

## **Portrayal of Women in Indian Mass Media: An Investigation**

**Himashree Patowary**

Research scholar, PhD

Assam University

Silchar

### **Abstract**

*Media's role towards women is becoming the growing concern of the feminist writers, basically regarding participation, performance and portrayal of women. Because different circumstances relating to the media's role towards portraying the fair sex have opened a new angle by leaps and bounds to think precisely about it. There are various criticisms raised by the feminists. According to the different feminists writers such as Simon de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone, Kate Millet, Gallagher, Bretty Friedman, media are reinforcing stereotype images of women as they are inferior, subordinate and submissive and only are the house wives devoid of all qualities of decision making. India also there are various feminist writers such as Ritu Menon, Kamala vasin, Kiran Prasad who have criticised the role of print and visual media towards women and portraying them. They focus on the point that as Indian society is male dominated and this dominance can be seen everywhere and unfortunately media is not the exeption to that.*

### **1. Introduction**

Women's participation, performance and portrayal in media are the three important dimensions of study for the social science researchers of modern time, especially for the feminists. Because for the empowerment and development of the women section, it is very important to give them proper environment where they can raise their voices against the inequalities and the gender-gap they are experiencing in our male dominated or patriarchal societies. Improving the status of women, in every aspect, is regarded as the only way to eradicate this gender gap and achieving a better quality of life for the women. For this, communication can be regarded as vital way and mass media can play a significant role in shaping social values, attitudes, norms, perception and behaviour. It has been widely recognised that media can play substantial role in promoting and disseminating information among the masses and are regarded as the key players in the social, political and economic development of women. Media can focus all the problems faced by women, these can give a space for women to talk about their rights or freedoms and most importantly media can provide a democratic environment where women can participate, represent their womanhood and in which they will be portrayed positively. A positive portray of women in media is necessary to maintain the real dignity and status of women which will minimise the gap and inequalities between men and women. But if media also become male dominated or play the role as a mere agent to forward this tradition then the whole situation will be against the women where their development and empowerment will not be possible.

The term media is widely used as a short hand for 'Mass Media'. The word media is the plural form of medium. Conceptually, the media are those technological agencies which are engaged in the creation, selection, processing and distribution of messages among the people. As a logical connotation, the mass media deal with the day to day problems of the nation and especially of the general people. It contributes towards the emergence of mass society and mass culture.

Mass Media in India, like every modern and advanced country, comprises of the Print media and Electronic media which are composed of the Radio, the Television, the Film, the Press, Publication and Advertising. Among these media, the television, films, Advertisements, photography, animation, paintings etc. are regarded as the visual media.

### Statement of the Problem

The mass media have long been welcomed as the watch dog of society and this tradition bestows upon them the social responsibility to mirror and guide the process of social change. But in contemporary India, mass media under various pressures have become the commercial channels only and failed to reflect the social problems or aspirations of the entire population, especially the problems faced by women in particular. So, the portrayal of women in Indian media, be it films, television programmes, visual advertisements or newspaper and magazines is becoming an area of great concern to the people having interest in social research and studies. There is an on-going trend in today's media, both electronic and print, to portray women as commodity, sex objects and sometimes as victims. It is known to everybody that Indian society is a patriarchal society; patriarchy is established in everywhere and every aspects of life, and unfortunately media is not exception to that. Media as the modern corporate organisations are still dominated by the male and in all the higher posts men are employed and they by controlling the whole system of media try to depict the picture of women as weak and inferior in front of the whole world.

### Review of Related Literature

Jha, Rama, (1992). *Women and the Indian Print media*, New Delhi, Northern Book centre

In this book the writer Rama Jha describes about the performance and portrayal of women in media. Firstly, she talks about the women journalists who deal with the women's problems, and also mentions that there are some male journalists who turn the problems viewed by the female journalists in to jokes. The male journalists are dominating the whole field of media in such a way that the female journalists can not be concerned about the real problems of women and so their issues do not get proper limelight to be focussed of. The writer also mentions some problems faced by Indian women such as rape, burning of women by their in-laws, beating by husbands, witch burning, illiteracy and portrayal of women in print media. But those problems never got proper importance because of the negative role played by the male journalists. So, the portrayal of women sometime will not positive. According to Jha, to portray women properly importance should be given on to publish the realistic problems faced by them, without which some wrong pictures of women will be portrayed.

