# CHAPTER II

## *Conceptualising Social Change, Gender and the Media*

Social change has been an integral part of human condition, but in the modern world social change has taken on some special quantities and magnitudes.[1] Social scientists have always had it as their ambition to discover which factors are the most important in inducing change and are yet to evolve a commonly acceptable framework for the study of social change. Steven Vago a Sociologist has conceded that there is a lack of uniformity in defining social change, and it has been conceptualised in varying terms by sociologists, historians, economists, anthropologists and political thinkers. According to him social change is the alteration in people's occupation, the way they raise family, educate their children, administer them-selves and seek out ultimate meaning in life. Having said this he however stresses that change is not the complete transformation of the structure and the functioning of a system and it can be either partial, without jeopardizing the stability and continuity of the state, or change may also embrace all aspects.[2] Other scholars while describing social change have also argued that in every society at all points of time in history; there has been some form of change in the economic and political patterns induced by technology, demography, ecology, by internal incongruities or even by conflicting ideologies. But in recent times they say 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.[3] Most scholars of social change hold the views that change is a continuous and unending stream of events which is inherent in the very nature of things although the tempo and causes of this may be divergent

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[1] Steven Vago, Social Change, New Jersey, 1980, pp.1-7.
[2] *Ibid.*,
[3] This perception has been presented by Paramjit S. Judge and Satish K. Sharma (eds.), *"Introduction"*, in Paramjit S. Judge and Satish K. Sharma (eds.), *Dimension of Social Change*, New Delhi, 1997, pp.1-2.

from age to age, culture to culture or from one area of culture to another.[4] Steven Vago almost summarises these ideas when he writes that change is a dynamic process and has becomes "irreversible, irresistible and irrevocable."[5] Thus 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 form from the beginning of human society.

Explaining further the nature and scope of change some scholars have underlined social change to be a continuous process which may partly be imposed, partly induced and partly assimilated due to the exogenous or external factors but which lead to changes via an internal process. This happens as individuals, groups, institutions and societies receive and respond to new stimuli.[6] M.N.Karna in his understanding of social change indicates two major dimensions of social change - the nature and direction. While the nature of change he says reveals content of change, the direction however speaks about the line in which it is moving.[7] Elucidating on the process of change Promila Vasudeva feels that social change may also involve diffusion, acculturation and assimilation and each of these is inter-linked to the other. Diffusion she terms is a process involving the spread of traits and ideologies from one culture to another. Giving examples of this process of change she says most of the cultural elements in societies are the result of this, and the economic, political and religious institutions have travelled far and wide through this process of diffusion. Acculturation she states is closely related to diffusion and is a process of culture change wherein continuous contact between two or more culturally distinct groups results in one group taking over elements of the culture of another group or groups. Assimilation which is again closely related to acculturation is a process of interpretation and fusion of persons or groups through the sharing of experiences and history and being incorporated into a common cultural life.[8]

[4] For details of these views see Sushila Ramaswamy, *Political Theory: Ideas and Concepts*, New Delhi, 2005, p.453,Wilbert E. Moore, *Social Change*, New Delhi, 1965, pp. 2-11, Piotr Sztompka, *The Sociology of Social Change*, Oxford, 1994, p.3, Promila Vasudeva, *Social Change: An Analysis of Attitudes and Personality*, New Delhi, 1976, pp.1-2.
[5] Steven Vago, *op.cit.,* pp. 4-7.
[6] For further readings refer to A.R Kamat, *Essays on Social Change in India*, New Delhi, 1983, p.3, Philip Kotler, "The Five C's: Cause, Change Agency, Change Target, Channel, and Change Strategy: The Elements of Social Action", in Philip Kotler, et.al (eds.), *Creating Social Change*, New York, 1972, p.174.
[7] M.N Karna, *Social Change in India*, New Delhi, 2003, p. 1.
[8] Promila Vasudeva, *op.cit.*, pp.4-6.

Scholars have also referred to social change and cultural change interchangeably.[9] For our understanding however we take culture as part of society and study the changes in society as a total entity including its structure and it's functioning and therefore call it social change

Thus we find that 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 "prime movers"[10] of social processes. But in-spite of the interplay of multiple forces or factors both material, ideal etc, yet none of the causes or factors is treated any longer as the ultimate cause of social processes.

Social change 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. While understanding social change we however do not attempt to make a study of only the structural changes of society or the behavioural changes of the people in isolation but the impact of either of them on each other and vice versa as a continuing process.

In the above paragraphs we have studied how in-spite of varied terms and concepts put forward by scholars to explain the process of social change yet there is an absence of commonly accepted explanation of social change. Social scientists have also put forward several theories to explain the evolution of society leading to the process of social change. Theories of social change can be divided into two broad groups such as the theories of Revolution and the theories of social Evolution. Though there have been theories of social change and a casual analysis of them is needed for a better understanding of what makes something happen over time but it also need to be stated that these theories have also been contentious issues in social sciences as it was believed that any sequence of social causation if it happens, is

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[9] Bryce F. Ryan, *Social and Cultural Change*, New York, 1969, pp.7-8.
[10] Steven Vago, *op.cit.,* p.7.

likely to be complex and immeasurable.[11] The social sciences, no less than the biological sciences were for a long period dominated by the theory of evolution. Early nineteenth century anthropologists accepted the hypothesis that all societies were progressing upwards along the same line towards some final objectives. The civilised societies made the greatest headway while the primitive societies were in the process of betterment.[12] Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Charles Darwin and others who propounded the evolutionary theory viewed that society was constantly growing and developing from simple to complex organization.[13] The positivist approach of Comte, the French sociologist who coined the term "sociology" believed that it is possible to study man in society and saw society as a process of evolution and progress and defined his task as one of establishing the uniformities governing this progress. He thus formulated his famous law of the three states of development of human thought the "theological", "metaphysical" and the "positivist."[14] Herbert Spencer asserted his famous formula of evolutionary process, i.e. progression of society from a stage of homogeneity and instability towards increasing heterogeneity and stability and posited "struggle for existence" as the dynamic force behind progression.[15] The revolutionary idea of biological evolution by Charles Darwin of extending evolutionary principles to account for changes in societies and differentiation among them became very popular especially with the British anthropologists and sociologists. The appeal of these classical theories though supplied valuable insights but when viewed in their entirety turned out to be untenable and hence scientifically unacceptable. Soon the social evolutionists fell out of favour rather rapidly because they tried to order the extreme diversity of contemporary non-literate and advanced societies into a single evolutionary scale according to stages.[16] One of the strongest opponents to the whole perspective of evolutionism was the Functionalist school of Anthropology and Sociology. One of the main profounder of modern functionalism was Emile Durkheim's who in his

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[11] Sushila Ramaswamy, *Political Theory: Ideas and Concepts*, New Delhi, 2003, p.453.

[12] Ian Hogbin, *Social Change*, Carlton Victoria 1970, p. 15.

[13] The views of Aguste Comte, Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin as viewed by Paramjit S. Judge and Satish K. Sharma (eds.), *"Introduction"*, in Paramjit S. Judge and Satish K. Sharma (eds.), *Dimension of Social Change*, *op.cit.*, p.15.

[14] Auguste Comte " The Progress of Civilization Through Three States" in Amitai Etzioni and Eva Etzioni (eds.), *Social Change, Sources, Patterns and Consequences*, London, 1964, pp.15-20.

