Chapter 6
Women Journalists making Choices

6.1 Introduction

Existing social contexts do not liberate women from negotiations with difficult choices. This chapter tries to understand women journalists and choices they make in relation to question of gender equality. In the field of journalism, understanding the experiences of women journalists through their own choices and freedom provides a way to understand their processes of negotiation. Being journalists does not mean an escape from male-hegemony, and politics but rather women are asked over and again to prove their capability. Their choices are often not accepted in the society. This chapter asks whether the choices these women journalists make can be seen as feminist choices. Marso (2010) writes that choices made by women have an impact on the lives of other women. Marso (2010, p. 263) writes:

“The very heart of feminist debates concern women's complex desires, the multiple locations and identities women occupy and embody, as well as interests and goals for feminist politics. If all women's choices can be considered equally feminist, as media depictions of feminism would have it, there is nothing for feminists to further discuss. Lacking debate, dialogue, and disagreement (in other words, lacking politics as Ferguson argues), there is no context or political space available for a collective discussion of social justice for women. Feminism's past as a social and political movement, its present debates concerning who constitutes the "we" of feminism, and its future as a movement anchored in the improvement of women's lives and lived experiences are all obscured within an unsophisticated language of choice and liberal individualism.”

This chapter firstly deals with certain male-hegemonic aspects through the experiences of women journalists’. Women are excluded by masculine-understanding of the profession, which defines rationality, logic, networking and mobility in the journalistic work. Thus women are judged and in turn seen as announced inferior to men because women are never seen to be united and bonding like men. It tries to understand why women lack solidarity and demonstrate poor connectivity among themselves? It tries to examine how
women are compared to men in the field of journalism. In journalism, gender neutrality is presumed and promoted which is not a reality. This chapter traces experiences of gender inequality at workplace by the women journalists.

The choice and freedom to dress, the appearance of women journalist is an important aspect in understanding the nature of their workplace. This chapter aims to unravel the much debated dress politics and sexist mindset at journalistic workplaces. Secondly, this chapter highlights that regressive and conventional work-environment which make women conscious about their clothing and appearance. Reinforcing social fear and safety disempowers women to freely execute their freedom and choices in this regard. It tries to understand that how dress is used as a powerful tool to impose moral policing on women journalists; attaching them to community honour through their clothing and appearance. It also includes influencing choices like hairstyles.

Working in the journalistic profession allows women to have some economic-power to operationalize their choices and freedom. This chapter also unravels how women are not equally eligible to own self-earned independent material resources unlike men. Especially in small cities, patriarchal structures attempt to control and regulate women journalists’ choices and freedom. This capitalist patriarchal enterprise doesn’t allow women’s complete economic liberation despite being economically self-dependent.

Apart from the freedom and choices of these women journalists their professional freedom is discussed especially once they reach upper levels of their profession. Registering the rare higher decision-making positions for women in journalism, it tries to understand how senior women journalists operate their power. This chapter attempts to understand senior women journalists’ narratives, which somewhere seem to reproduce male-hegemony through suggestions of gender-neutrality.
6.2 Seeing the Self: Male-Hegemony?

Understanding a woman’s self through a male point of view is an unconscious acceptance of patriarchal values in the understanding of the self. Women are assumed to be passive victims of the systems of male power and domination where their sense of worth and value and often attached to a male. Arnot (1982, p. 64) writes that

“according to Sheila Rowbotham (1973) in Woman’s Consciousness, Man’s World, the concept of male hegemony, like that of female oppression, is not new, but then as she also points out, it is one thing to encounter a concept, quite another to understand it. That process of understanding requires one to perceive the concept of male hegemony as a whole series of separate "moments" through which women have come to accept a male-dominated culture, its legality, and their subordination to it and in it. Women have become colonized within a male-defined world, through a wide variety of "educational moments" which is seen separately may appear inconsequential, but which together comprise a pattern of female experience that is qualitatively different from that of men” (cited in Arnot, 1982).

Acceptance of male dominated journalism makes women look at themselves through the patriarchal understanding of their own ‘self’ and ‘worth’. Moreover, internalization of supposed masculine emotions like courage, fearlessness and risk are taken to be something unfit for women but if they adopt such value they are seen as setting an exemplary approach.

Newly, recruited female journalists are sent on risky assignments like ‘sting operation’ and employed as charged-enthusiastic professionals to get the work done. Apparently, new comers have high potential to take risks like a man does to be in the profession. The sense of being less than a man is conditioned among women. Thus a woman tries to seek a space to overcome her socially conditioned underachiever status. The male defined courageous journalism is utilized as a motivational drive to do something ideally great in journalism.

Sangeeta: Women are more dedicated and honest in their jobs thus their potential is exploited to the fullest while keeping them in a paradoxical context. On one hand, it is said that they are dedicated professional whereas on the other hand it is said that they have to prove their ability in journalism, to be equal to men. They do extra work for extra hours, they agree to stay in office till late, at their own risk and their loyalty for their job results with loads of work and quick
deadlines to be done by them. Still women journalists do more work because they are never given a good response for their work and they remain without promotion under impression that they are not good enough like a man to be in this field.

The need for ‘recognition’ is shown through the proving that she is in accordance the idealized ‘Indian woman image’, who toils hard in silence and with great acceptance for professional work pressure. The construction of the idea of good woman professional is very much socially based. This limits a woman to have a good social image not crossing the boundary of being a woman means projecting a socially approved image. A woman sees herself and her professional performance through the male-hegemonic view, which discourages her further more. Women must then be silent and uncomplaining as women are expected to be and fearless risks takers as men are assumed to be considered good professionals.

