

## **ROLE OF MEDIA IN WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA**

**Dr. Pramila Jadhav**

Head

Dept. of Sociology

Balbhim Arts, Science & Commerce

College,

Beed. (M.S.) India

**Madhuri Chandrasen Chandanshiv**

Research scholar

Dept. of Sociology

Balbhim Arts, Science & Commerce

College,

Beed. (M.S.) India

### **Introduction:**

The world is flooded by the media. Women nowadays have wide choices, many local, national and even international radio programmes, several local television channels, hundreds of video films, many different newspapers, magazines, and even games and world-wide information and entertainment on the internet. We need to accept the media, especially television, are a powerful Empowerment force in women's lives.

**"There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is possible for a bird to fly on one wing."**

**- Swami Vivekananda.**

The most significant and longest social movement continuing is movement for emancipation of women. Though the primary goal for women empowerment is to improve the quality of life of women but it has also deep ramifications in social, economic and political scenario of body polity. The media through its reach to people at large has been instrumental though not to the extent desired in supporting the movement for women emancipation by focusing neglect and marginalization of the position of the women in society.

It would be a sad commentary on the subordinate role of women in India when woman is ideally viewed as *Shakti* (Power), the origin of power itself but in reality found as helpless, hapless women without any identity except that of a wife, or the mother who has very little voice in decision making and has very little by way of her own basic choice. Although discrimination against and exploitation of women are global phenomena, their consequences are more tragic in the some parts of the globe particularly in under developed countries where, ignorance, deprivation of the basic necessities of life, and the ever-growing pressure of transition from tradition to modernity-all combine to aggravate the inequalities that women suffer to a point at which their existence is reduced to a continuous battle for survival. Improving the status of women is regarded as the key to narrowing the gender gap and achieving a better quality of life.

To discuss women empowerment it is necessary to deal with the present situation of women in India. I would like to briefly discuss certain key aspects related to the women which media should adequately cover and facilitate the process of empowerment of women.

- **Media's Role in Empowerment of women in India.**

Communication is extremely important for women's development and mass media play significant role. It is to be noted that growth of women's education and their entry into employment have contributed to the growth of media. In all spheres of life whether for controlling population growth, spread of literacy or improving quality of life for vast masses, women have crucial role to play. However, women can be expected to play this role when they become conscious of their strength and are not deliberately marginalized by male domination. In this context, 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.

- **Portrayal of women by the Media**

By and large the media scene in India is that media does not address serious issues about exploitation and in equal treatment to women in different spheres but is keen in reporting sex related incidents by way of sensationalizing news of atrocities on women. Thus instead of highlighting the exploitation of woman they end up becoming one of the reasons

in increase of violence as their coverage more often than not tend to glorify the crime against women. It is true that media has brought to light, as never before, certain misdemeanors against women but in a very subtle manner it also perpetuated the stereotyped image of woman as a householder and an inconsequential entity in the traditional value system. Generally, women's problems never figure on the front page of a newspaper unless it is a gruesome murder or a case of rape. Newspapers even on women's page does not usually address relevant issues for women empowerment but reporting in concerned with beauty tips recipes, fashion syndrome etc.

This portrayal of women in media has led the National Commission for women to recommend amendment in the Indecent Representation of women (Prohibition act), 1986. The NCW wants to include new technologies like MMS and the electronic media and some which were left outside the ambit of the Act like posters and TV Serials which perpetuate stereotypes of women. Explaining the reason for including soaps in proposed amendment in the Act, National Commission for women has Stated that "Women are either being portrayed as sita (Ramayana) or as Kaikayee (Ramayana) and there Seems to be nothing in between the two extreme characters being shown in soaps. Divorces, adultery are highlighted frequently in Soaps where characters break the law without repercussion."

Negative images or just portraying reality is not enough. In fact, it can often be harmful. It has been observed that sheer duplication of the dark side of life can often lead to

apathy and passivity. This can be avoided by depicting the positive images or success stories of women in whatever sphere they happen.

Effective informative communication is one of the most important channels for the growth and development of women in the informal or unorganized Sector, as without information regarding services and benefits available through legislation, government schemes, banks and voluntary organizations, women can hardly take advantage of them. Thus the media should take into consideration the following points.

- i)** The media must project the working women in the unorganized sector as worker and not merely as performing the duties of wife / daughter. The being major earners, they must be projected as producers and not merely consumers.
- ii)** The media should make deliberate attempts to not only project the problems of women in poverty, but should monitor in such a way that conflicting role models are not depicted, nor derogatory references to their work are made.
- iii)** To improve content and Coverage, Coordinated efforts for increased interaction between NGO's women's social action group, research organizations, institutes of mass Communication, and the media personnel should be developed.

Everywhere the media has the potential to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women. They can create self-regulatory mechanisms that can help to eliminate misleading and improper gender based programming.

- **Conclusion:**

The subject women and media is quite relevant in the present day context. Form this platform the discussion on the subject is being initiated. The debate on this issue is being proposed to be discussed at the state level and the press council is keen that seminars and workshops on this subject are organized at different states and at different levels. I sincerely hope that this initiative will be fruitful. Let this beginning be auspicious.

**References:**

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