[15] Herbert Spencer, "The Evolution of Societies" in Amitai Etzioni and Eva Etzioni (eds.), *Social Change, Sources, Patterns and Consequences*, London, 1964, pp.11-14.

[16] Wilbert E. Moore, *op.cit.*, p.7.

work "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life" published in 1912 altered the focus of social change. He prioritised the study of structure and function of social order and social behaviour of groups within the social system being more important in the present times.[17] Karl Marx like Durkheim never lost his interest in social evolution but was most concerned with change especially of the social, political and economic concepts. Historical Materialism or the Materialist Interpretation of History is the keystone of Marxist social and economic theory. For Marx social change can be understood only if viewed historically and it is the mode of social existence that determines social consciousness. He saw man and nature as intertwined and man's historical development as a unique phase of natural history. Change in societies is absolute and this change takes place at every level of man's social existence beginning with the productive processes, economic structures he erects, his ideas about himself and the world, his customs, institutions, culture, and psychological make-up. In the course of history there develops new forces of production, new ways of controlling nature. As these forces of production advance they come into conflict with the old production and property relations, the old politics and the old ideologies. When this happens it becomes necessary to change the old relations of production and discard the outmoded institutions, putting in their place new ones better suited to the new level of productive forces. This process, in all its complexity is the basic explanation of the movement of history.[18] Together with Marx, Frederick Engels in his '*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State'* published in 1884 believed that the theory of Materialist Interpretation of History is not only indispensible for an understanding of what happened in the past, but at the same time provides the key for explaining the present day world and indicates the direction in which it is moving.

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[17] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, New York, 1995, A. Nisbet, *Social Change and History*, London, 1970, pp.228-230.

[18] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, Moscow, 1976, pp.32-62, Michael Evans, *Karl Marx*, London, 1975, p. 231, Howard Selsam, David Goldway and Harry Martel (eds.), *Dynamics of Social Change: A Reader in Marxist Social Science*, New York, 1973, pp.22-27, Richard W. Miller "Social and Political Theory: Class, State, Revolution" in Terrell Carver (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to MARX* Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 125-128.

The views shared by the early anthropologists that all societies were progressing upwards along the same line and towards some final objectives is difficult to agree as in our understanding all societies across the world grew from different level of developments and therefore to view societies to be progressing towards the same direction needs further elucidation to be a more acceptable one. Historical Materialism viewed human history as the progress in the mode of production and the changes in the forces and the relations of material production to be the primary feature of change in society. Change according to the Marxist approach is a continuous process that also leads to class conflicts and tensions between the forces of production and the relation of production ultimately resulting in the attainment of classless society. Materialist Interpretation of History helps explain change in society and is an important tool to the understanding of many societies. To our comprehension social change is a process that may originate in any area bringing about changes in other areas that may lead to transformation in the structure and functioning of production process, relationships, demography, technology, new social groups or even alteration in the behaviour, attitudes and practices of individuals or groups in a society. This can be brought about by technological, economic, political, religious, ideological, demographic and other factors that can be considered as independent variables which may influence each other as well as the course of society resulting in either complete or partial change of the existing social order.

It appears from the above discussion that social scientists have emphasised different kinds of change, though for most of them structural change in relationships, organization and links among societal components appears to be crucial. Thus 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. The tool that we would be using to the understanding of society and its change is that of 'historical materialism' which helps explain the process of material change in all societies. 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 men and women.

Were the questions of gender, equality, patriarchy and women also kept in focus while explaining social change from historical times to this day? Was the understanding of social change only in terms of the existing patriarchal setups concerning men, their wellbeing and their role alone and did such understanding strengthen the patriarchal system further, thereby putting more limitations on women and their emancipation? While we would be looking into this in subsequent paragraphs of this chapter but in trying to conceptualize social change we would now reflect on the scholarly explanation of social change in the context of India.

While understanding the process of social change in India it may be mentioned that in contrast with the west, it did not seem to have undergone theoretical fluctuation such as Evolutionary, Functionalist and Neo-evolutionary for the analysis of social change. Yogendra Singh is of the view that the "Indian sociologists" have been more concerned with the processes of social accommodation and adaptation rather than with abstract theory building which is so much in evidence in the western sociology of the past and the contemporary times, though he adds that the concern with social change among sociologists was always present.[19] B. Kuppuswamy opines that like all other societies, change is also an integral part in the Indian context but in order to understand social change in India it is important to understand the social values rooted within.[20] Our interrogation into the process of social change in India have revealed that scholars have mostly studied it in terms of Sanskritization, Westernization, modernization, traditionalization and the dialectical historical approaches to social change.

As stated above Sanskritization and Westernization are two major concepts which have been referred to by scholars and have emerged as the most influential concept to explain cultural and social change in India. The term Sanskritization was first used by M.N Srinivas in the course of his study of the Coorgs in the erstwhile state of Mysore.[21] While explaining the concept of social change in India M.N Srinivas put forward the two concepts *viz* Sanskritization and Westernization to explain some features of religious, cultural and social change in India. According to him Sanskritization is a process by which a "low" Hindu caste or tribal or other

[19] Yogendra Singh, *Social Stratification and Change in India,* New Delhi, 1980, pp. 93.
[20] B. Kuppuswamy, *Social Change in India*, New Delhi, 1986, p.65.
[21] M.N Karna, *op.cit*., p.14.

group, changes its custom, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently, "twice-born" caste. Though there seem to be an upward mobility for the caste in question and positional changes in the system but it does not lead to any structural change and the system continues to remain the same.[22] Srinivas explains that Sanskritization seems to have occurred throughout Indian history and is an ongoing process even to this day. "Westernization, on the other hand, refers to changes introduced into Indian society during British rule and which continue, in some cases with added momentum, in independent India."[23] According to Srinivas, Westernization takes place at three levels, primary, secondary and tertiary. At the primary level were a minority of people who first came into contact with western culture, and were the first beneficiaries. The secondary level of westernization refers to those sections of Indian society who came into direct contact with the primary beneficiaries, and the tertiary level are those who came to know indirectly about the devices introduced by the British.[24] These two principle processes thus ushered multi-fold change in the Indian society.[25] In Srinivas's opinion Sanskitization and Westernization resulted not only in the introduction of new institutions like newspapers, election and Christian missionaries but also brought fundamental changes in the old system and institutions.[26] But while Srinivas has explained social change in India under the broad processes of Sanskritization and Westernization, these approaches to explain social change in India have also come under sharp attack from many scholars citing that these two concepts have inherent inadequacies, crippling limitations, lacking in historicity, value loaded and ideologically biased in its formulation and approach. It was pointed out that the very nature of "modernisation" analysis of Srinivas, cannot acquire the power of explaining and analysing the dynamics of the social process in its diverse aspects.[27] Though humanitarianism and egalitarianism were the positive features of Westernisation but some scholars considered Westernisation as a process of cultural and cognitive colonialism.[28] Thus even though in the beginning "Sanskritization" drew a lot of attention from the social scientists to explain social change in India, but the idea as

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[22] M.N Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India,* New Delhi, 2009, pp. 1-6.
[23] *Ibid*., p.1.
[24] K.L. Sharma, *op.cit*., p.43.
[25] M.N Srinivas, *India: Social Structure*, New Delhi, 1980, p.77.
[26] Raghuvir Singh, *Social Change in Indian Society*, Bhopal, 1975, p.76.
[27] A.R Kamat, *op.cit*., pp. 6-7.
[28] K.L. Sharma, *op.cit*., p.43.

