MASS MEDIA, SOCIAL CHANGE AND GENDER RELATIONS IN NORTHEAST INDIA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

ABSTRACT

MOUSHUMI DEY

To
The Department of History
School of Social Sciences
North Eastern Hill University
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Introduction

While the 19th century with its remarkable political, economic and social transformation, ushered the industrial revolution, the development of communication and the mass media of 20th century was an outcome of a number of inventions, such as the telephone, telegraph followed by the press, the radio and television all an outcome of the industrial upheaval of the previous century.[1] This rapid advance of communication technology during the past few decades has greatly extended the connections between individuals and has bound women and men much more closely.[2] Perhaps that is why it has been said that of all the changes that has affected the quality of human life; none has had a larger direct impact on human consciousness and social behaviour than the rise of communication technology.[3] Scholars have laid emphasis on the technological development of mass communication and have also underscored its role in creating a common set of values and attitudes in thousands or millions of people at any given time who are constantly exposed to it. They have opined that besides other societal institutions such as the family, peer groups, school and church, mass media being easily accessible are attended by a large group of people, and therefore play the role of teaching and reinforcing social values.[4] Marshall McLuhan a Sociologist, ascribes the impact of mass communication to have turned the world to a "global village" whereby countries of the world are closer to each other because of the advances in mass communication.[5] The role of the media he reiterates is so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical and social consequences that they leave no part of us "untouched, unaffected or unaltered." In short the "medium is the message."[6] Because of its unique ability to reach simultaneous audiences of varied size, status, areas, the speed of transmitting messages, and its ability of breaking down barriers and easy accessibility, mass

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[1] Kamlesh Mahajan, *Communication and Society*, New Delhi, 1990, pp.61-62.

[2] Peter C. Goldmark, "Communication and the Community", in Dennis Flanagan (ed.), *Communication*, San Francisco, 1972.

[3] George Gerbner, "Communication and Social Environment", in Dennis Flanagan (ed.), *Communication*, San Francisco, 1972, p. 37.

[4] Elizebeth M.Perse, *Media Effects and Society,* London, 2001, p. 164.

[5] Marshal McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, London, 2001.

[6] Marshal McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message*, Corte Madera, 2001, pp.8-26.

media is said to be responsible for building public opinion, bringing social order and social change.[7]

Social scientists have always had it as their ambition to discover which factors are the most important in inducing social change. Though there is yet to evolve a commonly acceptable framework for the study of social change but there appears to be a general consensus amongst a large number of scholars that change is an essential feature of all societies which has been occurring in different forms from the beginning of human society. It has been viewed as a multi-pronged process of transformation in the behaviour, attitudes and practices of individuals or groups in a society either through diffusion or through integration of cultures which may result in either complete or partial change of the existing social order. The change in practices and attitudes of the people can affect the functioning of organisations and institutions in a society over a short or long period of time and the result of such change may lead to either marginal or comprehensive development or decay in the structure of society or behaviour of the people. But having said this we also need to understand, in what manner and form has changes occurred in societies and how has it affected both the sexes in society. Does the process of social change that affects social order impact all sections of society specially women the same way? Feminist scholarship questioned this lacunae in the explanations of social change and laid bare the existence of gender differences in every facet of society and felt that age old gender roles have been maintained by institutionalising many of the myths and taboos to norms and beliefs which have further strengthened the sex and gender divide in society. The rise in consciousness also brought forward the prevalence of customary practices along with patriarchal values and other retarding elements in the Indian social system too for the secondary position of women in society. Scholars like Maria Mies while rejecting the idea of the existence of emancipated status of women questioned the validity of the liberated position of women for all strata of society. She underlined the fact that for an effective change to take place there has to be a broader change in the role distribution in the family, a fundamental change in the social reality, a change in consciousness not only among men but also in women

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[7] *Ibid.,* p.26.

who still adhere to the sex based division of labour within the family and outside.[8] To bring about change, while it is necessary to remember that there are material bases of that change, yet a change of attitudes and social values is significant and information could be a major tool for social transformation in India and in this transformation the mass media plays the role of an important instrument of social change.[9] It has also been felt that mass media with its large reach can produce substantial innovative impact playing the role of introducing novel ideas in societies that could bring subtle effects upon ideologies and values.[10]

The importance of information and its transmission has been known to societies from very early times. In India kings and rulers in the early and medieval period had heavily relied on the messengers and informers to keep themselves abreast with the activities of their kingdom. Later the print media was utilised by the East India Company to further the company's interest. Social reformers beginning from Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Bal Gangadhar Tilak to Mahatma Gandhi through their newspapers and journals tried to promote national consciousness and were a great force to reckon with.[11] The mass media, however, not only includes the print media of newspapers, magazines, books, but also the broadcast media of the radio, television and the movies. After the country's Independence in 1947, among the available mass media, radio was quickly developed into an effective and truly national service.[12] Broadcasting from its experimental service in 1927 was expanded and by 1936 All India Radio (AIR) began formally as a government organisation with clear objectives to inform, educate and entertain the masses.[13] Besides AIR another medium of communication as an audio visual broadcasting medium is Doordarshan (DD) one of the largest broadcasting organisations in the world in

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[8] Maria Mies, *Indian Women and Patriarchy*, New Delhi, 1980, pp.289-294.

[9] Arpita Singh, "Women, Media and Communication-Problems and Prospects" in J.L Singh, K.Gaur and Ravi Kumar Pandey (ed.), *Communication and Social Transformation,* New Delhi, 2000, p. 280, C. Christopher, *Dynamics of Journalism Vol. 3,* New Delhi, 1997, p.198.

[10] Hugh Mackay, "New Media and Time-Space Reconfiguration" in Tim Jordan and Steve Pile (ed.), *Social Change*, Oxford, 2002, p. 151.

[11] For more detail on this see amongst others P.L Malhan, *Communication Media: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, New Delhi, 1985, B.Kuppuswamy and Narendra Basu*, Communication and Social Development*, New Delhi, 1976, Naval Prabhakar and Narendra Basu, *Mass Media and Society*, New Delhi, 2007.

[12] Jan R. Hakemulder, et.al, *Radio and TV Journalism*, New Delhi, 1998, p.1.

[13] Naval Prabhakar and Narendra Basu, *op.cit.,* p. 6.

terms of infrastructure, transmitters, software and viewership and which started its experimental telecast in Delhi on 15th September 1959.[14] Both these mediums also have a high coverage in Northeast India in terms of population and area.

Despite changes, decadent norms and beliefs still guides societies and these traditional beliefs often come in the way of healthy social growth and especially to the progress of women. Feminist activists and scholars believe that for a real and perceivable social change a change in the pernicious patriarchal structure of society that demarcates roles and rights of women and men needs to be addressed. The mass media has been considered to be one of the important vehicles of social change and it is in this context we need to understand the role of the two public service broadcasters of AIR and DD and its social responsibility in effecting change in society through its various programmes over its long years of existence. Being the largest broadcasting medium of the world in terms of area and population, the question of its social responsibility in imparting the right information at the right time to the right groups or individuals becomes important. To understand this role the gender content of its varied programmes in effecting change and in removing decadent patriarchal norms, beliefs and traditions that often go against the wellbeing of women need an in-depth understanding. If social change is the change in attitudes and practices by individuals and groups in society and has been an integral part of human condition, then it is vital to understand what has been the role of this vehicle, the largest public broadcaster in facilitating this change. The focus of the present work is therefore on the electronic media with special reference to the Northeast states of India. In respect of the latter the focus is on the AIR and DD because as stated earlier these two public broadcasters have the widest coverage both in terms of area and population.

Statement of the problem

Though there is a unanimity amongst scholars that societies have been a changing one which in contemporary period have accelerated because of the progress of technology and modern communication causing rapid changes all over the world but in all these explanation the question of women as a separate or

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[14] *Ibid.,* p.68.

inclusive entity, their roles and the impact of social change have been sidelined almost as if women had no historical role in the process of social change. But the understanding of social change remains incomplete if we fail to recognise the gender dimension of social change. Feminist writers have pointed out that it is not enough to elucidate social change but in this elucidation there should also be the critiquing of the dominant values, customs and regressive traditions that can further the process of social change. It is the erasure of such gender based detriments in society for a just social order through a process of social change by the various mechanisms and tools of societal upliftment that brings in the role of mass communication in such a process. Though there are other medium of social change like education, religion, planned legislations but with the developments in mass communication technology the sphere of communication has widened providing the transmission of information to newer areas reaching larger individuals and groups to help achieve mutual understanding.[15] This rapid advance of communication technology of the 20th century of the telephone, telegraph, press, radio and the television greatly extended communication affecting social behaviour to a large extent. Because of these varied advantages mass media is considered as one of the most significant medium having the potential to bring far reaching affects on people's lives. Because mass media is seen as instruments of social change we also need to understand what has been its role in the process of social change and sensitising the masses on crucial gender concerns. As stated above India had known the importance of mass communication from early times and its potential has been harnessed at different periods of history. Both the public service broadcasters of the country, AIR and DD have a long history of broadcasting with the objective to 'inform, educate and entertain' the masses through its programmes to a large area and population of the country. As both AIR and DD have a high coverage, it is necessary to examine the actual difference that their gender specific and general programmes can make in terms of social change and the position of women. In this regard the history and role of AIR and DD in Northeast India and their contribution to social change in terms of their programmes in addressing inequality and gender bias in society also becomes important. The issue therefore is to assess what role the mass media can play in social change.

