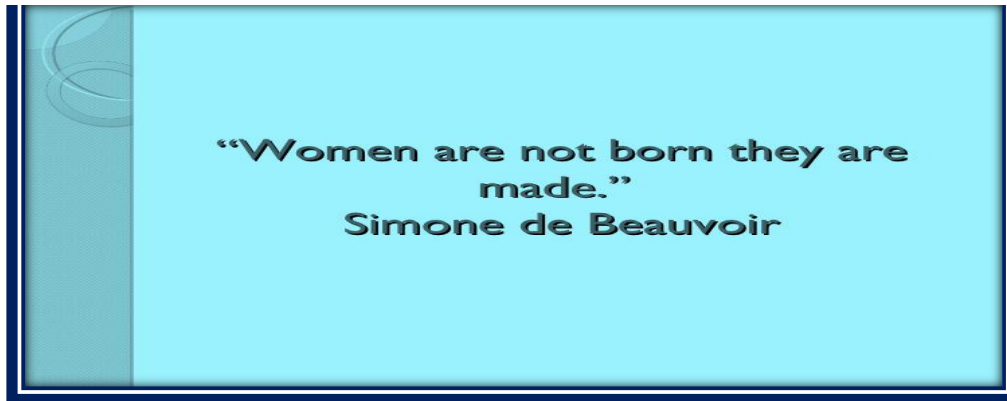

MEDIA PORTRAYAL AND WOMEN: WOMEN, GOD'S CREATION AS 'AFTERTHOUGHT'**Himashree Patowary, Research Scholar (Ph. D)****Dppt. Political Science****Assam University, Silchar, Assam****Figur1.Simone Beauvoir on women**

“I cannot be fair about books that treat women as women. My idea is that all of us, men as well as women, whoever we are, should be considered as human beings.”—Modern Woman: The Lost Sex, Dorothy Parker

“Everything that has been written by men about women should be viewed with suspicion, because they are both judge and party.”—Poulain De La Barre

“Humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being. “Woman, the relative being,”—Michelet.

Simone De Beauvoir in her book “The Second Sex” says that ‘woman is not born, but rather becomes a woman’. She explains that gender differences in the society make the man superior through his role bread- winner. It gives him position of power in the family as well as in the society: they become superior and women the subordinate. She is treated as the “Other”.As long as women live in a culture saturated with social conventions of what it means to be a woman, there will be a pressure for women to conform to certain ideals. This in turn could result in a conflict of identity, between a being’s comprehension of herself and the concept of woman which has been constructed by ideology. This conflict is the reason why women have felt the need to express themselves in writing in the first place, because they feel that there is a gap between what they see as themselves and what they are told that they should be.

As for women¹, it's a cliché talking that their plights and oppressions bagger description, out of the patriarchal nature of society. From birth to death, society fights shy of women in regard to their empowerment² and development issues, however, there are women, still longing for better lives within a just and egalitarian society: just and egalitarian, not from the legal and constitutional promise perspective but from realistic point of view.

The women are unique creation of the world and constitute half of the population of the country. No society can socially, economically, politically and culturally progress without the active participation of women.

In spite of the fact, women are the most deprived and socially discriminated in the society in the name of gender and treated as sex objects³ and commodity. Such approaches and perceptions prevailed in the society are shown in the media from time to time. In this regard the concept of 'cultural transmission' effectively works in transmitting the culture, and in particular expectations of the genders from one generation to the next. So, the role of media as a factor for socio-cultural transformation shaping the attitudes and behaviors of the genders towards the better development of the society, upliftment and equal recognition of the women in the society is recognized in a developing country like India. But at the same time, the negative projection of the image of women, their poor participation in the media and also an insignificant role in the women issues, related to gender bias, sex objects are common feature of the media industry. It helps not only in nourishing these differences but also showing the ideology of male supremacy.

As we know that the Indian social system carries about the diverse cultures that are reflected in various gender relations ranging from caste to class system, patriarchal forms to matrilineal. In India where a patriarchal society flourishes, 'son preference' is an age-old gender bias, in which the male of the family bears the responsibility of 'carrying forward' the family's name. He is supposed to support his parents in old age and also perform their last rites when they die. The fact that daughters are generally regarded as 'Parayadhan' or 'somebody else's wealth' and the giving away as dowry to the groom ensure that daughters are often seen as an 'economic liability'.

A United Nations statistics shows Gender inequality very starkly:

"Women perform two-third of the world's work but earn only one-tenth of the world's income. They comprise two-third of the world's illiterates and own less than one-hundredth of the world's property. A gross discrimination stands out".

