriminations and about violence against women but has not been able to put an end to it. This reality creates some doubts on the nature of our education system itself. In the second chapter we have tried to highlight some of these. This is not to say that education has had no impact at all in abolishing these social evils; rather the point here is that the present education system has somewhere and somehow been unable to address these issues. And it should be hoped that with the growth and improvement in the society and scholarship of our intellectuals and the individuals in it, the education system will overcome this too. So the education system in India and all around the globe will have to calibrate itself to not just expose and equip the individuals towards these issues but also make those individuals capable enough to find a better and effective solution for it.

Meanwhile, the media can help in the growth and improvement of our society and individuals in many ways. It can update individuals about the current events and about any such practices so that they can be educated about the wrong practices that are being practiced within their society. It can become a platform where people can raise their voices and express their disagreements or dissent against such practices. The media can

and will have to emerge as a platform for discourse, on these issues in a democracy. It can pressurize the concerned authorities and individuals to do something to stop such practices. And it can also inform other individuals who were uninformed till now and spur them to raise their voices and disagreement against it. These are the significant processes where the media as an institution and professionals working in the media as individuals are involved and thus generate a better selection process by each individual. The previous chapter discusses the reason behind the significance of education by the media in women's issues. In this chapter let us critically examine as to whether and how the media is doing it.

Though in a democracy, media may and should have different roles in various situations, it is one of the universally accepted views that its role in educating the society is most significant. As has been highlighted in the previous chapter, the educative role of media, particularly in educating the society about the women's issues, the intention of this chapter is to analyze the role played by the English newspapers on a certain set of women related events/issues in the country.

The English language newspapers that will be analyzed are The Times of India, The Hindu and The Telegraph. The selections of these newspapers are based on their reach, particularly among the educated sections of our society who are also in the thick of policy making and implementation. The choice is also determined by the spread of the core areas of circulation of these papers. Therefore, these may be taken as representatives for the Mumbai region (The Times of India), The Southern region (The Hindu) and the Eastern region (The Telegraph). All the three, in fact, also have an impact on the leaders of our political and civil society in Delhi, being national newspapers.

Newspapers during the week after the date of the events that have been chosen had occurred will be analyzed. It may be noted here that some of the copies were unavailable from the archives.

The events taken for the analysis of these newspapers are

1. Shah Bano Judgment (23 April 1985)
2. Roop Kanwar Case (4 September 1987)
3. Aameena Case (9 August 1991)
4. Reservation for women in Panchayat (23 April 1993)
5. Delhi Rape Case (16 December 2012). The sampling criteria of these events were based on their intensity and diversity which are also various forms of women oppressions, except Reservations for women in Panchayat.

Shah Bano Judgment

70 year old Shah Bano was divorced under the Muslim Shariat law provisions for a lawful divorce. According to the *Shariat*, Ahmed Khan, her ex-husband after the divorce was willing to restore the “bride price” originally paid by her parents to him at the time of marriage. And also pay the maintenance for three months. Because she was an uneducated and unemployed woman, she filed a petition in the First Class Magistrate’s Court at Indore, under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code, claiming maintenance of Rs.500/- per month. The Magistrate ordered Ahmed Khan, under Section 125 Cr. P.C. to pay a monthly maintenance of a “princely sum” of Rs.25/- in 1979. Then Shah Bano appealed to the Madhya Pradesh High Court and got it increased to Rs.179.20. Ahmed Khan approached the Supreme Court but this amount was upheld there with a judgment which hurt the feelings of the Muslim community’.¹

The Supreme Court gave the judgment on 23 April 1985. It is important to see as to how seriously did the media took up this issue because it was not only about the women but was also about the particular community and the woman and her status within that community. The judgment which attracted several voices from various corners of the country was actually not reported by any of the newspapers taken up for this study in the immediate instance.

¹ New Age Islam. Islamic Sharia Laws; A Relook at the Shah Bano Case Lest We Forget (Ithttp://newageislam.com/More-Comments.aspx?ID=6982) Accessed on 28/11/13.

Ameena Case

On 9 August 1991, in a flight from Hyderabad to Delhi, a flight attendant Amrita Ahluwalia spotted a young girl sobbing in her seat. When asked, she replied that she had been forcibly married to sixty years old Yahya Mohammed al-Sageih, and that she did not wish to go with him to Saudi Arabia. The young girl was Ameena, ten to eleven years old, whose parents married her to al-Sageih. As soon as the plane landed, the Delhi police arrested al-Sageih on charges of kidnapping and marrying a minor, and sent Ameena to NariNiketan, a state-run home for destitute women.² Ameena's parents were also arrested in Hyderabad subsequently.

The news could have easily become front page news in next day's paper, not only because of the intensity of the crime committed by both the parents and the Saudi Arabian national but also because it involved the life of a child, particularly a girl child. The incident not only highlighted the existence of oppression of women in 20th century Indian society but also showcased the odious practice of child trafficking and abuse in the country. In such a situation, the news media is expected to not only report on the incident but also to build a common conscience against such practices. We shall attempt to see and analyze the reportage during the week after the incident, as well as the others taken up for analysis in this study in three major newspapers in India after 9 August 1991 to briefly analyze the role played by news media in Ameena case.

The Telegraph

The incident was reported on 10th August, there was no follow-up on 11th and 12th August 1991. This is the early sign of this paper's insensitivity towards both the issue of child abuse, including child marriage in particular and oppression of women in general. The sensitiveness or the concerns of the newspapers can be easily traced by looking at the editorials because it is through the editorials that the newspaper expresses its concerns towards the society.