propounded by Srinivas of caste structure being flexible and *varna* as being rigid and the notion of treating caste as a group that uniformly makes an effort to raise its status by changing its way of life along definite lines lacks the reasoning of certain economic, political and other historical factors also playing a role towards the emergence of the caste structure and the elevation of groups to a higher status.[29] His critics argued that though upto the period of India's Independence Sanskritization could have been one of the processes to explain social change in India but after Independence, the democratic processes, reservation policies and other factors also contributed towards elevation of certain groups of people and even the political articulation among various castes.[30] After bringing in some modification in the concepts of Sanskritization as articulated by Srinivas it is still however being effectively used by many to describe the process of cultural mobility in the traditional social structure in India.[31]

Apart from the concepts of Sanskitization and Westernization scholars have also explained social change in India through other explanations. One such reference that finds a mention in all historical and sociological works while explaining social change in India is the Caste system. Caste plays an important role and is one of the most complex elements in the social setup of Indian society.[32] The stratification of the Indian society into the four "*varnas*" which later evolved to the caste system was traditionally linked to agriculture and its roots existed right from the Vedic period. Andre Beteille while defining caste holds that the individual's position in the caste structure is fixed by birth and is immutable. He is of the view that the caste system gives the Hindu society a segmentary character.[33] Caste system has also been studied either as a cultural phenomenon or as a structural phenomenon. Those that term the caste system as the structural one use the word 'caste' to define the system of social organisation found in traditional India and surviving to a large extent to the present day. While those who define 'caste' as a cultural phenomenon consider caste as a matter of ideology or value system, particularly that of hierarchy which forms the basis for ranking of persons and groups, and acts as cultural bases of stratification

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[29] Paramjit S. Judge and Satish K. Sharma (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp.20-21.
[30] *Ibid.*, pp., 22-23.
[31] A.R Kamat, *op.cit.,* p.14*.*
[32] Paramjit S. Judge and Satish K. Sharma (eds.), "Introduction", in Paramjit S. Judge and Satish K .Sharma (eds.), *Dimension of Social Change*, *op.cit.,* pp.18-19.
[33] *Ibid.,* pp.45-46.

found in most traditional societies, where status or honour constitutes the basis for social ranking, and the Indian caste system is merely a special form of the general system of status-based social stratification.[34]

While we have underscored how scholars have emphasised caste to be an important component in the Indian society but Rajni Kothari writing on similar lines is of the opinion that social change in India is a dichotomy between the old traditionalization and the new modernity of new values and institutions.[35] Institutions such as the joint family system and village community which evolved in the long course of history he feels has also played an important role in the Indian social and economic life and served to sustain and retain the basic character of Indian society.[36] B. Kuppuswamy also feels that in both rural-agricultural and industrial sectors of the economy and society, the family system played a significant role in the process of change and modernization though these elements had their own tension and contradictions.[37] The British rule in India transplanted a host of alien institutions of science, technology, education, law, administration and other measures to effect change and development.[38] The British government replaced the indigenous system of administration and governance. The missions made efforts to convert Indians to Christianity and the British educationist tried to spread education to bring about a change in the outlook of the indigenous population.[39] But all these changes including the social legislations for women upliftment some scholars have felt were limited to the upper and middle section of Indian society. Kum Kum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid feel that the western British tradition posed a serious challenge to the Indian tradition. Though some freedom was given to women in terms of education and religious practices but they also felt that social legislations which set out to improve the situation of women were at times counter-productive. They are of the opinion that the 'good' intentions of the British administrators and the middle class social legislations did not distinguish between the forms of patriarchy which were cross caste or class and specific to particular groups. Further,

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[34] Yogendra Singh, *op.cit.*, pp.32-33.

[35] Rajni Kothari "Introduction" in Rajni Kothari (ed.), *Caste in Indian Politics*, New Delhi, 1973, p 22.

[36] T.M. Dak, "Transforming Indian Society: An Overview", in T.M. Dak (ed.), *Social Transformation in India*, Delhi, 1990, p.1.

[37] B. Kuppuswamy, *op cit.*, pp.65-68.

[38] *Ibid.*, pp.77-82.

[39] K.L. Sharma, *Indian Social Structure and Change*, New Delhi, 2007, p.47.

such legislations had its own conservative biases and later came to be dominated by the familial ideology of the middle class.[40] For instance though the Widow Remarriage Act allowed marriages among widows on paper but there were several clauses in it which debarred the high caste widows from remarriage, from any right to maintenance or inheritance from their husband's property. In other words, the economic stake which the high castes had in not allowing widows to remarry, were firmly protected by the Act. Thus it goes to prove once again what scholars have time and again stressed that both tradition and modernity have been in India carriers of patriarchal ideologies.[41] Some scholars delving upon the process of social change in India in the contemporary times have emphasised the case of conscious planning of social transformation after Independence. These they say were a deliberate policy with the objective of creating a society of democratic political participation, social justice, cultural and religious pluralism within the framework of secular state that brought in changes in values which had a revolutionary implication of social change in India.[42] Planned legislations and the women friendly laws enacted recently against rapes, sexual harassment at work place etc by the Government of India have armed the woman with a better bargaining power for her rights. But we need to question if these legislations have brought significant change in the native institutions? Have these laws brought in a change in the acceptance and rejection of some of the old and new values in favour of women? Have these values which may have been continuing from the past or readjusted in the modern times, improved the status of women, their bargaining power to property rights, brought equality in jobs, emancipated them from harsh and unjust social values and norms, and led to place women in a more productive platform in society?

We also need to ask if Sanskritization and Westernization, caste system, evolution of the joint family system, village community, the liberal British policies or even the premeditated state legislations in independent India brought an end to patriarchy and its norms or did women continue their struggle to find a space of their own within the existing patriarchal setup? For a real and perceivable change in

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[40] Kum Kum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, "Recasting Women: An Introduction" in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds.), *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 15-16.
[41] *Ibid.*, p.16.
[42] Yogendra Singh, "Contemporary Social Transformation in India: Process and Contradictions" in T.M. Dak (ed.), *Social Transformation in India,* Delhi, 1990*, pp.*22-35.

society, a change in pernicious values and attitudes practiced and propagated is equally vital. Such changes can affect not only the functioning of organisations and institutions in a society over a short or long period of time, but a transformation of values, norms and beliefs can also lead a society either to marginal or comprehensive development or decay in the structure of society or behaviour of the people. Scholarly works on the conceptualisation of social change in India did not address the issue of gender in social change. M.N Srinivas's concepts of Sanskritization and Westernisation though emphasised the 'imitation of life styles to the upward mobility of various castes and to the growth of new ideas and values of equality and social justice' but even Srinivas was silent on the concept of gender and if the assimilation of new liberal western ideas effected changes to the age old patriarchal values and norms that women in society were burdened with. The social institution of the caste system also did not address the issue of socio-economic status of women affected by the caste divide. As even in present times caste not only determines the social status of different groups including that of women in the society but also tends to mould their behaviour pattern and regulates inter-personal relations and communications between different groups[43] and therefore it is also important for us to understand the role that the caste system plays in the lives of women. Though the role at the familial level to the process of change in India has been underlined by scholars but what have not been stressed are the adherence and the continuation of patriarchal norms within the joint family system that needs to be more sufficiently and comprehensively addressed. There appears to be an absence of gendered view of social change. It is this absence in the concepts of social change that has been taken up by feminist scholars to explain the relationship of social change and gender and the effects of social change into the lives of women.

