CHAPTER II

PROJECTION OF WOMEN IN MEDIA
The previous chapter dealt with historical background of the developments of Indian Doordarshan. It also challenged the notion that women, as a category, are similar all over the country. We saw that women have to be differentiated according to region, caste, class, and language. We also discussed the issues that have to be kept in mind while dealing with the projection of women on Indian Doordarshan.

In this chapter, I have dealt with how women are portrayed on Indian Doordarshan. They are generally portrayed as beautiful and docile females, which is in adherence with the patriarchal ideology. There is less or no attention paid to portraying problems of the lower middle class or lower class of society. Representation of the higher middle class is prominent on Indian Doordarshan. Doordarshan has tried to portray the problem of role conflict, which arises when women start exerting their economic independence. I have dealt here how successful or unsuccessful Doordarshan in its attempt of doing so. I have also dealt in this chapter how women are portrayed in different
countries - a worldwide phenomenon - exploitation of women as object. For this study I have taken help for the material from Beijing Conference.

Has the portrayal of women in print and electronic, visual and audio Changed? If yes, how? If not, why not? Have there been efforts to change it, which have been successful? Can some examples be cited? Ammu Joseph raises these pertinent questions - a journalist in her book "whose news? The media and women's issues" (co authored/edited with Kalpana Sharma and published by Sage Publications 1994) and "Women in journalism: Making news" (Konark publishers-Dec 1999). She answers the first question with a yes and a no because the portrayal of women in the Indian media has changed in some ways and not in others. Many of old stereotypes (housewives/mothers/wife/girlfriend/decorative object/sex object/victim etc.) are of course, still with us - though they have been diluted/modified to some extent, partly as a result of advocacy by women, both within and outside media organisation. She is more concerned about emerging
new stereotypes, which I think have much to do with changes in the socio-economical political scenario in India through the 1990's and parallel development in the media here. They are related to the process of liberalisation /globalisation of the Indian economy, globalisation of the media (especially through Satellite, Cable TV) and the rise of both consumerism and religio-ethnic identity politics (Particularly the belligerent /antagonistic /often violent variety we refer to in India as communalism). One result of this has been the increasing market orientation of the Indian Media.

And one negative (in her opinion) fall out of the media’s growing preoccupation with the bold and the beautiful, the rich and the famous can be seen in the emerging images of “the new Indian women”-beauty queens/models/and women entrepreneurs (particularly high profile ones who also belong to the high society). There are many other examples of the shifting trend in the Indian media’s portrayal of women. The nature and implications of these new images have yet to be seriously studied and analysed. New tools of analysis have
to be used to understand more complex and challenging scenario. If same arguments are kept repeating without addressing the subtle and not so subtle changes that have occurred in the portrayal of women in media we will not be taken seriously and our efforts will not be effective.

Have there been advocacy efforts to monitor and work with media, gender-sensitive training for media professionals, media owners and managers? Are there some examples that could serve as models?

Some Indian NGOs have been involved in some monitoring, advocacy and training program. But their effectiveness especially with regard to advocacy and training is limited particularly because media professionals (not to mention owners and managers) tend not to take them seriously. And that, I think is linked to the fact that many of their efforts do not reflect sufficient awareness of the realities of the media world and are based on the idealistic premise that the media must be socially responsible (which unfortunately, media professionals and more importantly media owners
On the positive side her interviews with women journalists (for the book) over the past couple of years have been hardening post of them expressed considerable unease with the recent market driven trend in the media which they agree have impinged on the coverage of serious issues including development and gender related events and issues. She thinks it would be worthwhile trying to build on those sentiments through some kind of realistic yet imaginative orientation program to help journalists and journalism.

Students/trainees (women certainly but perhaps also men who volunteer) to not only better understand issues of special concern to women as well as issues relating to gender and the media but also negotiate spaces within the media today to bring about changes in the portrayal of women as well as the coverage of gender related issues.

She is of the view that the very definition of women’s empowerment through the media has undergone startling changes in the recent times, with the so called gendering the
media involving for the most part, the highlighting the success of beautiful and/or entrepreneurial women whose high profile invariably matches their status in high society. The only notable exception of this reality comes in the form of coverage of women as victims of violent atrocities of one kind or another (violence as we know is high on the priority list of news values there is less and less media space/time available these days for writing on women and/or issues that are less ‘attractive’ and/or ‘dramatic’.

**PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN AND CHANGING ROLES.**

Laws or no laws, the vast economic changes that were sweeping the country since the beginning of this century were forcing Indian women into new social roles. In the Hindu society where at one time new women were debarred even from reading or reciting the scriptures – women following such learned professions as teaching, medicines, social works, law are assuming new social roles. They are even more radical then the women working in factories or those with
western education. For these women are not only absorbing ideas that are subversive to the traditional institutional patterns but they have also the wherewithal to live and organise their social behaviour according to those ideas. As a result of their professional status they are endowed with competent to defy any attempt to enforce the old ways upon them. Thus not only they demand and get more considerations from their husbands and family but in addition they have a social standing of their own outside the family in society at large. The need for trained Doctors and Nurses and Teachers in this country is so great that not only all the prejudices against women working outside of home is done away with but Professionally trained women are actually treated with special respect and considerations as of greater usefulness to society as citizens in public activities.

For individuals as for groups, social status is clearly one of the major determinant of social behaviour. The women who experiences a market increase in her socio-economic status, usually finds her power over others multiplied, her motivational system altered and her general pattern of life
transformed the women with a profession is socially in an advantageous position to organise her family relations and in-law relations in her own favour. Economically she is in a sound position to defy the traditional ideals of wifely submission. She would insist on her greater voice in the management of property. She would resent her husband’s one-sided consideration in social relations in her in-law family and outside of the family. She would no longer tolerate man’s double standard of morality. She would pay lip service to old traditions and partiality she would submit to her husband’s dominance for outside show but not in the traditional fashion but rather in the style of modern western woman.

The professions and career are boon in disguise to parents of daughters who were formerly forced to seek husbands for their daughters and offer handsome dowry to the groom to get them married at an early age. Not that many parents are willing to send their daughters in professions, but that such avenues of respectable pursuits exists, provide with some measures of relief to the parents who are not willing to
force their daughters into undesirable early marriages.

Indeed careers and professions are the new found blessings to aspiring young Hindu woman who in the traditional society had no respectable openings for their intellectual expressions and special talents. To the young and aspiring widows, professions and careers have provided a wonderful opportunity to preserve their dignity and acquire social prestige as useful and valuable members of society.

The proverbial high caste young Hindu widow who is “drudge of all work in her father-in-law’s house whose bread is sorrow and drink is tear” is a great shame and problem of modern Hindu society. For in spite of Sarda Act of 1930 prohibiting child marriages even today there are millions of widows or women divorcees in India. But leaving home and choosing a profession leads to role conflict. Working women are often tossed between home and work and experience mental conflict, as they are not able to devote same amount of time and energy to their home and children. Some women develop a sort of guilt feeling that they are not able to rear
their children with same care being not able to be present with children all the time like their traditional sisters. In order to compensate this lack of time, working women often tend to pamper their children with expensive toys and succumbing to their undue demands partly such a situation develops because women perceive their roles as mothers in old tradition and their own socialization processes and expectations of other members of society. It is not realised that a child does not need constant presence of the mother for its normal growth. Role Conflict makes working women tire themselves out giving personal service to the husband and attending to various tasks, which are often beyond their physical capacity and endurance.  

As rightly pointed out by the committee on social status of women it should be woman’s right to play a dual role. A woman should not be penalised for her important contribution as mother in the perpetuation of society. Child bearing is treated as purely a matter concerning women and hence the attitude that a woman must either gives up her job or her right
to bear children. A distinction between man’s work and woman’s work in respect of household jobs should be removed. If what are called woman’s jobs come to be respected by society, men will cease to hesitate doing these jobs. This attitude needs to be built into the socialisation process of children both in the home and in the school.

**PROJECTION OF WOMEN IN MEDIA**

While the role of media in early liberal thought was defined mainly in terms of a watchdog the expectations from this medium widened with the development of mass society. Dahlgren observes “as the vision of democracy has evolved historically so has the view of the desirability and feasibility of for a where the ruled can develop and express their political will to the rulers”. The Hutchins commission in 1947 in the US, specified the additional role of press to provide full, truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day’s events in a context which gives them meaning; to serve as a forum for the exchange of comments and criticism and be common carriers of the public expression; to give a
representative picture of constituent groups in society and goals and values of society. (Mcquail, 1994:124)\(^4\). With such developments media occupied a significant role in society.