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[15] Kamlesh Mahajan, *Communication and Society*, New Delhi, 1990, p.69.

The period for the study of AIR programmes cannot be a fixed one due to a technical problem. This problem arose because of the fact that the AIR archives though has been in the process of being digitised since 2001 but the recordings preserved consist mostly of Music, Spoken word, Interviews with eminent persons, Radio Dramas, and Radio Autobiographies of very important personalities from various walks of life. Other programmes based on social and current issues broadcast on an everyday basis have a brief shelf life and erased within a short span of time. Therefore the period of study is from its inception and the programmes reviewed under various categories for this study is mostly current programmes but having a long history of broadcasting. The period of study for DD programmes reviewed were from 1984 to 2007. The starting point of our analysis is July 1984 because that marks the turning point of television viewing in the country as Doordarshan started commissioning one transmitter everyday for a period of four months, which helped increase DD coverage over a large area and population. Further it was also in the early 1980's that Doordarshan had its transition from black and white to colour Television (TV) and began the live coverage format of transmission. The year 2007 has been kept the cut off year as it was by this period that the satellite cable TV made its inroads in most states of the Northeast and there was an array of channels for the viewers to choose from apart from the state run DD channels.

Review of Literature

In trying to understand social change, gender relations and electronic media in Northeast India and a review of the existing works, an effort has been made on our part to classify them on six main approaches that the authors have adopted to study these.

A great many works have been done by authors on social change from the sociological and anthropological perspective explaining the theoretical and conceptual understanding of it from historical times to the present ongoing change of today. Among the available materials mention may be made of the works by K.S. Mathur, B.R.K. Shukla and Banvir Singh, in *Studies in Social Change*[16], Piotr Sztom

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[16] K.S. Mathur, B.R.K Shukla and Banvir Singh (eds.), *Studies in Social Change*, Lucknow, 1973.

in *The Society of Social Change*,[17] B.Kuppuswamy in *Social Change in India*[18] and others have studied the theories of social change from the Revolutionary or Marxian concept of social change which emphasises the importance of class conflict, political struggle and Imperialism as the principal instruments of fundamental structural changes specially in societies of the 19th century, or the evolutionary theories that perceived social change to connote basic stages of a society's development from simple, rural, agrarian to a more complex, differentiated industrial-urban one either through unilinear or ordered nature of social change or a change through the Darwinian's concept that stresses on the adaptive and survival capacity of the fittest. The above concept of social change has been lucidly explained by Sushila Ramaswamy.[19] While explaining social change and social structures, Robert K. Merton in *Social Theory and Social Structures* argues that social change not only has functional or positive effect but also dysfunctional or negative effect for the social system. Wilbert E. Moore in the work *Social Change*[20] while dwelling on the theory of social change has concluded that it was not uniquely a modern phenomenon as some kind and degree of change has been a universal human experience. Bryce F. Ryan in *Social and Cultural Change* has also dealt with the diverse forces and processes through which socio-cultural system undergoes modification and transformation. Steven Vago in the work *Social Change*[21] explains the complete concept and theory of social change and has concluded that social change as a process is not a uniquely new phenomenon but an inevitable process in human nature, society and culture. Tim Jorden and Steve Pile (eds.) while explaining the causes and effects of social change in their work *Social Change*[22] have given the sociological approaches to social change and its changing process from industrial to information society of today. The work also explores the ways in which different societies and their life styles, politics, economies and culture came into existence and in turn changed again. A great many Indian authors have also worked on social change and given an Indian perspective to social change. M.N. Srinivas in his work

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[17] Piotr Sztom, *The Society of Social Change*, Oxford, 1993.

[18] B.Kuppuswamy, *Social Change in India*, New Delhi, 1986.

[19] Sushila Ramaswamy, *Political Theory: Ideas and Concepts*, New Delhi, 2003.

[20] Wilbert E. Moore, *Social Change*, New Delhi, 1975.

[21] Steven Vago, *Social Change*, New Jersey, 1980.

[22] Tim Jordan and Steve Pile (eds.), *Social Change*, Oxford, 2002.

India: Social Structures,[23] while explaining the nature of social change, has used terms like Sanskritization and Westernization to explain the multi-fold changes in the Indian scene. Raghuvir Sinha in *Social Change in Indian Society*[24] while borrowing heavily from Srinivas's concept of social change in the Indian context has also underscored the importance of western education, emancipation of women, growth of modern technology, social mobility towards industrial, urban settings, and political consciousness as the main principles of social change in India. P.C. Joshi in his work *Culture Communication and Social Change*[25] stresses on cultural communication which in turn can lead to development, national integration and communication revolution. While all these works have conceptualised social change broadly and lucidly but the impact and effects of social change into the lives of women constituting half of the population of the world have been left out. If social change indeed is a historical process involving a change also in behaviour, attitudes and customs in society then one also needs to look if social change has indeed brought such a transformation in the society and helped the women and their position in society. Change cannot be called social if it does not alter society and women constituting a significant part of it. What therefore also needs a focus is social change in the context of women and their position from historical to the present day of today.

There are a number of works on Feminist themes based on the descriptive and analytical roles of women in society. In fact the study of women's history and the role of women in the past and the present towards shaping the society are now being taken considerable interest by scholars than before. It has infact emerged from the world wide interest in the condition of women and the concerted efforts on the part of women's groups and women's liberation movement to familiarise people on the issues of women's problems. This shift in emphasis and the growing interest in the writing of history from the perspective of the role of women in the political, economic and cultural changes in the society have resulted in a large number of scholars who have concentrated on the question of women's history. The issues relating to gender conflict and subordination in a male dominated society is also

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[23] M.N. Srinivas, *India: Social Structures*, Delhi, 1980.

[24] Raghuvir Sinha, *Social Change in Indian Society*, Bhopal, 1975.

[25] P.C. Joshi, *Culture Communication and Social Change*, New Delhi, 1989.

gradually being taken into consideration. Among the available works that have taken up the study of women, their problems and their role in society mention maybe made of Simone De Beauvoir[26], Kate Millet[27], Vandana Shiva[28], Shamim Aleem[29], Kanwar Sonali and Jolly Wadhwa[30], Kamla Bhasin[31], Kum Kum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid[32], Robert A. Rathman[33], Linda Kauffan (ed.)[34], C. Kalbagh (ed.)[35], Rekha Pandey and Neelam Upadhya[36], Rehana Ghadially (ed.)[37], J.P. Singh (ed.)[38] and others. The work by Loudes Beneria and Savitri Bisnath on *Gender and Development: Theoretical, Empirical and Practical Approaches*[39], highlights the role of rural women and their condition in Indian society. Francis Banner, Lizbeth Goodman, Richard Allen, Linda Janes and Catherine King (eds.)[40] in their work *Imagining Women: Cultural Representation and Gender* have studied the two inter disciplinary areas of women's studies and cultural studies which is stated to be complimentary. The work also looks into the representation of women in different walks of society which is still judged, valued or criticized within the patriarchal cultures and its norms. While championing the rights of woman Mary Wollstonecraft, advocated passionately of educational and social equality for women. In her work '*A Vindication of the Rights of Women: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*' written in 1792, illustrates the limitations that women's deficient educations have placed on them and categorically stated that females from their infancy were taught to follow the examples of their mothers to be obedient,

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[26] Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, New Delhi, 1994.

[27] Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics*, Chicago, 2000.

[28] Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India*, New Delhi, 1988.

[29] Shamim Aleem, *Women's Development: Problems and Prospects*, New Delhi, 1996.

[30] Kanwar Sonali and Jolly Wadhwa, *Gender: A Cross Cultural Perspective*, New Delhi, 2000.

[31] Kamla Bhasin, *Understanding Gender*, New Delhi, 2000.

[32] Kum Kum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds.), *Recasting Women: Essay's in Colonial History*, New Delhi, 1989.

[33] Robert A. Rathman, *Inequality and Stratification: Class Colour and Gender*, New Jersey, 1993.

[34] Linda Kauffan (ed.), *Gender and Theory: Dialogues on Feminist Critics*, Oxford, 1989.

[35] C.Kalbagh (ed.), *Women's Struggles for Equality and Emancipation*, New Delhi, 1992.

[36] Rekha Pandey and Neelam Upadhya, *Women in India: Past and Present*, Allahabad, 1990.

