CHAPTER-22
THE FINAL JUDGEMENT

"Woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities and she has the same right of freedom and liberty as he", said an extraordinary visionary long time ago. He was the father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi or Bapuji as the nation lovingly called him. He went on to add - "The soul in both is the same. Each is a complement of the other. But somehow man has dominated women from ages past and woman has developed an inferiority complex".

This single statement summarizes the whole purpose of the present research - the domination of men over women through the institution of mass media, and ways to overcome it.

As Jawaharlal Nehru the first Prime Minister of India another extraordinary visionary emphasized, "The association of man and women should be of perfect freedom and perfect comradeship with no dependance of one on the other". And this should be the goal of every research study on women and media - to create a separate media identity of women in the mass media.

This, however, is easier said than done. On the whole, the reach of mass media in India is rather limited especially in the rural areas, among women and slum dwellers. This is mainly due to four mutually reinforcing factors.

1. Low literacy
2. Low purchasing power.
3. Poor means of transportation in the remote areas for timely delivery of newspaper or maintenance of TV or Radio sets.
4. Lack of relevant information if purposive communication is the aim of Mass Media.

Media relationship with women can be divided into three different aspects:

1. Women as Media workforce.
2. Women as Media Audience.
3. Women as projected on the Media.

By coordinating these three categories of women and bringing them on a common platform so that they understand the problems of woman's relation to media, this symbolic annihilation of women in media can be prevented.

This in a nutshell the goal of the present research. This study is divided into three separate sections and each category of women are separately studied and their problems analysed. As have been already found that where a socially conservative bent is compatible with the interests of those who
control the mass media be they public or private powers, the media’s treatment of women is narrow. Keeping this in mind we focus on each category.

**WOMEN AS MEDIA WORKFORCE**

Based on the analysis of questionnaire sent to 138 respondents at the decision making level of Television and Radio in the four metropolitans namely Delhi, Calcutta, Mumbai & Chennai of India this study shows that –

1. The number of women in the decision making posts of media is lesser than the assumed 25% and the advancing years have not really showed any improvement.

2. At the decision making level the concentration of women as producers or programme executive is highest, the number diminishes as we go up the hierarchy.

3. There is no significant increase in proportion of women in the different categories of Doordarshan.

   Though discrimination of women is not overt it is omnipresent in a thinly disguised form and every woman faces it at some point of her career.

5. Social and domestic responsibilities were considered important barriers as far as a women’s career was concerned.

6. Though laden with social and domestic responsibilities women were considered to be at par with men intellectually and in decision making abilities.

7. With the increase in number of women at the decision making levels the programmes will show a better understanding of women’s perspective. However this will not be possible till women communicators succeed in breaking away from the stranglehold of patriarchy.

"The recruitment of more women at every level of policy making and programming will be successful only if these women themselves enable to develop and exercise a more equitable gender consciousness. Only then can they ask crucial questions about the country's development instead of working to integrate women into the existing socio political paradigm", said Prabha Krishnan and Anita Dighe.

**WOMEN AS AUDIENCE**

In the country where almost 50% of population are women, not paying proper attention to them means seriously backtracking the countries development procedure. Adequate attention has not been paid to this section of audience who are most influenced by the media and influence media programme structures in turn.
A faulty understanding of these audience can cause the wrong kind of programmes to be telecast and can give rise to serious misinterpretations. It was found that:

1. The number of male audiences were more than females.
2. Most women saw TV after and during dinner.
3. Women were more interested in film and dramatised programmes.
4. There were very few women who listened to news and current affairs programmes.
5. Most women did not identify with women characters or aspired to be like them.
6. Most men and women watched television primarily for entertainment.
7. Most women respondents thought that women on TV were projected with the right mixture of traditional values and modern outlook.
8. Lastly more respondents thought that women’s programmes were changing for better.

But there is always scope for improvement. The Audience research units of All India Radio and Doordarshan should conduct periodic surveys of women audiences into the interiors involving large number of respondents because they have the machinery as well as the manpower. More research in needed for delving deep into the minds of common women so that programmes are based on solid research findings instead of half baked theories.

WOMEN AS PROJECTED ON THE MEDIA

In newspaper, on television, on the radio and in the magazines, women’s world is limited to home, family fashion and gossip. Women rarely appear in hard news coverage – a fact that reflects not only woman’s general exclusion from decision making positions, but also the news industries narrow view of newsworthiness. In entertainment programmes or popular fiction women figure as passive or dependent creatures with few concerns outside the domestic or romantic.

As target audience for much of the advertising in the mass media, women are manipulated, bullied, and patronized. Straight forward appeals to their common sense and real needs are rare and recent responses by media to changes in woman’s lives and aspirations are both tentative and long overdue.

Feminist discontent with news coverage tends to focus on three different complaints:

1. The depiction of women as second class human beings.
2. The under representation of women and women’s issues in routine coverage.
3. The distortion of women's movement in itself. The tendency to include irrelevant information about a female newsmaker's appearance and family status, information that would not be reported about a man in a similar situation remains strong.