So, the writer urges to the whole Indian women to become concerned about their main problems relating to society, economy, culture and politics otherwise their male counterpart will portray wrong pictures of women in front of the whole world.

Sharma K., Dr.Sanjeev, (2005), "Depiction of women in Indian media-A case of introspection for media planners" *Samaj bigyan shodh Patrica*, Amroha, Vol.1, no.1 April-Sept. pp.32-36,

In this article Dr.Sanjeev Kumar Sharma criticises the ways how Indian media both print and electronic are portraying women in the era of globalisation. The issues relating to women's are not discussed in media; rather women are used as a commodity relating to women's are not discussed in media; rather women are used as a commodity and sex object. Newspapers give no place to rape, crime, politics, scandals, serious debates and discussions on issues related to women. Most of the newspapers publish only the gossips about the TV serials or film actresses.

The writer also states that magazines as well as newspapers have sections for females where the reared if left only with the option of reading some personal gynaecological problems of married women or personal love hick-ups of young girls.

In Television also there are various serials where women are shown involved in conspiracy, premarital, extra-marital affairs, wearing costly, heavy golden and diamond jewellery, little care about anything else than the individual matters, and at all not even a word about the outside world. He also mentions about the advertisements where women are used to show their body. In most of the advertisements even a word about the outside world. In most of the advertisements in India be it newspapers or television or magazines, the main ingredient is women and these depict the picture of women as vulgar and cheap.

Roy, S.S., (2012) "Portrayal of women in Indian Media-In the era of neo-liberal economy", *Global Media journal*, June, Vol.3, No.1.

In this article the writer S.S.Roy states that today globalisation has left deep impact upon the Indian nation. With the passing of time with globalisation there occurred profound changes in economic, cultural, social and political arena. In economic system public sector has been ignored and private sector has been glorified. Open market system and privatisation have become the mantras behind the development of a particular country like India. The writer focuses that the state relegates vast power on the hand of the private players. Of this, competition is going to be a usual thing among the producers of different markets. Every one is trying to sale their products as soon as possible. So, they are busy with various manipulating activities to sale their products. That's why they are taking the help of advertisements.

According to the writer the companies busy with competition are using the faces and bodies of beautiful women to popularise their products. These producers always producing lots of products everyday and there is competition everywhere to become the best seller. For this they are using women in a cheap manner whether necessary or not. For example, they are using women in the advertisements of cigarette, man, s underwear, man's shaving cream etc. They are portraying women wrongly for their own purpose.

Schaffer, Sharada J., (2006) *Privileging the Privileged-Gender in Indian Advertising*, Promila & co. New Delhi.

In this book, the writer attacks not only the stereotyping but also the unethical and offensive representation of women in advertisement that work to their detriment and perpetuates an undesirable gender hierarchy.

The author places her detailed analysis of individual ads--- a whopping 2,000--- against the backdrop of Indian societal, cultural and religious norms that reinforce patriarchy and the inherent violence in Indian society against women, be it through bride burning, rape, or a number of other ways.

The author has reviewed ads over a 12-year period from 1994 to 2005, but she admits that the majority of the ads are from the 1990s, and her critical analysis raises some crucial questions that have troubled not only women but also social scientists cutting across gender. Unsparing in her observations, the author asks: "Does a woman need to be always tall and slim, young and light-skinned with silken skin and mop of gloriously shining hair?"

In the concluding chapter, the author presents a new code of ethics, challenging advertisers to re-examine their notions of gender in order to uphold women's inviolable right to be treated with respect and dignity.

Sudarsanam, Jawhari, (2005), *Representation of Women in Media: The Legal Debate* in Kiran Prasad (ed.) Women and media-Challenging feminist discourse, The women's Press, New Delhi.