[37] Rehana Ghadially (ed.), *Women in Indian Society: A Reader*, New Delhi, 1988.

[38] J.P. Singh (ed.), *The Indian Women: Myth and Reality*, New Delhi, 1996.

[39] Loudes Beneria and Savitri Bisnath (eds.), Gender *and Development: Theoretical, Empirical and Practical Approaches* Vol. 1, United Kingdom, 2001.

[40] Frances Banner, et.al (eds.), *Imagining Women: Cultural Representation and Gender,* Cambridge, 1995.

gentle and modest which will obtain them the protection of men. While dismissing such reasoning wished women to endeavour to acquire strength both mind and body.[41] Maria Mies in her work *Indian Women and Patriarchy*[42] on the other hand looks into the Indian version of patriarchy and its inherent contradiction. She states that though women have been idealized as 'divine mother' as '*Shakti*' as embodiment of virtues, but her day to day experience has been that of suffering, deprivation, harassment, battering and dependence for most women. Angela Miles and Geraldine Finn (eds.) in their work *From Pressure to Politics*[43] brings out the important contribution to women's studies by feminist scholars. The essays in the book while dealing with the feminist theory delves into the fundamental question of theory and practice, the relationship between the world of academia and the world of activism, while Sushma Yadav and Anil Dutta Mishra's work *Gender Issues in India*[44] looks into the gender dynamics in India especially with reference to law, society, religion, culture, economy and democratic polity. Bina Agarwal in her work *A Field of One's Own*[45] while examining subordination of women takes up the case study of land rights and gender relations in South Asia. She reveals that not only do women lack ownership in land but also the lack of control over property which constricts women further into subordination and dominance. Gerder Lerner in her work, *The Creation of Patriarchy*[46], while theorising the nature of female subordination attributed it to women's relationship to history and the systematic exclusion of women in patriarchy and the male dominated society. Sharmila Rege in her work, *Sociology of Gender*[47] has brought out the conceptual issues of Feminism and also women's role in different social institutions such as the family, school and the work place. Thus while there are a number of works on women's struggle, status, rights, roles, participation and exclusion throughout the historical process upto this day from various aspects of society which is helpful to the understanding of women

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[41] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects,* 3rd Edition, printed for J.Johnson No 72, St' Paul's Church, 1796, pp. 6-33.

[42] Maria Mies*, Indian Women and Patriarchy*, New Delhi, 1980.

[43] Angela Miles and Geraldine Finn (eds.), *Feminism from Pressure to Politics*, New Delhi, 2002.

[44] Sushma Yadav and Anil Dutta Mishra, *Gender Issues in India*, New Delhi, 2003.

[45] Bina Agarwal, *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*, New York, 1994.

[46] Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, New York, 1986.

[47] Sharmila Rege, (ed.), *Sociology of Gender: The Challenges of Feminist Sociological Knowledge*, New Delhi, 2003.

and their struggle for equality, but in trying to put back women to history and her rightful place in society we also need to explore the means through which this can become possible. If mass media is a powerful means of communication in the world of today, then we also need to take a look at the role played by the mass communication towards the emancipation and empowerment of women, and especially in terms of gender equality and gender justice. We also need to study if media only glamorized women and portrayed their stereotypical sex roles or has it played a more productive role into sensitising women towards their rights and roles. In most works of feminist scholarship however there appears to be an absence of scholarly research in this area, particularly in the context of the mass media and gender relations in India. The absence of this scholarly research needs an in depth study.

There are also works on women and media, and among other works mention may be made of Carolyn M. Byerly and Karen Ross[48], Cynthia M. Lont[49], Sue Thorham and James Hogg[50], Pamela J. Creedon and Judith Cramer[51], Liesbet Van Zoonen[52], Pooja Kateria[53] and others. These works have mostly studied the changing roles, struggles and impact of women in the media and provides insights into women's roles in newspapers, women's magazines, in advertising, television entertainments etc. Though it is important to discuss the roles, participation and portrayal of women in both the print and specially the electronic media but studies on the contribution of the media to the emancipation and empowerment of women is also crucial. In this regard the role of women in society as reflected through the media may also be beneficial. Studies into these areas would also help the media to improve its approach, content and functioning. Highlighting women's needs through the media can also ensure the true essence and ideals of a Public Service Broadcaster. In a country where governmental plans and programmes meant for the targeted groups and women, often remain non-implementable due to lack of knowledge and information, the Public Service Broadcaster keeping its socio-

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[48] Carolyn M. Byerly and Karen Ross, *Women and Media: A Critical Introduction*, Oxford, 2006.

[49] Cynthia M. Lont, *Women and Media: Content, Careers and Criticism*, 1995.

[50] Sue Thorham and James Hogg, *Women Feminism and Media*, Edinburg, 2007.

[51] Pamela J. Creedon and Judith Cramer, *Women in Mass Communication*, New Delhi, 2007.

[52] Liesbet Van Zoonen, *Feminist Media Studies*, New Delhi, 1994.

[53] Pooja Kateria, *Women and Media: Changing Roles: Struggles and Impact*, New Delhi, 2007.

economic ideals of education, information and entertainment can contribute more meaningfully towards this endeavour, and a study of this role of the media can benefit both the media and the various social groups including women in the society at large. The absence of works on this aspect of the media being a contributor to being an agency of social change and specially a facilitator of healthy change in society especially in the position of women needs a fillip.

The general works on communication and mass media have either studied the theory and concept of mass communication itself or its effects on society with a few works and papers mentioning either the projection of women in television or the role that women have played in media. Besides others mention may be made of a few available works by P.C Chatterji[54], Marshall McLuhan[55], Wilber Schramm,[56] P.H.Malhan[57], S.R. Sharma and Anil Chaturvedi[58], C. Chrisopher[59] , Jan R. Halemulder, Fay A.C. de Jonge and P.P.Singh[60], R.N. Kiran[61] , Chanchal Sarkar[62] , S.Ganesh[63], and others. Arvind Singh and Everett M.Rogers in their work *India's Information Revolution*[64] have stressed on the development of mass communication as the main paradigm for overall development, and felt that for mass communication to be a tool for development the up-gradation of the hardware equipment, satellite television etc are equally important. K.B. Dutta in the work *Mass Communication: Theory and Practice*[65] deals with the concept, functions, and aims of mass communication. The author also felt that communication being the basic part of individual life and organisational existence it is therefore important to harness the mass media for education, family welfare, health and nutrition. R. N. Acharya in the

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[54] P.C Chatterji, *Broadcasting in India*, New Delhi, 1991.

[55] Marshall McLuhan, et.al, *The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects*, Corle Mandera, 1967.

[56] Wilber Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication*, New York, 1987.

[57] P.H. Malhan, *Communication Media: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, New Delhi, 1985.

[58] S.R. Sharma and Anil Chaturvedi (eds.) *The Future of Mass Communication*, New Delhi, 1986.

[59] C. Christopher, *Dynamics of Journalism* Vol. 3, New Delhi, 1997.

[60] Jan R. Hakemulder, et.al, *Radio and TV Journalism*, New Delhi, 1998.

[61] R.N. Kiran, *Philosophies of Communication and Media* Ethics: *Theory, Concepts and Empirical Issues*, New Delhi, 2000.

[62] Chanchal Sarkar, *Challenge and Stagnation: The Indian Mass Communication*, New Delhi, 1969.

[63] S. Ganesh, *Studies in Modern Mass Media Communication*, New Delhi, 2001.

[64] Arvind Singhal and Everett M. Rogers*, India's Information Revolution*, New Delhi, 1989.

[65] K.B. Dutta, *Mass Communication: Theory and Practice*, New Delhi, 2005.

work *Television in India*[66] elucidated the role of television in India since its inception, its policy, role, functioning and growth of this important visual medium. Denis McQuial in his work *Mass Communication Theory*[67] has looked into the definition, theories, functions and different approaches to the study of mass communication. Marshall McLuhan in his path breaking work *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*[68], has studied the origin, development and the significance of the media which he considered an extensions of man turning the whole world into a global village. John Vivian in the work *Media and Mass Communication*[69] which is divided into three parts looks into the theory and the effects of media. It gives a narrative of the fundamental area of the mass communication discipline. Howard Davis and Paul Walton in their work *Language, Image and Media* (eds.)[70] brings out the different ways of expression by both the print, electronic, advertising and photography media which be it in the form of speech, pictures, texts, stills or moving pictures speaks the same language and is an expression of structuring and re-enforcing social and political relationships. All these works have definitely contributed towards a better understanding of the concept, role and significance of mass communication and helped to shape up the background towards the study of the topic concerned. While it is important to understand the meaning and significance of communication, but at the same time it is also necessary to look into the importance of mass communication for the social system and the media dependency on the conditions and social process or the inter dependency of mass media and other social institutions and the consequences of the inter dependence**.**

A large number of scholars have worked on mass communication and the effects of information on society and the social responsibility of mass media. Rural poverty elevation, education, and the media's influence on society have also been stressed by most scholars as being the primary responsibility of the media. The changed life style with information reaching the homes and the impact and

[66] R.N. Acharya, *Television in India*, Delhi, 1987.