From the above discussion it appears that though social change has been theorized in various terms and concepts but what seems apparent is that the social scientists have not explained social change and its effects in the gender perspective. The use of the term 'people' to explain the process and the effects of change gives the impression that scholars had meant the effects of social change to be similar to both men and women in society. But could the process of social change and its ramification have the same type, level and consequences for both the sexes in

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[43] *Ibid.,* pp.7-8.

society? Though scholars have agreed that societies have been a changing one because of the process of social change 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 inclusive entity, their roles and the impact of social change on women have been sidelined almost as if women had no historical role in the process of social change. But in understanding social change we also need to look into the gender dimension of social change. This is what the rise of feminism and the feminist scholarship that grew subsequently critiqued and interrogated the lacuna of gender insight in the concepts of social change.

In order to understand the issue of gender in social change it is important we firstly make a distinction between 'sex' and 'gender' for a better understanding of this study. Ann Oakley while explaining this divide stated that "by gendered society we mean the division of people into two differentiated groups 'men' and 'women' and the organisation of the major aspects of society along those binaries." Gender divisions she states not only permeate the individual's sense of self, families and intimate relationships but it also seeps into the structure of work, politics, law, education, medicine, the military, religion, and culture. Thus Gender according to Oakley is the "system of power" which privileges some men and disadvantages most women. Gender is a matter of culture; it refers to the social classification into masculine and feminine which defers with time and place. Sex on the other hand is a word that refers to the biological differences between male and female.[44] Even Simone De Beauvoir asserted that one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman, and emphasised the social character of womanhood as distinct from biological femaleness.[45] Judith Lorber and Lisa Jean Moore provided further insight when they underscored that though male and female bodies are different biologically but they are in most part made that way by "social practices and expectations" of how girls and boys, women and men should look and act. This gender divide is further shaped by national, racial, ethnic, and social class ideals for each.[46] These differences between men and women are considered as "natural difference" and because of these

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[44] Ann Oakley, *Sex Gender and Society*, London, 1972, pp.9-16.
[45] Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* London, 1953, p. 152.
[46] Judith Lorber and Lisa Jean Moore, *Gendered Bodies: Feminist Perspectives*, Los Angeles, 2007, pp.4-5.

social practices boys and girls are encouraged to use their bodies and minds differently; they are given different roles and positions in work, politics and other main areas of society. These natural differences are also reinforced by culture, the mass media, religion and the knowledge system and produce gendered bodies and behaviour.[47] Gender thus encompasses the social division and cultural distinction between women and men as well as characteristics commonly associated with femininity and masculinity.[48] Sex is therefore a physical and a biological entity while gender a social and a cultural one which is deeply interwoven into the organization of everyday life.[49] Gerda Lerner also feels that gendered relationship, attitudes, beliefs and practices strengthened women's subordination and their inferior position in the society came to be recognised as a 'natural one' and hence became invisible. It is this which firmly established patriarchy finally as an actuality and as an ideology.[50]

Scholars while defining patriarchy termed it as the domination of senior males over junior males as well as female, in the family, tribe or nation allied with the reckoning of descent in the male line.[51] They feel that the privileging of male experience in patriarchal society has had direct and long term effects on the way in which women's experience has been and is viewed.[52] The male position is seen as privileged and a 'norm' while the female position is seen as 'other'. Men have been associated with culture and women with nature, and this differentiation between 'men' and 'women' is recognised across all cultures. While women have been identified with nature because of their 'specialized' role in reproduction and their involvement with the bringing up of children but scholars feel that this association of women with nature is a symbolic component of patriarchy and this inferior symbolic position of women is frequently reinforced by concepts of pollution and it is this association between women, nature and pollution that keeps a patriarchal order

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[47] *op.cit.,* p.6.

[48] Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott, (eds.), "Introduction: The Gendering of Sociology" in Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott (eds.), *Gender: a Sociological Reader*, London, 2002, p.1.

[49] S. Krishnan and D. Chaturvedi, "Gender Bias in India", in C. Kalbagh (ed.), *Women's Struggle for Equality and Emancipation*, New Delhi, 1992, p. 5.

[50] Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy,* New York, 1986, p.10.

[51] Patricia Oberoi, "Problems with Patriarchy: Conceptual Issues in Anthropology and Feminism" in Sharmila Rege, (ed.), *Sociology of Gender*, New Delhi, 2003, p.89.

[52] Francis Bonner, et.al (eds.), "Introduction: On Imagining Women" in Francis Bonner, et.al (eds.) *Imagining Women: Cultural Representation and Gender*, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 3-4.

firmly in place.[53] Rejecting this patriarchal order of society, works on gender and sex believe that the associations are not inherent in the biological or social nature of the sexes, but are cultural constructs which are powerfully reinforced by the social activities which both define and are defined by them. The restrictions and taboos which many women experience structure their social world thereby providing another reason for women to be further controlled and contained.[54] Voicing her strong opinion on this segregation Simone De Beauvoir in her work *'The Second Sex'* had stated 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 economic interests of the males.[55] Even Mary Wollstonecraft considered today as one of the founding feminist philosopher voiced her strong views on the lack of rights of women in her work *'A Vindication of the Rights of Women: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects'* way back in 1792. Making strong assertions about the male dominated society she stated that the common opinion that a woman was 'created for a man' stems from age old times and it was theorized deliberately for the convenience of men to exert their strength and subjugate women. She stated that the superiority of sex based division is supported from the impression that as men have superior bodily strength they therefore have the 'natural superiority over women'. "It is time to restore the lost dignity of women and make them a part of the human species" she wrote categorically.[56] Scholars have therefore felt that the inequalities of gender relations are sustained through a complex of institutions, practices, ideologies and material edifices which are given social contexts, and which further acts to construct various images of masculinity and femininity thereby consolidating forms of gender inequality.[57] They believe that there exist deep seated, structural gender inequalities not only in the system of property rights, but also in legal provisions, family system, work organisation and others.[58] Bina Agarwal while looking into the denial of women's rights on property and land stressed the economic dependence of women

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[53] "Theorising Gender and Sexual Difference" in Polity (ed.), *The Polity Reader in Gender Studies*, Cambridge, 2002, p.7.

[54] *Ibid.,* pp. 15-17.

[55] Simone De Beauvoir, *op.cit.,* p. 159.

[56] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects,* 3rd Edition, London, 1796, pp. 48-93.

[57] *The Polity Reader in Gender Studies, op.cit.*, p.8.