In the article the writer discusses about the important points raised at the Being Conference (1995) regarding the role of mass media to curb the evil of depicting women in a derogatory manner. According to him women should be empowered by enhancing their skills, knowledge and access to information technology. This ensures to curb the negative portrayal of women internationally and to challenge instances of abuse of power in an increasingly important industry, the mass media.

The Beijing Platform of Action further suggests that the self regulatory mechanisms for the media need to be created and strengthened and approaches developed to eliminate gender-biased programming. There is a need to develop, by the media and advertising organizations, professional guidelines and codes of conduct and other forms of self regulation to promote the presentation of non-stereotyped images of women. Therefore, there is a need to establish, consistent with freedom of expression, professional guidelines and codes of conduct that address violent, degrading or pornographic materials concerning women in the media, including advertising. The national governments and the international organisations have to play a role here. They should encourage the media to refrain from presenting women as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and present them as creative human beings.

HariPriya, M. (2005). *Women in Advertisement on Television* in Kiran Prasad (ed.) Women and media-challenging feminist discourse, The women's press, New Delhi.

Here the writer states that liberalisation and privatisation have definitely invaded the today's consumer market in India. Our urban India is slowly transforming into a western society. The concept of global village and information revolution has led the markets to target the world with one message. The writer also says that in this process, western culture is being imbibed into our veins. The advertisers have not succeeded in the just and true portrayal of women. There is surely a renaissance going on for the Indian women. But this renaissance is not being captured correctly by the advertisers. There is a need to voice out for a change in advertising content.

Jha, Jyotsna & Nigam Divya (2007), *Women in Advertising: Changing Perception* by NigamICFAI Uni press

In the book the writers have analysed the women's presentation in media in present perspective. Women have been exploited by the advertisers for decades. They have frequently been stereotyped in the traditional roles of home maker, or have been projected as 'visual prop' to enhance the appeal of an advertisement. However, since the early 2000s, the frequency and the number of such demeaning and exploitative advertisements in the print and the electronic media have reduced.

Das, Mallika (2000). 'Men and Women in Indian Magazines Advertising' *'Sex Roles'*, Vol.43, Mt.SaintVincent Uni, Springer US pp.699-717.

Mallika Das in her study examined the portrayal of women and men in Indian magazines ads. Over 1,100 magazine ads from a wide range of magazines in 1987, 1990 and 1994 were examined. Results indicate that although the portrayals of women and men in Indian magazine ads have changed the period, they are still portrayed in stereotypical ways.

Punwani, J. (1988). *Portrayal of women in Television*, published in an edited book 'Women in Indian society: A Reader' by R.Gadhially, pp.225-232, New Delhi, Sage Pb.

In this book the writer has accused the TV programmes being portraying women in derogatory manner, which has minimise the respect and dignity of women. He found that even though women were present in most of the TV programmes in significant numbers, their portrayals did not reflect the complexities of Indian women.

Pandey, M. (1991). *The Subject is Women*, New Delhi, Sanchar Publishing House.

Here the writer writes that since the advertising agencies in India are male dominated, the tendency to portray women in traditional roles, or in superhuman roles where they manage the home and the job, has been inherent in the content of Indian advertising.

Shelat, M. (1994). 'Gender portrayals in Indian advertising', Seminar paper presented to the Gender and communication Section, International Association for Mass Communication Research Seoul, Korea.

In this seminar paper the writer describes how after the gain of independence in 1947, advertising in India was restricted mainly to the print media since television reached the country only in the late 1960s. According to her study, the print advertisements of the 1950s and 1960s portrayed men as breadwinners of the family, decision makers and professionals while women were portrayed as being inordinately concerned with their physical appearance and cooking meals to please their men and families.

Tefft, S. (1987). *India's bill could jail advertisers*. Advertising Age.

In this book the writer S.Tefft states that along with the recent boom in advertising, there has been a growing concern among several Indian women's group that too many advertisers are portraying women as sex objects or as stereotypical happy housewives.