[67] Denis McQuial, *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*, New Delhi, 1983.

[68] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, London, 1964.

[69] John Vivian, *Media and Mass Communication*, Boston, 1993.

[70] Howard Davis and Paul Walton (eds.), *Language, Image and Media*, London, 1983.

revolution of technology in communication and the effects of such changes especially among the children and young generation have been noted by many scholars in their works. Among other works mention may be made of Richard Collins[71], David G. Clark and William B. Blakengurg[72] , Lyn Govman and David Mclean[73], Arthur Asa Berger[74], Charles A. Siepmann[75], Charles Atkin and Lawrence Wallock (eds.)[76], Paul Hartmann, B.R. Patil & Anita Dighe[77], Suresh Chandra Sharma[78], Kanwar B.Mathur[79], R.K. Ravindran[80], Kanvar Chauhan[81]. Sandra J. Ball Rokeach and Murial G. Cantor in their work *Media Audience and Social Structure*[82] have approached the issue of communication and mass media from the sociological perspective and the need to take mass communication into account in addressing major sociological issues on social order and social change. Mukta Gupta in the work *Women, Child Welfare and Media*[83] also underscores the role and responsibility of mass communication to convey information and opinion for cultural transmission and cultural change. Hema Agarwal in her work *Society, Culture and Mass Communication*[84] sheds light into the history, growth perception and role of journalists in the profession of journalism in India. Kamlesh Mahajan, in his work *Communication and Society*[85] has studied the concept, method and the issues between the mass communication and the social system. It also deals with the impact of television on society, modernisation among girls, development of women and

[71] Richard Collins, *Media, Culture and Society: A Critical Reader*, London, 1986.

[72] David G.Clark and William B.Blakengurg, *You and Media: Mass Communication and Society*, San Francisco, 1973.

[73] Lyn Govman and David Mclean, *Media and Society in the Twentieth Century: A Historical Introduction*, London, 2003.

[74] Arthur Asa Berger, *Media and Society: A Critical Perspective*, New York, 2003.

[75] Charles A. Siepmann, *Radio, Television and Society*, New York, 1950.

[76] Charles Atkin and Lawrence Wallock (eds.), *Mass Communication and Public Health: Complexities and Conflict*, New Delhi, 1990.

[77] Paul Hartmann, et.al, *Mass Media and Village Life: An Indian Study*, Delhi, 1986.

[78] Suresh Chandra Sharma, *Media Communication and Development*, Jaipur, 1987.

[79] Kanwar B.Mathur, *Communication for Development and Social Change*, New Delhi, 1994.

[80] R.K. Ravindran, *Media and Society*, New Delhi, 1999.

[81] Kanvar Chauhan, *Television and Social Transformation: A Study of Mass Communication*, New Delhi, 2001.

[82] Sandra J. Ball, Rokeach and Murial G. Cantor, *Media Audience and Social Structure*, New Delhi, 1986.

[83] Mukta Gupta, *Women, Child Welfare and Media*, New Delhi, 2000.

[84] Hema Agarwal, *Society, Culture and Mass Communication*, New Delhi, 1995.

[85] Kamlesh Mahajan, *Communication and Society*, New Delhi, 1990.

political behaviour. Aimee Dorr in her work *Television and Children*[86] debates and has shed light on the social issue of television's content and its effects on children's wellbeing. J.L. Singh, K.Gaur, and Ravi Kumar Pandey (eds.) in *Communication and Social Transformation*[87] have through a collection of papers presented by various scholars examined the relationship between communication and social transformation in the rural-urban society in India. Naval Prabhakar and Narendra Basu in *Mass Media and Society*[88] besides bringing to light the historical growth of mass media in India also elucidates the influence of Internet on society and the role of mass media in a democratic country like India. In Vir Bala Agarwal's *Media and Society: Challenges and Opportunities* (ed.) [89] a number of papers presented by various scholars discuss issues related to media and social responsibility, communication technology, media in conflict situations and other aspects of media and development. The thrust of most of the papers are on the contemporary media scenario and the use of technology like Internet, and computers, and the strength and weakness of online journalism. In all these works the role and responsibility of media towards women hardly finds a mention. If media is a facilitator and a contributor of social growth than it is equally important to look at the deeper level to understand if this growth has kept women and their needs to sight and also how well such growth has been received by women themselves.

There is a glaring lack of works devoted to the growth and role of the mass media as well as media and social change in Northeast India. There are a handful of available works on this aspect and a mention may be made of a few works including that of Shashi Ahluvalia (ed.)[90], Udayan Misra[91], and O.L Snaitang.[92] Mary Harriet[93], and the unpublished work of Monideepa Sen[94] while bringing out the

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[86] Aimee Dorr, *Television and Children*, New Delhi, 1986.

[87] J.L. Singh, et.al (eds.), *Communication and Social Transformation*, New Delhi, 2000.

[88] Naval Prabhakar and Narendra Basu, *Mass Media and Society*, New Delhi, 2007.

[89] Vir Bala Agarwal (ed.), *Media and Society: Challenges and Opportunities*, New Delhi, 2003.

[90] Shashi Ahluvalia (ed.), *Social and Economic Development in Northeast India*, Delhi, 1986.

[91] Udayan Misra, *Northeast India: Quest for Identity, a Collection of Essays on Socio-Political Topics*, Guwahati, 1988.

[92] O.L. Snaitang, Christianity *and Social Change in Northeast India: A Study Among the Khasi-Jaintia Hill Tribes of Meghalaya,* Calcutta, 1993.

[93] Mary Harriet, *Role of Television in Social Change: A Study on Rural Meghalaya*, New Delhi, 2013.

social role and responsibility of the electronic media, has not touched on the social role of the electronic media in gender sensitization. Thus these few available works have not gone into deeper levels of understanding social change in Northeast India particularly in terms of gender relations and the importance of the mass media in that context. The growth of the media in this part of the country also has hardly found a deeper analysis or research and there is a near absence of study on the social role and contribution of the mass media in Northeast India. Although there are plenty of works studying the geographical, political, economic and social life and problems of the various tribes of the Northeast, but mass communication and its social role has been almost overlooked. If area and case studies could be taken up to study the role of the media in social transformation in the rest of the country surely this can also be looked into in this part of the country as well. Apart from departmental survey of AIR and DD on the response of their programmes very little in-depth work has been taken up from the academic view point to understand the connection between mass communication and its impact on women in Northeast India. It would be greatly beneficial to the policy makers, organisations of mass media and the student communities to get a broader and complete picture of the whole mass media scenario in the Northeast India as well, particularly in the context of social change and gender relations.

<u>Objective of the work</u>

The objective of this work is to study the history and the growth of the mass media specially the electronic media in the context of understanding social change and gender relations. As mass media has a very big canvas the study has therefore been delimited to AIR and DD in Northeast India because these have the widest viewership. The work will seek to analyse how gender sensitive have the two public broadcasters been and what kind of changes in values and social norms has it envisaged through its programmes in AIR's over 80 years and DD's over 60 years of existence.

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[94] Monideepa Sen, "Social Aspects of Mass Media: A Study of Television Coverage in Meghalaya", 1988,Unpublished M.Phil dissertation, North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong.

Data and Methodology

Primary data comprise of All India Radio and Doordarshan records, of programmes and archival materials of tapes and recordings over a period of time. Newspaper reports, commentaries in books and journals comprise the secondary data.

The work adopted the Historical approach to assess the process of social change in Northeast India and the evolution of the AIR and DD. It has undertaken a gender analysis of the programmes of AIR and DD. Gender analysis here implies an examination of the gender content of the programmes in terms of (1) their utility for women in understanding their social position and (2) raising general social awareness of both the sexes in the context of patriarchy.

Organisation: the work has been organised into the following chapters:

Chapter-1 *Introduction*

The chapter introduces the concept and the background of the entire work. The discussion is on the importance of social change, the study of gender and the relevance of mass communication. This has been detailed through an in-depth review and critique of existing literature.

