“.... an intelligent, energetic, educated women cannot be kept in four walls - even satin-lined, diamond-studded walls - without discovering sooner or later that they are still a prison cell. No home offers scope enough today for the trained energies of an intelligent modern women.”

Parl S. Buck
Chapter VI
SUMMARY AND MAIN FINDINGS

It is a well known reality that women in the Indian society have never found their rightful place. They have been ill treated, ignored and used as a commodity for ages. The topic under research is the direct fallout of the ill-treatment met out to women in India and the prevalent social situations adverse to women. There is a widespread need for the upliftment and awareness of the women folk, so as to overcome the present hurdles in our nation building and to achieve the long cherished goals of women empowerment. The print media, as such has a stronger impact on women empowerment due to its widespread reach and affordability. The popularity of the print media stems out of its authenticity and reliability, as perceived by common masses, over other mediums.

Women empowerment can be understood as an important tool to bring about the required social changes in the Indian society and the mindset of the people. The word empowerment came into limelight during early 17\textsuperscript{th} century and gained momentum in the course of time. In order to get the rightful place for the Indian women in this 21\textsuperscript{st} century the role of print media has been phenomenal. Empowerment of women can only be achieved through transforming the mental make-up of the women in particular and the society in general. To begin with, the barriers of distorted thinking developed over the centuries to
underestimate the fairer sex, needs to be broken. The progressive growth of a society can be assured through empowering women and in turn strengthening the hands that rock the cradle.

Tracking down the three main historical periods - the ancient, the medieval and the modern in Indian context, the rise and fall of women status stands out clearly. During Vedic age women were treated equal. Manu and his Manu Smriti stated to have given a setback to women’s position in the society and eventually the status began to decline. During Epic age, the women were treated both as virtue and a vice. Later the Buddhist age brought honours and respect to women, while during the Puran age it was again in doldrums. Medieval period witnessed large scale of foreign invasions and women literally had a very hard time.

The pre-independence period saw various reforms like Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Women Reform Movements, Ramakrishna Mission, Indian National Congress and Theosophical Society, all of which denounced the prevailing evils like sati, purdah, child marriage and ill treatment to widows.

It was only after Independence that women actually got an official concurrence of their rights through the Indian Constitution, wherein various Articles specifically defined the equal status of women. A number of legal reforms and Acts have been passed to enhance the status of women in the Indian society. Abolition of Sati Act, 1929, Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, and Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 are some of the revolutionary social legislations introduced in the Indian Constitution. During the initial years of post-
independence, the society continued struggling with evils like dowry, child marriage and female infanticide. The government took various incentives for inclusive and equitable development in the country. The welfare measures in each subsequent five year plans graduated to development plans and finally to the empowerment plans. In this series, the Eleventh Plan (2007-2012) in particular, aims to put an end to multifaceted segregation and prejudices being faced by the women.

At international level, the constitution of commissions, conventions, conferences or treaties by the UN and other bodies has paved ways for salvaging women’s image and their holistic development. The positive outcomes of such initiatives have shown tremendously positive results towards ensuring gender equality and women empowerment.

It is a well acknowledged fact that media has played a very proactive role in highlighting women’s problem and persuading the policy makers to devise ways and means for women development across all nations. The projection of sensitive issues by the media has resulted into a proactive judiciary and accountable bureaucracy. It is a serious responsibility of each one in the media to present a correct picture of women’s role. Over the years there have been technological advances in leaps and bounds. Media too had its share of progress and transformation in to a powerful tool as on date. During the initial years print media and radio were two major modes for media to reach the masses. But with the advent of television and entry of the Internet, the overall situation has greatly transformed. The
impact of media on the general thinking of masses can be gauged from the fact that it has a major say in the national affairs and nobody wants media on their wrong side.

Nevertheless, print media has its own credentials. Due to commercialisation of media, the projection of a women’s image has taken a strong beating both in the electronic as well as the print media. Although there are few channels or newspapers that are battling for the cause of women empowerment and correct image-building of women in the society but their number is negligible. Recent spurt of programs on TV channels have done further damage to the already battered state of women. The media is over commercialised and sensitisation is the order of the day. It goes to any extent to have an upper hand in its viewer’s ratings. Somehow, in our country, print media is still considered to be less biased and more serious about its real business.

