

Violence against Women

Dr. Shivali Agarwal
Assistant Professor
Political Science

Ismail National Girls (P.G.) College, Meerut

Opening the door on the subject of violence against the world's females is like standing at the threshold of an immense dark chamber with collective anguish, but with the sounds of protest throttled back to a murmur. Where there should be outrage aimed at an intolerable status quo there is denial and the largely passive male violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon. Although not every woman has experienced it and many expect not to, fear of violence is an important factor in the lives of most woman. It determines what they do when they do it, where they do it, and with whom. Fear of violence is a cause of women's lack of Participation in activities beyond the home as well as inside it. Within the home, women and girls may be subjected to physical and sexual abuse as punishment or as culturally justified assaults.

These acts shape their attitude to life and their expectations of themselves. The insecurity outside the household is today the greatest obstacle in the path of women. Conscious that compared to the atrocities outside the house, atrocities within the house are endurable, women not only continued to accept their inferiority in the house and society, but even called it sweet. In recent years, there has been an alarming rise in atrocities against women in India. Every 26 minutes a woman is molested, Every 34 minutes a rape takes place, Every 42 minutes a sexual harassment incident occurs, Every 43 minutes a woman is kidnapped and every 93 minutes a woman is burnt to death over dowry. One quarter of the reported rapes involve girls under the age of 16 but the vast majority is never reported. Although the penalty is severe, convictions are rare.

These are the facts about India and the Status of Indian Women. India reports a crime every 17 seconds according to the National Crime Records Bureau's unique 'Crime Clock'. According to 'Crime Clock 2005: which tracked criminal activities over the last year, the country

reported one molestation every 15 minutes, one crime against women every 3 minutes, one dowry death every 77 minutes, one rape every 29 minutes, one murder every 16 minutes, one sexual harassment case every 53 minutes.⁽¹⁾ Among the crimes listed by the crime Bureau, rape, molestation, sexual harassment, murder and dowry deaths were reported more frequently than dacoit, arson or counterfeit⁽²⁾. These data hoarse that the crimes against women, are growing rapidly but no civic society with any rules and Regulation is not doing anything to prevent it.

Media in a democratic polity is supposed to act as a pedagogue of freedom and is telling critique of all illegitimate practices and formation of power. In the light of these statements we are trying to find out the question related to the role of media regarding the violence against women or in protection of the women's rights.

This paper raises some questions as why women are victimized by the Media obscenity. Why media could not fulfill its own duty to make civil society especially to women's related issues? Is there any role of media in enhancing the violence against women? Should some moral bindings call upon to media to prevent violence towards the women? What should be the role of media in depiction of the women and her related issues.?

To find out the answers of these questions, the role and activities of TV, print media as Leading News papers have been considered. I went through the past three month newspapers to come to the conclusion.

Role of Media in India:

Media has been the reflector of dominant values and work as an active agency, among reinforcing and strengthening dominant value structure. A platform where various interests can be brought together exists in the form of media in today's democratic society while the role of media in early liberal thought was defined mainly in terms of a watch dog, the expectations from this medium widened with development of mass society.

Generally speaking mass media does not mean the media of the masses. It is only the media which reports to the masses the trivialities fads, problems and foibles of the elite ⁽³⁾. Impact of Mass media on women is only a matter of conjecture and infact it is really distressing. For unlike other marginalized groups women are always pitted simultaneously against many powerful agencies like the state, society, caste and religion all of which represent patriarchy in an institutionalized form. Naturally, therefore advancing the cause of women means a comprehensive interrogation of the existing power relations. Media is a "power resource" in terms of exerting influence in society, they are played out, they are 'source' of varied definitions

of social reality, changing culture and values and most important they are a source of the “ public meaning system” media is the carrier of public opinion and plays a crucial role in giving voice to the people.