Moss Kanter (1974, p. 43) quoted in Acker (1990) suggests that a “masculine ethic” about rationality and reasoning is defined by managers who promote the traits belong to men having an educational advantages, as a requirement for organizations. These masculine ethics includes having a tough-minded approach, analytical abilities and the capacity to set aside personal, emotional considerations for the sake of the accomplishment of a task with cognitive superiority and decision-making. These managerial attitudes are usually guarded as if only made for men. Whereas women seem to get risky assignments but they are often not acknowledged due to a patriarchal organizational hierarchy in Journalism.

Shivani: Most of the times male colleagues take advantage of communication-gap among women journalists and they do comparison of women on personal grounds which sometimes trigger to set an ideal image at workplace. Male journalists from different newspapers can go out altogether for tea coffee anytime-anywhere roaming freely and are taken as a good sign of ‘networking’ for news and profession whereas if two female reporters from same or different newspapers are seen together. It becomes talk of town. Also, the male try to give all efforts for rumours to break the solidarity among women in this field.

It does results into the lack of unity among women journalists as they are not well-connected because women are projected as enemies of each other. It is a known fact that women are not enemies of each other whereas in journalism they are victims of male – politics which keep their presence under-represented while
not letting them united coming up with a common voice. Actually the divide and rule policy is quite in function.

I have been working in this field for more than a decade and I have not experienced that whether women are uniting themselves to come forward to raise their voices against the discrimination they have been facing and I could find the main reason is emotional and professional insecurities of women which keep them away from each other because male is always seen as a main source of security for everything. Thus women still find their sense of being even in professional aspect according to the male’s approval or rejection. That is why it has been a situation that women are giving feedback or comments on each other’s work and developing ideas.

The politics of comparing women by men becomes visible as women are not seen in mutual professional networking and they tend to focus on personal image-building efforts. This image building is usually done while unquestionably following the hierarchical norms ignoring the fellow-women journalists and required solidarity among women journalists. The denial of woman as a person depletes their individual confidence and generates a sense of insecurity among her woman colleague. Shivani’s narrative strongly brings out that women’s emotional and professional insecurities muddle up, ultimately falling in the trap of seeking more recognition from men. Also, it demonstrates that women find it almost impossible to stand independently against the male-hegemony, which does not let them stay united.

Bell Hooks (2000) writes about the foundation of solidarity among women while criticizing, it is the "the enemy within" which echoes our internalized sexism. Through patriarchal thinking we have been socialized as females to find ourselves inferior to men and thus are always seen to be in competition with one and another for the sake of seeking patriarchal approval. This socialized need for approval place women in jealousy, fear, and hatred in relation to each other. Such sexist thinking is internalized by patriarchy, which lets us judge each other without compassion and treats one another harshly or with a sense of bitter competition. Hooks (2000) asserts that feminist thinking facilitates us in unlearning the female self-hatred or uprooting patriarchal internalization of “the enemy within.” Feminist’s enables us to break off the barriers and have our own consciousness towards forming solidarity among women.
Ritu: I have experienced that despite being in a same profession facing same struggle in the field of journalism, women journalists do not support each other. They prefer charting their own way while making professional network with male journalists and staying out of any kind of women’s group activity, if there is any by chance. The culture of appreciating each other among women journalists is not prevalent, on contrary sometimes it goes against a woman if her counterpart is working well and being appreciated by her male colleagues. I don’t know how to decode it, whether a feeling of jealousy or insecurity among women themselves.

The identification with the self gets tough because of patriarchal socialization where a woman is supposed to be submissive and obedient. This notion of a ‘good-cultured-woman’ is expected from women at workplace too and unconsciously seen in behavior of women journalists. Ultimately men controlling the functioning in the workplace and maintaining the differences among women journalists keeps the system of inequalities running.

The lack of thick connectivity and networking among women journalists keeps them away from each other and discourages them from discussing their own experiences among themselves. Hooks (2000) states that female bonding is not possible in patriarchy as it is seen as an act of treason. Whereas male bonding is well accepted, it strongly affirms the patriarchal culture. She critically observes that it is easily understood that men in a group have thick bonding supporting each other like team players and keeping the well-being of the group above all individual gain and recognition. Perhaps such assumption and patriarchal assertion of the male-bonding split the solidarity among women easily.

It was observed during interviews that women journalists themselves try not to speak too much or their opinions as it might fuel any argument and can damage their image at workplace. The frequent labeling of women for putting forward their own views brings out a lot of hurdles on day to day survival thus many women prefer to be silent on many issues. This silence is by choice, to avoid any heated-argument in order to maintain peace at workplace is again understood as a responsibility of the women journalists.
6.3 Clothing and Appearance: Drawing a Line

A woman’s body is veiled or covered through clothes. They are part of a cultural politics by which nations are actively produced (Ross, 2008). Clothes play a critical game of representing modesty and sexual explicitness, a denial and celebration of pleasure, both at the same time. As a form of social control, clothes are a mechanism of inclusive and exclusive politics, which demonstrate social hierarchies and moral boundaries (Davis, 1992; Gaines and Herzog, 1990; Tseelon, 1995; cited in Gupta, 2008). Significantly, clothes function as a discursive practice of gender in daily life, which in turn constructs: gender, caste, religious and national identities (Eicher and Roach-Higgins, 1992; Fair 1998; cited in Gupta, 2008).