²Mankekar, Purnima. 'To Whom Does Ameena Belong?' Towards a Feminist Analysis of Childhood and Nationhood in Contemporary India, *Feminist Review*, No. 56, Debating Discourses, Practising Feminisms (Summer, 1997).

The issue was conspicuously absent in the editorial pages of both 11th and 12th August. Whereas, on 11th August, it was about the Indo-Pak relations, and on 12th August it was about the appointment of a new Governor for Punjab. On each of these days, the newspaper carried two op-ed commentaries on the editorial page and each of them were political commentaries. Needless to say, political issues, as always, dominated the editorial page on 11th and 12th August 1991.

Another way of looking at the concerns of any newspaper is to see the 'Letters to the Editor' section. The Telegraph carried 7 letters each day on the bottom of the editorial page. Out of 14 letters, only one letter dealt with the problems of women in everyday life. There are several ways in which women are humiliated in daily life. The full text of the letter 'Humiliating experience' by Chayanika Gupta, Sahapur, is produced here to showcase as to how women become victims of humiliation, even if it's a prank for some men. The relevant letter read as follows:

"West Bengal in general and Calcutta in particular have become a haven for eve-teasers. In this context, I would like to relate an incident which took place on July 23. Two of my classmates of Muralidhar Girls' College and I were standing at the Golpark bus stop when, suddenly, a young man appeared holding a five rupee note in his hand. He said to one of my friend that he had a five rupee bet with his friends (standing closeby) that he could slap her. We were stunned at this unwarranted affront, but kept our cool and ignored the man. He rejoined his friends and we could hear them laughing. Is this the way civilized people behave with each other? And why must women be the victim of such humiliating experience on account of their sex?"³

The paper carried this letter on 12th August 1991. Though the letter was not in relation to the Ameena case, it indeed showcased how we look upon women in our society. The young man who came to the author and her friends had no fear and regrets on what he was doing. Perhaps, this is also one of the main reasons why violence and oppression against women still exists in our society.

However, some follow-ups on Ameena case came on 13th, 14th and 15th August 1991. On 13th August, the paper in its 'The Nation' section on page 4 carried the news on

³ Gupta, Chayanika. "Humiliating Experience" The Telegraph Calcutta 12/8/1991, p- 6.

Ameena appearing in court. The report under the headline "Dazed child bride appears in Court" read as follows:

"The Saudi Sheikh, Yahya Al H. Mohammad Sagish, met the young girl at Hyderabad on August 7 and married her the next day. Preliminary queries revealed that he paid more than Rs 2 Lakh to the bride's family for the marriage. He has been charged with wrongful confinement and alleged sexual harassment. His passport has been impounded and he has been remanded to police custody till tomorrow."⁴

It is interesting to analyze the first sentence of the 8th paragraph of the report which read as follows: 'Wearing the same light blue salwar suit since Saturday with ruffled, ungroomed hair, Ameena was made to sit on a chair in the packed court room where she stayed hardly for 15 minutes'.⁵

The question that arises here is, was it really necessary to report on what she was wearing? If she would have changed her clothes, would that have made any difference? In fact, the reporter's decision to report on her dress reflects a certain patriarchal notion that we have in our mind. It is in a patriarchal society that people need to know what a girl is wearing. Whether her clothes are 'decent' enough or not for a decent girl is a question frequently asked in a patriarchal society and this notion also influences a certain value judgment on the crime against women. A photo of Ameena, smiling after her rescue, was also published along with the news report. And this leaves another larger question of whether the identification of child marriage victim is ethically correct?

On 14th August, the newspaper under the headline 'Saudi abductor remanded to judicial custody' reported that 'Delhi High court today remanded the 60 year old Saudi Arabian national, who married a 10 year old girl from Hyderabad, to judicial custody till August 27.' The report also added that 'the counsel for the Saudi Arabian national, Mr. I.U. Khan, moved two applications in the court of the Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Mr. K.C. Lohia, seeking discharge of the accused and his release on bail. The application sought quashing of the proceedings under Sections-363 and 366 of the Indian Penal Code as the accused was covered under provisions of the Muslim Personal Law. It

⁴"Dazed child bride appears in Court". The Telegraph Calcutta 13/8/1991,p- 4.

⁵ Ibid.

pointed out that according to the Shariat laws, a Muslim could marry a nine-year-old girl and her consent was not needed. The application showed Ameena as his “legally wedded wife”⁶

On 15th August 1991, the newspaper carried a photo of Ameena with woman police escorting her to the court room on 13th August.

On 17th August, the paper carried a report under the headline “BJP cites child bride case to demand civil code” stated “In a significant statement, the BJP today said the case of 11 year old Ameena who was “married” to a 60 year old Saudi Arabian “once again raises the issue of a modern uniform civil law in India” and urged the Muslim community to accept “a minimum of social reforms”.⁷

The report was one of the most excellent reports carried by The Telegraph on the issue of Ameena case. In the first paragraph presented above, the reporter puts the word ‘marriage’ inside the ‘open and close inverted commas’. By doing this s/he, is actually expressing a categorical disapproval of the illegal marriage between a minor and an old man. As we can see in the earlier reports on the issue, such , words like “child bride” were used not only in the report but also in the headline, it is actually wrong terminology to be used by the media or any other institutions because it presents a wrong message towards the society. A child is a child, s/he cannot be a bride or a groom both legally and ethically and therefore to use the term like child bride is incorrect.