Justice G.N.Ray, (2008) addressing the Press council of India at the inauguration session of National Press Day on Nov, 16, at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi.

Addressing the Press council of India at the inauguration session of National Press Day, Justice G.N.Ray says that the most significant movement will be the movement for the emancipation of women. There should be respect for the women section in all fields; they should be given equal pay for equal work, there should be no gender gap between man and woman. According to him the most important medium through which the problems can be focused is the media. Both the print and electronic media should focus the gender inequalities, violences against women. These should not give importance on focussing women as sex objects or commodities.

Choudhury, Maitrayee (2000). "Feminism in print media" *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*,; sage pb.New Delhi.

In this article M.Choudhury has stated the issue of feminism in the institutional context of the print media. Discussing the modern issue of feminism the writer has opened a new angle to think about the equality, freedoms or liberties for the women. She showed a great concern for the women's movement for the restoration of the feminine needs and necessities in the era of liberal economy.

Prasad, Kiran, (2005). *Women, Media and Society: Recasting Communication Policy*, in the edited book by herself "Women and media-challenging feminist discourse", The women's press.

Kiran Prasad in her article, 'Women, media and society: Recasting communication policy' which is included in an edited book by herself 'Women and media-challenging feminist discourse, writes that without the welfare of the women the development of the society is not possible. Women should be given the democratic space where she can talk about her problems. For this the media can be regarded as the best way through which they can transmit their voices and ideas to the mass. So, media should play a significant role to develop as well as empower the women by focussing their problems and most importantly they should portray women as strong and superior not like the inferior and less respected. Because distance between the media and women not only derives the women of their right to information but keeps them in the dark.

Tomar, Ranu in her seminar paper (2011). "Gender and Media: Status of women journalist in Hindi Print Media in India" presented at University of Work, 19- '22 sept.

In her seminar paper Ranu Tomar attempts to explore the struggle for transformation and bridging gap between social identities of women and men. The relationship between media and women has a certain structure where women are trapped as an object. She also states that the role of women in media decision making is reflected in the poor representation of women issues and concerns.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Aim**

The research is made for making an investigation about the portrayals of women in the Indian print and visual media through feminist perspective.

#### **Objectives**

The objectives of the study are:

1. To analyse the feminist understanding of media.
2. To critically analyse the media's role in constructing the images of women.

#### **Research Design**

In order to fulfil the objectives of the study the researcher will employ the Analytical Method. An analytical method is that where a researcher has to use facts or information which are already available and analyse these to make a critical evaluation of the material. In the present study the available data on Indian print and visual media will be critically analysed.

#### **Research Questions**

The research questions of the present study are:

1. What is the feminist stand on media?
2. How media play role in constructing images of women?

#### **Data Collection**

Data for this study collected from the secondary sources of data. The secondary data includes books, magazines, journals, periodicals and different websites.

#### **Analysis**

During the past decade, advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes and behaviour, especially of children and young adults. Everywhere the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women. More women are involved in careers in the communications sector, but few have attained positions at the decision-making level or serve on governing boards and bodies that influence media policy. The lack of gender sensitivity in the media is evidenced by the failure to eliminate the gender-based stereotyping that can be found in public and private local, national and international media organizations. The continued projection of negative and degrading images of women in media communications -electronic, print, visual and audio - must be changed. Print and electronic media in most countries do not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world. In addition, violent and degrading or pornographic media products are also negatively affecting women and their participation in society. Programming that reinforces women's traditional roles can be equally limiting.

The world- wide trend towards consumerism has created a climate in which advertisements and commercial messages often portray women primarily as consumers and target girls and women of all ages inappropriately. Women should be empowered by enhancing their skills, knowledge and access to information technology. This will strengthen their ability to combat negative portrayals of women internationally and to challenge instances of abuse of the power of an increasingly important industry. Self-regulatory mechanisms for the media need to be created and strengthened and approaches developed to eliminate gender-based programming. Most women, especially in developing countries, are not able to access effectively the expanding electronic information highways and therefore cannot establish networks that will provide them with alternative sources of information. Women therefore need to be involved in decision-making regarding the development of the new technologies in order to participate fully in their growth and impact. In addressing the issue of the mobilization of the media, Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and programmes.