¹Women denote a social or cultural category of females as gendered persons. She is an adult female of the human race. She has all biological qualities like men have, she can think, she can speak, she is the creator of new generation. But she is not considered as a status of the same gender, she is portrayed, exploited and discriminated in the living world (Dimitrov, George:2015).

² Socialist feminists are interested in undermining the power-over system of capitalist patriarchy through empowerment. However, they believe this can be accomplished best by a societal and global redistribution of power, as opposed to placing their hopes in the empowering capacity of feminine traits. As a result, socialist feminist are most active in socialist revolutions and women's economic movement s, on welfare, women in development, and women in the 'global factory'. As cited in 'Analysing Structures of Patriarchy.

³ The Media have been criticized for its portrayal of women as objects whose value is measured in terms of their usefulness to others. It becomes difficult to see them as thinking, feeling, and capable people. Constantly, portraying women in a highly sexualized way makes it more likely all women will be seen as sexual objects (Women and Media: Who do they think you are?).

Besides certain Hindu Scriptural text claim that at the very dawn of creation, women emerged as sinful creatures, fire, snakes and poison all rolled into one. The original Manu, the author of the Dharmashastra argued that at the moment of creation itself women were allotted the habits of lying, sitting around, with an indiscriminate love for ornaments, and qualities such as anger, meanness, treachery and bad conduct. A Hindu woman is compared with a crow or with a shudra without having intelligence and commonsense. Women should be always like "Sita"⁴ of Ramayana, an ideal woman, revered by the Hindu society, as she adored her husband as 'Pati-paramiwshwar' or god. "The Manusmriti"⁵ lumps together animals, shudras and women and considers all of them equally unclean, polluting and fit to be subdued and controlled by the men of upper caste." (As stated in V.Geeta)

In Christian religion also it is maintained that men are created by God for the first time and after that women are created from the rib of the 'Adam', the first man on the earth created by God. So, man is the exemplary human whereas woman is a secondary and dependent being. Similarly, in Holy Quran also, it is maintained that men are created to rule and women are created to be ruled by the God. (V. Geeta).

Religion has been a significant contributor to the oppression of women for millennia. For most religions, particularly monotheistic religions, God is depicted as a male and addressed as "Father". In the Biblical creation story, Eve is created from Adam's body, suggesting male superiority. Eve is also often blamed for committing the "original sin" because she gave in to temptation and then persuaded Adam to sin as well (other cultures have similar notions. In Christianity, God gave the world a "Son" to save mankind, not a daughter. Many of the prophets of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are men, including Moses and Muhammad. The majority of religious authority figures are males, and in some religions, like Roman Catholicism, women are not permitted to become priests⁶.

The portrayal of this complex range of gender subjectivity can provide an appearance of media's simultaneous sensitivity and bias on gender issues. The prevalence of gender discourse has ensured that the impact of gender differentiating structures in terms of atrocities such as sati, rape, female feticide, denial to access to facilities and resources (credit, health care, property) and poor quality of participation in availed avenues is well reported. In the absence of defined and institutionalized policies, procedures and mechanism guided by gender just concerns, the messages conveyed fall in the realm of individual attribution on meaning and representation of gender issues in combination with the dominant socio-political norms. Thus gender representation in media is open to the influence of competing tendencies, be it the market, cultural capital, communalism, electoral politics or women's empowerment articulation (Dagar, 2004).

The history brings it to light that communication is fair and square, in communicating the information, sharing problems with the recommendation of the solutions of the humans from its inception in the

⁴ Sita is the central female character of the Hindu Epic Ramayana, daughter of Janaka. She is the consort of the Hindu God Rama and is an avtar of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth and wife of Vishnu. She has been a much revered figure among the Hindus. She has been portrayed as an ideal daughter, an ideal wife and an ideal mother in various texts, stories, illustrations, movies and modern media. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sita>

⁵ Manusmriti was the first book written on Laws of the world, which deals with social and moral conduct of a person. It falls in the smriti category of Hindu Scriptures and hence it is less authoritative than Vedas and Upnishads. Manusmriti is also known as Dharmasutra of Manava. <http://hinduismfacts.org/hindu-scriptures-and-holy-books/manusmriti/>

⁶ https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Sociological_Theory/Feminist_Theory

global set up. As a result, Media⁷, rightly given the titles of “Watch Dog”⁸ and sometime “Mirror of the society”⁹ are, basically, worthy to play a distinguished role in the struggle of women in gender transformation and in bridging the gap between social identities of men and women. The stereotypification¹⁰ of women by the patriarchal society and the very result of it, the male dominated power relations, has been, far and away, objectifying women as sex and commodity, which according to the so called patriarchy, can be sold or purchased in the market of patriarchy. According to Van Zoonen--

“The media are hypothesized to fulfil the structural needs of a patriarchal and capitalist society by reinforcing gender differences and inequalities”. Media reflect society’s dominant social values and symbolically denigrate women, either by not showing them at all, or by depicting them in stereotypical roles” (Van Zoonen :1996).