Chapter-2 *Conceptualising Social Change, Gender and the Media*

This chapter attempts a conceptual background of the entire work and inter links social change, gender and the mass media. Though there is yet to evolve a commonly acceptable framework for the study of social change but the quest to make sense of social change, the direction, the specific ways and the forces that create change has been going on for a number of years among social scientists. Natural, demographic, political, economic, technological, cultural, and religious are deduced to be the primary rationale of social change. In recent times new forces of change, namely advanced information technology, globalization, capitalist production, consumerism and the proliferation of the market economy have all played a role in accelerating the process of social transformation causing rapid changes all over the world which have not only altered the way of life of the people

in the urban metropolitan areas but also brought in a social transformation in the rural economy and the social structure. Inspite of multi-faceted explanation of social change yet there is a general consensus amongst a large number of scholars that change is an essential feature of all societies which has been occurring in different form from the beginning of human society. Change can either be partial without major alteration of the complete system and without jeopardizing the stability and continuity of the state as a whole or there may also be a complete change in the system, producing a new system fundamentally different from the old one. But whether partial or a complete change in its structure and functioning what is an accepted view is that society cannot exist in its static state. While understanding social change the chapter also critically evaluates the absence of the gender dimension to the understanding of social change. Gender as we understand is the social division and cultural distinction between women and men as well as characteristics commonly associated with femininity and masculinity. The chapter details the new knowledge system of the feminist scholarship that not only challenged the existing social order and the new forces like 'freedom' 'equality' 'liberty' released by the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution but the questioning of the inferior position of women under patriarchal values and norms. Scholars ranging from Mary Wollstonecraft in '*A Vindication of the Rights of Women: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*' way back in 1792 and Simone De Beauvoir in her work *'Second Sex'* , to Bina Agarwal and Uma Chakravarti in recent years had voiced their strong opinion on the existence of segregated societies and opined that history has shown that men always kept in their hands all concrete powers and deliberately kept woman in a state of dependence thus establishing her as the 'other' which suited the interests of the males. Scholars tried to bridge the understanding of social change and that of gender roles. Thus while social change has been an integral part of human condition and is a continuous process, but in all these explanation the question of women as a separate or inclusive entity, have been sidelined almost as if women had no role in history and in the process of social change. It is the erasure of such gender based detriments in society for a just social order through a process of social change that brings in the role of the mass communication in such a process. Though there are other medium of social change like education, religion, planned legislations but with the developments in

mass communication technology the sphere of communication has widened providing the transmission of information to newer areas reaching larger individuals and groups to help achieve mutual understanding. It is this wide reach of the media today that makes it one of the most significant medium having the potential to bring far reaching affects on people's lives. How much has been the social role of AIR and DD the two public broadcasters to bring in a change of mindset in society has been understood further as we tried to understand the history and functioning of both the organisations and their contribution through their varied programmes to social change and in removing gender inequality and gender bias in society in the next two chapters of the work.

Chapter-3 *Sound and Substance: All India Radio in Northeast India-A History*

This chapter traces the history of radio broadcasting in India in the context of social change. The introduction of radio in the country and the Northeast cannot be delineated without outlining the interesting world-wide advances in radio technology and its adoption in our country as an important tool of communication. While highlighting this development we delved into the history of communication technology and the humble beginnings of radio and transmission of programmes as a result of the technological explosion by the second half of the 19th century. The history of worldwide evolution of technology in communication was a slow and gradual process and the effort of improvement of techniques in several areas by different individuals culminated in the communication revolution of today. For several centuries before the electronic media, it was the print media in the form of books, newspapers, and pamphlets that served as the only means of reaching a wide audience from a distance. Though the improved transportation technology increased the speed of communication throughout the nineteenth century, but it was not until the technological innovation of the telegraph by the 1840s and the invention of the telephone in 1876 that opened the way for more widely accessible personal long distance communication, marking the beginning of the first new mass medium since print. The second half of the 20th century ushered in of the Digital Galaxy, providing subscribers with access to the internet and the World Wide Web (WWW) by means of devices called modems (modulator demodulators) and also the cellular (cell)

phone. In later years from 1920s the origination of magnetic tape popularised the use of cassette, the digital compact disc and MP3 that enhanced storage capacity, the invention of cinematograph, the motion pictures, the VCR and the introduction of Digital Video Disk (DVD) by 1997, all contributed significantly to communication and the rise of the mass media. These developments not only allowed the near instantaneous communication over long distances but scholars consider them as cultural source and mass culture creator.[95] The history of radio 'transmission' on the other hand began as early as 1901 when Marconi and his assistants reported that they had transmitted the three dots of Morse code letter 'S' faintly across the Atlantic Ocean from Cromwell in England to Newfoundland in Canada. Thus for the first time in the annals of evolution of technology that radio became the foremost broadcast medium that introduced a new element to the media equation. It became the earliest system for sending electrical signals through the air without wire via electromagnetic waves which was initially called 'wireless' and later 'radiotelegraphy' abbreviated to 'radio'. After several other improvisation in its various parts the earlier term 'wireless' that was generally used to transmit signals was replaced by 'radio' based on the idea that rays replaced by electromagnetic waves were being spread out from a transmitter. The surge of radio technology from its earlier cumbersome machine to the improved form of battery operated one, and the increased popularity among listeners across several countries have made scholars believe that radio has several comparative advantages over the other media to became a tool for social change. Although India was a dependency but it was among the earliest countries in the world to adopt broadcasting. After Independence in 1947, among the available mass media, radio was the only medium that had the potentiality to be quickly developed into an effective and truly national service. From its first experimental broadcast on 1st August 1927 from Bombay, AIR has expanded its transmissions and set up more stations, transmitters and other infrastructures all over the country. It came to be known as *'Akashvani'* a Sanskrit word coined by Rabindranath Tagore meaning 'celestial announcement' often found in Hindu mythology. Literally *Akash* means 'sky' and *Vani* mean 'sound or

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[95] Denis McQuail, "The Influence and Effects of Mass Media", in James Curren, Michael Gurevitch, Janet Woollacott and Edward Arnold (eds.), *Mass Communication and Society*, London, 1977, pp 32-33.

message' i.e. sound or message coming from the sky. The name was thought to befit a radio company and became official in 1956. Today AIR has a total of 299 full-fledged stations all across the country with a clear mandate to inform, educate and entertain the masses as a public broadcaster of the country. The chapter has also detailed the setting up of AIR stations in all the North-eastern states with a stress on the capital or the primary stations in each state of the Northeast.

Chapter-4 *Images and Reality: Doordarshan in Northeast India-A History*

This chapter traces the history of Doordarshan in Northeast India in the context of social change. While we have presented a detailed overview of the radio, its evolution and the role of AIR from inception in fulfilling modern day information needs in India in chapter three but in order to have a more holistic view of public broadcasting in our country along with its role in ushering in social change, the evolution of the other wing of broadcasting the audio-visual medium or what is commonly known as the television is also necessary. To understand the furthering of this function we have taken up an in-depth study of the vast network of Doordarshan the official audio-visual media of broadcasting in our country. Television represents one of the very important medium of the electronic media and is the latest arrival in the field of mass communication. *Television* means 'seeing at a distance' which scholars believe have revolutionised communication technology by its capacity of combining audio and visual effects bringing the world into our drawing rooms, bed rooms and the business chambers of the viewers. The invention of television like the radio was not the ingenuity of a single individual but the worldwide efforts of several individuals with a scientific bent of mind. In 1907 a Russian scientist, Boris Rosing, had designed an electronic system of wireless transmission using a cathode ray tube and by 1923 he gave a television demonstration using a camera tube to transmit a still image to the face of a cathode ray tube. Around the same time experiments were also going on in America and in 1925, an American inventor, Charles Francis Jenkins, sent the image of moving windmills to a receiver five miles away, the first transmission of a moving object. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s these and other research engineers improved the television signals and the receivers. The number of scanning lines, which determine picture detail, grew from

120 to the present 525. The success of all such experiments proved beyond doubt that the future belonged to electronic television. Post World War II saw not only an advancement of technology but also competing technology that had a major impact on industrial organisation and methods of mass production and accelerated change. This led to resurgence in art, cinema, architecture and literature as well. The 'artistic revolution' ushered in a 'cultural revolution' leading to a boom of the mass media particularly radio, television and films. The gradual adoption of television since the 1950s in the western and European countries revolutionized television production and programmes ushering in the 'golden age of television'. One of the primary reasons for giving a deliberate push to the development and expansion of mass communication in our country especially after Independence was because it was felt that in the early stages of free India with an economy of vast disparities, mass media could play a powerful role, and within this the potential of television in terms of outreach was perceived as immense. The Doordarshan one of the largest public broadcasting organisations in the world in terms of infrastructure, transmitters, software and viewership, started its experimental telecast in the form of a UNESCO's pilot project in Delhi on 15th September 1959 with the primary objective to study the use of TV as a medium of education, rural upliftment and community development. It was in 1967 that television in India took a social twist when it went rural and programmes on Agriculture and other programmes for farmers were introduced. Towards the end of 1970 there was a further expansion of television in India and a second television station in Bombay now Mumbai was set up in October 1972. Thereafter more stations were commissioned in Srinagar, Amritsar, Calcutta, Madras and Lucknow. It may be noted that though television broadcasting began in Delhi in 1959, it was initially a part of AIR, and was separated from radio as 'Doordarshan' on 1st April 1976, and henceforth television in our country came to be known as Doordarshan. Presently the total organizational setup of DD consists of 35 channels including 5 National channels, 11 Regional language Satellite channels, 11 State Network Services, one International channel, one Rajya Sabha channel, and one Educational channel called 'Gyan Darshan', besides the Direct to Home Service (DTH) called DD-Direct Plus launched on 16th December 2004. Like the growth of DD in other parts of the country, in Northeast India too there has been the installation of Doordarshan *Kendras* since 1982 in Guwahati, and ever since a DD

Kendra has been established in all the capitals of the Northeast over a sustained period of time. At present there are twelve DD stations in the Northeast. Besides all the state capitals having a Doordarshan *Kendra* each, there is also a *Kendra* in Dibrugarh and Silchar in Assam, besides a Programme Production Centre (PPC) in Guwahati, and a *Kendra* at Tura in Meghalaya.

