CHAPTER- SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter focuses on the conclusions derived from the analysis of the empirical data on the coverage and dissection of women’s issues which are deemed sufficiently salient to be disseminated by the media. Of the total coverage it is seen that The Times of India gave highest coverage to the women’s issues both in terms of space and frequency. The second highest coverage was given by The Telegraph followed by Eastern Chronicle. Thus, it can be concluded that at the national and regional level the English dailies assigned more space to women’s issues than the local English daily. The dailies are the most widely read, and posses great potential to influence people on various women’s developmental issues but the study showed that coverage of women’s issues in these newspapers are far less to bring about the desired effect in the society.

Even when women and the women’s issues are covered in the news their voices are not heard very often. This is due to the fact that mostly others speak for them. This, together with the low visibility and appearance attributes to what Tauchman (1978) called the ‘symbolic annihilation’ that is the marginalization of women in the news media.

In general the women’s stories get very little visibility. Some stories do not get prominence even when they appear. The analysis showed that women’s issues were predominantly event-oriented. A major percentage of the news stories focused on the crime/violence and are routinely covered finite and so has greater possibility to be covered. Or else the focus of the stories would have been diversified. Crime not only offers event oriented stories but also the protests associated with it. The various movements including the women’s movements were aware that to bring the attention to their problems it has to be covered by the media. The action oriented events of the women’s groups are framed in such a way so as to be congruent with the rhythms and needs of news work.
This proposition was strengthened through the micro analysis of violence/crime issues in which the stories were dissected into various sub-themes. Out of all the sub-themes the issues on rape and molestation got highest coverage in comparison to other stories like female feticide, dowry death, murder, suicide or police atrocities. This indicate that such stories with the involvement of various bureaucratic, government and non-government organizations including women’s organization get more prominence in media and carry news values. Such issues give prominence through highlighting the event and the follow up of the events but what lacks is the absence of the indepth analysis of the women’s lives and the social structures. Media reports the event objectively and factually but do not lend a mouth piece to the structural dimension of the society. This social movements that shows the relationship between the media and the event is a complex phenomenon. Todd Girtin’s work presents his observations on the relationship between media and various movements that although movement gain popularization in the initial stage, they may suffer from fragmentation with continued media exposure. Once the movement gets on the media’s agenda the media adopts the politics of representation in presenting the events and emphases on the span of exposure of the stories in the newspapers. It can be concluded that protests are acceptable as long as it has meaningful action and the coverage matures in terms of action taken. One poignant example is the Guwahati molestation case in July 2012 (discussed in the analysis section) where the protesters agitation influenced the government to adopt quick action against the culprits.

The news stories usually lack their own potential to expose the underlying realities of the events instead the articles, editorial, letters to editor carry perspectives to provide linkage between the events and allow expression of their opinion. Features and editorials have the advantage of being prominent when placed in the supplement section with added tones and with the progressive orientation of the editor more articles on women’s concern and development can be promoted. It is observed that issues on the developmental aspect of women, health, social, gendered economic policies were either missing or marginally covered. Burning social problems like infanticide/feticide, dowry, prostitution/trafficking etc were covered negligibly. Such issues with social significance are covered less even in articles and editorials. The fact that lies under such insignificant coverage attributes to the reporters professional
socialization and internalization of patriarchal percepts within a particular social order.

In retrospect, the researcher found that stories on women as entertainers or politicians were covered in the main body of the paper. The entertainment stories relegated to the entertainment section indicate that they do not reflect the essence of the women’s issues. But as the study is on women’s issues therefore stories with less consciousness on women’s issues were also included and it was found that all the newspapers carried highest coverage of entertainment stories. The marginalization of women’s issues is the lack of interest in addressing the issues of women’s concern in media is also the impact of the patriarchal structure and the media agendas.

Thus, this study provides a different insight into the relationship between women/women’s movement and media. The various women’s movement advocating the women’s right and justice in the patriarchal society bears links with the political system and the policy makers. The government uses such women’s movement as their political agendas and aspirations. Though the government is deeply patriarchal yet they present a liberal and secular attitude in addressing such issues. However, these assumptions cannot undermine the important role that media play in a democratic society. Media has the potential of dissecting the women’s issues in the lights of binary opposition i.e. the positive and the negative. Binary opposition is concerned with the way the meaning is interpreted. The implication of binary opposition lies within our cultural system that shapes our interpretation and understanding of a subject. These oppositions appear entirely natural and are unquestioned and leveled as real is at the level of ideas. But they can represent reality and ideologically reinforce the judgmental and hierarchical ways of thinking that might well seem entirely natural. Therefore, the facts underlying in the representation of women’s issues lies in the construction of reality in context to social consensus.