A range of debates were invoked internationally, terms such as ‘Hijood’ and ‘Burkini’ were coined by Aheda Zanetti, the Lebanese-Australian designer. Her designed garment also reinvented debates around public order, secular values, and liberty, a body politics requisitioning the understanding of multiculturalism. Shirin Neshat, the Iranian artist powerfully describes:

“The female body has been politicised and has functioned in a way as a type of battleground for ideological, philosophical and religious debates and agendas. Muslim women have been made to embody and practice the value systems of their societies through their bodies and social behaviour.”

Women’s clothing: its length, width, cut and even colour are all debated in the blame game of national-sexual politics (Phadke and Khan, 2006). Defining moral values by the length and appearance of the clothes has been a debated issue, which has a direct relationship to the ‘female body’ being subjected to control and regulation according to the socio-cultural values. In an incident of mass molestation occurred on 31st December 2016, new-year evening against a woman took place in the city of Bengaluru, which invoked a widespread outrage. The incident received a stereotyped response from

77 https://www.ft.com/content/2aaba124-7b24-11e6-a2e4-f193b105145e accessed on January 10, 2017.

78 https://www.ft.com/content/2aaba124-7b24-11e6-a2e4-f193b105145e accessed on January 10, 2017.
Karnataka’s home minister, claiming that the “Western dress” worn by the women was the reason for their molestation. Generalizing incidents of molestation because of western clothing or dressing opens the debate on politics of clothing and thus controlling women. It is a patriarchal reinforcement, executing the female body politics, which regulates women’s mobility and safety.

Placing female body under social circumstances is a construction of values and morality, which makes woman inferior to man and carrier of these patriarchal values. Menon (2012) argues that biology and culture are interrelated as women bodies have been shaped by social restrictions with certain norms of beauty; the ‘body’ has been formed as much by ‘culture’ as by ‘nature’. Woman as a body is certainly understood and regulated through socio-cultural boundaries. McNay (1991) critically mentions that fundamentally notion of the body is central to the feminist analysis of the oppression of women. The biological difference between male and female bodies’ structure gender inequality which has been legitimated.

The socially constructed difference between male and female gives a range of vulnerabilities, contextualized in prevailing gender inequality wherein a woman’s body is controlled through dress and morality in the patriarchal hierarchy. Dress has been a powerful tool to reinforce the moral values in objectifying a woman’s body. Phadke (et al, 2011) argue that dress codes define what a woman can wear and what she cannot show explicitly articulated regulatory codes of behavior. The authors point to victim blaming often done on clothing when women are attacked.

Klein (2005) while criticizing the book Dress and Morality (2003), authored by Aileen Ribeiro, states that though the author is not particular about distinguishing the ‘moral’ critique of clothing from other critical perspectives as over the many centuries, critique of dress has been received with attention in medicine, health, social order, political economy and varieties of cultural identity. This work has been confined to the study of England, which is chiefly as a trend-setting nation according to the reviewer. In a patriarchal

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society, dress is directly attached to a woman’s body claiming more as an object in social context.

Durham (1999) argues that as a cultural practice, dress is logic of the concrete and a poetics of contrast intellectualized reflection, inarticulate embodiment and subjective experience; its meaning bears the imprint of colonial and postcolonial relations of domination and struggles with foreign hegemonies. Women working as Hindi Journalist, have to be extra careful regarding their clothes at their workplace, especially when they are out in the field. During interviews women themselves diagnosed it as a serious issue that dressing style does matter to a woman, it represents her moral values. Dressing matters because a woman’s body matters.

In context of my study, it is important to talk about the conventional social set up where dress is used as code in defining the morality of women. It should be understood that one should dress decently, meaning fully-covered body and wearing a ‘dupatta’ if dressed in ‘salwar kameez’ is sign of a good-cultured woman’s dressing. Here ‘dress’ is directly an assessment of the women’s moral values of presenting herself. Nowadays, wearing a pair of Jeans is quite popular but still it is expected that a woman must know that her body is to be covered not to be revealed. Many women journalists believe that clothing is an important factor to make a woman feel more responsible for her safety and at her own risk.

Meenakshi:  If a girl maintains a line of behaviour then nobody can question your image in this profession. A woman’s dressing sense and way of talking matters. Presentation plays an important role to expect the nature of response from colleagues. It depends upon the female journalists on how they present themselves at work place, which decides behaviour of their male colleagues towards them. It is in our hands that what kind of response we want to get from our professional sphere. Thus being formally and decently dressed is necessary. Many young woman, newly joined in this profession find it difficult to adjust because they sometime go in fashion and make inappropriate choices of clothes and they have to face repercussion for their choices.

Connecting the issue of dress with desent choice for work place is not merely about dress, it rather questions conventional approach at work for women where she needs to be properly dressed to ensure respectful treatment. The body-dress habitus is experiential
and it is certainly a physical experience which work as a basis for naturalizing moral assessments argues Durham (1999). Women journalists themselves prefer certain dresses which actually makes them feel comfortable with their body in social surrounding given the moralizing environment.

Phadke et al., (2006) write that women’s clothing, actions and behaviour are considered as the collective honour of the community. A violation of their body is taken as a violation of the entire community, no matter even if it is women’s consensual action which dishonours community’s values. It reflects a patriarchal-obeidence regarding dressing sense to prevent woman body from male gaze or nature of treatment from males. Here it gets critical when professional boundaries are made on the basis of social perceptions and biases. Women journalists themselves feel that to make a positive image one needs to be disciplined in their own behaviour majorly through dressing sense and style. This self-imposed morality in which women enact self-surveillance in obedience to moral codes about clothing.