There are different names of oppressions are still existed in the society taking the shape of sex and gender stratification and giving out the inequality based on sex and gender, imbalanced power relation between men and women, imbalanced status based on stereotype traits attributed on both men and women. In a sentence, it can be sum up that patriarchy is the root cause of all the sufferings and oppressions¹¹ or injustices on women, which they experience each and every second of a single day.

According to Gender stereotypical perceptions women are supposed to be dependent, weak, incompetent, emotional, fearful, flexible, passive, modest, soft-spoken, gentle, care takers while men are powerful, competent, important, logical, decision-makers, aggressive, focused, strong and assertive. Gender stereotype and gender inequality is so deeply engraved in the long history of social

⁷The role of women in media started off from 1960 onwards when Television becomes the part of the society. From that period onwards women who were showed in the newspapers, films and Television got much importance on her. Most of the media corporations were owned by big MNC as well as big Business men who were all males. So, they were not conscious about women so they started women as weapon of attracting their audience and to improve their ratings (Dimitrov, G.: 2015).

⁸ The Watchdog media is the guardian of public interest, warning citizens against those who are doing them harms. The mass media are often regarded as the fourth branch of government because of the power they wield and the oversight function they exercise. The media’s key role in the democratic governance has been recognised since the late 17th century, and remains a fundamental principle of modern day democratic theory and practice. Media shape public opinion, media can promote democracy by educating voters, protecting human rights, promoting tolerance among various groups and ensuring that governments are transparent and accountable. (Sheila, S, Coronel, The Role of Media in deepening Democracy, Executive Summary.

<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan010194.pdf>)

⁹It is cited in the “Role of Women in Indian Media: An overview” by DevendarBhardwas, Dr. Suresh Chandra Nayak and Dr. Deep Narayan Padeyel. It is said so because of its accountability towards the society as a whole.

¹⁰Gender stereotypes are oversimplification, exaggerations, generalisations and reductions of men and women (Basow: 1992). Similarly, Talbot says that, gender stereotypes [are] linked to gender ideology [to] reproduce naturalised gender differences. In doing so, they function to sustain hegemonic male dominance and female subordination (as cited in Reutler, Maik:2013, “How Gender stereotypes are achieved linguistically in AMC’S Mad Men”, published in Journal of Serial narration of Television II, http://www.uni-saarland.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Professoren/fr41_ProfSolteGresser/serial-narration/PDFs/Journal_02-2013/073-085_s46nth9.pdf

¹¹Patriarchy is “a set of symbols and ideas that make up a culture embodied by everything from the content of everyday conversation to literature and film” (Johnson, 1997, p. 84). “At the heart of patriarchy is the oppression of women, which takes several forms” (p. 11). Patriarchy colors family, work, law, individual identity, and religion; in fact, there is not a single area that can escape the effects of patriarchy. Patriarchy must be recognized as one of the underlying causes of violence against women in India. (Pamela A. Johnson and Jennifer A. Johnson:2001)

consciousness that it is now believed that only the media with its tremendous reach and power would be the ideal tool in bringing about gender equality. In literature there are many stereotypically female and male characters and feminists argue that these roles reproduce and maintain patriarchy.

According to Elizabeth Langland, there are common stereotypes such as the mother, the wife. The stereotype the “submissive wife” is portrayed as an “obedient, passive, unassuming” woman.

Gamble mentions that the submissive women are commonly portrayed as “nurturant wife, mother or muse”.

Traditionally, the wife’s role was to stay at home and take care of the children, while her husband worked and brought money to the household (McElroy 102). Gale A. Yee claims that the role of the submissive housewife is partly a product of the wife’s lack of financial independence. Thus, by following norms and values in society, reinforced by ideology and religion, the traditional wife reflects the stereotypical role of the submissive wife. In contradiction, Louis Blackwell discusses sexuality as a part of the stereotypical submissive wife. She argues that women are described as subordinating themselves to dominant men because of a fulfilling sex life. According to this stereotype, these particular women also have a tendency to endure their men’s violent behaviour and abuse.