[58] *Ibid.,*

on men that became the material basis of gender oppression while Gerda Lerner emphasises the generation of surplus and its appropriation by men and the acquisition of private property which she felt led to the emergence of a patriarchal family, wherein women's lives became structured into social institutions and their long subordination to men.[59] Vandana Shiva on the other hand regards modern scientific knowledge and economic development and its unbridled pursuit of progress as patriarchal projects that drain resources from women who needs and depends on them the most for themselves, their families and their societies. This she considers to be the latest and most brutal expression of violence of patriarchal ideology as it has led not just to man's domination and mastery over nature but also mastery over women, and excluding them from participation as partners in both science and development.[60]

Feminist scholarship therefore not only challenged the existing social order and social norms like 'freedom' 'equality' 'liberty' brought out by the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution as well as questioned the inferior position of women under patriarchal values and norms but also initiated the process of generating a new knowledge system that did not exist before. It was the consciousness of the secondary place of women across all cultures which led to the growth of feminist anthropology that first made its appearance in the early to mid 1970's that led to the growth of scholars formulating strategy for addressing persistent social injustice against women.[61] The early feminist anthropologists sought to make women visible in the ethnographic record and in their worlds. It was felt that when studies would be made on the importance of women's roles making women the centre of analysis or at least fully present, the accounts that would emerge would be significantly different.[62] The interest in the studying of women's position in the past and in the present by women and feminist groups made them question the hegemonic assumptions of the social sciences about the naturalness of sex differences, the complementarity between men's and women's roles and they tried to establish that sex roles were not merely indicators of difference between

[59] Bina Agarwal, *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*, New York, 1994, pp.12-13, Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy,* New York, 1986, pp. 18-29.
[60] Vandana Shiva*, Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India,* New Delhi, 1988, pp.1-3.
[61] Ellen Lewin (ed.), Feminist Anthropology: A Reader, Oxford, 2006, p.2.
[62] Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott, (eds.), "Introduction: The Gendering of Sociology" in Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott (eds.), *Gender: A Sociological Reader*, London, 2002, pp.2-18.

women and men but marked a key social and hierarchical division. They not only questioned the existence of gender differences in family, work and the society at large but they 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 growth of conflict between patriarchal and liberal political thought in Europe in the seventeenth century and the shift of views on human nature and the nature of society in this period led to a new perspective on the role and status of women as well. There was a shift in collective consciousness which gave rise to the feminist revolution directed against patriarchy.[63] Just as countries demanded emancipation from colonial rule, the principle of equality of individuals irrespective of sex, race, caste and class were demanded by women who wanted the abolition of their traditional subjugation, and claimed equal political and social rights, right to education, right to vote, the right to professional activities and even the right to free mate selection.[64] Liberal political thought holds all human person including women as being unique and capable of rationality. They believe in a just society that allows individuals to exercise their autonomy and to fulfill themselves.[65] Some of the early liberal Feminist thinkers like Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Harriat Tylor (Mill), and others championed rationality, equality, education and fairness to all. Mary Wollstonecraft in her work '*A Vindication of the Rights of Women: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*' stated that females from their infancy are taught to follow the examples of their mothers to be obedient, gentle and modest which will obtain them the protection of men. While dismissing such reasoning wished women to endeavor to acquire strength both mind and body.[66] But while Mary Wollstonecraft had suggested that women be "granted civil and political rights" and have "elected representatives" of their own,[67] other scholars like John Stuart Mill and Harriat Tylor (Mill) writing almost a hundred years after Mary Wollstonecraft,

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[63] For details on the growth of patriarchy in the 17th and 18th centuries see Melissa A. Bulter "Early Liberal Roots of Feminism John Locke and the Attack on Patriarchy", in Mary Evans (ed.), *Feminism: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies,* Vol. 1, Routledge, London, 2001, pp. 55-56.

[64] Maria Mies, *op.cit*., p.16.

[65] Rosemarie Putnam Tong, *Feminist Thought*, Oxford, 1998, p.10.

[66] For more details on the feminist views of Mary Wollstonecraft see Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects,* 3rd Edition, pp. *op.cit.,* pp.6-44.

[67] Mary Wollstonecraft, *op.cit*., pp.15-75.

also celebrated rationality but they departed from Mary Wollstonecraft, in insisting that if society was to achieve sexual equality or gender justice, then women too must be provided with the same political rights, economic opportunities and education that men enjoy in order to change those systems, structures and attitudes that contribute to one's own and other's oppression.[68] Thus, while Liberal feminism views liberation for women as the freedom to determine their own social role and to compete with men on terms of equality as far as possible, the non-Liberal feminists like Jean Bethe Elshtain, Alison Jaggar and others have critiqued and faulted the liberal feminists 'agenda stressing issues' and ideologies for their stance of emphasizing individual rights over the common good, their stress on male values and of giving women political rights over economic rights. They felt that the gender differences between men and women cannot be erased overnight.[69]

Until 1920 the women's rights movement in America confined all of its activities to gaining the vote for women and most of them for the next almost 40 years believed that simply by gaining the vote women had become equal to men. After a period of lull most of the women's rights groups that emerged after 1960s aimed at increasing women's consciousness about women's oppression. Their goal was not to reform the existing elitist, capitalistic, competitive and individualist system but to replace it with egalitarian, socialistic, cooperative, communitarian sisterhood-is-powerful systems. These new Radical groups perceived themselves as revolutionaries rather than reformers.[70] The Marxist Feminism that also grew towards this period viewed the oppression of women as a function of the larger socio-economic system that existed historically as well as currently and a direct result of the institution of private property. They believe that only the end of capitalism which intensifies the degradation of women, and therefore the creation of communism or a classless society can serve the long term interest of women and end their oppression.[71] Marx did not discuss the other process of production commonly known as housework. Whereas, Frederick Engels, interestingly did acknowledge the existence of housework though he never analyzed its economic importance. He

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[68] Rosemarie Putnam Tong, *op.cit*., pp. 15-20.

[69] *Ibid.,* pp. 35-44.

[70] For further details on the views of Radical Feminists see Kate Millet*, Sexual Politics*, Chicago, 2000, pp.25-45,
Rosemarie Putnam Tong, *op.cit*., p.56.

[71] Sushila Singh, *op.cit.,* p.28.

recognized it as the "open or concealed domestic slavery" that ties a woman to the home and prevents her being emancipated by her participation in social production.[72] Though Engels wanted an end to private property that could bring equality between men and women but both Marx and Engels neglected the influence of the relation of human production on the formation of capitalism. This omission has an important political effect, for it means that Marx and Engels's analysis does not come to grips with gender differences among the working class. Marx's analysis has largely been silent on the reasons that working class women suffer a double oppression as members of the working class and as potential reproducers.[73]

Thus these principles propagated by the feminists on women's rights made the women visible once again laying bare the absence of their true rights in the socio-economic and political arenas of the society. While the nineteenth century feminist movement saw legal and constitutional ways as the only means to bring about a change, the twentieth century movement was broader in scope and demanded further reforms such as those of rape laws, reproductive rights and the question of sexual orientation that appeared significantly on the feminist agenda.[74] Current forms of feminism have grown out of women's movement and consciousness-raising groups since the 1960's and the 1970's and their publications of scholarly work, besides the extensive and active networking of informal women's groups. Committed feminists through their material and publications played a significant role in undermining traditional academic boundaries between the personal and the political. While analyzing the effects of the feminist movements it has been expressed by some scholars that though the women's movement has brought the woman back to light with her rights being articulated but the feminist movement is stated to have generated anxiety among men as it now forces them to share their traditional power and privileges. According to Judith M. Bardwick though more and more men as well as women say they support changing the status of women, however men are more

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[72] Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, London, 1902.