While we have underscored the sizable volume of scholarship that considers mass media as a powerful tool in modern society for the overall development process yet there have also been works that critically evaluated the role of mass media. Scholars have opined that there has been a "stoic stability in sexist media representation"[96] that receives ample depiction on television and other media channels. To find out the veracity of such opinions and explore the drift with AIR and DD programming we have in the next chapter taken up a comprehensive review of their programmes in the context of social change and gender sensitivity.

Chapter-5 *Gender Sensitivity, All India Radio and Doordarshan*

This chapter has taken up an analysis of the programmes on Education, Agriculture, Health and Women's programmes of both AIR and DD targeted at rural and urban audience to understand the gender content of the programmes.

The growth of technology had a definite impact on the expansion of broadcasting by the second decade of the twentieth century in most of the countries in America and Europe and whatever the regimes, whatever the agency, whatever the period, infact, all broadcasting stations were offering programmes to a large unseen audience. But what is interesting to note is that countries across the globe for a variety of reasons largely historical, though using basically the same technology did not present the same range of programmes or in the same manner, but in all of them there was an operational division of labour, of producers, presenters, performers and engineers.[97] Similar efforts were also made by the national broadcasters of DD and AIR that were given a big push after Independence of the

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[96]Carolyn M. Byerly and Karen Ross, *Women and Media: A Critical Introduction,* Blackwell, Oxford, 2006, p. 38.

[97] Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet*, Cambridge, 2005, p.181.

country with the chief function of providing information, education and entertainment to a large number of people. The mass media were considered a facilitator and a contributor of social growth and towards this endeavour there were several categories such as Agriculture, Health, Education and Women's programmes that were added as the software of AIR and DD. While we studied the worldwide speed of technological progression that were gradually also imbibed by these two medias but in our assessment of programmes we also tried to gauge if the technological sophistication has also impacted the quality of programmes to bring in new ideas to societal upliftment. We wanted to discern if through the varied programmes, issues related to gender and patriarchy and its strong leanings to the perpetuation of male power and male dominance, the socio-economic status of women, and change in the value system, attitudes, and social structure prevalent in society also formed a part of the programme content. To realize the AIR objective of *"Bahujana Hitaya; Bahujana Sukhaya"* a Sanskrit phrase, meaning 'the benefit and happiness of large sections of the people', it has evolved a three tier system of broadcasting at the National, Regional and Local level. In our effort to understand the gender content of programmes it was necessary to evaluate a few women's programmes of AIR Delhi as we found a similar pattern of programme and issues taken up by the Regional channels of the Northeast as well. In AIR Delhi the 'series' nature of programme is the main type of Women's programme which addresses issues, problems and achievements related to women and which are divided into episodes. The Primary or Regional stations constitutes the second tier of broadcasting of AIR located mostly in the capitals of every state that deliberates issues on Agriculture, Flagship, Farm and Home, Music, Environmental, Women's, Youth, News, Education and Children besides other programmes. These programmes are in the form of talks, discussions, drama, features, documentaries and quiz. The exclusive programme set aside for women listeners both urban and rural from most stations of the Northeast was analysed extensively. This programme show cases women's issues on health, socio-economic development of women and "meant to raise the social consciousness of the country in regard to attitude towards women."[98] For instance there are three weekly women's programmes that are broadcast from AIR Shillong called '*Nala Rympei'* (from our own hearth) and '*Na*

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[98] *Annual Report 2007-2008, Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India),* New Delhi, p. 64.

Tyngkong Tyngbet' (from the entrance) both a thirty minutes composite woman's programme in Khasi and Jaintia respectively. A Garo woman's programme of twenty five minutes duration is also broadcast. These programmes have a long history of broadcasting. The topics of *Nala Rympei* consist of portrayal of women's role as hearth keepers and catering to the needs of the family comfort. Women's role has been typified as the one who cares for the children and the aged, who is responsible to maintain the family budget, and the one who is completely in-charge of the wellbeing of the family. Though there have been topics on women's education and her role in the society but this need for a woman's education is again linked to the family's welfare and very little for her own career or freedom.

Besides AIR the other wing of broadcasting as the audio-visual broadcasting medium of our country is Doordarshan which has been producing programmes for many years since Independence. Inspite of the growth of Doordarshan, scholars have pointed out that the great power and potential of television as a medium of communication has been somewhat slow, artificial, sectarian, highly unbalanced lacking a distinctive Indian personality, feature and character and there has been a general concern on the nature and content of programmes and on the role of television in a developing country like India. Scholars feel that the audio-visual mode of communication can become the potential instrument in providing information and promoting growth, "reawakening and activising" the rights of target groups and audiences.[99] How much of this 'reawakening' was actually possible through Doordarshan's programmes and how best it served as an 'instrument of growth' was our endeavour to understand by reviewing the content of some of the programmes from the 'National' level to the 'Local' Northeast level from the early eighties and the variations if any that has evolved with changing times. Preceding satellite cable era in the mid eighties was the sudden burst of sponsored 'serials' and 'soap operas' in Doordarshan which changed the nature of television in India. Most of the serials of that period were women oriented narratives of 'family drama'. Our analysis clearly brought out that though women oriented serials such as *Hum Log, Buniyaad, Khandan, Karamchand* and other serials were taken up by Doordarshan yet in all the popular serials of the eighties the female was depicted as the stereotype

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[99] P.C Joshi, *Culture Communication and Social Change*, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 190-197.

of helpless and weak individuals within the four walls of domesticity while those aspiring for power and the ambitious were portrayed as meeting gloomy ends rarely leading a happy life. The other documentaries and serials of the nineties such as *Havva Ke Haath'* (Hands of Eve), '*The Voice of Changes'*, '*Adhikar'*, 'Sangharsh' '*Sampark'* and others reviewed show a definite move to more women oriented programmes, portraying them either as achievers, or bringing to the open their constraints and struggles in more real life situations. Though entertainment based sponsored programmes increased but we also find the production of composite women's magazine programmes encompassing various segments of beauty, health and fitness, panel discussions on women oriented topics, career avenues and current issues which grew during this period.[100] The composite nature of programmes that began at the National level in the 1990's also found its way in Women's programme from the *Kendra*s of Northeast. This is evident in the content of a Women's programme from Doordarshan Guwahati telecast for over two decades under various names but presently known as *Manashi* a thirty minutes composite magazine format of programme every Sunday from 5pm to 5.30pm and even in *Onggonar Onggone* the woman's programme from DD Agartala. The magazine format of programme was however not evident from other *Kendra*s of the Northeast but based mostly on discussion, interviews, or talks on varied topics most times recorded in-house production. Other programmes on Agriculture, Health, Education and Women's programmes of almost all capital *Kendra*s of the Northeast were also reviewed.

Chapter-6 *The Electronic Media, Social Change and Gender Relations*

This chapter has analysed the role of AIR and DD in the context of social change and gender relations by drawing upon the materials covered in the earlier chapters and thus presents the major findings.

In our work we had introduced the topic in the first chapter and therein discussed at length the concept of social change, gender and the role of the mass media towards social upliftment, the history of AIR and DD, and an analysis of the various programmes of both these media in the next few chapters respectively. As mass media today is regarded to play a definitive role in society our endeavour

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[100] Archive tape numbers, ARDG/DVC/60/3565, ARDG/DVC/60/3566, ARDG/DVC/60/3578, accessed on 19th and 20th April 2011, at Doordarshan Archives, *Akashvani* Bhawan, New Delhi.

throughout the work was therefore to comprehend the social responsibility of AIR and DD as enlisted in the objectives of these organisations to 'inform, educate and entertain'. For this we have analysed the gender content of several programmes of both AIR and DD having a long history of broadcasting under various categories at the national level as well as those of Northeast to have a broader perspective of their role in effecting change by helping remove decadent patriarchal norms, beliefs and traditions that still guide Indian society and which often comes in the way of women's wellbeing. Our effort was also to understand if programmes showcased women as mere puppets in the existing patriarchal society dominated by values that still limit women's progress and deny them true justice or if the technologically advanced AIR and DD have been able to rise above the dominant social values and have critiqued patriarchy. Based on our analysis these are some of the most important findings and conclusions.