No aspect of news coverage is more frustrating than the low visibility of women and women's concerns in news reports. In part this news vacuum reflects the fact that so few powerful positions are held by women.

A woman's "low profile" is also a product of the socially conditioned definition of news. Women are at their most newsworthy when they are doing something "unlady like".

Since the complex and powerful changes in women's daily lives - how they make their livings, raise their families and spend their money and so on - are difficult to reduce to a discreet news item most coverage of woman's issues are linked to an event, which may be contrived precisely for its ability to attract news coverage. Such events are often controversial and tying news coverage to them have made the process of change seem more controversial than they really are.

Similarly in case of serials though attitudes are changing the image projected of women in media is fairly utopian distorted or stereotyped. Notwithstanding various directives, woman's image has gone through several unjust projections at the hands of the media. The passivity of female characters in television is a major cause for concern. Rarely is a woman shown as capable of solving her problems, standing up to indignities or violence, facing challenges on her own or taking decisions. The image of the educated women is type cast as insensitive, self-centred and uncaring. The economically independent woman is shown or domineering and ruthless. She is ideal only when she is in her nurturing roles as a supportive supplement to man. There is a serious type casting as far as children are concerned. Girls are always shown as cooking and looking after younger siblings and imitating the nurturing role of their mothers, whereas boys seek adventure, solve problems, and follow the role model of their fathers.

Women specific programmes on radio and television perpetuate sex stereotypes and cater to women as housewives and mothers, rather than provide knowledge and skills for their role as economic contributors.

THE FINANCIAL ASPECT

In some countries, the state is the sole financial backer of the mass media. In a few of these, the mass media have been enlisted in a campaign to sell sexual equality.

When financial support of the mass media is in the hands of commercial interest, its content is determined by a more convoluted but equally purposeful process.

The purpose of the words and pictures in commercial media, from the sponsor's point of view, is to give value to the advertising space they surround.
This they do by attracting an audience which will then be exposed to the commercial message. Thus whatever attracts readers, listeners or viewers is valuable in commercial terms, no matter what its cultural, intellectual or social value is.

It is not surprising that these commercial interests are not necessarily in tune with the public interest. In relation to the female half this dichotomy is particularly large.

Publicly supported media are not entirely immune from the syndromes of commercialism. It can be said that they “sell” the public interest, at the behest of the public whose representatives control the media. However, a governmental role in the sponsorship of the media is clearly preferable to commercial sponsorship alone, because the latter does not give a voice to segments of the population that have no economic clout.

It is impossible for the media, print or broadcast to be neutral in the presentation of values. The only way to guarantee that groups having a particular value system do not suppress all others is to secure access to the media for people who hold diverse views.

Where the image of women is concerned, that in itself has revolutionary potential, for one of the most damaging things about women’s portrayal in the media has been the apparent lack of options, even where diversity is encouraged. However, sexism in the media is unlikely to subside as long as discrimination against women is widely tolerated in the real world.

WOMAN’S ALTERNATIVE MEDIA

Over the past years, important attempts have been made worldwide to develop media controlled and operated by women themselves. The supposition is that these media will present information and perspectives which are more closely attuned to the reality of women’s lives.

WOMEN’S PUBLICATIONS

These usually make a conscious attempt to cover issues directly relevant to women – for example reproductive health, crime against women, discriminations and to provide news about women’s actions, projects and networks. Their number is on the increase but the overall number of publications produced in the developing regions remains relatively low.

Examples are Emma in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Ms. in USA

Manushi in India.

WOMEN’S AUDIOVISUALS/VIDEOS/FILMS

In 1986 a women’s guide to audiovisual resources published by ISIS international a global woman’s network called ‘Powerful Images’ listed more than 600 audiovisuals-mainly videos, slideshows and films about women. Most of these have been made by women. 167 came from Asia Pacific, 43
from Australia & New Zealand, 35 from Africa and Middle East and 24 in the general world wide category.

The major themes were images and culture including identity, roles, relationships, migration, work, health (reproductive rights & Sexuality) women's struggle, women's history, sexual violence, prostitution, pornography, empowering women for development, racism and peace.

**WOMEN'S RADIO**

Women's alternative radio differs from much of the programming for women commonly transmitted by the mainstream media. They cover more controversial issues such as violence, rape, economics, politics, legal rights and so on. The alternative approach aims to give voice to ordinary women themselves encouraging them to speak about their lives and problems, rather than inviting experts to address the women listeners.

Examples are: Libre a Elles (Belgium), Kvindeboluerne (Denmark), Radio Pleine (Ireland), Radio Lilith (Italy), Women's Airwaves (U. K.). In US and Canada public and private Radio stations transmit women's programme made by women's group. This is however a Western phenomenon and it will be long before it catches on in less developed countries.

**WOMEN'S PRESS AGENCIES**

At the international level a major project was launched by UNESCO in 1978 whose aim was to develop women's feature services in each world region, so as to promote a regular international flow of news and information on issues of concern to women. Between 1978 and 80, regional services were established and operate Women's Feature Services in Latin America and Africa. The IPS women's feature service (WFS) till 1988 used to put out two feature articles per day on the regular IPS wire. The service accepted articles only from women journalists, who were recruited through regional coordinators in Latin America (Costa Rica), South Asia (Delhi), South East Asia (Manila) and Africa (Zimbabwe). The coordinators also edit the material for regional distribution. The service was centrally managed from the IPS international communication centre in Rome and editorial and operational coordination was entirely on the hands of women. WFS focussed on developmental issues always from the specific perspective of women.