[73] Karl Marx, *Capital: The Process of Production of Capital*, Vol. one Moscow, USSR, First Published in 1887, Online Version: mea 1995, marxists.org 1999, "Reproduction and the Materialist Conception of History: A Feminist Critique", in Terrell Carver, (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to MARX*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 196-221.

[74] Sonali Kanwar and Jolly Wadhwa, *Gender: A Cross Cultural Perspective*, New Delhi, 2000, pp.170-171.

inclined to adhere to traditional views of gender and thus of role differences.[75] This adherence further maintains patriarchal norms and strictures against women and their rights.

From the above philosophy of feminism whether in its Liberal, Radical or Marxist view it appears that they all share a common consciousness seeking widespread changes in traditional social structures within the family, their economic role, position of women, and also in the fundamental attitudes and personal relationships for a just social order. Their strong views against patriarchy which they considered as the biggest obstacle to women's liberation from traditional norms and behaviour made women conscious of their rights and their dignity. Feminism and feminist writings on women's issues sowed the seed of social change in traditional social structures, challenged the existing patriarchal system and demanded equality and empowerment for women. But though the liberating views of the feminists paved the way for the rise in the social consciousness of women and their issues but the 'anxiety among men' to share their traditional powers and privileges and thereby their adherence 'to traditional views of gender' is one of the crucial reason for the continuation of the sex based differentiation which till today have in one form or the other come in the way of that true equality of women in society and also a potent factor for the perpetuation of patriarchy and its ills in society. It is the erasure and the existence 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.

The liberating philosophy of women's movement and the rising consciousness of women's rights in the 19th century were not limited to Europe and America alone but may have also spilled over across the world as women tried to reach out to women's groups in order to build a common consciousness against oppressive patriarchal values. Emphasizing this Beatrice Kachuck underscored that though the word 'feminism' evokes western stereotypes but Indian women are credited with having resisted patriarchal oppression for more than 2,000 years though the isolated resistance grew into a movement only in the nineteenth century almost at

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[75] Judith M. Bardwick, *Women in Transition*, Great Britain, 1980, p.14.

about the same time to that of Europe and America.[76] But according to Premlata Pujari and Vijay Kumari, the Indian women's movement as an organized current was different in many aspects from the sister movements in other countries, as the progressive elements not only had to meet obstruction from the Government but also from the conservative sections of society.[77] While making a study of the growth of feminist ideas it has also been found that although some scholars eulogized the position of women in society stating that women's position in the early period was a "well respected and fairly satisfactory one"[78] other feminist scholars like Maria Mies and Uma Chakravarti 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.[79] Even A.S.Altekar who painted the power and position of women in early India to be an "independent" one has subsequently contradicted his own view when he stated that women had no property rights and "the patriarch was the sole owner and guardian of landed property."[80] Such views again prove that the so called 'independent position of women' was a controlled one and limited to a few religious rites and rituals and did not include the broader domain of social, economic and political institutions. That the position of women was not one of a liberated and emancipated one was stressed by Maria Mies when she stated that it was changing adversely in spheres of family, religion and even in the public life. Women in India continued a life of dominance, abuse, neglect and sanctions within a patriarchal setup of society.[81] Even the social liberal reformist challenge of "recasting women in India"[82] in the mid 19th century could not resolve the hardened patriarchal social beliefs, practices, mental attitudes and values which have changed very less even

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[76] Beatrice Kachuck, "Feminist Social Theories: Theme and Variations", in Sharmila Rege, (ed.), *Sociology of Gender: The Challenge of Feminist Sociological Knowledge*, New Delhi, 2003, p 53.

[77] Premlata Pujari and Vijay Kumari, *Women Power in India,* Vol. 2, Delhi, 1994, p.4.

[78] Mandakranta Bose, "Visions of Virtue" in Mandakranta Bose (ed.), *Faces of the Feminine in Ancient, Medieval and Modern India,* New York, 2000, p.3.

[79] For further reference please read Maria Mies, *Indian Women and Patriarchy*, New Delhi, 1980, pp.36-37, Uma Chakravarti, Beyond the Altekarian Paradigm: Towards a New Understanding of Gender Relations in Early Indian History, in Kum Kum Roy (ed.), *Women in Early Indian Societies*, New Delhi, 1999, pp.72-81.

[80] A.S Altekar, "The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization: Retrospect and Prospect "in Kumkum Roy (ed.), *Women in Early Indian Societies*, New Delhi, 1999, pp.50-54.

[81] Maria Mies, *op.cit.,* pp, 37-38, Patricia Uberoi, "Introduction: Problematising Social Reform, Engaging Sexuality, Interrogating the State", in Patricia Uberoi, (ed.), *Social Reform, Sexuality and the State*, New Delhi, 1996, p. xi.

[82] Maitrayee Chaudhuri, "Gender in the Making of the Indian Nation-State", in Sharmila Rege, (ed.), *Sociology of Gender: The Challenge of Feminist Sociological Knowledge*, New Delhi, 2003, p.342.

over a period of time.[83] Thus it appears that there was a rise in consciousness especially among feminists of women's position in the past to the present times which led them to bring forward the retarding elements in the Indian social system which they felt were to be blamed for the secondary position of women in society. They further stressed the prevalence of customary practices along with patriarchal values which they held were responsible for women not being granted her rightful position in society. Scholars like Maria Mies repeatedly 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 who still adhere to the sex based division of labour within the family and outside.[84] Therefore feminist scholars outlined that for change to become an integral part of human condition a change in attitudes and practices is essential for social change to become effective for both women and men in the social system. They outlined the need of alteration in the age old patriarchal values and decadent social norms for a more meaningful place of women in society. The question that thus arises is what are the means or vehicles of social change which can bring a deeper social alteration of attitudes? Change as we have noted has been induced not only by demography, technology, ecology, ideology but in recent times new forces of change such as advanced information technology, globalization, capitalist production and others have further accelerated the process of social transformation altering life styles and social structures. But how much of all these factors have brought about long term change in beliefs and practices is still under study. The rapid advances of communication technology of the 20th century have been considered to be one of the most important vehicles to the process of inducing change in society. This work would therefore seek to understand the gender dimension of change and find answers to questions raised above. It would use the tool of historical materialism as to our understanding 'materialist interpretation of history' provides a tenable explanation to social change. Historical materialism underscores change that occurs in any area which leads to the alteration of productive forces, relations, technology and the modification even in the manners and actions of individual and groups. The material changes in production and relation of production

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[83] Partha Chatterjee, in "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question" in Kum Kum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds.) *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, New Delhi, 2009, pp. 233-236.

[84] Maria Mies, *op.cit.*, pp.289-294.

is infact true to all past and present cultures. But explanations on the role and effect of social change to women have not been well elucidated. It is in the probing of the underlying factors of material alteration to the status of women and the instrument thereof to usher a modification in their lives that the work would look into the role of mass communication in bringing about change in an inimically value loaded patriarchal society.