Today, media acts as a cornerstone of democracy, which imparts information on public issues through which citizens convey their opinion to policy makers. In other words media is the carrier of public opinion and plays a crucial role in giving voice to people.

Replacing the model of face to face communication of the public gathering of the past to discuss public issues, media today acts as a mediator and facilitator between policy maker and citizenry. Various expectations from media includes "reporting development likely to impinge on the welfare of the citizen; identifying the key issues of the day and setting the political agenda; acting as a sports person of various perspectives and interest groups; facilitating a dialogue between the ruler and the public and a diverse range of views"\(^5\). Research indicates that the issues on the agenda of media have fair change of getting on to the agenda of both the
public and the policy makers whereas the issues missing on the agenda of the media remain visible and non-existent. This is because the media are a power source in terms of extorting influence in the society; they are a location where public affairs are thread out; they are a source of varied definition of social reality, changing culture and values; and most importantly they are a source of the public meaning system which signals the public definition of normality and deviance in society. Since they are crucial sites of debate where meanings are constructed and public consciousness is shaped, their role in political awareness is important. Curran asserts that the accessibility to this sphere and freedom to interpret social reality is emancipatory in many ways. On the one hand it provides an opportunity to subordinate groups to offer their perspectives and to question the dominant ideologies and structures, and, on the other, this freedom and accessibility promotes understanding and tolerance among people towards alternative perspectives.

Talking of women and electronic media we are
inevitably led to further inquire into the women's status in post 1947 India. We also explore the nature of women's movement in India and ask questions about the adequacy and nature of portrayal of women in media.

Women in India have traditionally been peripheral to our media food chain. They account for just a little less than 50% of India's vast population and half of the 300 million strong viewers of television, but the decision making setup in media, as in the parliament, did not, till about a decade ago, see them as an important group. Till a decade ago the dominant media was the print media.

It would be cliché talking of the subordinate role women in India and the stereotypical image of women living two contrary, almost simultaneously-that of shakti (power) the primeval power, the origin of power itself, and helpless, hapless women without any identity except that of a wife, or the mother who has no voice in anything, has nothing by way of her own basic choices.

It sounds intriguing how from a highly dignified
position in India’s mythical history, the women in India allowed herself to accept not any secondary position but also the status in which she was forced to be categorized into a lower caste, almost equating her with dalits during the middle ages. One refers here to the famous dictum by all too sanctified bhakta poets Tulsidas in Ram charit manas which says dhole, gawar, shudra, pashu, nari, yeh sab hain taran ke adhikari. Translated into English it would mean a women like a sudra, a drum Boer, and an animal, is fit for beating only. The vested interest of the ruling elite and male lobby consisting of alien culture that invaded India legitimised women as an individual of no consequence. But for the Gandhian renaissance that saw women once again as an individual entity with a great capacity to contribute socially and politically, women’s movement today would not have marched ahead as part of the world’s women’s movement.

Nevertheless the low literacy rate of women (even now two third of India’s women are illiterate)\(^9\) and then even lower purchasing power made them negligible as media consumers
and indispensable as workers and media managers. There were other reasons as well such as low visibility of women in society and in politics, low registration of economically remunerative work done by them and the usually high-risk low salaried nature of women's jobs. Coupled with the age old biases against women's intellectual capacity, this generated a mind set in the commercial media circles that the average consumer of media was a male and the women if they did figure in it at all were secondary both as subjects for commentary and arbiter of taste. This mindset continued when the electronic media first began to expand.

Between 1982 and 1987 Doordarshan began to commission serials and programs that would nudge the collective social conscience of Indian TV viewers and help them see women the way they really were, not as faceless mothers and workers or mere plaything. It was then that serial such as Humlog, Buniyad, Adhikar, Aur bhi hai rahie, Udaan and Kashmakash were screened. Largely untrained and hesitant feminists began to coach themselves to handle TV
programming and several of them took to telecasting regularly even though the pay was poor and work was erratic.