To evaluate how the print media is handling the cause of women in the society, the researcher has chosen to go for a content analysis of the four English dailies from this region. At the face value, it seems that the print media has done considerable efforts to the cause, through its dynamic women journalists and by highlighting the government’s schemes. At the same time it needs to be evaluated and emphasised the authenticity of the issues and views presented their in. Against this assumption the present study intends to carry out an exhaustive content analysis of women centered issues in the sampled newspapers to ascertain the veracity of their contents. For the purpose the researcher has examined the contents of
four major newspapers which are being published from Chandigarh. These are – *Hindustan Times, The Times of India, The Tribune* and *The Indian Express*.

The content analysis has been done on the basis of random sampling. The present study has considered four major indicators as given by United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UN ESCAP). These are: a) social indicators in terms of Health (personal, pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, ageing), Violence (domestic, harassment, general, gender-bias, trafficking), Education (general, adult), and Girl-child (education, violence, sex-ratio, foeticide, health, rights); b) Political indicators in terms of rights, law, justice, policy, political, equality, governance, Women Reservation Bill; c) Economic indicators in terms of self-reliance, professionals, achievement; and d) Miscellaneous indicators in terms of international cooperation, sports, celebrity.

The objectives of the present study are:

1. To find the space allocated to women empowerment issues in terms of square centimeters (sq cm).
2. To find the frequency in terms of number and percentage of women empowerment content.
3. To find out the type of treatment given to women empowerment news/views.
4. To know the column-wise coverage, placement of women empowerment issues on different pages, place of origin, generic and source of women empowerment news/views.
MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

After a thorough and detailed study of the four leading dailies from Chandigarh the researcher is of the view that not much has changed for the Indian women in the past few decades. The treatment given to women empowerment issues in print media is with respect to the company’s own gains. As is evident by the importance given to the news/views which is either to sensitise or glamorise the women folk. There has been a very little increase in coverage of women empowerment related issues by most of the newspapers and a lot is desired to be done. In order to do justice to the cause of creating awareness through print media concerted efforts both by the media and the government needs to be in place.

Overall, results of the study revealed inherent diversity of the Indian print media. A broad pattern is reflected in the focus and approach of the four national dailies on women empowerment news/views coverage. There were great variations among the newspapers about the topics covered.

- The total space given to news/views in the four newspapers was 56 per cent in terms of sq cm, whereas the space given to women empowerment news/views was meager 4 per cent and even the total space including pictures was 5.76 per cent only.
- Maximum space coverage to women empowerment issues was given by *The Times of India* and the least coverage was given by *The Indian Express*. 
In terms of space coverage (sq cm), miscellaneous category topped with 48.72 per cent coverage. Wherein, the top contributor was The Times of India with a share of almost 49.57 per cent to the total space coverage of the miscellaneous category.

Further, under miscellaneous, share of women celebrity news/views was maximum with 72.21 per cent. This highlighted the lopsidedness of print media which focused more on women celebrities – models, fashion, Bollywood and Hollywood actors for commercial gains. Women sports news stood second with a poor 18.23 per cent, thereby ignoring the achievements of outstanding sportswomen representing the state or country at various national and international levels. Both women celebrity and women sports news/views were mainly covered by The Times of India. The Indian Express was the main contributor of women equality news/views, but it too gave a meager share of 1.80 per cent. The Tribune gave 0.80 per cent share to women in international cooperation.

The social indicator of women empowerment was ranked second, with a share of 30.20 per cent. It is a known practice to highlight violence against women in order to sensitise and increase sales. It is evident from the fact that violence related news/views against women (36.82 %) was given more space than women education issues (20.94 %), girl child news/views (29.15 %) and women health issues (13.07 %). It seems that the media is blind to the policies and schemes for
women education and girl child declared by the government from time to time, as it rarely found place in any newspaper. Perhaps the reason for non-inclusion of women education news/views, girl child issues or women health news/views was because of these being less appealing in terms of product value for the newspapers. Notwithstanding the above, women health news/views and violence related to women got maximum coverage in *The Times of India* whereas women education issues and girl child news/views were best covered by *The Tribune*.

The social indicator was followed by the political indicator of women empowerment with 15.61 per cent coverage by these national dailies. This very important theme, directly related to women empowerment was inadequately covered by our media fraternity. In a country ruled by a woman president it is both shocking and shameful. Law news related to women got precedence over other sub-categories, followed by women political news/views (23.76 %). Women Reservation Bill issue (1.26 %) and women governance news/views (1.11 %) got least coverage. The struggle and rise of Indian women in political arena requires better treatment and media has an important role to play in the same. Women rights news/views were given maximum coverage by *Hindustan Times* and women law issues were predominantly covered by *The Tribune*. Women policy news/views were given maximum coverage by *The Indian Express*, and *The Times of India* lead in women news/views related to politics.
The economic indicator of women empowerment got the least importance among the four main indicators. The three sub-categories had women achievement issues at first place with 44.68 per cent. Women professional news/views stood at second place with 32.63 per cent and last place was taken by women self-reliant issues with 22.68 per cent. Women professional issues and women self reliant news/views got predominance in *The Times of India* whereas *Hindustan Times* preferred women achievement issues over others.