All the content of the media are important to our national life not just what frankly and directly relate to public affairs. To some extent, it sounds true that the T.V reflects the reality; somehow, it does not stop at the depiction of reality but tries to step forward. It constantly evaluates the reality and point out the ideal picture of the world (⁴). On the other hand the groups of people controlling any media constantly try to influence the reality by presenting their own ideal situations. There are enough evidences and researches to suggest that any medium is a powerful medium which can have positive as well as negative effects.

Media and Women

As we have mentioned earlier in this paper that the contents of media are reflective of the values of the society (we can say the pressure of media is becoming essential for justice against the committed crime), which are further nurtured and sustained through the media. The treatment meted to women and girls are mirrors of the present value of a particular society.

Here first of all, we have to take a glimpse of the characteristics of Indian media because we are concerned with it, To study about its role in the matter of crime against women. In India, Print Media was the first one to establish itself in the country. After than electronic media evolved as an other medium. Needless to say, the main impetus for the establishment of electronic media in the public sector in India,⁵ was the possibility it held as and instrument of social change and modernisations. It had been assumed that TV could foster a major attitudinal change in the people, But gradually Print Media as well as electronic media has proved a showcase for the dominant class of society. It usually mouths official versions of events uncritically and hardly presents and exacting critique of the deviations in the use of state power by the privileged social groups or patriarchy.

Media without women does not exist because in general, films, advertisements, songs, TV signboards and drama they portray women as a lustful thing. Women are portrayed as self sacrificing persons with no self respect or as jealous cats. Most of the films and TV show, women as a weaker sex, second class roles and most of the time, females are shown as sex objects. In the battle for equal status and fair treatment of women, important role is generally attributed to the mass media and in particular to television because it has become a significant part of life, in a developing country like ours. In different countries, After searching the role of

women depicted be the media that the image of women as it is shown in the films and television is either of a housewife, a mother or as a sexual object. Women are shown as dependent foolishly inclusive deceitful incompetent and so on.

The situation of women working within television or films reflect the fact that the world of work is male dominated. It has been estimated that there are approximately twenty eight percent of women in broadcasting in India⁽⁶⁾The Serials which were shown on the TV from the early 80's noted for their homogenous construction of womanhood and gender stereotyping. Gender was often viewed as an overarching category which by itself defined the interest tastes and value premises of women discounting cross-cutting class, caste, religion and regional variations existing among them. This always gave the women characters depicted in the serials, a unity of purpose and solidarity which are actually conspicuous by their absence in real life situation.

In print media also portrayal of women deals with the treatment of women in pictorial textual and linguistic content of various newspaper section. The presentation of concise and accurate picture of how the media portrays women around the world poses enormous problems of compression and synthesis. Both as characters in fictional media material and as newsmakers in the press and broadcasting, women are numerically under represented, an absence which underline their marginal and inferior status in many spheres of social, economic and cultural life. Prevalent news values define most women's problem, as unworthy, admitting women to coverage primarily as the wives, mothers or daughters or men in the news, in their own right, they make the headlines usually only as fashionable or entertainment figures. Mass media advertising directed at women as consumers is condescending in tone and manipulative.

Women constitute 52% of the world's population yet make up only 21% of people featured in the news. women are most under represented in radio where they are only 17% of news subjects compared with 22% on television and 21% in newspaper⁽⁷⁾. The Global Media Monitoring project 2005 shows that the marginalization of women in news media is still very much a reality. The release of the report in London on 15 February 2006 will be followed by three weeks of Global Action on Gender and media.

Some findings are being quoted here which are showing the women in news have lower share than men in the normal situation, then what about the place of news related with the violence against women or victimized women in the media. Now have a look on the data “ Women's views and voices are marginalized in news media. Men's voices dominate in hard news. Men are the majority of news subjects in all story topics. Even when women do feature in

the news they are more likely to be found in 'hard' news stories about politics and Government (14%) and the economy (20%). Women are unlikely to be the central focus of a story. Only 10% of news stories world wide have women as a central focus" (8). News stories are more likely to reinforce than challenge gender stereotypes. Only 3% of stories challenge stereotypes compared with 6% of stories that reinforce gender stereotypes. The stories that do highlight gender equality or inequality make up only 4% of news stories. The idea that emerges is that news media owners and senior journalists are mostly men and they decide what news about women should come out, because women journalists emphasized on the women related issues.