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.[85] 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.[86] 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.[87]

That human beings have another fundamental need beyond the physical requirement of food and shelter, and that need being to communicate with each other, is a well established fact. This urge for communication is primeval and in contemporary civilization is necessary for survival.[88] Scholars like Kamlesh Mahajan have defined communication as an art of transmitting information, ideas, and attitudes from one person to another and a means of breaking down the barriers in the way of human interaction to achieve mutual understanding. Though historically messages were transmitted face to face but in the modern scene with the coming of communication technology the spheres of communication have widened.[89] C.Chritopher is of the view that such innovation in technology has made human communication more universal and overwhelming on human society in

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[85] Kamlesh Mahajan, *Communication and Society*, New Delhi, 1990, pp.61-62.
[86] Peter C. Goldmark, "Communication and the Community", in Dennis Flanagan (ed.), *Communication*, San Francisco, 1972.
[87] George Gerbner, "Communication and Social Environment", in Dennis Flanagan (ed.), *Communication*, San Francisco, 1972, p. 37.
[88] *Ibid.,* p.62.
[89] *Ibid.,* p.69.

general.[90] Developments in communications have not only extended the human ability to exchange messages, but have also transformed the symbolic environment of human consciousness and are continuing to alter it. As the process of communication involves the sending and receiving of messages it requires an instrument, a channel a carrier, a vehicle to convey the messages which may be the human voice or some other written, printed, visual or audio-visual media, which takes the messages to the audience and brings back their response.[91] Thus communication is a two way process of sending and receiving messages which can be in the form of entertainment or information. One such carrier of messages is mass communication. Mass communication includes all those means of transmitting messages such as radio, television, newspapers and films which enable a source to reach a large audience with information and persuasive messages.[92] One of the most striking features of mass communication is that the mass media channels are the agencies through which large number of individuals can simultaneously receive the same communications and be correspondingly influenced, and in turn affects public opinion and raises problems of social importance.[93] The nature of each of the media whether newspaper, radio, television or films is distinct and unique and speaks a language of its own and the mode of production and reception differs from one media to another.[94]

It appears that scholars have defined communication as 'an art' and 'a necessity' for human interaction. It is considered a social process that has widened the sphere of communication. 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 communication is considered as one of the important components in human communication to play a definitive role in society. However to what extent it has been affecting people's mind is an area which needs a more in-depth study to gauge its actual role in social change. Though a few empirical studies have been done to decide whether the media

[90] C. Christopher, *Dynamics of Journalism*, New Delhi, 1997, p. 189.
[91] K.B Dutta (ed.), *Mass Communication: Theory and Practice,* New Delhi, 2005, pp. 15-45.
[92] Arvind Singhal and Everett M. Rogers, *India's Information Revolution*, New Delhi, 1989, p.20.
[93] R. Wright, "Mass Communication Rediscovered its Past and Future in American Sociology" in Sandra J. Ball, Rokeach J, and Murial G Muria (ed.), *Media Audience and Social Structures*, New Delhi, 1986, p. 26.
[94] C. Christopher, *op.cit.,* p.219.

are mirrors or moulders of society, only scattered, inconclusive and contradictory results have so far emerged between the relationship of mass media and social change, but this inconclusive and contradictory results of media's role according to Karl Erik Rsengren could be because the changes of the value system have been approached at different levels of abstractions, with different time perspectives and keeping different areas of change in mind.[95]

Mass media specialists have now come up with several approaches to mass communication research. The Sociological approach to mass communication has been the belief that communication technology was the central factor in cultural history and that technology determined culture. They also believe that media institutions, work not in isolation but within the wider social context. The Empiricists feel that media addresses messages to mass audiences who can perceive them in a myriad ways depending upon their knowledge and relationships they hold. Marxist sociologists of media studies consider media as ideological systems controlled by the power elites. Technology they believe are imperialistic and capitalistic and instruments to the legitimization of the status quo of the power elites. Thus the approaches to mass communication research does not represent one consistent school of thought but looks at media in a variety of ways as a social process.[96] Empirical observations after the World War I had attributed the mass media to have considerable power to shape opinion, beliefs and mould behaviour. Since then, the mass communication research believes that mass media like the radio, films and the print media functions through a nexus of mediating factors within the existing structures of social relationships and systems of culture and belief. [97] Therefore we now find new thinking and new evidence accumulating on the influence of mass communication and its social power in affecting change. One of the reason why the study of mass communication affects previously have been overlooked could be because before mass communications, people lived their lives in relatively small groups in face to face relationship. But today the higher reach of mass communication has not only brought people closer to each other but the

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[95] Karl Erik Rsengren, "Mass Media and Social Change: Some Current Approaches" in Elihukatz and Tames Szecsko (eds.), *Mass Media and Social Change,* London, 1981, pp.251-258.
[96] C. Christopher, *op.cit.,* pp.214-218.
[97] Denis McQuail, "The Influence and Effects of Mass Media", in James Curran, Michael Gurevitch, Janet Woollacatt and Edward Arnold (eds*.), Mass Communication and Society*, London, 1977, pp. 72-74.

commercialisation of mass media has added the dimension of studying the impact of mass media to a large measure. For example, the commercial viability of a sponsored radio or a TV programme on increasing sale of a particular product necessitates the requirement to study mass media and its affects.[98]

Not only is a renewed interest now being shown on the role of mass communication in shaping our lives, but in order to understand this role further, there are now five kinds of theories which are relevant to mass communication. They are the Social Scientific Theory, Cultural Theory, Normative Theory, Operational Theory and Everyday or Common-Sense Theory. These theories offers general statements about the nature, working and effects of mass communication, based on systematic and objective observation of media, evaluates cultural artefacts and differentiate them according to some criteria of quality, examines how media ought to operate if certain social values are to be observed or attained, offers practical ideas assembled and applied by media practitioners and the knowledge we all gather from our own personal experience with media.[99] Though these theories may not be binding and absolute to mass media operation but they are a set of ideas that help make sense of the role and functioning of the media. Much of today's media is consciously or unconsciously guided by the combination of these set of ideas. They help in the objective, self regulatory and critical examination of media operations as well as to the practical application of the various media works in everyday situations. The theories provide the basis to the making of certain choices to both the content provider and the media consumers. A combination of all these set of concepts in accessing the nature, functioning and the role of AIR and DD programmes would also be applied to the 'mass media' content of this work.

Media and their content are now assumed to have significant and substantial effect and its impact on various dimensions of social life and structure.[100] Considering the amount of resources invested in mass media production and distribution and the diverse content that could have effects on society, the question that is often asked is what has been the role of mass media in effecting change in society? Whatever is the answer but the fact remains that the media whether in the

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[98] Lewis Anthony Dexter, "The Basis of Mass Communication in Society" in Lewis Anthony Dexter and David Manning White (eds.), *People, Society and Mass Communication*, New York, 1964, pp. 3-8.
[99] Denis McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory*, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 14-15.
[100] Elizabeth. M Perse, *Media Effects and Society*, London, 2001, pp.3-6.

level of individual, group, institution, society or culture do influence opinion and behaviour, and promote or inhibit change.[101] Though the extent of influence that mass communications has on effectively reinforcing or stabilizing behaviour or beliefs may be difficult to measure in the absence of more recent specific finding but it seems reasonable to suppose that mass communications do stabilize beliefs and this stabilization leads to stability in social actions.[102] Media is said to be responsible for building public opinion, bringing social order and social change, increase citizens knowledge of the larger world and acting as a facilitator of human communication eliminating distance and the meeting of the minds.[103] Being public and rapid the messages through mass communication are intended to reach larger audiences within a short time or even instantly. It not only entertains but also collects and distributes information covering events in the environment both outside and within any particular society.[104] Because of these varied advantages mass media has been considered to be one of the most significant medium having the potential to bring far reaching affects on people's lives.