1. A notable feature that we found in AIR is that most programmes have a long history of broadcasting bringing to the fore a degree of the traditionalistic layout of programmes. Even timings of many programmes have continued to remain the same since the inception of AIR stations for instance *'Aiduer Buloni'* the Women's programme in AIR Guwahati continues to remain at 12.30pm in the afternoon since 1948. *Nala Rympei* a Woman's programme of AIR Shillong or *Bidyarthir Anushthan* (programme for students) from AIR Guwahati are both broadcast since 1960s.

2. Over the years however there has been some evolution with regard to the content of radio programmes both in its variety and packaging. For example in the Women's programme content there have been additions of newer issues as topics. To cite an illustration, in the 1980's Women's programmes were mostly for the house-wives and their concerns as well as those related to the joint family structure but over the years there is an increasing trend to take up topics and issues based on women's upliftment, on nuclear family structure, topics related to concerns of working women like sexual harassment at the work place or the right investment avenues for women's incomes. Though the format of women's programmes for rural and urban listeners have not changed profoundly but we have found that with time some

topics related to agriculture, farming technologies, health, nutrition and family planning that find priority in these programmes are specifically addressed for the women listeners. Topics also include those of career opportunities for women, survival strategies for single mothers in cities, programmes addressing domestic violence, rapes, tips on procuring driving licences, or passports and other issues which were not addressed before or which were once considered taboos to even speak about are focused in AIR programmes.

3. Another aspect that changed with time is regarding the style of programme presentation. For instance women's programmes in previous years were based on scripts read out by the presenter or discussion based with a few invited guests who were women themselves. However with time though beauty, cookery, and familial topics are still being included as part of a 'magazine format' of programme but it is along with the resource persons from the specialised field of work. Likewise health and agriculture programmes is more of discussions type including 'phone-in' segments of interaction with listeners which were not widely prevalent in previous years.

4. While making a comparative study of programmes of AIR Delhi and the Regional stations in the Northeast we found similarity as well as variation of presentations of programme. In the National Channel or the *Rashtiya Prasaran Seva* there seem to be a clear endeavour through the various programmes to glorify Indian culture showcasing both its past and present glory. The programmes are of generalised nature without prioritising any specific region or segment of society. We also found no explicit programme dealing exclusively on women's issues which are strongly evident in the Regional stations. But while cultures are also showcased in the other AIR stations but the format of programme presentation differed between the AIR stations. The form of women's programme at AIR Delhi is based more on 'series' type of programme which are popular form of 'broadcast drama' unfolding in episodes for both the urban and rural category of women programmes. While the format of women's programme in the Regional level are more a 'magazine' type which within a single episode may contain

discussions, talks or skits along with music to make the programme more entertaining.

5. Topics for all programmes including women's programme are most times based on current issues selected as per the 'Programme Calendar' which is a pre-set format of 'programme guide' on an all India basis issued by the AIR Directorate New Delhi, though this fixture can sometimes be deviated depending on certain specific local needs. To give a fillip to current topics and debates the programme content is chalked out along with inputs from departments and other Non Governmental Organization working towards various issues. Programmes are sometimes mounted keeping in mind the needs of different types of listeners. For instance during the months of February-March or April-May the requirements of students seeking information on school or college board examination are kept in mind and therefore topics selected for school broadcast or youth programmes are based on examination stress or information given on the various entrance exams so as to educate both students and parents on the different career opportunities. While such sensitivity addressing the changing interest and life style of students and farmers by providing them the latest array of information is evident but the same has not been amply evident while taking up the gender concerns in the society through the women's category of programmes, a programme which is exclusively reserved to focus on women's issues and concerns.

6. While reviewing Woman's programme from the different AIR stations we found that though there have been efforts to incorporate women oriented narratives highlighting their skills and roles within the family and in the working environment outside but wider issues and gender concerns critiquing patriarchy and its varied norms impacting a woman's life has been a less focused area. Though current issues of immediate social relevance are included as topics but the role of women as the nurturer and the caretaker of the home for the children and family comfort has been abundantly portrayed. 'Home management' seem to be the clear domain for women alone. For instance, if the topics are on "scientific home management" in the

programmes for urban women listeners, than it is "family welfare" for the rural listeners. Even though there are topics on the need for women's education but it is once again in terms of budgeting the family resources and savings. The fact that women are the home keepers and men the bread winners, are stressed time and again in the various serials, discussions and talks of AIR programmes. Such programmes on women have clearly demarcated the boundary of women's roles and rights. Despite the fact that topics such as women's upliftment, dowry, child marriage, female infanticide that were once unmentionable are taken up in recent years but our review has shown that discussions and analysis of patriarchy and its strong leaning to the perpetuation of male power and male dominance, subject of the value system and insensitive attitudes responsible for women's demarcated arena in the social structure have found very little space in the programmes. Women's programme is not only restrictive as far as the afternoon broadcast time is concerned but it also appears that women have been segregated and shunned to the private sphere. The topics taken up are of traditional nature that encourages women to remain in the domestic or the private arena. The topics mirror the stereotypical attitude of patriarchal mindset from the level of the policy makers' right down to the implementers of such lop-sided guidelines that rationalises a predetermined role and space for women and which finds ample manifestation in the programmes mounted. The very fact that such topics are set aside to be discussed only in the category of "Women's Programmes" is an example of women being demarcated within a separate enclave or arena which is of the women, by the women and for the women. The ghettoization of women is apparent in such a policy decision.

7. Our study has also revealed lesser field based programmes which can address several core concerns of women at the grass root. We have not found any interactive 'dial in' and 'dial out' programmes on women's topics in the Primary stations of AIR in the Northeast. Though the use of digitised technology is the pride of AIR and DD to keep itself at par with the communication revolution but technology has been used selectively and haltingly. The fact that programmes on Agriculture, Health, Current Affairs,

considered as 'hard news' content finds easy accessibility to the public through the 'dial-in' facility, while the restrictive nature of Women's programmes that can address issues on social change and gender sensitivity are sans the listeners direct accessibility are reflective of the lack of seriousness and insensitive nature at the level of mounting the programme down to the level of implementation of women's programmes. This bias in policy is evident even in the content of Farm and Home (F&H) a hardcore agriculture programme of AIR broadcast seven days a week. In the F&H category there is an episode every week reserved for the women agriculturists wherein issues related to women agriculturists such as modern technologies for the farmers are highlighted. But here again the topics selected do not reflect that they are based on hard research. The study on the gender dimension of agriculture reveals that shifts and changes in technology and techniques in agricultural farming and production have had a profound impact on women cutting across all cultures and communities. Infact such concerns on the lack of land ownership rights among women has been voiced by Bina Agarwal and economist Amartya Sen who state that economic opportunities if given to women can play a decisive influence on the workings of the economy and the related social arrangement. They emphasised that the economic participation of women has a major power for social change in general.[101] The AIR programmes on Agriculture have neglected such dimensions of the agricultural needs of women. Showcasing women's participation in farm and fields are no doubt commendable but so also is the need to bring to the fore the patriarchal nature of agriculture that has profound and adverse impact on women. It is not enough to fill in air time toeing governmental reports through exaggerated facts and figures but to show the abject reality of agriculture vis-à-vis women the way it exists.

8. One of the most noticeable aspect of Women's programme that appear as a stark reality is that the many important issues concerning women and their wellbeing are presented only once in a week in the Regional stations and most times for a duration of twenty to thirty minutes which includes songs

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[101]Bina Agarwal, *op.cit.*, Amartya Sen, *op.cit.,* p.201.

that are also packed in every edition of the programme to make it more entertaining. The short and spaced out programme marks a key hindrance to serious and sustained discourse on women's issues. While making a study of the existing programmes, what also came as a revelation is that generally all women's programmes are looked after by women producers themselves. For example during our period of data collection all the three producers of 'Women's programmes' in AIR Shillong were found to be women. However our review of Women's programmes and interactions with both the male and the female producers of this programme have not revealed a significant change or difference in the topics or issues taken up. This also goes to show that women producers themselves may not necessarily be gender sensitive in their attitudes or perceptions as they have not been trained to gender concerns. Though we have found local variations of topics but broadly all AIR stations and DD *Kendra*s mount very similar socio-economic and cultural topics. This parity is so because all the *Kendra*s and stations are guided by the 'Fixed Point Chart' (FPC) and the 'Programme Calendar' issued from their respective Directorates.