This report also highlighted as to how the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), by giving such a statement was actually trying to make partisan political gains rather than raise the debate on women’s rights. . It went on to add that

“The BJP’s stance is significant in view of the communal angle it is imparting to the plight of a minor girl to promote its own politics. A large body of secular opinion has also been outraged by the Ameena episode and this might enhance the BJP’s ability to exploit the issue among its newly-acquired urban middle class base”.⁸

⁶“Saudi abductor remanded to judicial custody”. The Telegraph Calcutta 14/8/1991, p- 4.

⁷“BJP cites child bride case to demand civil code”. The Telegraph Calcutta 17/8/1991, p-1.

⁸ ibid

The editorials on each day's (on 13th, 14th, 15th and 17th August 1991) issue of The Telegraph were based on political events of the country. The paper carried six commentaries by various writers on these days but none of them talked about the Ameena case. It is a clear pointer of the sense of priority that the paper gave to an issue concerning the rights of women and more particularly the girl child.

The Times of India

It is surprising that the Ameena incident was not reported in the 10 August 1991 issue of the Times of India; this notwithstanding the newspaper's claim to be a national newspaper in the country. It is more surprising that the paper decided to publish a report on false rape charges by a teenager under the headline "'Rape' victim charge false" but not Ameena's forced marriage on 11th August 1991. Similarly, the case was not reported on 12th August too.

It was only on 13th August 1991; three days after the incident occurred, the paper for the first time published a report on page four with the headline "Child bride issue rocks Lok Sabha"⁹. As the title itself suggests, the paper published it because by now the case had attracted attention in the political sphere of the country and now various political leaders and groups were talking about it. On the same day, it published another report on page nine with the headline "Girl freed from Arab's clutches" together with a photo of both Ameena and Yahya Mohammed al-Sagih.¹⁰

There were no reports on the issue on 14th August even while a picture where Yahya Mohammed al-Sageih was shown, hiding his face, accompanied by two policemen escorted to the court on the 13th August issue of the newspaper.

A report on violence against woman under the headline "Woman burnt alive in Bihar"¹¹ was published on 15th August 1991. It was one of the only news reports on violence against women which was published in the paper since the Ameena case.

⁹ "Child bride issue rocks Lok Sabha". The Times of India Bombay, 13/8/1991, p-7.

¹⁰ "Girl freed from Arab's clutches". The Times of India Bombay, 13/8/1991,p- 9.

¹¹ "Woman burnt alive in Bihar" The Times of India 15/08/1991.p- 7

However, no follow-ups were reported on that day. The Times of India issues of 16th and 17th August 1991 were not available.

The Hindu

On 11th August, the very next day of the incident occurred, The Hindu seemed to be sensitive enough to the issue to publish the report under the headline “‘Bride’ rescued, Arab detained”.¹² The report provided as much detail as was possible and desirable on the incident. It is to note here that the Hindu had been more careful in choosing the terminologies. It did not use the word ‘child’ before the word ‘bride’ which was/is a better way of reporting. However, there was no follow-up on 11th August 1991.

On 12th August, a follow-up under the headline “Arab remanded to police custody” was published. It reported as follows:

“The 60-year-old Arab, Yahaya H. Mohd Al Sagir, arrested yesterday for attempting to abduct a minor girl, was remanded to police custody till August 13. He was produced in the court of the Metropolitan Magistrate, Mr. V. K. Maheshwari, in the Patiala House Courts today.”¹³

On 13th August, a report on Ameena’s appearance in the court on the previous day was reported under the headline “Now she is in the clutches of the society”. The report highlighted the battle inside the court room between the women organizations for her custody. The report stated:

“While the girl does not know what the future holds in store for her (It perhaps can't certainly be worse than the past), a tussle has started among women's organisations to secure her custody. At least two of the organizations put in appearance seeking permission to intervene apart from being given the custody of Ameena.”¹⁴

On 14th August, a news report under the headline “Ameena to be shifted” was published. It informed that “The Delhi High Court today directed the Delhi

¹²“‘Bride’ rescued, Arab detained”. The Hindu Chennai 11/8/1991,p-1

¹³“Arab remanded to police custody” The Hindu Chennai 12/8/1991,p-1

¹⁴“Now she is in the clutches of the society” The Hindu Chennai 13/8/1991,p-9

Administration to shift Ameena, the 10-year-old girl who was rescued from an Arab Sheikh who claimed to have married her, from the NariNiketan to a short stay home.”¹⁵

On 15th August, a report was published under the headline “Legal hitch prevents shifting of Ameena”. It informed that “Mr. Justice R. L Gupta of the Delhi High Court had — in response to a petition by the Janwadi Mahila Samiti — on Tuesday directed the Delhi Administration to shift Ameena from the NariNiketan to a "short stay children's home." But the Superintendent of the NariNiketan refused to implement the order on the grounds that although there is a children's home in the capital, there is no "short-stay" children's home.” The report also reproduced Ameena’s statement:

“In her statement, Ameena said that at the time of her ‘*Nikah*’ she did not know the name of the groom."On Friday night, my parents performed *Nikah* with the old man. I did not know his name. I did not know which place he belonged to" she said in her statement. She said the two of them stayed in a hotel for two days and thereafter her father left her at the airport. "I started weeping in the aeroplane. The airhostess came to me and I told her everything. When we landed at Delhi the airhostess took me to the police station".¹⁶

Ameena also reportedly told the Judge, that neither did she want to go back to her parents in Hyderabad nor did she want to go with the Arab Sheikh. There were no follow-up on 16th and 17th August 1991.

There are some points to be noted to analyze the way the three newspapers chosen for this study reported the Ameena case for a week after the incident occurred on 9th August.