Chaudhuri (2012, p. 284) critically writes “women are often projected as cultural emblems of the Indian nation and society. Changes in her attire and demeanor are therefore hastily condemned as threats to culture and tradition. Such responses have been witnessed in many parts of the world and at one level can be read as a response typical of patriarchal societies. At another level this essentially patriarchal response has to be conjoined with the specific historical experience of colonial societies. Changes to tradition had to be condemned on two grounds-one, that they ran counter to natural patriarchal norms and two, they are alien and western.”

According to a news story, published on a website, Newsweek.com, “There is a long and complicated history of women’s dress codes in the workplace, especially in the corporate world. Women are scrutinized far more than men for what they wear and high heels epitomises the nature of getting the dress code right.”

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“Women in public life also continue to be endlessly scrutinized for the way they dress. More column inches are devoted to discussing the dress codes of women political leaders than to scrutinizing the sartorial choices of men in equivalent positions of power and authority.”81 Ironically such coverage on sartorial choices is done by media showing its sexist attitude and unfortunately when it comes to its own employees it brings out multiple socio-cultural realities. The power-dressing in corporate world compels female employees to look presentable and highly ambitious at a male-dominated workplace. This news story informs “the power dressing trends in the 1980s involved business women wearing an exaggerated masculine style of dress, pinstripe suits with shoulder pads – but still paired with killer heels– as a way of signaling that their career ambition was equal to that of men.”82 Brown (forthcoming)83 argues that aesthetic labour is a current trend at workplace with expectations, which places an individual’s appearance, dress and other such traits. It is also expected that the employee must look good and sound right.

In context of my research it brings out that here clothing and appearance codes are very conventional, politicizing dress code more for woman rather than men. Somewhere a woman herself tries to ensure her own safety and dress in immediate defense in general argument whereas it entire raises a question of controlling women’s sexuality, mobility and freedom. In this situation discussing feminism in journalism becomes merely a word which reinforces the conventional values. Obeying the ‘dress’ as a code for self-security could be done by women out of fear of being harassed or raped.

Sangeeta: The rapes and violence against women are happening these days indicate that women are responsible for these incidents. Your dressing sense, one should wear dresses as per their choice but in a limitation not showing one’s body otherwise you are attracting others. Second thing is that your body language, your way of talking matter which should be according to decent


83 Scarlet Brown (upcoming) PhD Barbie Gets a Makeover! Aesthetic Labour in Academia. King’s College London, UK.
values. Nobody else can guarantee your safety, it is you who has to be alert and conscious what are you wearing and where are you wearing.

This self-guarding through self-conduct reproduces the male-hegemonic attitude among women, which should be deconstructed with a strong intervention with knowledge and execution of patriarchy being operated among women journalists. The professional and personal image gets overlapped by women as they too find it that a woman should behave according to the certain social parameters. This works for the further validation of the patriarchal mentality which doesn’t question the attitude towards women professionals in journalism. Out of fear too, women prefer to wear more traditional clothes as in their own understanding revealing clothes brings the danger of being harassed and raped.

Rejecting the femininity traits for the sake of job has been an interesting experience where a woman adopts masculine appearance breaking the conventional appearance of a woman.

Shivani: I have got my hair-cut like a boy in my high days of working in journalism and still I maintain my same hair-style, people used to make fun of me while saying ‘par kati’ or ‘Baal kati’ woman. I used to get comments that I am a man in woman’s body just because I got my hair-cut short. I found difficulty to manage with Salwar – Kurta during field work; I chose to wear trousers–shirt. I have been working with my attitude but still you are seen left alone and your rebel is not enough to break the perception about dresses and safety issues. It is definitely not the dress but male-attitude actually whole concept of looking at a woman like a piece or commodity.

I have experienced looking like a man gave me a boost to be in man's field but I couldn’t escape being a woman too and facing discrimination based on gender. I was labeled as lesbian. I don’t get answer that if a typical girlish or womanly dress seems provoking a man to rape a woman, how come my dress decide my sexuality adding more troubles to my peace. I don’t feel free and safe even after reversing my choices in dress and attitude.

Here the argument is about ‘bodies’ which are culturally and socially defined and contested. Dressing and appearance are strong methods to control women’s choices while inducing the fear of being unsafe. Hagerstrand (1982) quoted in Rose (1999, p. 359 - 370) says ‘people are not paths, but they cannot avoid drawing them in space -time’. It plays a
politics around a woman’s body, limiting her free choices even in clothing and dresses in particular socio-cultural contexts.

Shivani suggests that even dressing in a masculine way does not prevent either the comments or the harassment. Phadke et al., (2011) point out that it is a well-acknowledged fact that abiding by conservative dress codes does not ensure safety of a woman at all, as women wearing saris, salwars and burqua-clad women too face sexual violence and harassment in the streets.

Shivani finds her resistance by dressing like a man, which to some extent helped her but she identifies that her female body cannot escape conventional repression and being discriminated. Stretching her choice of dressing like a man can be understood as a Demaiter et al., (2009) suggest “women who act as conceptual men sometimes pay a price for violating gender norms, and are criticized by colleagues and others for their lack of femininity (Pierce, 1995; Roth, 2004a; 2004b). To minimize this, some women adopt other strategies for instance, some compartmentalize their lives, acting like men in many work settings, but adding feminine touches to their dress and demeanour in their interactions with subordinates and friends, and on their own time (Blair-Loy, 2001; Hinze, 1999; Pierce, 1995). Other women in male-dominated jobs reject the traditional masculine definition of the ideal worker, and work on their own terms, finding alternative ways to be both good workers and good women” (cited in Demaiter et al, 2009).