In this regard, some studies have found that social issues related to women (equality of status and opportunity) got less than 9% while sensational stories relating to women which were invariably crime stories got between 52% and 63% of items in newspaper. Besides the print media, electronic media is also depicting women as scrupulous, religiously intolerant, craving only for their family, politically naive, socially inevitable and culturally ultra modern. In recent time, sex and sensation are becoming the primary motivations behind any reportage, where women are used as commodity; some time in advertising some products or some time as sexy babes neglecting the real status of the whole women section.

It is a fact that the Indian society generally considers women as weak and inferior. As a result, a woman undergoes tremendous traumas from birth to death. Many girl children are annihilated even before they see the light of the day, many girls are raped on roads or at homes, many wives are beaten by their husbands and in-laws, many girls have to give up their education to help their parents to earn money. But media are not focussing those problems. They are only busy with to publish the gossips of the actors and actresses, the love stories between them. This negative attitude towards women in real life is very much reflected in the way media represents them as well. Media representations of Indian women reveal that they are less accepted and respected as persons and more looked upon as objects. She has three projected roles--- biological, domestic and decorative. Media are hardly challenging the gender attitudes promoted and perpetuated by the society. Watching a BBC documentary on Indian cinema a British youngster commented, "Indians must be very poor, and they seem to have very little respect for women". He had after all seen a few clippings of films inserted in the documentary. What if he were to watch at length, more of our kitsch movies and worse still sexually suggestive, dehumanising song sequences.

Now a day, as a visual media, advertisements play important role in promoting different products. Everyday we are exposed to a number of advertisements through various media vehicles like newspapers, magazines, radio, television, internet and various outdoor media. But there has been much criticisms against advertisements as these are portraying women as sex objects. Women's physical attraction has been used as a whole, or in parts, to market everything from brassiers, male under garments to automobiles. These ubiquitous images encourage people to think of sex and women as commodity, and these may contribute to violence against women. For example, there is an advertisement of a premium whisky that shows one man is taking first sip of that particular whisky and the lady sitting in front of him appears to be losing some inches of her dress, after every drink the process is going on up three drinks. After three sips of the drink he finds that the breasts of the previously over clad lady have become quick visible and half clad and his own shirt has slipped from his shoulders. And the voice smurs kuchh bhi ho sakta hain (Anything can happen). The depiction of women in this and other advertisements is actually insult to the women in general which are destroying the real status and dignity of women. According to a United Nations Research Report (1975) on Advertising and the Portrayal of Women, advertisements have been held responsible for projecting women in a derogatory light, and as inferior class of beings (National Advertising Review Board, 1975). Shrivastava's research on the Indian media has shown that the dominant negative stereotypes in connection to the portrayal of women are:

1. A woman's place is in the home.
2. The most important and valuable asset of a women is physical beauty.
3. A woman's energies and intellect must be directed toward finding the right man.
4. Women are dependent coy and submissive; they are masochistic in their response to indignities humiliations, and even to physical violence inflicted upon them.

5. The good woman is the traditional house wife long suffering, pious and submissive; the modern woman who asserts herself and her independence is undesirable and can never bring happiness to anybody nor find happiness for herself.
6. Women are women's worst enemies.
7. The working woman is the undesirable exception who must be brought in to the marriage fold and made to conform to traditional social norms.

The 1974 Report of the Committee on the Status of Women (Joshi Committee Report) found that 'women are represented as wives and mothers in most TV and other media programmes. Although 36% of them are agricultural workers, women are predominantly projected as non-producers, with a decorative function, being marginal to national growth and development. Plural nature of Indian culture and the diverse roles women play is neither acknowledged nor communicated. These results in stereotyped images and role specifications of women in unidimensional projection of their reality'.