It is noteworthy that although all these serials proved to be popular according to the ratings, the most popular program was Ramayana a commercially sponsored serial by a commercial filmmaker on the mythological tale of Ram and Sita. The unstated attitude was, while Ramayana rakes in huge profits, let the politically correct serials keep the liberals happy. This could and not and did not last. The sponsors were looking not for social messages but for viewership ratings, and so the socially relevant serials usually did not get a renewal of their contract. When they did get a renewal it was after a long battle and the producers were told politely that the government would not commission the serial that they would have to look for commercial sponsors. One by one, these features and serials, though missed by the audiences, gradually disappeared because of sponsors mostly the makers of Chocolates, soaps and toothpaste, wanted loud entertainment consisting of spicy film extracts or else religious mythology. Ramayana went on
to dominate the small screen for months and ran into several hundred episodes and was then followed by an equally crude small screen version of the Mahabharata, which sent the cash registers ringing. The sponsors were now queuing up and asking for more of the same.

Serials like Adhikar, Udaan, Kashmakash portrayed women as rebellious and achievers. This was totally against the thinking of a larger middle class family who conceived women in a more traditional form i.e. in role of mother, sister and wife. The above serials did not give any importance to the above role hence these serials suffered the fate of less viewership and as a consequence did not get commercial sponsorship.

Contrary to these serials Buniyad and Humlog, which portrayed middle class and lower middle class women, found great acceptance and viewership. In Humlog, Lajo the daughter-in-law of the family was portrayed as the self-sacrificing lady with no aspiration. She was totally dependent on her fate, subjugated by husband, in-laws and her own
siblings.

According to Mrinal Pandey, the sponsorship pattern of the mid 1980s retain its basic inner contradiction till today in that here private capital must be used to finance government created welfarism and open titillation of consumers base instincts must coexist with protests against the coarse consumerism that is destroying the cultural matrix and promoting greed and violence in society. The producers of most of the popular serials still remain Bombay based with no previous experience other than that of producing advertisements of commercial cinema. The ‘other’ kind of serials on politically current topics is produced only by idealistic young producers and activists with shoestring budgets and little marketing experience. That the quality and promotional powers of the one soon drive out the other has now become the recurring karmic pattern of the world of TV programming.

With the advent of the 1990s however, some things have begun to change. Sounds and images from the
audiovisual media now effectively penetrate the illiteracy barrier. At the same time the daughters of the post independence era, middle class women from the urban areas, who were deeply influenced by feminism, have joined the media (both the print and the electronic) in large number. These young women, well educated, articulate and aware of their rights, are also making vital decisions within urban households about the purchase of consumer durable and non-durable. And they make sure that the market takes serious note of their arrival. True this class is limited, but when translated into numbers, even this percentage has yielded a sizeable group that has a fairly large sprinkling of senior media managers and artists in its midst.

The enhanced visibility and official clout of women, both in the print and in the visual media generated its own backlash.

The women’s movement of the 60s and the 70s in the United States, England and other European countries had their fall out in India also. Even as the mainstream press known as
the "Nationalist press" in British India was trying to recover from its basic protest format of the colonial days and was acquiring a more participatory role in the nation's reconstruction, it did not remain aloof of the happenings elsewhere. It was, as one can verify from our media files. An Indian interpretation of the explosion of value system that the women's movement had questioned particularly in Europe and UK. And the interpretation was more from the point of view of the tradition bound India fearing the breakup of the pious family system which was considered by the American media as an unnecessary stranglehold and means of perpetuating women's subordinate level in the US.

The Government released its much awaited perspective plan on women from 1980 to 2000 AD the women development centers in the Universities with munificent grants to study women's problems and women development corporations with a view to implementing and monitoring women's program were initiated. All these were political decisions. Besides various organisations helped bringing together women
activists and media personnel living in their professional isolation on the same forum. And despite at times ideological differences or party affiliations they were speaking the same language and articulating common concerns.

The media consultation on women's program was one such platform provided by NIPCCD in Feb. 1989.\textsuperscript{11} It went a long way in sensitizing women journalists towards thinking on women's issues.