The dress and hair-style of a woman socially defines her image in connection to her female body. Manning (2010, p. 38) writes that “stereotypes assigned to women based on the length and color of their hair can affect them on personal, societal, and professional level.” If a woman adopts a tom-boyish attitude and puts up a bold-macho image of having short hair, she has to face questioning along with apprehensions from her male colleagues. Manning (2010, p. 35) critically mentions in her work “many stereotypes have also surfaced assigning attributes to women based solely on the appearance of head hair. Stereotypes related to women and hair colors include: dumb blonde, fair maiden, and blonde jokes and with regard to their hair length, women with shorter hair are often perceived as more masculine than women with long hair.”
While quoting Rose Weitz’s work ‘Rapunzel’s Daughters: What Women’s Hair Tells Us about Women’s Lives’ (2004), Manning (2010) mentions that “hair is a social construct that is deeply connected to the identities of women. Weitz (2004, vxi) writes that “part of a broader language of appearance, which, whether or not we intend it, tells others about ourselves” (cited in Manning, 2010). Symbols exist within this phenomenon that makes up a broader language is communicated to those we meet to make statements about which we are.” Appearance through hair style does need consideration in the context of Indian journalism too. As per my observation, the many prominent journalists do have short hair such as: Barkha Dutt, Sagarika Ghosh and Seema Mustafa. Not only in journalism but in academics too, women break stereotypes assigned to their hair style. Having short hairstyle is a form of resistance adopted by women to challenge social norms and gender stereotypes. Manning (2010, p. 35) argues ‘women use their hair to establish both a group identity and as a form of everyday resistance from social norms established by dominant culture’ as hair the subject of cultural significance for women more than for men. In my research, one respondent mentioned her experience of choosing short hairstyle, which is actually a strong form of resistance in her socio-cultural context. Her narrative reveals that women with short hairstyle are addressed less respectively and are called names like ‘Par kati’ or ‘Bal Kati’. It brings contradiction to the fore, on one hand having short hairstyle brings acceptance in male-bastioned journalism and on the other women with short hairstyles are looked down because they challenge the conventional parameters of having long hair.

Acker (1990) cites Burrell (1984, p. 98) that in early modern organizations “the suppression of sexuality is one of the first tasks the bureaucracy sets itself.” The operation of the large factories of the nineteenth century, other large organizations like armies and monasteries, which had limited participation of women, attempted to banish sexuality, favoring control of members and organization’s activities (Burrell 1984, 1987; Hacker and Hacker, 1987). Choosing a masculine look while working in the organization might bring a sense of ‘maleness’ presenting her as a strong one, to overcome the female or feminine traits which are a socio-cultural manifestation of vulnerable gender identity for a woman.
Their ‘macho’ attitude gives her ‘self-assumed’ acceptance in male-dominated profession. Such tomboyish look or being a tomboy is associated with both “the subversion of gender roles and the perpetuation of an oppressive, dichotomous gender system” (cf. Devor, 1989; Sayers, 1995; Thorne, 1993 cited in Carr, 1998). Though it has another side too, which relates to a different debate in ‘sexuality’ where women with ‘macho-bold-image’ are labeled as lesbians. Moreover, at the same time rejecting femininity and putting forward a masculine-feminine attitude would help her to bring herself strongly against the male-dominated profession. If women journalists are flocking together, the immediate response from men is received that these are anti–men and lesbian women. It is used like a weapon among male-gossips to make women feel inferior and project these women as a harm to social norms and values.

According to few respondents, dressing like man helps them to put up a strong appearance. Many respondents felt that a woman should be self-conscious to avoid any chance to be misunderstood because of her dress or hair-style. Nature of journalistic workplace seems patriarchal and sexist which controls clothing and appearance of women journalists.

6.4 Economic Empowerment?

Making choice and living it in particular socio-cultural environment is not easily accepted for women who often face a backlash. Execution of choices is possible through having an economic independence which can empower a woman. A woman’s choice doesn’t have a validation no matter even if it is an earned ‘choice’ based on her own economic freedom. Their freedom of choice is controlled and seen as unreasonable one because women making choices is a challenge to the existing social order. The term ‘nature of choice’ being made by women about their career, sexuality, marriage, family, work and even dress come altogether regulated by society. Furguson (2010, p. 247) writes that

“Linda Hirshman coined the phrase ‘choice feminism’ to name the widespread belief in the US that the women's movement has liberated women to make whatever choices they want. While Hirshman focuses on the choices women make about wage work and unpaid labor in the home, choice feminism is a much
broader phenomenon. The view that today all choices are feminist can be invoked to support decisions to wear lipstick and high heels, to participate in Girls Gone Wild!, to sleep with men, to enjoy pornography, to not have children, to hire a maid, or to adopt a gendered division of labor.”

Despite finding immense possibilities of choice in feminism there is prevalence of gender consciousness at larger perspective. The actualization of feminist consciousness seems to be layered because execution of choices is done at material level where women are not free to voice themselves into male-dominated patriarchal system. Significantly, their material-growth in terms of economic base gives women an upper hand and a confidence for being self-reliant. Their economic independence is criticized by their male colleagues because it certainly disturbs the capitalist-patriarchal order of having a male as owner of the resources.