Stereotyped “Feminine” traits

- **Physically Weak** - When a person is unsuccessful using bodily strength, for example incapable of opening a jar or carrying a big box, or similar actions.
- **Submissive** -When someone is obeying someone else without questioning their authority.
- **Emotional**- When someone is showing his/her feelings, both positive and negative.
- **Dependant**- Someone that depends on someone else, for example a home, food and money or other things.
- **Nurturing, Helpful** - Someone that takes care of or supports someone else physically or mentally.
- **Afraid, fearful** – When someone is nervous or afraid to get hurt or that something bad will happen.
- **Troublesome** – Someone who causes trouble or pain to others.
- **Follower** – A person that supports and admires another person or set of ideas. A person who is very interested in a particular activity and follows all the current news about it.
- **Victim**: Someone that needs to be saved because he/she is being hurt or tortured by someone.
- **Described as physically attractive** - The character is described as beautiful/attractive by another character.
- **Asks for or accepts advice** - The character asks for help or assistance or in other ways and shows that he/she need help.
- **Ashamed** – Someone feels shame or embarrassment due to something he/she has done. (England et al. 2011, p. 561 table 2 & 3 the oxford advanced learners dictionary.).

1.4.2 Stereotyped “Masculine” traits

- **Physically Strong**– Something shows that the character is strong, by example moving heavy objects, hitting something etc.
- **Assertive** – Someone that strongly expresses their opinions so that others will notice declaring or positively stating something.

- **Unemotional** –The opposite of emotional, a character that does not show emotions.
- **Independent** -Someone who is self-sufficient and does not depend on other people for home, food and money etc.
- **Selfish/Self-serving**– People who only care about themselves and not about others. People who are only interested in gaining advantages for themselves.
- **Hero, Brave, inspires fear** – A person that is admired for doing something good or brave, for example saving someone or doing something that is dangerous. Someone who inspires fear by making someone else be afraid of him/her.
- **Problem solver**– A person that finds ways to solve problems.
- **Leader** – A person that in some way leads a group of people.
- **Perpetrator** – A person that commits a crime or does something that is wrong/evil/mean.
- **Described as having a higher economic/career status and being intellectual** – A person that is described as having a profession in which the character earns a lot of money. Also this person is reading or doing similar intellectual activities.
- **Gives advice**– Someone who gives other people advice on how to act etc.
- **Proud** – Feeling satisfied with something that has never been achieved. (England et al. 2011, p. 561 table 2 & 3 the oxford advanced learners dictionary.).

As a result, feminists, keeping in mind, the influential role of media towards society, as the contents of it reflect the society and social norms as a whole, expect media to play the role of the agent of social change and social transformation to environ women in secured embankments with positive space where women can able to find some space of dignity, respect and identity. Research spanning more than 100 countries found that 46 per cent of news stories, in print and on radio and television, uphold gender stereotypes. Only 6 per cent highlight gender equality. Behind the scenes, men still occupy 73 per cent of top media management positions, according to another global study spanning 522 news media organizations. While women represent half of the world's population, less than one third of all speaking characters in film are female (<http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/in-focus/media>). For this, portrayal of women in positive and dignified way is very much necessary, with which a positive outlook can be fetched among the people against the age old tradition of gender inequality and imbalanced power relations. It is well stated in the following citation....

“Media has a role to play in the struggle for gender transformation and bridging gap between social identities of women and men. While communication studies, even of the radical critical tendency, have long seemed to be largely ‘gender-blind’ (Van Zoonen 1991; 1994; Gallagher 2003).

Consequently, Women, Media and media's role towards projection of women in it have been the subjects of study for researchers all over the world. When we start talk about women, feminism¹² and media the first question that strikes most is why women has been the subject of media for the ages and why not men? Why media and gender become the issues of discussion? Why should we need feminism? The only answer can be cited here is that women are human beings and they have the right to live in such an environment where they can voice against the injustice and violations done to them. Obviously, humans cannot forget the role of media as the fourth pillar of democracy, but yet it's a matter of

