

Role of Media in Empowering the Indian Women

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ABSTRACT: *It is undoubtedly true that empowerment of women can be made possible by education through mass media. Mass media has played a vital role in empowerment of WOMEN. It has reached out to larger audiences through print, radio, television, cinema and internet. Life today is conditioned by mass media. It has moulded public opinion of the masses. But it has not changed the traditionally oriented attitudes of the millions of Indians towards women. In the past, women were not in the field of mass media whereas now they are taking active role in all fields of journalism. No wonder, empowerment of women has enhanced with the active participation of women in a predominantly male dominated Indian society. The role of women in top positions in the corporate world to self-help groups in villages has been made possible due to the efforts of media highlights. Experience has shown that addressing gender equality and women's empowerment requires strategic interventions at all levels of mass media programming and policy-making. Even though, 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. The potential of mass media for the empowerment and emancipation of women from obscurantist's.*

KEY WORDS: *Mass media - Women Empowerment - Public Opinion - Global Phenomena – Women Discrimination – under developed countries*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In India women comprise 52 percent of its total population and with the advent of 21st Century and its development in various scientific and technological era the status of woman are also changing at a fast pace but we cannot ignore the very existence of a world where woman are discriminated, marginalized and oppressed because of various gender divide issues. Women are vital human resources in improving the quality of life. The country's overall development depends greatly on the inclusion of women in its development process.

They have been the transmitters of culture in all societies. The status of women in a society is a true index of its cultural, social, religious and spiritual level. It is one of the most important criteria for estimating with precision the degree of civilization attained by a particular society in various periods of its history. There is increasing realization that the process of development will be left incomplete without the active involvement of women.

Self decision regarding education, participation, mobility, economic independency, public speaking, awareness and exercise of rights, political participation and many more factors ensure women empowerment. In short woman empowerment is the breaking of personal limitation.

Governments, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations are responsible for the prevention of all forms of discrimination against women. Besides all of them, the responsibility of the mass media is also big in this issue. Because effect of the media is very large in the dissemination and interpretation of a lot of knowledge, innovation and the news. Today, the media constitute a big part of our lives. Almost everyone benefits from the mass media. Actually, it's a really big power to announce our thoughts and our goals about empowering women's economy. Why do not we bring up the ideas about media efforts for women's economic empowerment? What is the role of the mass media in the creation of women's social roles to reinforce them? How can we benefit from mass media for gender equality and women's economic empowerment? How can be improved women's visibility and effect in the decision making process in the media sector? In this paper the powerful and positive role that the media can play in the empowerment of women and gender equality has been analyzed and identified.

II. NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

There is inequality and vulnerability of women in all sphere of life. They need to be empowered in all walks of life. Without the active participation of women, establishment of a new social order may not be a successful one because women constitute half of the population. Women should realize that they have constitutional rights to quality health care, economic security, and access to education and political power.

Mahatma Gandhi firmly states that the status of women would not change merely by bringing legislations; it must be supported by change in the women's social circumstances and situations and also man's sexist attitude to women. Empowerment is a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systematic forces, which marginalize women and other disadvantaged sections in a given context. A large segment of Indian womanhood still suffers deprivation and discriminatory attitudes.

It is necessary to mobilize the vast women power, if the country has to progress in all walks of life. Empowerment of women is a long and difficult process which is to be promoted with full public support and this could be successful only when those women living at the lower strata who have been suppressed by the male dominated society taking undue advantage of their lack of education and poverty can rise up to claim their rightful place in their own society.

Exposure To Media:

Women have lower access to media than men in every age group. About 71 per cent of women are exposed to media as compared to 88 per cent in case of men. Twenty nine per cent of women do not have access to media regularly. Since it is an important source of empowerment, greater proportion of women without having access to media reflects the relatively disadvantageous position of women in relation to men with regards to empowerment. Free PowerPoint Templates

Mass Media

Media is considered to be the most important tool of society in the modern times as it has the power to reach out to a large audience by mass communication and create an impact wherever it can reach, which now has become far and wide. Social media through its ever updating apps and networking is an inevitable source of influence on mass. The media at large has been instrumental though not to the degree desired in supporting the movement for women emancipation by focusing on the neglect and marginalization of the position of the women in society.

Communication is extremely important for women's development and mass media play significant role. It is to be distinguished that growth of women's education and their entry into this business through employment has contributed to the growth of media. If Media can be a powerful agent of change, it can be an equally powerful agent of oppression. It is without a doubt a dominant medium for advocacy of gender equality and the status of women. Yet the media can also reinforce stereotyped images of women and their roles in society. Women and their contribution to the society have always been overshadowed by the news of their hardships and atrocities inflicted upon them. It is indispensable that the print and electronic media present a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world. As media has huge influence on people, it should act with more responsibility before reporting and publishing any news. Portrayal of women which is derogatory to their image by media is an evidence of lack of gender sensitivity and has called for making them accountable for such representation of women

While alternative media has been around for centuries, the concept did not begin to emerge as a specific form of media communications until the middle of the 20th century. As social unrest became more prominent in a number of nations, people with alternative points of view on issues such as race, religion, lifestyle, orientation, politics, and social organization began to use small presses to create their own publications.