Shivani: The shocking part is that they can’t tolerate if a woman who has been working in journalism for last 14 years can afford to have a car, house and other material assets. When I bought a new car for myself, I joyfully came by car to the office. But it became another strong reason showing ‘jealousy’ among the male colleagues who satirically said that if you can afford a car then why do you need to work here. Also the worst part was that there were a number of assumptions among males that I might be having some other income sources strongly pointing out on character and behaviour. They tried to point out that this car could not be purchased out of such meager income from journalism.

These days I don’t come by car to office, forcefully maintaining a low profile which perhaps doesn’t go against the egos of male colleagues. There is very strong material show off through vehicle brands, buying real estate and other gadgets among male colleagues themselves and they promote each other too whereas if a woman makes such progress, it directly hurts their ego.

The growth and economic progress of a journalist is seen in materialistic terms and lifestyle which is very common social assessment of one’s status. Among male journalists, having expensive cell phone, car, gadgets are added to their progress and status and were seen as a source of pride but if a woman updates her materialistic status, it is fodder for gossip among male journalist.

Interestingly, Bell Hooks (2000) describes, the term “power feminism” highlighting, mass media as of collective voice of those women who have achieved economic power, finds a link here as such emerging “power feminism” among women journalists, it throws
a challenge to capitalist patriarchy. Hooks (2000) argues that these power feminists should be helping or sharing resources to assist the efforts of women in achieving economic self-reliance. Here, in context of this study, challenging the capitalist patriarchy also demands a collective voice and effort from feminist politics. This gives a visionary feminist approach in economic liberation of women.

Working in this profession for a quite long period women are supposed to have earned professional identity and progress through their own clear choices. Through Shivani’s narrative, her visible material growth in the profession is taken as a defamatory act by male-colleagues where men have a clear discomfort with material choices made by a woman. It discourages women’s progress and growth over the ten years of timeline in this profession. The reinforcement of patriarchal values through owning economic resources by a woman and her visible material progress is not well accepted. Ultimately she chooses to maintain a low profile trying to keep her away from such masculine politics.

Meenakshi: After working for years in this field, I chose to be single. I have been living with my parents but I needed to buy a house. I started looking for one, contacted brokers and property dealers this spread like a wildfire that I am going to buy a house, making most of the men curious to know that if I can buy a house why I am working here. I faced so many comments like what will you do having a house for you only, you are not even married, why are you investing, you are a woman you should get married rather than buying a house or after buying house will you get married? Later, I changed my job and tried my best to go ahead without letting anyone know in office that I am looking for a house for me. Unfortunately, I had to face same line of remarks by property dealers and agents as they too think that only a man is entitled to buy a house for his family.

For a woman, who has been living her choices certainly want to have an economic security which is a symbol of having an independent economic decision taken by her. Meenakshi’s narrative suggests that woman owning her house is not socially acceptable thing because she cannot be an independent owner of economic resources. The conventional notion about woman belonging to a man restricts her from being independent. The whole focus is towards marriage because a woman is not supposed to stay unmarried, living a life of her choice.
The economic power of a woman is the most significant aspect; it allows her to be independent of social bindings and enables her to have her own way of life. Patriarchy has its roots in accumulating the economic resources, functioning through social values. Structurally, women are made economically dependent and limited to the domestic space and kept out of the decision making process.

Customization of choices or cutting them suitable to the order is an adjustment to the higher order where male-ego and power matter more than a woman’s progress and her earned economic status. Reduction in execution of choices made by a woman is actually reducing her freedom and will, which she has earned. A woman cannot be freed from being regulated. According to existing social dominance, a male is entitled to own economic resources and to show it off, to gain dominance and power but this is not available to women.

6.5 Senior Women Journalists: Negotiating or Reinforcing Hierarchy

There are very few women in higher decision-making position in Hindi print media. Further women who have been working in decision-making positions have suggested the absence of women’s voices as they go higher in the professional ladder.

Very few woman journalists have made their way to the higher decision-making process. In their journey they have broken the social barriers while reaching their respective higher positions in journalism. During interviews women journalists who have been in this profession for more than a decade have got promotion and are holding senior positions. These women in higher position sound more masculine in their language and in their power preference of the profession. Their bossy-attitude explains that they do not find gender-discrimination from their position because major struggle lies in the beginning of career. On the contrary, they justify that a woman needs to be bold and tough on emotions then only she can survive in this field. There is almost a denial of gender discrimination and the assumption of gender neutrality.
The sense of power while being in a higher authority is visible among women journalists who are working in decision-making position and their views towards women journalists match with the patriarchal attitude as much as the male journalists.

_Ritu:_ Even males have to compromise as they too do not have time for their family in their journalistic profession. Still they work with passion and dedication in this field. It has never been easy to reach up to the higher position, personally I have observed that it is more about surviving in the struggle rather than being conscious about your gender.

In the profession where one has to cover news, event happening anytime thus gender consciousness limits your professional vision. Moreover, once you reach at the level of decision making process, you have to go by the newspapers agenda, policies and rules which has again no space for gender, it demands capable and efficient candidate to handle the position. You cannot excuse yourself from the professional responsibilities while working for an organization; you become responsible to the assigned position. I have seen male journalists in higher position work hard, ignoring their personal life completely dedicated to the profession and deadlines.