¹²Feminism is the idea that women should have political, social, sexual, intellectual and economic rights equal to those of men. It involves various movements, theories and philosophies, all concerned with issues of gender difference, that advocates equality for women and campaign for women's rights and interests. (Johannesdottir:2009)

concern for the feminists regarding media's portrayal of women and gender inequality¹³ over the globe. Over the centuries, the media industry has developed so extensively that it relates itself with the society as a whole through its communication infrastructure. It plays a vital role in setting opinions, influences our behavior, attitudes, social interactions through the presentation of image. But it should also be kept in mind about the role, which has to be played by the mass media in eradicating gender stereotypes through the media messages and contents. In the past few years the forms and content of mass media plays a significant role in the production and transmission of patriarchal culture. A review of various research studies on the media portrayal of women undertaken up to 1980 by Gallagher (1981), however, observes:

“..... a consistent picture emerges from those research studies which have investigated the media's portrayal of women. At the very best, the portrayal is narrow; at worst, it is unrealistic, demeaning and damaging”. In the name of freedom of speech, the media claim the right to represent women as they wish.” –Gallagher

The ways in which women are routinely portrayed in Mass Media, for which media vein of, are nothing but the stereotyped images. Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels and James Benet's foundational collection of empirical and theoretical articles in *Health and Home* was among the earliest to problematize women's media representation. The text cited not only women's routine omission or symbolic annihilation—from mass media, but also ways in which women were stereotyped.

➤ Numerous quantitative content analysis have shown that women hardly appeared in mass media, but it depicted as working in traditional female jobs (secretary, nurse, receptionist) or as sex objects. More over, they are usually young and beautiful, but not very well educated.

(Gallagher:1980)

Similarly, Margaret Gallagher's (1979) UNESCO Funded study hold to search the underlying reasons why women's image would continue to concern women for decades to come: The media are potentially powerful agents of socialization and social change—presenting model, conferring status, suggesting appropriate behaviors, encouraging stereotypes (Carolyn M. Byerly & Karen Ross: 2006). So, its role towards women should not be tided over or ignored. Popular mass media as well as the new media represent a symbolic power of social control, which are even versed with to initiate social changes and

¹³ The main point feminists have stressed about gender inequality is that it is not an individual matter, but is deeply ingrained in the structure of societies. Gender inequality is built into the organization of marriage and families, work and the economy, politics, religions, the arts and other cultural productions, and the very language we speak. Making women and men equal, therefore, necessitates social and not individual solutions. Judith Lorber in *Variety of Feminisms and their contribution to Gender Equality*.

becoming increasingly powerful mechanisms for mobilizing popular support. It will be cleared from the passage given below--

The structure of ownership and participation are new in media. So it's important to search the position and status of women in the new set up of media, whether women are being portrayed positively or in derogatory sense or whether women are being employed in media. (Arif Moin & Ehtesham Ahmad Khan 2013)

To keep an eye on the role played by media Feminists have been trying to give focus on the contents published in media and kept on criticising the role of media. As a result, Feminist media studies have emerged as one of the richest¹⁴ and most challenging intellectual projects within the field of media and cultural studies over the past twenty-five years.

The range, complexity and transdisciplinarity of feminist media studies today bear little resemblance to the fledgling body of work that began to appear in the 1970s. The world wide feminist movement has pointed out three basic important dimensions regarding women's participation, performance and portrayal in media. (Gallagher: 2005)

Gallagher says in "Feminist media perspectives" that it was indeed a political impetus that first shaped the academic agenda of feminist media analysis (Gallagher). The tradition was started with Betty Frieden¹⁵ who was dead against the media's role towards women. Gallagher says---

"One starting point for Western feminists was Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*¹⁶ (1963), with its clear critique of the mass media. At a global level the United Nations International Decade for Women (1975-85) was a catalyst for debate about the probable factors of women's subordination, while the media's role as a specific source of oppression was documented in reviews initiated by UNESCO (Ceulemans and Fauconnier, 1979; Gallagher, 1981).

In this regard, it should be treated of, that Tuchman had added the concept of "Symbolic Annihilation"¹⁷ being noticed the media's role towards women as they were deeply implicated in the patterns of discrimination, operating against women in society – patterns which, through the absence, trivialization or condemnation of women which are wanting in the real pictures of women¹⁸. It is discussed well by Gallagher....

¹⁴In "Feminist Media Perspective" Gallagher discussing about feminism as a theory, politics and activism says that it's an intellectual project within which media and cultural studies took shapes.

¹⁵Frieden and other feminist authors of the 'Second Wave', in Europe and US, unleashed a powerful movement in the 1970s that redefined what it meant to be a woman (Hermes, Joke:2007).