First, except The Hindu, both the Telegraph and the Times of India were insensitive in the selection of the words and the terminology that were chosen in their reports. As mentioned earlier, the term like “child bride” is incorrect both ethically and legally. However, both the newspapers used it frequently. P. Mankekar defines why the term “child bride” is wrong. She explains it as “a term that conjoins specific notions of childhood and sexuality”.¹⁷

¹⁵“Ameena to be shifted” The Hindu Chennai 14/8/1991,p-9

¹⁶“Legal hitch prevents shifting of Ameena”. The Hindu Chennai 15/8/1991,p-9

¹⁷Mankekar, Purnima. op.cit.

Secondly, the Aameena case was not merely about the minor girl being forcibly married. Rather it disclosed the existence of several other socially evil practices of Indian society like poverty and child abuse.

Roop Kanwar Case

One of the most inhumane forms of oppression against women was done against Roop Kanwar. On 4th September 1987, in the village of Deworala in Rajasthan, 19 year old Roop Kanwar was forced to burn herself on her husband funeral pyre. Sati was first banned in 1829 by the colonial government and later by Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987. Where one version of this tragic incident argues that Roop Kanwar offered herself for sati to her father-in-law Sumer Singh, another argues that she was thrown into the fire of her husband's pyre. No matter what the reality is, the Roop Kanwar case once again forced us to rethink about our patriarchal norms in our society. As 'Sati' was one of the oldest forms of violence against women, news media in a democratic country should have played an active role and not only condemn such practices but also try to educate the mass to stop it. Therefore, the analysis of the Times of India is presented below to highlight whether press media was vocal in condemning and educating about such evil practices against women or not.

The Times of India

The reason behind the analysis of Roop Kanwar case in The Times of India is to highlight how media most of the times blackouts the events violence against women in India and also how nature of media is subjected to the political nature of the nation.

Media Blackouts

As said earlier, 'Sati' one of the oldest forms of oppression against women in Indian traditional society exists even after the introduction of laws like Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987. However, media being the institution for furthering the democracy is expected to keep its eyes open and inform the people if such evil practices are performed. On the contrary, The Times of India felt that it was unnecessary to report on the Roop Kanwar

case. In the analysis of a week's newspaper after the event it was found that not a single report was based on the case. The event was totally blacked out by the newspaper. The issue which dominated the paper during this time was the Bofors gun scandal. The issues that revolved around in the editorial of the newspaper were political, economic and security affairs.

Reservation for Women in Panchayats.

On 23 April 1993, Government of India enacted the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act which gave reservation of 33 percent of the total seat for all three tiers of panchayats and functionaries for women. The amendment was brought because India has always witnessed low women's participation in politics. It can and was hoped that once women start to participate in political sphere, they will also procure decision making powers both in political level and in their daily life.

As this amendment was going to end the centuries old tradition of keeping the women inside the household and barring their participation in social, political and decision making process, it is indeed necessary to analyze how media treated it.

The Telegraph

When any issue becomes the matter of debate in the Parliament, media always shows its enthusiasm to report it. Even when women's issues becomes the matter of debate in the Parliament, it gets reported, which otherwise would not have been, such as we have seen in the Ameena Case. However, the news of women's reservation in Panchayats, even after being debated in the Parliament was unheard in the newspapers, when we go by the editions of the day after the enactment of the law; this is the case with The Telegraph.

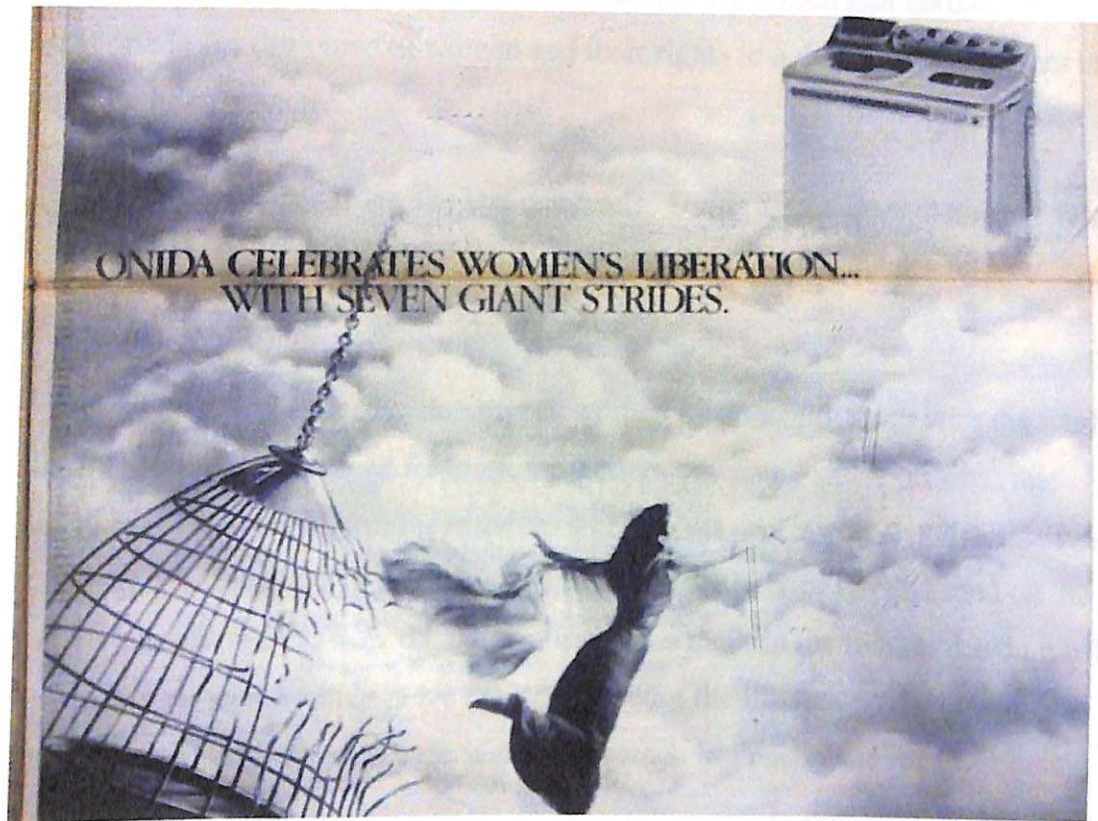
In the analysis of the newspaper for a week after the date of enactment of the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act, it was found that the newspaper did not report it until 27 April 1993; that is the event went without being reported for five days after its enactment. And on 28 April 1993, the paper carried a report under the headline "AICC