Brochures, newspapers, and eventually magazines provided a foundation for what was soon identified as fringe media, denoting the fact that these views were not generally held by the majority of the populace. By the 1960's, alternative media has branched out from printed publications to the inclusion of low budget movies, as well as independent radio and television broadcasts that were syndicated on low-frequency media outlets. Many alternative media publications begin life on shoestring budgets that make it necessary to utilize the most cost-effective means of printing and distributing the materials.

Over time, a number of these underground or alternative publications build considerable reader bases, and are able to increase the scope and the quality of their work. Others remain publications that serve a niche base of readers and continue to operate with relatively little resources. Newspapers or journalism in the pre-independent period were more for the cause and concern of the people, but with the advent of the 21st century and the changing status of media journalism instincts has been wounded by paid news, yellow, mud-slinging and propaganda based media giants and conglomerates.

The image of woman portrayed in mainstream media is that of a submissive stereotypical image being juxtapose as a weaker sex in the statistics of gender related hierarchy. Though some different forms of media has been successfully portraying woman's physiological image as western, over hyped and post modernistic essence which leads to deviate the reality of present sociological states. So to such reserve comes alternative media which is mostly an unexplored arena with an agenda of movement against the monopolization of media

space and time and against media de-regulation to create a platform for the poor, deprived, voiceless and marginalized women of the society.

Alternative media concept originally aroused from the mainstream media's black out of alternative opinion. It can be defined by rediscovering the purpose of mass communication. Alternative media are media inclusive of newspapers, radio, TV, magazines, movies, internet, etc. which provide alternative information to the mainstream media in a given context, whether the mainstream media are commercial, publicly supported or government owned.

Such form of media may involve traditional outlets such as newspapers and magazines, or radio, television, and movies. The main function of alternative media is to offer a different perspective that what is presented in the media that is under the control of a government or a big business. At one time, alternative media was also known as counter-cultural or underground media, terms which helped to identify the media outlets that provided opportunities for dissenting points of view and ideas to be shared outside the established media

Women Empowerment

Various constraining factors of women's empowerment are:

- ♣ Heavy work load of women
- ♣ Isolation of women from each other
- ♣ Illiteracy
 - ♣ Traditional views that limit women's participation
- ♣ No funds
- ♣ Internal strife/militarization/wars
- ♣ Disagreements/conflicts among women's groups, unstructured
- ♣ adjustment policies
- ♣ Discriminatory policy environment
- ♣ Negative and sensational coverage of media

Various mass media campaigns should be organized at the grassroots level through their understandable medium like traditional form of communication which includes puppetry, story-telling, folk arts, folk music and other vernacular mediums. By creating a social climate favorable and susceptible to varied women's issues. Undertaking different forms of alternative mediums to voice out for the economic independency of women through woman's land rights an effective key to empowerment

Introduction of more feminist oriented research to explore and theorized the ways woman have intervened to challenge mainstream media representations of themselves by producing new forms of media where feminist values tend to be central both the production process and the content of what is produced. To promote more grassroots activism alternative media can break the ice between the voice of the poor and the rich. Alternative media like woman's community radio should be promoted which effectively nurtures equality, diversity and promotes democratic values amongst women.

Alternative media with various development and participatory initiatives can help in equipping grassroots women leaders to become voice of change. More focus on community mobilization, outreach and mass media through alternative media movement among the grassroots level. Such kind of medium which provide a forum of "for the people and by the people" concept gives a new reformation to the developmental concept of a society which are hardly acknowledged. Various programmes and policies should be made which are alternative initiatives to the lesser known groups. Villages, communities should be maximized most in form of various alternative communicational medium like that of folks and traditions to convey effective message since folk media being close to the hearts and minds of the people. Using traditional media helps in fostering new ideas and the adjustment to a new or evolving social or political situation.

III. CONCLUSION

Mahatma Gandhi very aptly said "if you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate an entire family". So education is also one of the prime needs of women towards its development and empowerment in the society. Though alternative media can act as a platform or bridge to surpass the barrier of essential communication and information; education is fundamental, pre-requisite of all human beings. Women especially at the grassroots level are often ignorant and uneducated and seldom speak out against atrocities done to them. Alternative media like community radio, alternative newspapers or developmental journalism can come to the rescue to highlight their problems and guide them their intrinsic and extrinsic rights.

Women who are deprived of basic human rights can reach to various helpline through the initiative of alternative media groups and members. Thus, there is no doubts that the developmental facts of women has always been the prime focus of planning since independence and a clear vision is needed to remove the

obstacles on the path of women emancipation from the government and women themselves. Thus the media and other positive approaches need to harness to bridge the age old gender divide issues in India to achieve the rightful share of women and their empowerments in most optimal way

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