**WOMEN'S NETWORKS AND DATA BASES**

These networks are a response to women's need for information not provided by the mainstream media channels and for increased communication among women and across national boundaries. The central purpose of almost all networks is information collection and dissemination, whether by computerised or manual methods.

The first such network was ISIS women's International Information and Communication Service. Launched in 1974 it published a quarterly
'International Bulletin' between 1976 and 1983. This covered issues such as media, violence against women, tourism and prostitution, migrant woman nuclear power, peace, sexuality, health, feminism and socialism and new technology.

In 1984 ISIS was transformed into two independent organisations: ISIS Women's International'Cross Cultural Exchange (WICCE) in Geneva and ISIS international in Rome.

The ISIS WICCE has 3 major activities.

a) a documentation/information service
b) a quarterly publication called women's world
c) a cross cultural exchange programme which gives an opportunity for women activist anywhere in the world to work and learn with women's group in another country.

Another network, the International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC) aims specifically to support and strengthen the efforts of women in Third world regions to set up and expand their own regional communication networks. It published the quarterly Tribune, organised work staff exchange, helped women's groups to produce communication materials and produced development education materials which it distributed free in developing countries.

The other Networks are the Women's Global Net Work on Reproductive Rights which share information on fertility control and against coercive or unsafe population control policies.

The women and Global corporations network links up Individuals and organizations concerned about the impact of multinationals on the human and economic rights of women.

Only one international network focused exclusively on women and the media. This is the Network on Sex Roles within the Mass Media which was composed mainly of Media Researchers. Its purpose was to disseminate research on sex-roles within mass media, to exchange information on efforts, to improve equal treatment of women & men in media employment and in media content and to inform members of the network about relevant conferences, seminars and other meetings. Established in 1981, by 1987 the network consisted of some 350 members all over the world.


SUGGESTIONS

A positive social and personal image of women is essential not merely for the sake of women but for the sake of national development as well.

For this the major requirement is the main streaming and integration of women and their participation at all levels rather than confining them to
The policies should involve new images, ideas and encourage an honest examination and healthy debate among men & women.

Instead of being limited to the mass media alone, a policy should be developed that links media with education, culture, creative and performing arts and the new forums being encouraged for their further growth of women both inside and outside media.

The improved policy in communication should not be addressed to women only but to the society as a whole specially to men and boys who are equally the products of a defective social system.

Instead of highlighting the women's role as a mothers, the focus should be on the fact that the woman is one of the two parents and both have equal responsibilities. Instead of highlighting her role as a homemaker, she should be projected as a person capable of conscious choice and allowed to learn about responsible citizenship as well as responsible parent hood.

After exploring the Indian electronic media I have arrived at certain conclusion based on which I put forward certain humble suggestions.

1. Setting up of an expert group on women's issues for radio, television and print media for examining media strategies, for combating revivalism and obscuraitism that denies women constitutional equality and to draw up a framework on roles/images projected of women.

2. A `Media Advisory Committee' to constantly monitor and reappraise the position of women in Media based on feedback and new Media outputs.

3. A balance should be struck between nation building and revenue earning potential of Radio and TV, not giving in overtly to either, at the cost of women's image in Media.

4. Media Personnel both men & women should be motivated to project a positive image of women. Positive role models of women as cultivators, producers, managers etc. must be forcefully projected.

5. Commercial films, serials and advertisement should be scrutinized before telecast and those containing negative projection of women should not be allowed.

6. Reasons for low exposure of women to mass media must be identified and rectified.

7. There should be extensive audience research on women audience and women's programmes. These should be analysed and the data implemented to make further policy decisions.

8. The feedback information should be provided to the Researchers and media institution so that they can be used to further Research and analysis to assess the ways in which the various communication channels reach and affect women and girls.
9. There should be 'resources centres' at the centre and state levels for identification, collection, dissemination and documentation of materials related to women's issues.

What national policies must propose should be comprehensive and inclusive rather than exclusive. This would require considerable affirmative and specific attention to the special needs of girls and women without contradicting the fundamental point of equality in development. Nor should it ignore the special challenges posed by culture, religion and the allocation of duties and activities to each of the sexes.

The influence of mass media can only be expected to increase. For one thing, ever increasing numbers of people have access to them; literacy campaigns are enlarging the range of the print media and new telecommunication technologies have expanded the reach of the electronic media.

In social terms however, the technology has not fulfilled its promise. The sophistication of communications hardware has escalated at a dizzying rate, but what is communicated—especially concerning women—has scarcely changed.

The present study is a humble attempt at focussing these shortfalls and inaccuracies and proposes a few steps to rectify them. Though this is a small step towards equality between sexes it might later prove to be a giant leap for mankind— or rather womankind.