Media's role in violence against women

The violence against women was taken into account by national and international documents only since 1993, when the United National approved a declaration calling for the elimination of the violence against women in all its forms, from violence within marriage, sexual harassment in the work place to female genital mutilation and forced prostitution, But violence against women is become a global phenomenon. Beginning with the Globalization, communication revolution has been playing a major role in day to day life. Media itself a great mean to get information about the world wide events, In India media has been working effectively but not in the women's issues. Every Political scam gets prime time on the media screen but women's related issue like dowry, wife beating , domestic violence do not come in front with decent manner. the sensitivity of issues has been changed into sensation. The practice of dowry, domestic violence, female foeticide and feminization of property, these issues have been raised time and again but unfortunately not in a sustained manner. Print media also back when the women's related issue raised, a few hard hitting articles and editorials are written and the issue dies a natural death. Some feminist write in detail in the magazines and newspapers but they get only one editorial page space in a month or in a year. From 2 Oct 2006 to Nov 2006 Leading English Newspapers like Times of India, Indian Express and The Hindu and the Leading Hindi Newspaper Danik Jagran from north Indian region show violence against women events on their Least important page. Only one or two case showed with brief coverage as " A girl molested by a JNU student in JNU campus ⁽⁹⁾. A news about Acid burnt girl, she was burnt by her lover, but why she was victimized? No reason was there, media thought it was not necessary to bring the cause and reason in front of the people⁽¹⁰⁾.

These are the example of such news which are related with the crime against women. It couldn't get a prime place on the front page of any Newspaper but some cases like Priyadarshini

Mattoo case in which the convicted has got Capital punishment ,gets front page of every news paper. The reason behind it the involvement of some V.V.I. Persons in these type of cases. So the role of media in projecting the plight of women and especially the coverage of violence on women in India, the stuff that headlines are made of unless it is something sensational when violence of this magnitude and intensity terrorizes half of the world's population. It would be reasonable to expect that it would be reasonable to expect that would be front page news and the subject of serious editorial comment, yet it rarely is, except when the victim happens to be one of the beautiful people or established celebrity⁽¹¹⁾.

It is small comfort that the Indian news media are not unique in the manner in which they tend to cover or not cover-gender violence. For example, as international media consultant Margaret Gallagher reports in her Book," Gender Setting", a two year study of 30 newspapers in Sri Lanka by the women and Media collectives women's Rights watch came to disturbing conclusions, which apply just as well to the situation in India. The survey revealed that " the press rarely initiated any substantive debate about the causes or consequences of violence against women, and there was little comment on laws, law enforcement policy ⁽¹²⁾. Media is not gender sensitive as well as the television media, this picture is not also satisfactory. Day after day the various channels churn out serials with doses of violence against women. while some portray subtle cases of abuse and violence, Some others are alarmingly loud.

The approach of TV is not playing its role fairly in the concern of women portrayal . As we can take some examples of its serial which have large viewer ship. The women character of these serials are depicted as mischievous women sent to the mental asylum when they assert herself. So the TV a popular media has a unanimous thinking with its serial directors than how could it be justified with the depiction. It is not raising its voice against criminal of women. Such depictions prove to be highly dangerous.

To see the other face of the coin some cases should be analysed here which got a grand coverage be the media like Nisha Sharma case, Priya Darshini Mattoo case, Jessica Lal murder case, depiction of the agony of the missing child's mother case but as we have mentioned earlier in this paper the crime clock roars that there is a crime against women in every 3 minutes then why this crime is not brought ahead as by the print media or electronic media, this is a firing question which need to be answered. The role of media is crucial to the issue of violence against women, both in terms of how media cover (and often distort) the issue, and how media may be used as a tool to help activists and governments raise awareness an implement programs on this

issue, according to Rina Jimenez David, a longtime journalist and women's rights activist from the Philippines.¹³