It goes to the credit of women's movement activist and protestors handling alternate media who also modified these perceptions and tried to evolve a more integrated approach towards women's problem. Of course, differences of opinion exists regarding their approach to women's problems be they the problems of gender bias, in a male dominated society, which condition their radical and almost aggressive attitude or that a status rising above the gender difference of male and female psyche. And this shows multifarious perspective it opens to women's situations hopefully to the portrayal of women in media. The Shah Banoo and the Roop Kunwar Sati
episodes raised hell for the government underpinning its status quo policies that intended to divide the political strength on women’s issues. And it turned out to be quite a fully pitched media battle. Women in the press through their investigative reports brought to light the machinations of vested interests of various political parties.

One thing more has happened and this is that media attention on these issues has created awareness among women in their own issues. And this reflects unfortunately through aggressive atrocities like dowry deaths in certain cases and eve teasing in general.

Indeed there is a set of opinion which insists that feminization of media is the first requisite for empowering women in other areas for they are all information linked.

Inside media too for the first time some women have begun to talk of the glass ceiling. They assert that when they acquire the skills and the seniority they should be given editorial and departmental control. Most of them were still piped to the post by males who networked through the
corridors of powers. And when they joined the privately owned electronic media, partly as a natural mid-career switch, it was taken as a reaffirmation of their feminine disregard of propriety.

True a country like India contains multitudes when we go to the villages, we go back to the agrarian cultural that wakes and sleeps with sunrise and sunset and marks out seasons by configurations in the sky. Here women can be seen but not heard and if they work, it is in the fields or within homes. But as we come closer to the cities, the villages too begin to show signs of change. Television antennae and satellite dishes become increasingly visible and the local culture and speech begin to reveal the unmistakable stamp of popular films and TV program. Then there are the metropolitan cities like Delhi, Bangalore, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras that have upper crust pocket seeped in the electronic revolution in the same way as their counter parts in the developed world computers have been around in India for a decade. The internet revolution reached India some two
years back and at the moment there are some 60,000 internet connections in the country, serving an estimated half a million consumers.\textsuperscript{11}

But the enormous advantages of the Internet and the new jobs that have been created in India remain limited, largely to urban males since they require high levels of computing skills and constant creativity. Both are mostly denied to women, who remain sedimented in low skill, low paid jobs. If the electronic revolution has yielded any advantages to Indian women the beneficiary has been the same limited group of upper class urban women who have in any case long been noticeable for being head and shoulders above the majority of their sisters, and also many brothers from the poorer sections.

It is the Ally Mcbeal syndrome Every Wednesday on television thirty something Mcbeal argues her cases intelligently has a career on the upswing is well liked by her peers is considered reasonably attractive knows how to have a good time and bonds well with friends of both sexes. Yet a
meaningful relationship – let alone marriage – eludes this 21st century women episode after episode. And to add insult to injury her ex-boyfriend not only works in the same firm as her but also is happily married to a colleague. It is a story that is finding a familiar echo in urban India.\textsuperscript{13}

The gap between rural and urban women in thoughts and behaviour has widened over the last decade. Women in Urban areas have become more independent, economically and hence more independent in their working. In men they are looking for a loving companion and not a provider. Thus we can see that the whole edifice of social structure once built by Manu is crumpling. The evolution process in urban women has been 200 per cent as compared to 5 percentage in men. Women with their natural job of home keepers, child rearing, factors in the in-laws have taken to earning a salary. But men are just breadwinners. Lord and master of their world. Says psychiatrist Sanjay Chug “men have stuck to the same rate of evolution “ Adds Urvarshi Butalia, publisher Kali for women. It’s due to the women’s movement. Women have outstripped
men in many spheres. That’s why it has become difficult to find partners. Men are somewhat scared of dealing with this new kind of women.

On the contrary to this kind of women we have women like Lajo, of Humlog who is totally dependent on the Husband. The provider, who believes that marriage, is the ultimate thing that can happen to a female and the very thought of resisting the institution will befall evil on the family. She not only believes in dominant patriarchal society but also reinforces it in her daughters.

At the Beijing platform for Action section ‘j’ women and Media certain points were discussed on the “Portrayal of women in Media under following heads:

**PORTRAYAL**

1A Changing and unchanging pattern of portrayal.

1B Issue areas of portrayal that raise concerns.

1C Innovative campaigns to promote change.


**Working with Media**

2A Monitoring and training

2B Working with owners (Private and state)

2C Innovative campaigns to promote change.