### 6.2 RECOMMENDATION

On the basis of the findings of the study, it is seen that the visibility of women’s issues in print media is still marginal compared to other issues. The recommendation for the increase of the status of women is as under:
• It is found that the representation of women in media lies on the social structure of patriarchy. They are treated as mere subordinates who depend on men. This study brings to light a very discouraging picture of the representation of women’s reporting in India. The rapture in the prevailing system of attitude will reinforce betterment of the status of women in Indian society. The social structure of the society with women in a secondary position is accepted as natural by the society. The government should intervene with the situation and pay greater attention to the needs of the disadvantaged section. If the government assumes greater responsibility it can act as support structure for women. The researcher suggests that the strongest implication of this study is to increase the level of consciousness to a wider spectrum and for its implementation certain action strategies should be essentially evolved.

• Another significant way to achieve this objective is the incorporation of gender education in the academic curricula from the school level. Education influences and shapes the person’s thinking from an early stage. Our academic curricula involve, historical aspects, struggles, different subjects find prominent place in educational system but the depiction of realities remain invisible. The student takes on the social order of patriarchy where women are presented as subordinates. Education gives importance to certain experiences and theories while ignoring others and in order that people perceive women as subject in their rights it is essential to incorporate the works, struggle and experiences of women in the education system to change the prevailing hegemonic ideologies. Such insight given to students would sensitize them to carry the problems of women into the mainstreams.

• The incorporation of gender agenda in the media and communication studies will help the media students understand the ground reality of the various media organizations. Media plays an important role in a democracy, in other word it is the mouthpiece of democracy. The agenda setters in media organizations give emphasis to the certain issues while ignoring others. Media which operates on the patriarchal ideologies ignores the women’s aspects. Media, the mirror of society could act to route the process of development.
But it is important to understand at the structural and functional level of the mediated reality and produce alternative opinions.

- Introduction of gender perspectives in media education at the undergraduate or university level will help to groom students as better media professionals. The communication students will think with objectivity and laterally on various women issues, critically examine the gender perspectives, debate on the women’s status in society and media. “If communication education sensitizes students to gender issues, a capacity may be attempted for influencing potential communicators to make significant contributions to shape gender-informed debates in media and society” (Ambigapathy, 1995). The curricula should incorporate the feminist ideologies, the relationship between media and the structural power society in order to check the patriarchal ways of thinking.

- The journalist and the reporters should be concerned about the various developmental issues/social issues/gender issues need to invest more time and energy in constructive reporting which will create a platform for debate. The journalist can influence the policies of a media organization by questioning its practices and ideologies and include women’s issues in a beat along with other issues like sports, politics, economy/business, etc. The lack of awareness or concern on the part of reporters and their insensitivity in reporting act as a hindrance in the coverage of women’s issues. Moreover, journalists need to be sensitized while dealing gender issues. Its role should be to expose and create awareness against the social malice and in a way it should inculcate more awareness program to sensitize media in the coverage of sensitive women’s issues by factual and objective reporting.

- The various women’s movements at the various levels should bring the women’s struggle to media. The journalist should be invited to the field areas to get a better insight into the harsh realities of the women’s lives. The newspapers should introduce special pages on gender, where the space allotted can be utilized in the maximum way for disseminating information and
suggest alternative opinions on prevalent social ideologies and invite participatory responses.

- The Press Council should intervene in the publication of objectionable news related to women. The censor board must also be sensitized in the portrayal of women in media and ensure that violence shown is not glorified rather justified so that it does not further injure the image of the women. Moreover, every media house should employ an ombudsperson to deal with complaints against the media coverage and render necessary redressal against the violation of media ethics. Since women constitute nearly half the population their protection, development becomes a necessary criteria on the part of the government.

- More research studies in this area should be undertaken to ascertain the increase of coverage of women’s issues in the Indian print media by increasing space and visibility.