Besides the advertisements, Cinema is also one of the most important and cheapest visual medium of entertainment in contemporary India. Unfortunately, the commercial film industry, which is a purely profit based industry, cares little about the image of women they portray to the public. Commercial films have followed a set pattern of female image portrayals wherein women are projected as sacrificing themselves for the family and reaffirming values of self-effacement and devotion to the male head of the family. Women who opt for a less traditional life are portrayed in a negative light. Furthermore, these films vividly portray physical violence against women and hardly ever show women as being capable of thinking for them in a logical and rational manner.

Gokul Singh and Dissanayake (2004) quoting Richards (1995) mention three categories of sexual objectification of women in Indian cinema, the tribal costume which is used for cabaret dances, through which women's body particularly pelvic region and the other parts are shown, the wet sari and the behind the bush scene. In the film *Hum Apke Hain Koun* (1995), the leading female actress wore a deep cut blouse, indicating the scopophilic nature of the camera. In another popular Indian cinema *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995) actress Kajol enacting the modern version of the wet sari sequence, wearing not the sari but a more revealing white costume. In this film the female character comes from such a conservative Indian family that she fears to tell her father that she has fallen in love with some one. Given that conservative context, it seems unlikely that such a character would be dancing a rain dance.

In their study of the mistreatment of women in commercial Hindi films, Dasgupta and Hegde examined a sample of 30 movies. After examining the movies the researchers concluded that the mistreatment of women in Hindi films is a mechanism which reinforces and perpetuates the patriarchal order of Indian society.

Television is also one of the most popular electronic media in India. In the television programmes women are basically seen as performing the decorative functions and as being marginal to national growth and development. Another important aspect of television programming is that large chunks of the entertainment programmes are drawn from commercial film content. A crucial implication of this phenomenon is that as in commercial films, women on television entertainment programmes are projected as non-thinking, sacrificing and suffering beings while educated and motivated women are seen as the scourge of the patriarchal order of society.

TV serials are depicting women and young females as involved in conspiracy, pre-marital, extra-marital, post illicit affairs, wearing costly, heavy golden, and diamond jewellery, perpetuating their religious fundamentalism, spending time in family feuds, suicidal love affairs, mega parties, palatial houses, luxury cars, sleek mobiles, elegant make-ups, little care about anything else than the individual matters, and at all mob even a word about the outside world.

As in the case of television, Desai and Patel state that the majority of the radio entertainment programmes in India are borrowed from commercial films. As far as typical women's programmes on radio are concerned, on an average, 60% of programme time is devoted to entertainment only. Twenty percent is given for educational programmes, and 20% is used for imparting information. Women are portrayed as gossip-mongers, and they are given advices on how to become a good wife, a good mother and improve their physical appearance. They are also given elaborate instructions on how to cook, sew knit etc.

The print media in India (when compared to electronic media) have limited impact on the vast and mainly illiterate population of the country. The majority of the population has depended on the oral tradition of cultural transmission for over two hundred years.

It has been seen in the newspapers that these give place to the news related to rape, crime, politics, scandals, sports and economics; serious debates and discussions on issues related to women are completely missing. In vernacular press the depiction of women gets a share only in coloured pages where there is a lot of gossip about actress of TV serials and film stars along with some hot pick-ups. The English press also dwells upon providing snaps of the hot babes and erotic photo gallery of party mania in multistar hotels.

Magazines as well as newspapers have sections for females where the readers are left only with the option of reading some personal gynaecological problems of married women or personal love hick-ups of young girls, otherwise special features on knitting, fashion, sales etc. are the routine one.