meet to be held at Amethi". The news was about the All India Congress Committee's session on panchayati raj that was to be held on May 29 and 30 at Amethi. Even then, the report also did not talk anything about the reservation for women in Panchayats.

On 29 April 1993, the paper carried one of the most famous photographs taken on June 1972 by Huynh Cong Ut of Associate Press. The photograph about the survivors, where a girl child among them was without clothes of a napalm bomb attack in South Vietnam was carried by the paper because it was exhibited at the World Press Photo retrospective which opened at Ashutosh Hall, Indian Museum. The photograph was one of the most powerful instruments in spurring people all around the world to advocate against the United States invasion in Vietnam. It was also the proof of what media; particularly press can do when it decides to fight for a cause.

The paper also carried a report on up-coming panchayat elections in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan. But the report did not talk about the reservation of women in it.

On page five of this day's edition, the paper carried a pictorial advertisement which talked about the 'Liberation of Women'. It is significant to analyze this advertisement to understand the role of media in the liberation of women in India.



Onida's Pictorial Advertisement in The Telegraph on 29th April 1993.

This pictorial representation shows how the media, in most of the times, manipulates the minds of its readers and viewers. Here, a woman is shown freeing herself from a cage together with the written message of "Onida celebrates women's liberation with seven giant strides". It's also important to note here that the woman after freeing herself stretches her arms and tries to reach towards the washing machine, which indeed is of 'Onida' brand. The woman is wearing a 'sari' which is one of the dresses of Indian women therefore, woman is indeed an Indian.

This advertisement is an excellent example of how media make use of various welfare issues like women's liberalization for the market benefits. An attempt has been made in the previous chapter to elaborate on this point.

The advertisement actually was about the semi-automatic washing machine which Onida brand had recently launched and the seven strides which its advertisement talks about was nothing more than some features of the product. However, the representation

had been done in way so that it can conjoin freedom of women with the purchasing of Onida washing machine. And this when there was the legislation that certainly was an important one in the discourse of women and their rights in a democracy that went un-discussed in the newspaper.

Among the seven strides, the last one reads "Onida appreciates that every woman of today is seeking her own personal meaning of freedom. And dedicates its new generation washing machine, as a tribute to her quest"¹⁸

The advertisement firstly, stereotypes women by attaching them with the washing of clothes. Second, it talks about freedom for woman but also decides on what that freedom should be. Then it introduces the market product and injects the idea that women liberation means purchasing the washing machine, particularly of Onida brand on the minds of its readers. This is how the women issues are dealt in the market driven media. The advertisement was the only piece that talked about the liberation of woman. The paper did not carry any report on reservation of women in Panchayats for the whole week.

Where at one level, the issues of women's freedom are talked in the advertisements for the market benefits, at another level the media refuses to report on the policy that has enormous potential in liberalizing women.

The Times of India

Similar to the RoopKanwar case, the Constitution 73rd Amendment Act was not the matter of concern for The Times of India. In an analysis of a week's edition since 23rd April 1993, not a single report was found referring to this aspect of the new law.

The Hindu

The Hindu was the only newspaper which informed people about the Constitution 73rd Amendment Act, 1993. On 24th April 1993 a news report under the

¹⁸The Telegraph Calcutta. p-5

headline “Panchayati Raj Act effective from today” was published. However, the report did not mention anything about the reservation of women in panchayats.

Delhi Gang Rape

If there is any act of violence against woman that was hugely covered by the media, than it is the gang-rape and murder of a 23 year old girl on 16 December 2012 in Delhi. The incident generated widespread protests and was extensively covered by the national media. The girl was gang-raped in a private bus in which she was travelling with a male friend. There were six others in the bus, including the driver, all of whom raped the woman and beat up her friend. The woman died from her injuries thirteen days later while undergoing emergency treatment in Singapore. The news soon spread all over the country and spurred mass anger against such acts.

As Delhi gang rape is the only case study in this dissertation that occurred since the liberalization of the Indian economy and the media too, it would be interesting to see how the print media played its role in educating the society about such violence and how far did it play its role in spurring the people to come out on the streets to show their emotions. Therefore, the analysis of the three newspapers selected for this study is presented in detail.

The Telegraph

The case was not reported on 17th December 2012. On 18th December, the paper reported the incident under the headline “Girl raped in Bus, tortured with rod”.¹⁹ Together with the general information the report also highlighted some recent rape cases. This report clearly mentioned where the victim is employed. Moreover, the report discloses the address of the Delhi gang rape victim. Another story was published under the headline “Years on, no escape from trauma for two victims”.