¹⁶The *Feminist Mystique* written by Betty Friedan (1963) marked the reawakening awareness of women to the pervasive societal pressures to conform to a traditional role. This thesis bears the examination of the nature of relationship between the media and the social change (Damarest, Jack & Jeanette, Gerner:1992).

¹⁷The concept of 'Symbolic Annihilation' was first introduced by George Gerbner in 1972. He first briefly referenced the concept without going elaborately as: representation in the fictional world signifies social existence; absence means symbolic annihilation. Gerbner used this concept to reveal how representations in the media cultivate dominant assumptions regarding how the world works and, as a result, where power resides. Later this concept was further elaborated by Gaye Tuchman and expanded the concept from Gerbner's simple definition from 'absence' to include 'condemnation' and 'Trivialisation'.

¹⁸In "Feminist Media Perspective" Gallagher has aptly made a critical discussion on 'symbolic annihilation' regarding the portrayal of women in media. She referred this concept in terms of two major themes: firstly in the

“.....the overall media treatment of women can best be described as narrow...women are rarely portrayed as rational active or decisive...Underlying practically all media images is a dichotomous motif which defines women as either perfectly good wholly evil , mother or whore, virgin or call girl, even tradition or modern”.

Stressing on world scene the Mc Bride commission said in general that the media paid insufficient attention to specific issues of women's importance, to the activities of the women's movement and the social contribution made by independent and gifted women as media are making after the preservation of myths. Women appear in news papers or magazines or films as self deprecating and dependent, irrational, superstitious and over emotional. In both the media vis. Print and visual make for shown women either as the house wives whose interests are limited to domestic needs, or in sexually allowing background which by its associations with consumer goods make them attractive. A numbers of studies indicate over-effects of portrayal of women's images. There are some fundamental aspects which have not received as much publicity as question of glamorization of women as sex objects by the media in a developing society like India.

Traditionally, the media world has been male-dominated globally as well as nationally. Men design and define media policies, priorities, and agendas, including how women are portrayed and presented. Most often, it is men who make decisions about hiring staff. The ratio of male-female workers in the media is heavily imbalanced in favor of men. It is no wonder then that the media is biased against women in many areas. This bias affects images of women in the media, and, in turn, has a negative effect on women's development in a society. In India, cricket news occupies nearly 20% more space than women's issues. Female presence is more through advertisements, news of crime, and social events. Women's representation has moved beyond female images of the family and home to personal care, as dictated by the market agenda in a predominant patriarchy. The subtle stereotyping is more insidious as it is relatively more invisible but, nonetheless, demeaning and patronising.

The continuing debate on mass media and gender produces much more complex understandings of the social, cultural dimensions of power and inequality existed between men and women in the society, and more specifically feminist analyses of the media, culture and society. According to Gallagher (1992), “..... *the mass media function in the larger system of patriarchy and capitalism that controls media structures and organisations and represents women as subordinates.*”

Ranu Tomar observes,

“.....the role of women in media-decision making is reflected in the poor representation of women issues and concerns. The drastically changing media (print) can be seen through years or especially in post-liberalization period, media has become market-oriented”. (Tomar Ranu: 2009)

The mass media are being challenged for its involvement to get on the hegemony of dominant social classes and reproducing gender relations in the context of a larger system of patriarchy and capitalism which control the mass media and subordinate women. So, different women's groups and media professionals get along to challenge them. The question of gender and gender inequality touches almost every aspect of the media-culture relationship. So, Van Zoonen (1991) writes that.....

analysis of the structures of power in which women are systematically subordinated and secondly, in the politics of representation and the production of knowledge in which women are objects rather than subjects.

“..... the meaning of gender is never given but varies according to specific cultural and historical settings...is subject to ongoing discursive struggle and negotiation’ (p45). Here important issue is professional inequality which is embedded in media and is strongly based on social differences between man and woman.”

The exclusion, seclusion and oppression of women by transnational corporations are translated into media representation and employment. To address these issues UNESCO commissioned major review of the literature worldwide related to women and Media (Gallagher 1981). Gallagher (1981) notes that her reviews present a picture remarkable only for its overall consistency when compared from one country to another. The report offers considerable evidence in support of conclusion that is:

Representation of women can best be described as narrow. On film, press and the broadcast media, women’s activities and interests typically go no further than the confines of home and family. Characterized as essentially dependent and romantic, women are rarely portrayed as rational, active or decisive. Both as characters in fictional media material and as newsmakers in the press and broadcasting, women are numerically under representation- an absence which underlines their marginal and inferior status in many spheres of social, economic and cultural life. Prevalent news values define most women and most women’s problems as unnewsworthy, admitting women to coverage primarily as wives, mothers or daughters of men in the news: in their own right, they make the headlines usually only as fashionable or entertainment figures.