As a result, most of the feminist writers have come forward to study about the present status of women in media. And the necessity of feminist approach to the media is being acknowledged everywhere today. The world wide feminist movement has pointed out that the portrayal and employment of women in media are in a most derogatory position. In the middle of the twentieth century, Simone de Beauvoir's book 'The Second Sex' was published and she clearly established that the problems and the poor image of women arose from the affirmation of the past and a gross neglect of the growth, development, the talents and opportunities of women in specific societies. Her work is a classical expose and a foundation for an intellectual defence of women and their rights to a different experience (Busby; 1975, 107-131). Betty Frieden's research about the construction of the American cultural ideal of "the happy housewife heroine" in women's magazines and advertisements is a typical example of feminist academic venture related to media. Her book 'The Feminine Mystique' (1963) was a best seller and gave rise to a revival of women's movement which had been dormant since the successful struggle for women's suffrage. Betty Frieden also headed one of the first 'second wave' feminist groups 'National Organisation of Women' which declared the media to be one of the major fields of struggle for women's rights. The group demanded better placement of women in media, child care centre and journals by women. A research project was launched in entire US to monitor TV networks and local stations for sexist content.

Feminist media studies can be classified into three broad categories—

Liberal Feminist media analysis, Radical Feminist media analysis and socialist feminism.

In Liberal Feminist media analysis sex role stereotypes, prescription of sex appropriate behaviours, appearance, interest, skills and self perceptions are the core topics of analysis. According to this group of feminists women are depicted in mass media as wives, mothers, and daughters, girlfriends; as working in traditionally female jobs like secretary, nurse and or sex objects. It is considered that media perpetuate sex role stereotypes because they reflect dominant social values and also because male media producers are influenced by these stereotypes.

In Radical Feminist discourse, there is a social system 'patriarchy' in which all men are supposed to dominate all women. Issues formerly considered as private like sexual violence, wife battering, incest, pornography; sex tourism and trafficking have exposed by radical feminists. According to radical feminist media assumption mass media are in the hands of male owners and producers, so they will operate to the benefit of a patriarchal society.

In Socialist Feminism women's position is not determined exclusively by gender rather it considers the analysis of class and economic condition of women. The reproduction of labour and the economic value of domestic labour are the concepts central to socialist feminism. Recently socialist feminism has attempted to incorporate other social aspects along the lines of ethnicity, sexual preference, age and physical ability (Gallagher; 1979).

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

Geeta Seshu describes the latest media's image of women in the following words, "Short skirts and noodle-strap tops, see-through shirts with shorts that barely cover her derriere, hard drinking and hard partying. Impossibly slim and dizzyingly tall, a go-getter career girl with snazzy mobile phones to match every outfit".



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

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

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

### ***Conclusion***

The worse part of the whole episode is that there is no revulsion, no change to biased projections and no regrets from any part of the society. We have somehow taken the whole gamut of dialogues, stories and picturization of women as way of our life or as if of no consequences. It has never been realized that if womanhood is come when the coming generation of the present children will have absolutely no respect for their sisters, wives and mothers. Hence the major objectives of media must be to perform the programmes relating to improvement of women's status that they are free to assert themselves as human beings, co-equal socially, morally and politically with men. There should be positive portrayal of women taking note of their role in all facets of life.

Thus it can be concluded that overall effect of the portrayal of women in media is to reinforce rather than reduce prejudices and stereo types. The mass media is to reinforce rather than reduce prejudices and stereotypes. The mass media in India has not made adequate efforts to discuss serious issues concerning women and prepare the women to play their rightful and equal role in society. To change this condition, it is necessary to monitor the media and point out the merits and demerits continuously.

### ***References***

- B. Axford & R.Huggins, (2001).New Media and Politics, sage publication, London.  
Ball, M, (1985).January 28, India:A sleeping giant finally opens doors to the west. Advertising Age, 56-62.  
Choudhury, M, (2000), Feminism in print media, Indian journal of gender studies, 2007; 7:263.  
Desai, N, &Krishnaraj, M, (1990), Women and society in India, New Delhi, Ajanta Prakashan.  
Desai and Patel (1990), Indian women: change and challenge in the International decade, 1975-1985, Bombay, Popular prakashan.  
Jha, R. (1992), Women in Print media: Initiating new perspectives, New Delhi, Northern book center.  
Keval J.kumar, (1998), Mass Communication in media, Jaico, Bombay, pp.140-143.  
Pandey,M.(1991) The subject is women, New Delhi,Sanchar Publishing House.