Institutional (non-) role.

3A General mainstreaming in media by government

3B Recommendations.

**PORTRAYAL**

Changing and unchanging pattern of portrayal.

In many countries around the world, women agreed that little has changed in last five years in terms of portrayal of women in media. With rare exception (Argentina most notably) contributors related how images of women. Is this not only the same? Is this not only the same as always? And with increased commercialisation of every medium some women felt there is no escape from bombardment of negative images of women.

In Zambia and India the images of ten years ago are still in common currency. Women are still portrayed as Floor
scrubbers, carriers of STDs and HIV/AIDS, sex objects, in Zambia and as "house wife, mother, wife, girlfriend, decorative objects, sex object, victim" in India. In Croatia "sexism in visual and printed media regarding women is the norm". In the USA "Sex sells everything." and in UK a similar situation prevails, to the extent that they still have page 3 girls (topless) in the biggest selling daily tabloid.

Women are still described in terms of their appearance rather than their ability. In Sri Lanka portrayals of women are almost universally as loyal supporters for a man and not as Independent and successful in their own right. From South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, Canada and elsewhere the stories are similar, little positive change in reducing the number and style of negative portrayal of women.

In Europe where television is largely state owned, there is a consensus that television has not changed the sexist perceptive of its overall programming but has given a portion of its broad casting schedule to programs about women during certain fixed hours. Otherwise, contents of commercial serials,
cartoons that have a large audience have not changed. Women’s concerns have been categorised and marginalised in the media. Seen as a minority, women see themselves granted a small space in men’s fora. In the UK a survey found that out of 12000 newspapers photograph analysed, women featured in just 30% as opposed to 69% of photos with men, 80% of the pictures judged ‘not relevant’ to the story – were photos of women. These were inserted just to give a lift.

The same images continue and there are new images to deal with as the effects of globalisation begin to filter through into daily life. New media are perpetuating and accentuating much that is negative about the portrayal of women computer games and music videos being notable examples. There is a continuing lack of images depicting representative from minority communities for example in the UK, Women and girls of colour are seen missing. In North America women who are disabled or who are overweight seem not to exist in the sea of the images flooding over the country, and in India disabled women hardly exist in mainstream media.
In Argentina, the last ten years there has been a veritable revolution in the media's portrayal of women. This has been brought about largely as a burgeoning activity on the part of women in the media industry.

Most contributors say that positive change is beginning to filter through. Some were cognisant that apparently positive efforts to depict power women are being used in cynical ploy for new markets. Some feel that societies and women in them are becoming more sophisticated media consumers or are becoming more attuned to the difference they can make in terms of demanding changes.

Of course there is no one reason why changes have been so few or so slow to come about. Just as there is no one women to whom we are referring in the discussions, there is no one single universal model for chipping down the edifices of negative portrayal. Rather there are complex multi faceted analyses.

First there is need for awareness and acknowledgement of fear, for which action for raising awareness is essential with
a caveat. For example portraying existing situations actually may raise awareness. However, it may also be construed as condoning the status quo. Media portrayals of women must include ideals and other choice women have and promote that right to choose. There is a stigma of extremism and sexism such as is faced regularly by women in Croatia whenever they speak out against sexism advertising campaigns. In China and many other countries, officials and ordinary people men and women are unaware and insensitive to the gender inequities and are afraid of feminism.

Numerous contributors demonstrated how important it is to carry out campaigns demanding public cooperation on negative portrayals of women. One writer points out that each and every negative image requires production of another imagery.

For example, film actresses are those who do publicity shots, are victims or ignorant happily offering their bodies often in degrading situations of nudity, to cinema and television screens in exchange for a promise of wealth and
celebrity. Are they not aware of their choice and of the manipulation of which they are the objects? The majority of stereotypes of women in the media were certainly suggested by men but executed by women.

Additionally there is an emerging media discourse about women and images of women that is "schizophrenic". The complex issues involved in assessing women's portrayal are further complicated by popular media with their depiction of women with images and broadcasting extremely sexist advertisement.

The most common representation of women in media are those where women themselves remain biologically located. Women are not socially situated in these representations, but remain sexually segregated. A challenge to this is important as media presents to us tent and film models of workmen which become models for women.