She said on the FIRE webcasts "many women have said that the media coverage (of rape or other violence) was like a second assault all over again, because of their insensitivity in using pictures, publishing names, and other violations of privacy, And the way they portray violence reinforces stereotypes, when they focus on the appearance of the victims, especially if they are young, attractive, or are questioning the way they were dressed".¹⁴

Gender violence in the media is all, pervasive in most parts of the country. Popular entertainment in India, particularly films, portray violence against both women and men in a graphic manner. Violence against women in films takes the shape of rapes, spousal violence and sometimes public humiliation of fallen women- these portrayals are not without problems. In India where censorship is pervasive one is struck by the level of violence in films particularly Bollywood and Tollywood.

Conclusion

There has, no doubt, been some improvement in the India news Media's coverage of women violence, especially in terms of analysis and comment- by journalists as well as academics, activists and other professionals contributing to the media. However, this positive development is barely reflected in regular reportage, which is extremely important if only because that is how yesterday's history comes to be recorded. The WHO includes the media among the community-based efforts to prevent violence: activities meant "to raise public awareness of and debate about the issues, stimulate community action, address the social and material causes of violence and make provision for the care and support of victims".¹⁵

In recent years there have been many attempts across the globe to engage the media in a serious, sustained way to tackle the worldwide plague of violence against women. The serious efforts are made by the responsible community like US National Advisory Council on violence; they asserted "The responsible voice of the mass media is critical to communicating that violent behavior is unacceptable. Violence against women, in any of its forms, should never be condoned or romanticized under any circumstances. Although reducing violence in the media is a central goal, message that promote violence prevention are equally important."

The victim women should not be brought into limelight because she is felt ashamed by the society after coming into front. In murder cases photographers and news footage of women victims should not be displayed, media used to make it sensational without showing the reason behind it or culprits stand back e.g. Highlighting news stories on female feticide and infanticide

where the mothers play inactive role in the deaths of their female child, without considering the socio-economic realities of the society. Where these events took place Media is playing its role in irresponsible manner. Of course, there were some issues in which media has played a crucial role to bring the culprit in front of the people but the presentation of violence against women with obscene seen should be banned.

Considering the various news reports on violence against women in the newspapers, it is obvious that violence against women is not an attractive topic for the media. Not only that there is not positive and sensitive coverage of issues in the media but with the passing time we also have noticed that electronic media is evolving itself into sensitive media because gradually it is bringing the women's issues with wide coverage and in responsible manner especially in some cases we have gone through.

Professional recommendations suggested that media organizations should provide guiding principles on non-discrimination, non-discrimination, non sexist language and should avoid gender biased emotions.

References

1. *The Times of India*, New Delhi, Saturday, Sept 2, 2006.
2. *Ibid*
3. Narayanan, V.N., 1997 'I Muse therefore I am', New Delhi, Sterling punwani, and Jyoti, 1988, *Portrayal of women on television*, in Rehna Ghadlially ed.
4. Mehra, M, *Broad casting and the people*, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1985.,
5. *Doordarshan*, sept 15, 1959
6. Mathu .dr. Anuradha and pandya. Dr. Rameshwari, ed. *Facets to women's development*., Kalpaz publication, 2006, p.65
7. *This is the major findings of a Global study on gender issues in news media conducted by the world Association for Christian communication (WACC) in 2005.*
8. *Ibid*
9. *Times of India*, 31 oct 2006, p.6.
10. *Danik jagran*, 2 Nov. 2006, p.5
11. *www.indiatogether* – "when violence is not news", Ammu Joseph
12. *Ibid*
13. Rina, who was interviewed by Maria Suarez on FIRE's first Internet Broadcast at the Beijing +5 Women's conference in New York writes a column called "At Large" for the Philippine Daily Inquirer, and is an activist and national chair of a women's political party called "Philipinas Advance". See www.fire.org.
14. *Ibid*.
15. *WHO's World Report on Violence and Health 2002.*