¹⁹“Girl raped in Bus, tortured with rod”. The Telegraph Calcutta 18/12/2012. p-4

On 19th December, the paper published a report on how the accused partied before raping the victim under the headline “Bus beast partied before night run”.²⁰ On 20th December, the advocacy for the fast trial began in the media. The report under the headline “Fast trial, not death, needed: Lawyer”²¹ was published. On 21st December, the report under the headline “Bowel loss shadow over rape victim future”²² was published. The report was basically on the health of the victim. More follow ups were published in the following week which were mostly based on the health status of the victim and the agitation by the people.

The Times of India

The Times of India also reported the incident one day late that is on 18 December under the headline “40-min ride: Beaten, raped & dumped”.²³ The paper not only tried to sensationalize the incident with such headline but also carried some pictorial representation of the event. Another story on how women feel about their safety was published under the headline “Unsafe in any hour in big, bad city”.²⁴

Among all the newspapers in the country The Times of India gave most space to the follow up. On 19th, 21st and 23rd the paper carried the incident related stories in a whole single page. The paper also tried to bring in the security aspect of the incident.

²⁰“Bus beast partied before night run” The Telegraph Calcutta 19/12/2012. p-4
²¹“Fast trial, not death, needed: Lawyer”. The Telegraph Calcutta 20/12/2012.p-4
²²“Bowel loss shadow over rape victim future”. The Telegraph Calcutta 21/12/2012.p-12
²³“40-min ride: Beaten, raped & dumped”. The Times of India 18/12/2012.
²⁴“Unsafe in any hour in big, bad city”. The Times of India 18/12/2012.

Conclusion

There are no disagreements in any modern civilization on whether women are being oppressed or not. This can be considered as one of the main reasons behind the expectancy that the formal education system can serve for their benefits and empowerment. However, due to Macaulay's¹ minute on Indian education and then Governor General William Bentinck's resolution of 7th March 1835 the education in India hardly had any significant role in resolving women's problem or for that matter on any other issues during colonial rule in India.

The fate of Indians and their education system was decided after "the arrival of Thomas Macaulay as a legal advisor and his essay on the subject in February of 1835 that tipped the balance in the Anglicist direction, resulting in Bentinck's Resolution of March 1835".² Macaulay "famously wrote in his "Minute", that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabic" and thus why the education of Indians should be taught English".³ Therefore, on the 7th of March 1835 the following Resolution was issued

- The promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India; and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone.

- But it is not the intention of His Lordship in Council to abolish any College or School of native learning, while the native population shall appear to be inclined to avail themselves of the advantages which it affords, and His Lordship in Council directs that all the existing professors and students at all the institutions under the superintendence of the Committee shall continue to receive their stipends. But his lordship in Council decidedly objects to the practice which has hitherto prevailed of supporting the students during the period of their education. He conceives

¹During 1834, the debate on the Indian education was at its height between the Anglicist who supported English language education and Orientalist who supported Arabic and Sanskrit education for Indians. Thomas Macaulay was the legal advisor of Governor General William Bentinck and advised for Anglicist approach in his famous Minute on Indian education in 1835.

²Caton, Alissa, Indian in Colour, British in Taste: William Bentinck, Thomas Macaulay, and the Indian Education Debate, 1834-1835, *Voces Novae: Chapman University Historical Review*, Vol 2, No 2 (2011)

³ibid.

that the only effect of such a system can be to give artificial encouragement to branches of learning which, in the natural course of things, would be superseded by more useful studies and he directs that no stipend shall be given to any student that may hereafter enter at any of these institutions; and that when any professor of Oriental learning shall vacate his situation, the Committee shall report to the Government the number and state of the class in order that the Government may be able to decide upon the expediency of appointing a successor.

- It has come to the knowledge of the Governor-General in Council that a large sum has been expended by the Committee on the printing of Oriental works; his Lordship in Council directs that no portion of the funds shall hereafter be so employed.
- His Lordship in Council directs that all the funds which these reforms will leave at the disposal of the Committee be henceforth employed in imparting to the native population a knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of the English language; and His Lordship in Council requests the Committee to submit to Government, with all expedition, a plan for the accomplishment of this purpose.⁴

The resolutions above shows that the intentions of the colonial rulers were not to produce the educated Indian who would work for the betterment of the (Indian) society but to produce an Indian Englishmen who can serve for the purpose of their colonial rulers. "Bentinck had been steadily pursuing a policy of gradual introduction of English education in India since 1829."⁵

Moreover, unequal education system that was introduced after the advocacy for the education for women had its role in sustaining the marginalization of women in India. During late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when debate on the women's education was at its peak "what was promised to women,

⁴ Ed Sharp, H. Resolution by Lord Bentinck, March 7, 1835, Bureau of Education. Selections from Educational Records, Part I (1781-1839).

⁵ Suresh Ghosh, Bentinck, Macaulay and the Introduction of English Education in India, History of Education 24 (1995): 17. Quoted in ⁵Caton, Alissa, Indian in Colour, British in Taste: William Bentinck, Thomas Macaulay, and the Indian Education Debate, 1834-1835, Voces Novae: Chapman University Historical Review, Vol 2, No 2 (2011)

however, was not a 'equal' education. It was education that would make women better wives and mothers"⁶

Therefore, it is to be note that most of those who work in media house in India are the products of such education system. Perhaps, the issues revolving around women are not either covered or are sensationalized.