Yet the beginnings of a change in the situation come from education and positive role models. Education has the potential to reach the greatest number regardless of their
means. Because so much of the world’s population live in situations where access to some kind of media routine, it is by exploiting that these same media that many women would seek to being public education, if only they could get access. There were no voices of dissent against the need for education though some would say it is not the most important locus of change to aim at first.

Women in South Africa and Srilanka said that society and media are intertwined and both must take same responsibility. Almost a chicken and egg situation no one produced a magic formula as to where to start for activists seeking to change the situation. In fact, each society must figure out the responsibility question. Who is responsible for producing the images and regulating them? Who is responsible for making positive changes? Who is responsible for deciding on appropriate content on everyone’s behalf?

There was agreement that women themselves must take some responsibility for the status quo and they have a choice before a new situation can be framed and worked towards.
Finally in all campaigns issues related to freedom of expression were important as well as the need to decide what we want from the media. Is it an accurate portrayal of society's women? Is it a perception of some of our ideals? Do we recognise the right of the individual to choose for them?

**ISSUE AREAS OF PORTRAYAL THAT RAISE CONCERN.**

Images of women are laden with negative content, like images of women as sex objects and housekeepers – television magazines, rock videos etc. At some time it seem that new technologies make possible even more in human standards of beauty and there is more violence and more sexualization of children than before.

This density of images, particularly negative and or violent ones is all the more disturbing given the twin facts that advertising continue to find even more clever methods of entering our lives in schools in politics but also that fewer and fewer control the majority of the information channel.

Sometimes increased use of images of violence being
committed against women is of grave importance. In South Africa today the human rights based constitution and legislation is having little impact on the lives of ordinary women. In fact there is a social aversion to publicly acknowledging violence against women, which in turn reflects by how little attention the media pay to acts of violence against women.

The wider music industry hardly get off lighter, with changes that women are still largely presented as “sexual performers”. As objects and less as talented musicians in their own right. For example what are girls thinking as they pass musicians at festivals and see only men playing instruments? Do they perceive the underlying message? It is important that women be visible as musicians and composes music is a symbol of a type of power and ability to sway groups of people, to capture attention and to create a cohesive and compelling idea. The classical music industry gets no better treatment, when a contribution from Belgium points out that sexualized images of female opera singers are routinely
presented on album covers to guarantee good sales.

One might think given the stupendous growth in the number of women owned business worldwide and the increase in the number of female parliamentarians that we would see concomitantly improved images of women in business and in politics. For it this seems to be no closer to truth than ever. For while they are seeing women in executive positions and in politics in the USA, women are constantly asked about their children (or their interest in becoming a mother) where such questions are not asked of male executives of political candidates.

In Sri Lanka women politicians who emerge from grass roots are derided in their media for their low class and for their dereliction of duties as mothers and wives.

**INNOVATIVE CAMPAIGNS TO PROMOTE CHANGE**

In South Africa a public education campaign to help stop rape was launched on television on billboards, and buses. The television spot proved quite controversial and was pulled from state owned television after a small number of men
complained but returned to the air after agitation on the part of South Africa’s vibrant community of organisations fighting against violence done to women. The campaign was successful in part because the anger and resistance to violence against women is something, which unites South African Women (and many men) regardless of the race. The media on the whole has been educated to share a commitment to revealing the fact that rape is not about race or about women as static a historic object.

In Croatia various street actions were tried by placing large stickers across sexist billboard advertisements, which read “this offends women’s sexism” and “stop”. Results are distributed to schoolteachers, media and government bodies.

India can take lessons from these campaigns to generate mass consciousness for upliftment of women. There have been advertisements during prime time serials and news concerning family.

By contrast all too often the media in a manner depicts those women who do rise to power closely parallel to the
images of other South Asian women leaders. They are usually from a high socio-economic class and society and the media sympathise with these women leaders whose (Male) family member was assassinated or deposed in a coup and encourage them because of the violent situation they have encountered.

In all this, journalist does not get off without criticism particularly female journalist. In situations where there are journalists well placed to report on women’s rights issues, their ability to do so must be considered in context with other relationship that are locally defined. Journalists cannot be criticised for not paying more attention to women’s right issues without also bringing up questions of editorial, political and financial control and personal security.

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