Here, the nature of profession does affect men and women both but men are not held responsible for not giving time to their family. It’s not taken as a complaint whereas it is taken as a pride because head of the family is working hard. This is true in other profession as well.

Reaching higher in the professional position actually dilutes the gender-sensitivity for those woman journalists who face discrimination because of their gender. The higher position speaks a language of power and gender neutrality where all are seen as equals. Holding a powerful position a woman finds herself again bound by the structural compulsion to ignore gender to fulfill larger organizational goals. The patriarchy has deep roots from bottom to top, in the print journalism structure. Watts (2009, p. 512) quotes “Collinson and Collinson (2004, p. 240) critique the power of 'organizational time discipline', which they argue has contributed to a 'remasculinization' of management in which women managers at all levels will only survive if they follow the example of their male counterparts of subordinate home and family to company and career.”

According to women in higher position, it is the limitation of position which controls journalists from organizational behavior and male hegemonic power point of view. These
senior women journalists prefer not to speak much about gender as a separate category which is another method to cope with the existing gender biased attitude in the media organizations. Demaiter et al., (2009, p. 35) cites that

“For Marshall (1993: 100), such an approach is a coping mechanism. This stage of coping she calls “muted”: here women do not view organizational cultures as male-dominated, and they “deny the salience of gender” to their work. While this coping strategy clearly facilitates women’s ability to inhabit and work in a male-dominated environment, Marshall (1993) believes that it also entails considerable strain (women have to work to remain blind to the gendered culture they inhabit). Some women enter a different stage (“embattled”) when events and circumstances make it impossible for them to deny the importance of gender any longer; during this stage they are exposed to the gender inequality around them.”

The profession of journalism is not untouched by social biases which get in clash with the professional norms, which keeps varying as per the need of the media organization. The social hierarchy ensures that a man is free from household-family responsibilities and available for more work. Women who are in a higher position, are supposed to compromise their personal and family unlike their male counterparts. For women, they have to face difficulties as they have to be available for family and work both with the same attention and sense of responsibility.

That’s why gender is rarely treated as something to be considered in Hindi print work culture. Certainly, it is a debatable issue that women journalists themselves try to escape such issues while observing a culture of silence regarding these issues.

Jeevika: Each woman has her own share of struggle, to make it, to the top professional position in journalism. Presently, working in a higher position took so many years of negotiation with the deep-rooted male-domination to bring myself this far. Once I am working for this position, I see, difficulties woman journalists have to face in the journey if they are not strong enough. I do relate my struggles to theirs but one has to walk on their own. I am a single woman, I have given my years of life to this profession which certainly cannot reduce any other woman’s struggle who must have got married and made a choice to stay in the profession. Perhaps ignoring the gender is more appropriate if you need to stay stronger in this field.

Yes, women are vulnerable too, while repeating your gender that you are a woman actually makes you weaker and gives more chances to males to point out at your weaknesses for being a woman. Thus gender should not be a reason to make unreasonable choices because decision-making position is more about organizational responsibility and keeping the newspaper running at any cost.
I personally become helpless to raise the voice on important issues like having a sexual harassment cell because in editorial board, I am the lone voice. I feel so powerless that despite my suggestion to form a body to address such cases is reduced it to a sarcastic laughter from male colleagues and I am reminded of my position to serve the newspaper not the social work. This is an irony of being in the higher position where your voice is not free ultimately, no matter you have come this far.

Holding a decision-making position, does not ensure that women can raise issues and voices for her other female counter-parts. The politics of position is entirely a different scene where a woman does not have enough power to bring the issues to the forefront. Having a low number of women in higher position actually weakens the policies existing in media organizations because these women’s voices are not even considered.

Jeevika’s narrative suggests that women in powerful positions find gender as a base for discrimination in this field but they do not have system to address these reality. On the contrary, her narrative suggests that a woman should ignore her own vulnerability of the gender which is the basis of the structural discrimination. She herself agrees to the powerlessness of being in higher position because again it is male-dominated power system which marginalizes women one, to reinforce the hierarchies blocking the spaces for voices and dialogues.

Acknowledging the vulnerabilities of being a woman reveals existing reality in Hindi journalism where a woman herself sees that staying stronger and ignoring the gender question is a choice that can work to survive in the profession. Acker (2009) asserts the ‘Glass Ceiling’ phenomenon as women are scarce at top positions. They seem to move up in the ladders making progress but in reality very few are able to make it to powerful positions. She reasons that existence of a gender imbalance or absence of women at the top as generating difficulties for the women working in down at the ladder. Acker (2009) points out that the invisibility of systematic inequalities often hinders efforts to attain gender equality in organizations.

Moreover, also the senior women journalists are not completely powerful despite being at higher position as they are not equally made part of the informal-power-networking unlike the male journalists. Thus senior women journalists remain limited to their

Respondents, who have been working for more than decades in this field, shared that even if a woman journalist reaches up to the higher-position, she does not have the same power as her male counterparts.

Shivani: If a woman acts so independently and powerful through her work and develops networking is seen of course not good woman and she is never appreciated the same way as a male journalists develop networking and sources among politicians, ministers corporates and so on.

It is important to understand that when it comes to sharing the power-networking in journalism, women placed, in senior positions limit them to newspapers’ organizational goals which do not let them come up all independently. Thus higher positions are male dominated because it has to do with decision-making power and distribution of power in the realm of journalistic work and women are rarely the preferred choices. The informal networking and developing sources actually give a powerful networking which actually seen as a threat to male journalists as narrative of the respondents is echoing. Also senior women journalist as respondents clearly mentioned that drinking, smoking and more male activities are not the preferred methods of women journalists to make sources and networking, which also shows that senior women journalists do not get acceptance in the male-world and are seen as unprofessional.