An analysis through theoretical perspective

For the purpose of this dissertation, the role of media in educating the society about the women issues is analyzed through Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the oppressed framework. The analysis of newspapers reportage in various women issues done above will be used to understand the role played by the media in educating the society about the women issues. It is to be noted that the events taken for the newspaper's analysis are diverse. Though some of them, in some of the way may be connected to each other, the attempt has been made to see the role of media in diverse situation where women are involved.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

As media is considered as the fourth pillar of the democracy and the voice of the voiceless, it has been held with the responsibility of educating the society about the oppressive elements in the society. When it comes to the liberation and the empowerment of the women, it needs to initiate the pedagogy which not only educates the society but also the oppressed. By doing so, it can spur the oppressed to come out of the 'culture of silence' which has been forced upon them by the 'myth' created by cultural imposition and societal norms and initiate the 'cultural action for freedom'. However, media has been negating such pedagogy even if it tries to address the issue of gender discrimination and violence.

But while educating the oppressed for spurring the 'cultural action for freedom' from the oppressed themselves who have been ignorant of their rights and privileges and have no political or economic powers, it is necessary to note that such kind of pedagogy should be "carried out with the oppressed in the process of organizing them". In other words, oppressed becomes the main participants in this process of education.

⁶Agarwal, Bina. *The Idea of Gender Equality: From legislative Vision to Everyday Family Practices*. Ed Thapar, Romila. *India Another Millennium?* Penguin Books, India 2000. p- 41.

On contrary, except in Delhi gang rape case, in all other case studies it was found that the opinions and views of the women were not given prominence. After Delhi gang rape, some newspapers however, tried to bring in the concerns of the women themselves like in The Times of India under the headline "Unsafe in any hour in big, bad city".

Both in the Shah Bano and Ameena case and several such other cases media has failed to recognize this fundamental aspect of pedagogy for women empowerment. Gudiya was also one of such woman who had to face such a media's attitude.

Gudiya from Mundali village in Meerut district, Uttar Pradesh married for the second time with Taufiq after the news of her first husband's death during Kargil War in 1999. As his body was not found, Arif, her first husband, was presumed dead. However, he came back in 2004 and reclaimed Gudiya, who was expecting a child from her second husband, as his wife. The media treated this as an entertainment show and raised a set of questions that were certainly obnoxious. "What should Gudiya do? Go back to Arif or stay with Taufiq? And what about the child? An intensely personal dilemma was first made the subject of debate in the village panchayat where 1,500 people ruled that Gudiya must return to her soldier husband. And shortly after that it was turned into a live television spectacle as all kinds of "wise" people and "experts" discussed on what Gudiya should do". In this media trial, Gudiya was confined inside the cage of 'women in oppression' which is created by patriarchal norms. The Gudiya case and several others are the examples of the media mortifying women folk through its patriarchal views.

Women themselves were/are never given prominence and were/are never included in the decision making process which would affect their very own lives. On contrary, by giving undue space for the views and opinions of the powerful personalities and groups it forced women to remain within the 'culture of silence'.

Because the concerns and the views of the victims themselves were not given prominence the cases like Shah Bano and Ameena did not remained the women's issues, rather it turned in a battleground between the Hindu majority and the Muslims minority. Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma, analyzing the contents of select newspapers on this, hold that "When it comes to issues touching on the lives of Muslim women in particular, both media and politics follow the well-trodden path. The women are forgotten; the incident becomes a tool for debates on the same old issue-whether Muslim Personal Law is fair to women and whether it is time to bring in a uniform law to govern marriage and

divorce in all communities”⁷ . “Clearly, the controversies surrounding Ameena had profound implications in terms of discourse of identity. As in the Shah Bano case, Hindu nationalist organization like the BhartiyaJanata Party used Ameens’s predicament as an opportunity to campaign against Muslim personal law”⁸ .

What could be found in the analysis of these case studies is that, till now media has failed to identify the diversity of the elements that has resulted in the oppression of the women. And the reason behind the identification of each and every oppressive element is that each and every of these cases were treated in isolated manner. Until now the media has made no attempt to expose the nexus between these events and the existing patriarchal norm. In other words, they failed to place these events in the broader context of women in oppression. In the case of Shah Bano it failed to address the issue like dowry or “bride price” which also constitutes a major factor of violence against women. However, it tried to look into the negative impact of Muslim Personal Laws for political reasons. It did nothing to educate the Muslim community about the negative impact of Shariat Laws. Nor did it empower the community’s members, particularly women, to decide upon their own lives and aspirations. The voices of common members of community were never given prominence. On the contrary, the media restricted the discourse to the elite within the community and the clerics and political leaders.

Similarly, in the Gudiya case, media limited the scope of the discussion by simply making it as a spectacle. Here too Gudiya did not get an opportunity to express her opinion. While highlighting the similarity between the media treatment in these two cases Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma state; “The parallels with the Shah Bano case are evident. At that time, Shah Bano’s needs as a divorced woman were forgotten in the debate over civil law versus personal law and, specifically, Muslim Personal Law. Here, too, the needs of the young woman were forgotten in the midst of discussions about what she had to do under Islamic Law”⁹ . The Gudiya case was also seen by the media “simply as a personal story, of a soldier returning from war and finding that his wife had not waited for him but had married to someone else”¹⁰ .

⁷Joseph, Ammu, & Sharma, Kalpana; *Whose News? The Media and Women’s Issues*, Sage Publications New Delhi 2006 p-117.

⁸Manekar Purnima, *op.cit.*

⁹Joseph, Ammu, & Sharma Kalpana *op.cit.*, p-119-120.