Space coverage of women pictures has sub-category photos which had maximum coverage of 64.54 per cent followed by ads (31.8%) and cartoons (3.65%). Here again, women celebrity pictures covered more than half of the total coverage of women photos. Thus, glamour proved to be selling more than the idea of sports women or other achievement seekers. The same can be gauged by the latest treatment met out to the national women hockey team.

The frequency of women empowerment news/views was far from encouraging. The total number of news/views in the four newspapers was 36,156 out of which only 1,893 (5.23%) news/views were covered pertaining to women empowerment issues. In newspaper wise comparison, *The Times of India* covered highest number of women empowerment items followed by *Hindustan Times*, *The Tribune* and the least by *The Indian Express*.

The total number of items pertaining to women empowerment in the four newspapers had equally shocking
results. As usual maximum coverage was given to women celebrity issues amounting to whooping 34.49 per cent, ones again a marketing gimmick. Second place was taken by violence related to women news/views with 12.46 per cent, representing run of the mill stories of very less core value. Women sports issues bagged third place with 10.40 per cent. With a country of almost 50 per cent women population, it is really a sad state of affairs to have the women sportsperson being overlooked or not getting adequate coverage. The important policies of the Center and State Governments too got a cold shoulder and contributed to merely 9.50 per cent overall.

- The Constitution of India caters for the well being and upliftment of women by passing various laws and rulings, in order to make the masses aware of them, newspaper is the best medium, but unfortunately these issues got only 5.22 per cent of coverage. Improvement in women education statistics is a challenge for the Indian Government, coverage of mere 4.64% by the print media certainly warrants better treatment. Even after repeated representations for the reservation of women in politics, newspapers covered only 4.44 per cent news on women politicians. Women health news/views got 3.85 per cent of news coverage in the four newspapers which is awfully short of any standards. Needless to say that all other women empowerment sub-categories got such negligible coverage in comparison to women celebrity issues that it’s not even worth mentioning.
In column-wise coverage, digest form covered maximum number of items on women empowerment, followed by two columns. Women empowerment news/views mostly appeared on supplement pages. Under dateline category, women empowerment issues were maximum covered under non-mentioned dateline. Majority of women empowerment issues were published as feature and minimum items of women empowerment were covered in editorial (0.89%). The source of women empowerment news/views was majorly not given. Overall the analysis revealed that the treatment given to women empowerment issues was mainly for general awareness as well as for upliftment of women folk and sensitisation of women empowerment content had few takers.

Among all the parameters *The Times of India* took the lead in publishing maximum number of women empowerment news/views. It is evident that the print media’s primary focus was on the coverage of women celebrity issues and news/views related to violence against women. These two categories contributed nearly half of the women empowerment content in the newspapers studied by the researcher. Secondary coverage was given to news/views on women health, girl child, women education, women sports, women politics and others. There was almost no coverage concerning poverty or the pathetic state of women in villages.
The findings of the study brought out the naked truth that for the media sorority, women empowerment issues are not at all important for the consumption of the readers and also for the sale of the dailies itself. In this bargain the prime duty of the media – to create awareness amongst the masses and in this case to awaken a society for women related issues – is left out in the dark. It is unfortunate that women who constitute nearly half the population of our country are given such low priority. Perhaps this is the reason that over the years the very same topic of women empowerment has been selected by many researchers, including the present one. The statistics speak for themselves which are glaring and requires urgent attention. It is high time that the print media treats this issue seriously or else they end up doing lip service by highlighting women issues only during International Women Day or Girl Child Day or Mother’s Day.

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

1. The print media should put more stress on the issues like dowry, child marriage, female foeticide, rural women, women in poverty and oppression against women rather than focusing on page 3 for their better sales.

2. Media fraternity should be more sensitive in presenting women’s perspective.
3. Strict actions should be taken against media houses who flaunt sexualised images of women in ads to increase their sales.

4. Media planners/government agencies should make amendments in the existing policies or pass new laws for decent representation of women and there should be certain fixed space for women empowerment issues in the newspaper on daily basis.

5. Overall, it is evident that the newspapers have done very little to prove its worth in empowering women but it is also true that they deliver what the readers prefer. Till such time the mindset of the average Indian is changed towards women related issues blaming the media will be futile.