"As a consequence of men's numbers and dominance, the professional and managerial world is a male culture. The male members have grown up together, played, learned, and worked together. They share common understandings about rules and styles of competing, bartering and succeeding. These understandings ease their communication and assure support and acceptance among them. But women are out-siders to this male milieu" (Fox and Hesse-Biber, 1984:141 cited in Moore, 1988, p. 568). Negotiation in the
ladder of journalism could be seen majorly for those women who are in their middle age and in mid of their career. Whereas those who join the profession just after their post-graduation know little about the realities and those who have been able to reach up almost know the realities. The professional hierarchy in the journalism is not vertical, clearly it does have structural inequalities to place the women at lower rung. For example, a woman could be a city-editor but the system finds it difficult to take her as an editor of the particular edition of the newspaper. Thus for senior women journalists their higher position too are not as per the vertical order which is not uniform in Hindi print media. Now, the positions have been changed with the changes in the emerging new beats and topics that are to be covered in newspapers.

6.6 Conclusion

Male-hegemony is a prevalent fact, in the context of which women’s work in journalism is evaluated. The choice to be in the profession has sometimes meant that women journalists adapt masculine ethics to succeed. This can then be seen as gender-neutrality and therefore gender equality. Because it keeps women in paradoxical location where on the one hand they are encouraged with the assumption of gender-neutrality and on the other hand women are strategically then unable to even discuss gender equality in male-dominated profession. To great extent women themselves assess their own self through male-defined parameters. With a constant struggle to prove their worth and capability in comparison to a man is another oppressive structure which exists. Moreover, the dominant generalization about poor solidarity and sorority among women in journalism work favors male journalists as women are unable to lobby as a group. Because women are not socially and economically independent and their dependencies on men lead to having fragmented voices due to internalized sexism. Considering women and their unity as a potential threat against male-domination in journalism is a regressive force at journalistic workplace which reasserts dominant values. As a researcher, I have observed that Jabalpur and Gwalior cities have almost no connectivity among women journalists. Also, here women journalists are told to perform equal to men reinforcing the idea that men are superior. Whereas, Bhopal and Indore have better connectivity among women.
journalists but still it is difficult to bring them together, to raise a collective voice. It shows that patriarchy is highly operative through keeping women disconnected with each other.

An unconscious struggle to seek an approval from a male authority makes women vulnerable. Women are further regulated through clothing and appearance at the workplace defining moral boundaries for women. A woman’s body, its clothing and appearance are judged perpetuating sexual-politics of dress. Control of the dress and appearance is powerful tool to express regressive values to be followed by women at workplace. In the context of this research, this brings out that the journalistic workplace is mainly patriarchal, which expect women to be “decent” making conventional choices of clothing and dressing. These codes also stir up the national agenda of Indian culture and civilization, which locates a woman as a symbol of national honour. Chaudhury (2012) clearly establishes that recasting women as emblems of culture is a process of refashioning gender norms is practiced in the name of culture and refinement of culture. Hindi journalistic workplace seems to function to maintain the binary of gender which is socially acknowledged and reinforced by dominant values. This unravels that Hindi journalistic workplace is highly regressive showing fear of erosion of cultural values which women are required assume.

Amidst all such experiences of women journalists, it has becomes an important finding that their economic empowerment is nonetheless notable for bringing a strong identity to them. It shows that despite being in journalism for long period women journalists have not been able to live up to their choices and freedom. Due to regressive social forces women journalists are confined while expressing their material choices which has become an interesting factor about small cities. It unfolds those patriarchal forces, which dismisses ownership of economic resources by women no matter whether it is earned by them only. Social hierarchy doesn’t approve this economic ownership of a woman because it may be a threat to male authority and power. It raises a concern that despite having a relative economic liberation women are repressed by patriarchal forces. It brings out that these cities Indore, Bhopal, Gwalior and Jabalpur show deep-anarchy when it comes to women independently owning economic material base despite working for
years in journalism. It provokes to think that on one hand it is a reinforcement of patriarchal structure as women are claiming and constructing their material base but are being dismissed because conventionally, a man is the owner of property by all means.

Expressing dismissal of women’s economic liberation because of social hierarchy furthers reveals that women are entangled in the power structures. Senior women journalists seem to have a voice in higher positions of power. These women journalists who have reached up to the top ladder of the journalistic profession display a deliberate gender-blindness while speaking through the power of their position. But it also reveals that in higher-positions too, gender-discrimination actively operates while giving limited professional power to these senior women journalists. They highlight demands of journalistic profession with zero-flexibility ignoring gender because higher positions are meant to extract organizational profit rather than reflecting on the organization’s gender blindness. The top professional layer resonates and justifies men’s struggle in this profession, diluting gender concerns. It identifies that specifically in Indore; senior respondents expressed the male-hegemonic language dismissing gender as a separate category in journalism. Rest of the cities Bhopal, Gwalior, and Jabalpur are still struggling to have women in decision-making positions. It shows that women in top-ladder of journalism have lone voice as there too it is a male-dominated space, which does not encourage gender equality but reinforces a masculine professional hierarchy. This chapter acknowledges that women journalists are not able to execute their choices and freedom as these are regulated according to patriarchal norms. Existing social forces outside and inside workplace disempower them at multiple levels.