¹⁰Ibid p- 119.

Media's portrayal and treatment of women related issues as personal or distinct events can be found more eminently since the Supreme Court's Vishaka guidelines in 1997. Vishaka Guidelines which deals with the security of women in workplace has been interpreted by the Indian media as 'sexual harassment at workplace' and reduced its scope in the discussions. An example of this was seen recently in the incidents involving Tarun Tejpal.

Tarun Tejpal, the editor cum owner of the magazine Tehelka, was allegedly raped his colleague. The event attracted non-stop coverage from the national media in India. However, in this case, media, through its narrow viewpoint, reduced the larger issue of violence against women to 'sexual harassment at workplace'. Sexual harassment of a woman in workplace indeed occupies a major aspect in the discourse of women in oppression; but there are other aspects such as violence, injustice and discrimination that women face. But if media wants to participate in the process of empowering women it is necessary that it locates the issue of sexual harassment at workplace and other incidents of violence against women in the broader context of women's oppression.

Secondly, media tends to exalt one case of women's oppression over another; where one case is given much hype while another is ignored. The cases like Shah Bano, Gudiya, Delhi gang rape and Tehelka were able to get the huge attention of the 'profit and power seeking media' because in all these cases, powerful people and influential groups were involved.

On November 26 2013, together with the news about the Tehelka case, The Times of India reported four stories on violence against women. They were under the headlines 'One held for rape, clicking nude photo', '3 youth gang-rape woman', 'Jalalkheda woman files rape complaint against criminal', 'Woman, teen allege molestation'. However, none of these incidents were followed up by any other newspapers or television channels.

Whenever, women issue has been able to get some space in the media it has been treated in such way that the patriarchal values guide them. From Shah Bano case to Gudiya case in the past and in the Delhi Gang rape to the present case of Tehelka, the media has failed to counter patriarchal ideas. And it tries to gloss over its failure by focusing on a single or just few aspects of gender oppression. As a result, citizens are left with the half consciousness of the issue. They are made to believe that the women

empowerment is limited to employment, education and security for women. In reality, these requirements cannot improve the status of women folk until and unless the 'collective conscience of society' is changed.

Media's failure to report in depth of such issues can be considered as a probable reason for its narrow viewpoint. As it does not want to investigate facts and realities, it simply deals with the surface. Therefore, on the Delhi gang rape case the media was obsessed with the nature of punishment to hang the culprits or not? Similarly, for the time being, it is the sexual harassment at workplace in the Tehelka case.

The dominant notion that the involvement of women in ownership and the production of media products can improve pedagogy of women issues also seems to be a problematic. In the 21st century India the involvement of women in media both in news as well as in entertainment has increased considerably. However, the representation and perception of women in all kinds of media remains unchanged. If we look into the entertainment television channels, these are filled with soaps and other such programmes which "have made use of cultural stereotypes to reinforce subservient role models for women that are major obstacles in changing social prejudices and traditions affecting women"¹¹. A point that is to be noted here is that the number of women participating in these soaps is greater than that of men. "Women participate in television programming at three levels-- as viewers, as actors/anchors and as producers of the programmes. Though their number is still fewer than men at the production level, as actors and viewers women constitutes an enviable majority"¹².

So why is it that even the growing numbers of women participation in producing media content fail to negate the stereotyping of women's lives and roles in our society? The answer lies in the concept of 'Self-Depreciation' enunciated by Paulo Friere.

"Self-depreciation is another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them. So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything- that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive- that in the end they become convinced of their own

¹¹Kiran Prasad(Ed). Women, Media and Society: Recasting Communication Policy. Women and Media 'Challenging Feminist Discourse'. The Women Press.Delhi 2010, p-6.
¹²Sultan Waheeda, ibid p- 118.

unfitness”¹³ Self-depreciation in the minds of these women in Indian media has been built through the patriarchal norms and values since time immemorial. Because of the undue influence of the patriarchal norms, those women who were fortunate enough to pursue higher level of education and enter into the media, failed to interpret the world (or society) differently or to make their own meanings out of it. The interpretation or the making the meaning of their own present status is hugely influenced by the opinions of their oppressor. Due to this, even when they try to liberate other women they end up subscribing to the same old values and traditions. This happens because “the oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressors, to imitate them, to follow them”¹⁴. Such kind of self-depreciation can also be found in the minds of the individual women or groups who participate in the debates in the news media.

Because the media do not consider women to be a main participant and decision maker and also affirm the existing values and norms which subscribes to patriarchal norms, it is actually proliferating the “Banking” concept of education which adds more to the Self-depreciation of the women.

Due to ‘Banking’ concept of education, neither the media coverage nor the widespread protests were able to stop violence against women that followed after 16th December 2012 rape case. The debate over Muslim Personal Laws and its impact on women has still not yet been solved even after much hype on Shah Bano and Gudiya and similar other cases. Through the Banking concept of education, media is educating the society about the ideas and views of the powerful few rather than involving women themselves to educate the society.

Therefore, to achieve liberation of women and their empowerment, media as a responsible institution should start “Problem-posing” education system. Each and every news concerning women should be treated equally and attempt should be made to find out the nexus between different forms of gender discriminations. And while attempting to find out these nexus the common people, particularly women should be involved rather than merely depending upon the professionals. It is only through problem-posing education system, where oppressed becomes the main participants and initiates and

¹³Freire Paulo, op.cit, .p-45.

¹⁴ibid p- 44.

contributes in transformation of the society, the conscientization of society in general and women folk in particular can be achieved.

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