9. However when we gauged the evolution of policies for programmes we have found some changes both in the ways programmes are mounted and executed. In this aspect though there is a seasonal change in the FPC of it being either a 'Summer' and a 'Winter' FPC and programme producers are expected to be guided by it yet with time the stringent conformity of programmes to the prescribed governmental format and rules based on the FPC or the 'Programme Calendar' issued from the Directorate New Delhi has become less binding and programmes could be scheduled based on the Producer's discretion of local current situations. Another evolution that has taken place is regarding the length of programmes. Programmes earlier were more talk based for a lengthy period but now in order to sustain the interests of the listeners the duration of the talks have been reduced substantially. But though with time programmes have become more varied touching upon different subjects and topics and also interactive in nature, the formats of programmes however have not made a drastic change. For example even

though the duration of talks have been reduced but talks, discussion and interviews continue to be the format of programmes even in the present times. The use of Hindi in the programmes has also been reduced so as to enable listeners from non-Hindi backgrounds to understand the programmes. Programmes are now both in English and Hindi at the National level and in most times in the local languages at the Regional AIR Stations. However controversial and sensitive topics are still avoided. This was evident as our conversation with the programme personal revealed that topics such as those of bisexuality, lesbianism, and mindset of rapists are either not taken up at all or are rejected by higher authorities on the pretext of such topics being controversial and therefore not air worthy. This clearly is a pointer of the bureaucratisation of the media and the existence of the older stereotypes of patriarchal mindset that has remained unaltered to this day. For social change to be discernable and widespread the deep rooted and raw hard truths of society need focused attention. It is not enough to fill in air time and cram up programmes but what is important is whether topics and issues taken up are a reflection of the existent ills and realities of society and if there is a sincere attempt at addressing those facts. The avoidance of certain topics for the simple reason that they are deemed as 'controversial' reflects the duality of the public broadcaster. While on the one hand it endorses its social responsibility time and again yet the real picture is a timid attitude of implementing the same social responsibility.

10. While reviewing the DD programmes of the 80's and 90's what stood out was the fact that programmes of the period were largely dominated by the forms of sponsored 'serials' and 'soap operas' most of which were women oriented narratives of 'family drama'. These serials we realised played a crucial role in changing the subsequent nature of television programmes in India. While reviewing some of the popular 'serials' of the period what came out as a clear revelation was that in all the popular women oriented serials of the eighties telecast by the National Channel of Doordarshan, the female was depicted as the stereotype of helpless and weak individuals within the four walls of domesticity while those aspiring for power and the ambitious

women were portrayed as rarely leading a happy life. Each of the leading female characters in the other serials of the 1980's were either projected as the long suffering one, docile, lacking in common sense or the other extreme of ruthless, greedy, selfish, wilful, conspiring wicked women within the strict domain of the patriarchal order of family. The 'veiled' women had little say in the decision taking matters of the family. Their space was limited within the boundary of the kitchen or private domain of the home. If they dared to move to the outer space of a working or business environment they were often typecast as lacking in character or knowledge to be able to shoulder crucial responsibility or tasks. The serials also depicted societal hostility towards women's collective effort, negative and even trivializing of feminist activists and the stigmatisation of women rising above circumstances. Women were revealed as accepting their fate, with a large measure of pessimism over their plight. The men were on the other hand depicted as authoritarian, capable decision takers both within the family and in business or as having the freedom to indulge in domineering behaviour. It was the traditional approach to women's role and position in society that was the epitome of almost all women oriented serials of the 1980s which were telecast in DD1 considered the National Channel beamed all over the country including the Northeast. Doordarshan through these serials reinforced the patriarchal social order of the time and which paved the way to many variants of similar other serials into the 1990's as well.

11. But we did find a balancing of topics from the 90's to the middle of 2000 as besides the type-casted women oriented 'serials', Doordarshan had also telecast a number of programmes portraying women as achievers bringing to the open their constraints and struggles in more real life situations. Though serials based on family dramas some of which were over hundred episodes in length, continued to be telecast in addition to other programmes that depicted achievements of women in challenging fields, their legal rights and other issues but what is significant is that issues not addressed openly before such as those of dowry, female infanticides, violence against women, widowhood, adoption of girl child, women in challenging jobs such as working in

crematoriums, elephant trainers and other jobs were topics that were taken up in Doordarshan programmes. Though in the serials women continued to be depicted in their typical avatars as docile and repressed but in the documentaries and in the composite programmes women were portrayed in their more active role contributing meaningfully to the upkeep of the family and their role in works outside the home domain. A dual image of women was therefore portrayed as repressed on the one hand and independent decision makers on the other.

12. While the 'serial' category dominated the programmes of Doordarshan at the national level it was however 'Composite magazine' format of programmes that was the new design of women's programme that was introduced from the 1990's and which continued upto the mid 2000's from most *Kendra*s of Doordarshan. Though there was an increase in entertainment based sponsored programmes but we also find the production of composite women's magazine programmes encompassing various segments such as those of beauty, health and fitness, panel discussions on women oriented topics, career avenues, and current issues. The composite nature of programmes that began in the 1990's was also evident as the format of women's programme from most *Kendra*s of Northeast India as well. This is evident in the content of *Manashi* a Women's programme from Doordarshan Guwahati telecast since the last two decades. The composite magazine format of programmes is also evident in *Onggonar Onggone* the Woman's programme from DD Agartala telecast from 1996.

13. Another interesting aspect of women's programme is the fact that women's programme from all the *Kendra*s of the Northeast were of short duration featured once in a week. Examples may be cited of *Manashi* which is of just 30 minutes in the entire week, *Ki Rympei* a 30 minutes programme of DDK Shillong encompassing a mere 2.86% out of the total telecast time of seventeen hours and thirty minutes of all programmes or *'Women's World'* the Women programme of DDK Kohima of 20 minutes duration four times a month constituting a total of mere 3.60% of the total duration of programmes on a monthly basis. Such short programmes of women's concerns cannot

really address the multi-dimensional aspects of any topics and leaves little room for a complete discourse of issues that dominates a woman's life and which sets her standards in the larger social contexts.

14. Women's issues also formed a part of *'Kalyani'* a health series of programme of DD launched in May 2002 in the country under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare wherein the reproductive and child care and other health related problems of women catering to both the urban and the rural population are taken up. 'Narrowcasting', a centrally sponsored project of mass media under the Ministry of Agriculture has also been initiated to give support to Agriculture programmes and provide area specific information on agriculture to women farmers as well. Even in this category of programme we find a division of women between the home and the field. Moreover reproductive and child care occupied a top priority in the health category. Though the focal point is to educate women on their health issues but in focusing on the 'reproductive and child care' most times, DD not only becomes a mouth piece of publicizing the ever changing governmental agenda but also pushes through the masculinist image type-casting a women with nature, as the giver of birth and protector of her children as though women do not have any other health issues. The exclusivity of an episode within a category of programme also encourages controlled dissemination of knowledge instead of inclusive approach within the common body of information imparted to all irrespective of their sex.

15. Another change that was introduced in the nature of programmes was the segmentation of programmes into the 'In-House', 'Commissioned', 'Sponsored' or 'Royalty' type of production. It is important to note that this division impacted programmes in a significant way as it made programmes more market oriented of what sells best and suits the interests of the advertising agencies and the sponsors of programmes. The categorisation of programmes into commissioned and sponsored serials, telefilms, and fiction added another dimension to the portrayal of women based on market specifics. Such programmes powered by the profit and loss agenda of

business firms and multi-national companies cannot effectively address and communicate the real issues that plague different sections of society.

Our analysis of the various categories of programmes and the topics taken up in both AIR and DD reveal a great extent of similarity between these two wings of broadcasting almost to the degree of being regimented programmes. Very few episodes of programmes in any category be it Education, Health, Agriculture or Women have underscored the urgent necessity to improve the socio-economic status of women by addressing a change in the value system, attitudes and social structure prevailing in society. Further excepting seeking some inputs from women's organizations and Non Governmental Organizations on topics to be taken up we have found no advisory committees constituted especially for Women's programmes. If there are advisory committees along with members from various departments in the 'Health', 'Agriculture' and 'Education' category of programmes than surely committees representing members of various departments and civil societies can also be constituted for Women's programme, a programme that deals exclusively with women's issues. If both AIR and DD are committed to 'social responsibility' of upliftment and development in society and to "create awareness about women's issues" and "promote social justice" as laid out in the objectives of the *Prasar Bharati* Corporation then by addressing the all round problems of both women and men, the largest electronic media of the country can become a more effective vehicle of bringing in progress and social change in the country. Recent cases of crimes against women in cities and suburbs are pointers to the domineering role of patriarchal values and mindset that has its deep roots in society and which continue to have a dominant position in women's subjugation. If women are to find their rightful place in society then along with other social agencies the largest public broadcaster of the country can also heighten the process of social change, gender sensitization and gender equality in society, but it has not done so to the extent it should because of the deep seated patriarchal values which permeate all structures and organisation of the society. AIR and DD are mouthpieces of the state as discussed earlier, and when the nature of the state is patriarchal it is only expected that these two arms of the state will also uphold patriarchal attitudes. So, social change as conceptualised in this work has not really come about because societal

values have remained primarily unchanged, and a critique of patriarchy is still wanting and if these two major vehicles of change are to become effective agents of social change, than a deeper gender sensitisation will have to take place in both All India Radio and the Doordarshan.

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