At global level major study was done known as Global Media Monitoring Project in 2005. This study was co-coordinated by World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) an international NGO that promotes communication for social change. This study was conducted in 76 countries across the globe (Bharadwaj, D. et al: 2014) .

This study found that:-

- i) There has been a steady increase in the percentage of news items reported by women from 28% in 1995, to 31% in 2000, reaching 37% in 2005. Female reporters have gained more ground in radio and television than in newspapers. The press lags far behind the electronic media, with only 29% of stories written by female reporters in 2005.
- ii) As news presenters, women are more likely to be found in television than radio. With 57% of television items presented by women in 2005, this is the only area in which female outnumber males. In radio 49% of items were presented by women.
- iii) The on-screen presence of women decreases with age. Up to the age of 34 women are in the majority as both news presenters and reporters on television. By the age of 50, only 17% of reporters and 7% of presenters are female. For women in the profession, a youthful appearance is more highly valued than experience. Male presenters and reporters continue to appear on-screen well into their 50s and even 60s.
- iv) In most news organizations, local news is deemed less prestigious than national or international news. Female reporters are more likely to work on local stories (44%) than on national (34%) or international stories (32%).
- v) Female reporters predominate in only two topics weather reports on television and radio (52%) and stories on poverty, housing and welfare (51%). There is a 50-50 gender balance among reporters in celebrity news, and in stories on consumer issues. In all other topics, male reporters are in the majority. Sports news is the least likely to be reported by women, with just 21% of female reporters.

- vi) Overall, male journalists report at the so-called 'hard' end of the news spectrum such as politics and government (where women report only 32% of stories). Females are more likely to work on the so-called 'soft' stories such as social and legal issues (40% reported by women). Although many 'soft' news stories are important, they are not always perceived as such in the hierarchy of new values. As a result, the work of female journalists is sometimes under-valued, and women reporters are frequently assigned to stories that are downright trivial—celebrity news (50% reported by women), or arts and entertainment (48%).
- vii) There are more female news subjects in stories reported by female journalists (25%) than in stories reported by male journalists (20%).

This Global Media Monitoring project concludes that women have made great strides in the news media over the past decade. But they still struggle to achieve equal treatment. Older female professionals are rarely seen on television: for women appearance is valued more highly than experience. Female reporters frequently work in local news beats and on stories at the 'soft' end of the news spectrum. This could be one of the reasons why there are more female news subjects in stories reported by female journalists. But, irrespective of who reports the news, the fundamental question is: why do so few women make the news at all. The Global Media Monitoring Project 2005 concludes, the world we see in the news is a world in which women are virtually invisible (Gallagher 2005).

Further Gallagher (2005) describes that the use of stereotypes reflects a mental dead-lock not only in terms of what society may expect from women, but also more seriously in terms of what women may expect from them. The basic structures of many societies have been based on assumptions of sex-biased roles, which are entrenched in the use of language. When gender-biased language is used in a story (for instance, craftsman, businessman, fireman, and policeman), journalists support a destructive bias that suggests women are excluded or incapable of playing their roles. True gender equality should liberate both men and women from the limitations of such narrow thinking.

—It is not impossible to produce news stories that are gender sensitive. It just means thinking more creatively about the topic at hand—whom it concerns, who should be included in its coverage, in what way and for what purpose. says Margaret Gallagher, author of the GMMP(2005).

It has been a global view of the contribution of women work force in media. In context of India, a study on Status of Women Journalist in Print Media was conducted in 2002 by Press Institute of India commissioned by National Commission for Women. A two pages questionnaire was distributed in three languages to journalists across the country, from Punjab and Shillong in North and North East to Kanyakumari in the South and from Calcutta in the East to Kotach in West. This study turns into the reality that women in regional-vernacular press are lagging far behind their colleagues in the English language press. There is vast difference in the wages earned by those in English national newspapers and those in regional media. This report says that in regional press men and women are hired like contract labor on daily wages. They are extremely insecure and invariably it is the women that are the first to be axed.

The level of awareness of basic working conditions is very low on some key issues:

- i. 31 per cent were not aware if any equal employment policy existed in their Organization.
- ii. 29 per cent did not know if women were targeted.
- iii. 19.5 per cent did not know whether formal appeal procedures or mechanisms for handling grievances existed in their organization while 50.7 per cent were sure of no such facility.