The speed at which media today functions was however the result of gradual process of development in its technology over the many years. In the past it was the 'traditional' core mass media of newspapers, television and radio that were considered as the 'old media' consisting of basic communication networks, but with the advances in communication technology and their widespread adoption means there is now a new expression called the 'new media' that has been in use since 1960s encompassing an expanding and diversifying set of applied communication technologies. The two main driving forces of media technology are satellite communication and the harnessing of the computer.[105] The technique of digitalization and the new means of transmission have not only enriched media content and its reach but the interactive media of today has made it one of the most important components of mass communication. The crucial question among social scientists therefore is, has this technology been utilised to harness social awareness? This work would definitely delve into this aspect.

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[101] *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

[102] *Ibid.*, pp.12-14.

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

[104] Charles R. Wright, *Mass Communication: A Sociological Perspective*, New York, 1975, p.5.

[105] Denis McQuail, *op.cit.,* pp. 18-39.

The Indian surge in mass communication began with the print media that was first developed to mobilize public opinion during the freedom movement, though it was only after Independence that the Indian press experienced an impressive growth and flourished and today enjoys a large degree of freedom.[106] The potentiality of All India Radio was also realised to facilitate the twin objective of extending the broadcasting service within easy reach of a large population and also provide an effective communication support to the tasks of nation building.[107] Presently AIR with its total broadcasting stations of 299[108] and covering a population of 99.19%, with a variety of programmes on cultural, educational, scientific, health and hygiene, social and economic aspects is by far the largest broadcasting network in the world.[109] Like AIR, Doordarshan (DD) a visual Public Service Broadcasting medium in our country with 67 Doordarshan *Kendra's* or Production Centers terrestrially covering 79% area and 92.6% of population in India, is also considered as one of the largest television networks in the world.[110]

As noted above social change has been an integral part of human condition and is a continuous process. The various factors that induces change not only leads to a process of transformation in the behaviour, attitudes and practices of individuals or groups in a society but can also affect the functioning of organisations and institutions in a society over a short or long period of time and may lead to either marginal or comprehensive development or decay in the structure of society. 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. Though most scholars have agreed that societies have been a changing one because of the process of social change which in the contemporary period have accelerated further due to 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 inclusive entity, have been sidelined almost as if women had no historical role in the process of social change. Even though women represent 50 percent of the world's

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[106] Naval Prabhakar and Narendra Basu, *op.cit.*, p.1.
[107] Dr Jan R. Habemutder, et al (eds.), *op.cit.*, p.1.
[108] *Annual Report, 2012-13, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting*, New Delhi, p.158.
[109] *Annual Report 2007-2008, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting*, New Delhi, p.65.
[110] *Ibid.,* p.81.

population but it does not require much logic or empirical evidence to prove that women have been and continue to be victims of poverty and under-development on the one hand and socio-economic inequality, domination and exploitation on the other. 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 also very important and information could be a major tool for social transformation in India and in this transformation the mass media could play the role of an important instrument of social change.[111] 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.[112] Indian society is still guided by a number of decadent norms and beliefs which are patriarchal in nature and which often come in the way of healthy social growth and especially to the progress of women and therefore it is in this context we need to understand the role of the two public service broadcasters of AIR and DD in 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.

Scholarly works on media and their role in society especially on issues of women have underscored the stereo-types of media. When it comes to the question of media and its role in highlighting the problems of women, it is alleged that media generally pays little attention to issues specific to women, and rather project their stereotypical image in terms of physical appearance and sex roles.[113] P.C Joshi in his work has brought out this fact when he stated that though women are subjected to discrimination and oppression in innumerable ways but far from bringing them to

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[111] 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.

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

[113] Malti Mehta "Women in Media: Challenges and Prospects" in Ranjana Harish and Bharathi Harishankar (eds.), *Shakti: Multidisciplinary Perspective on Women's Empowerment in India,* New Delhi, 2003, p.122.

light, media especially feature films, seem to "idealise and rationalize" them. He further pointed out that myths, legends, images and symbols are derived from the vast treasures of Indian Mythology and folklore to either mystify or rationalize patterns of men-women relations which are detrimental to women's personality and antagonistic to their emancipation and equality. In order to check such projection he believes that it is necessary to raise the issue of women directly in the context of the impact of modern communication and development as the problems of women are rooted in their many-sided relationship with men in their diverse roles and life situations.[114] Malti Mehta has also pointed out that media generally pays scant attention to issues of specific importance to women, to the activities of the women's movements or to the social contribution made by independent and gifted women. She therefore states that it is important to promote forms of communication that not only challenges the patriarchal nature of media, but also strives to decentralise and democratise them, whereby women will be accepted as active partners in building up society at large.[115] It has been reflected that women's work, her caring and nurturing functions have always been undervalued and pushed to the private sphere and this confinement to the private which is seen as 'non-rational' is derived not from any philosophy, but from patriarchal assumptions.[116] This silencing, marginalizing and devaluing of women's experience both negative and positive need to be redressed. Scholars feel that the female experience which is muted and lost altogether needs to be retrieved from obscurity.[117] To achieve this they feel it is necessary to develop consciousness of women's rights among both men and women, to increase the social awareness of the issue of gender equality and a change in norms and attitudes to bring in the real change whereby women would be accepted as active and equal partners in building up the society at large.[118] R.N Acharya driving home this point stresses that the neglected 'women's dimension' should not only be taken note of but made an inherent part of all media software.[119] Though we know for a fact that the two broadcasting media of the country, AIR and DD have been producing general

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[114] P.C Joshi, *op.cit.*, pp. 245-263.

**[115]** Malti Mehta, *op.cit.,* pp. 123-125.

[116] Maithreyi Krishnaraj*,* Androgyny An Alternative to Gender Polarity, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.31, Issue No. 16-17, April 20th to 27th April, 1996.

[117] Alison Prentice and Ruth Pierson, "Feminism and the Writing and Teaching of History" in Angela Miles and Geraldine Finn (eds.), *Feminism: From Pressure to Politics*, New Delhi, 2002, p. 163.

[118] Ranjana Harish and Bharathi Harishankar (eds.), *op.cit.,* pp. 125-127.

[119] R.N Acharya, *op.cit.*, pp.78-79.

programmes as well as programmes specific to women but what needs to be assessed and focused is the actual difference that such programmes have brought to the lives of women in both rural and urban areas and whether such programmes have meaningfully contributed to social change, overcoming governmental control and able to become the common people's mouth piece in articulating their desires and needs? Have its women specific programmes been able to rid the social ills of society or are the programmes a reflection of the existing male dominated values that still limit women's progress and deny them true justice? Furthermore doesn't the fact of categorising women's issues separately as 'Women's programme' itself a reflection of a patriarchal mindset of the public broadcaster? We would attempt to probe into these questions further in the next few chapters.

Marshal McLuhan had perhaps already foreseen the great communication surge of today when he had expressed that "media is an extension of us"[120] and anticipated this great power of the mass media that could control both our personal and social lives and play the role of an effective agent of change in society. But how much of this role our National broadcasters through the advanced means of technology been able to achieve and what has been its social role to bring in a change of mindset in society can further be understood if we look into the history and functioning of both AIR and DD and their contribution through their varied programmes to social change and in removing gender inequality and gender bias in society.

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[120] Marshal McLuhan, *op.cit*., pp.22-23.