



## WOMEN & MASS MEDIA

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*“You can tell the condition of a nation  
by looking at the status of its women”*

*-Late Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru*

### INTRODUCTION

Communication is extremely important for women's development and mass media play significant role. Media has an important role to play-to create awakening in women to achieve their potential as the prime movers of change in society. In today's world, print and electronic media play a vital role in effectively conveying message that needs to be conveyed. Media which wields immense power in a democracy-a power which is only expanding and not diminishing, needs carrying out a focused attention about women related issues and the portrayal of women. In every family and society, there is an ethical and spiritual space, which has been traditionally dominated by women. The principal character in Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion bemoans, "why can't woman be like man!'. The media can play a salutary and a liberating role to give to the women the distinctive and the exclusive space, which must belong to them to enable them to generate the ethical and moralizing impulses for the entire society(Ray:2008).

But if we see the rural India, that our social system is patriarchal. The common principle in a patriarchal society is that men are better than women physically and intellectually. And so women are thought to be subordinate to men. In this case, mass media as a powerful agency of the society daily presents the picture of women's subordination.

## **WOMEN'S ROLE IN FILMS:**

As film is the popular medium of entertainment in our country, women are used only for gain. In films women are represented in such a manner as if they are capital. Women are weak, dependent on men, sympathetic, kind, patient, virgin and they have no self-identity – these actualities are represented through the heroines of films. And men-women relationship is represented through all these in such a manner that it seems women is subordinate to men. In films, women's role is to dance and sing around the heroes, to cry helplessly, to raped and to pray for help to other men or the heroes.

## **WOMEN'S ROLE IN T.V.:**

In various T.V. programmes of India, the presence and representation of women reflect the attitude of the society towards women. T.V. being a family media, women are here more looked upon as symbol of beauty than symbol of sexuality. The role of women in T.V. is traditional. Here women take part in the programmes relating to cooking. In theatre, women's role is as homemaker or as beloved; here women are engaged either in make up or in child rearing. Though women's participation has increased in such information related programmes as talk show and magazine programmes, women rarely take the role of maker of these programmes. Many women are seen in T.V. news, but most of them are news reader or news presenter. Women's presence is not much in reporting. According to Lowe, "The media frequently portray women in one of three roles. The first is as a wife, a mother or a housekeeper for men; the second is as a sex object; and the third is as someone trying to appear beautiful for the benefit of men. Other sex role stereotypes were identified by the Women's Media Action Group(WMAG) through an examination of the media between 1981 and 1983. They found women were portrayed at home, either in the kitchen, in bed, or with the children; if they were at work it was a servicing job; they possessed perfect feminine qualities including caring, nurturing, sensitive, passive and house proud; displayed incompetence at manual or technical jobs; and were often depicted as the dream ideal women (Lowe:2007).

## **WOMEN'S ROLE IN NEWSPAPER:**

Those who are associated with the collection, formation and presentation of report are called reporters. Journalism is always recognized as a risky profession. As men are of the opinion that only they have the efficiency to combat all the risk, naturally women's presence is very rare in journalism. Newspaper has different sections, such as editorial, feature, news desk, reporting, photographer, editing etc. Women take more or less responsibilities in this

department. But their participation is less in the reporting department which is, no doubt, the main attraction of the newspaper.

### **WOMEN IN ADVERTISEMENT:**

A woman's body is integral in the formation of their identity. Bodily shape and size, clothes and accessories, make-up and care of the skin and hair are all codes of appearance based on the body that actually shapes and moulds a woman's identity and determines what it means to be 'famine'(Lowe:2007). In T.V. and other advertisements women are presented as only materials, not human beings. As a result of the patriarchal mentality, women are seen always busy with cosmetics to get fair complexion. If they are not of fair complexion, they face difficulties to get married. Women participate more in such advertisements which humiliate their honor. Besides, in the advertisements of male cosmetics, women are presented unexpectedly. In most of the advertisements women are presented as having the so called motherly and feminine nature of housewives, neglecting their progressive role in the society. In advertisements women are mostly found as housewife, mother, cosmetics loving, quarrelsome, shy, and dependent on male, symbol of beauty, server of family and so on.

### **WOMEN'S ROLE IN STORY-NOVEL:**

In stories and novels, women are presented as neglected, distressful and helpless. In most of the writings, women are presented as ideal mother, beloved and housewives. Consequently, the creative potentiality and the contribution of women in various fields are often neglected in most of the cases. As for example, we may say the contribution of women in economics and politics does not get place in most writings.

Actually, in films and other mediums, women are presented in a perverted and vulgar way. Women are presented as materials, sexual symbols or sex materials. In these cases, neglecting the talent, efficiency etc., women have been presented as dependent human beings without self-honor. Mass media does not show that women have their own lives, their own creativity and variety. In mass media women are generally presented in five ways. These are:

- i. Ideal Women: Like good mother, good housewife.
- ii. Beautiful Women: These women are born to get love and praise of males. Only beauty is considered to be their merit.
- iii. Virgin Women: These women will save them from other males view and touch.
- iv. Prostitutes: From advertisements to pornography, these women are always used. They are the main attraction of the mass media in Bangladesh.

- v. NGO Women: They are very patient amidst poverty. They try to get good fortune by rearing up ducks and hens.

### **RECOMMENDATION FOR POSITIVE ROLE OF WOMEN IN MEDIA:**

- Proper and strict laws are to be formed and applied forbidding the vulgar and perverted representation of women in various media including films.
- Instead of presenting only the negative, traditional and disheartening role of women, positive roles are to be equally shown in women related discussion and programmes in media. In this regard women's success, boldness, efficiency etc. such positive qualities are to be highlighted in front of the people.
- For the progress of women, various women organizations have to organize women related research works so that scientific information can be collected regarding women's participation in media, their problems and positions etc. As a result of this, problems are to be solved and progressive measures are to be adopted.
- Information and Culture Department can make short films to show the positive roles of women and to make both women and men free from superstitious. Such short films can be shown to the interior areas of the country.
- Women organizations have to take active work process to encourage women to prevent the illogical and vulgar use of women in advertisements and mass media.
- Women organizations can form pressure creating groups to oppose any matter which is dishonorable to women. They will create pressure on the government, concerned authority or the person.
- Authorities have to take strong steps to prevent such incidents and to punish them who are responsible for the vulgar presentation of women in media.
- Steps to be taken so that more women can take the role of controlling positions in mass media.
- Necessary measures are to be taken so that women get inspiration to participate in media works and they also enjoy safety in their professional work. Women organizations can create pressure in this regard.
- Equal point of view is to be applied regarding the participation of women in physical exercises and sports. Men-Women discrimination in this regard is to be avoided by the media or T.V. at any cost.

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