- iv. 10 percent are not aware of any formal training program in their organization while 42.3 said that no such facility was provided.
- v. 87.6 percent are not aware of any superannuation scheme or believe that it does not apply to them.

The objectification of women in mass media has a long sorted history. Critics, however, argue is that such an analysis is an exaggeration, which they dismiss along with most feminist critiques of society. The representation of women in the media has always been exploitative and derogatory as well. It has, throughout the years, reduced women's position to just mere objects which can be won, prizes to be shown off, and playthings to be abused (Stephanie Nichole Berberick:2010). The ideal women, who are portrayed by media is in contradiction with the real picture of women. In the contents of Print Media or the electronic media, women are portrayed as beautiful having slim figure, fair skin, long legs, attractive and so on. Both the self and society has suffered because of the objectification, sexism, exploitation and assessment.

In 2010, following a set of three studies that "examined the associations among sexist beliefs, objectification of others, media exposure and three distinct beauty ideals and practices," Researcher Viren Swami and colleagues, found that sexism exists where beautyideals and practices are rigidly consumed and followed, (Swami et al. 2010:367, as cited in Berberick:2010).

In patriarchal societies, the roles and privileges accorded to women are inferior to those assigned to men, and as such, sexism plays a central role in the continuing oppression of women. Moreover, and as predicted by the "beauty ideals are oppressive (BIO) hypothesis (Forbes et al., 2007), the existence of patriarchal structures and attitudes should result in significant relationships between sexist attitudes and the endorsement of beauty ideals and practices, (Swami et al., 2010:366).

The women's issues get a fallback position and are kept away from the mainstream reportage in media even though the entire world society is plagued with burning women's issues like female feticide, sexual harassment, discrimination in work places, women empowerment, maternal health, unemployment and illiteracy.

Mass Media, one of the world's largest database, as well as agents of influencing public opinion, reflect opinion and perceptions through reporting what other people, companies and organizations are saying and doing. Media reports reflect the happenings of the society but unfortunately media is wavering from its actual role of disseminating factual information instead presenting biased information which obstruct the development of the society, especially women (Tauchman:1978).

Besides, women are rarely given professional coverage in fields like economic, social, political and business. The most disquieting trend in media is that women are either poorly or negatively covered. The under representation of women in media in the west but paramount of gender based studies in mass media is relatively less in India. Media needs to be sensitized in addressing the positive portray of women.

For these reasons portrayal of women and media coverage of women's issues has got immense importance throughout the world and has been a source of contention and debate by the media researchers.

Feminism, Stereotype Theory and Intersectionality

Theoretical conjecture of this work, firstly, derives from Feminist Media studies, an approach that emphasizes the gap between gender representations and social Reality¹⁹. It seeks to explain how women find their own power in a world filled with social stereotypes and stigmas. "Feminism seeks to expose, patriarchal practices" (p. 39). It is about fighting for equal rights for women as a distinct social group, equal to men in every way²⁰.

"Identifying male sadism, especially toward women, and holding men at least theoretically culpable for such acts as rape, wife beating, and child abuse are major achievements of modern feminism" (Clover, 1992, p. 226). Because of the women's rights movement, feminists argue that female portrayals in the media should change. King (2007) argues, "As women assume authorial control and industrial power, and as audiences demand new images in old-fashioned genres, the representation of women should continue to change" (p. 2). Before the representations can change, it is first important to understand these representations of women, what they mean, and to understand where they fit into scholarly theory (ibid). According to Tuchman, the media performs two simultaneous works, first enshrining and reflecting dominant societal values and then acting as a means of socialization. Therefore, media images are regarded as 'a version of reality that is culturally determined' (Jewkes 2012:37). It is a site where 'cultural understanding about women are reflected, created, transformed and publicized' (Hirsch 1994:1027).

As a system of gender ideology, the media reflects masculine understandings of the world, and in turn legitimates the "natural" authority of men and subordination of women (Daly & Chesney-Lind 1988; Flavin 2004; Humphries 2009). Constructions of gender thus reinforce the socialization of 'dichotomized and hierarchal sex-role stereotypes' (Carter and Steiner 2004:2).

Through 'institutional coerciveness' (Cameron 1997:31), stereotypes portrayed in the media transcend alternative practices of gender construction. By selectively disseminating ideology and information, the media largely perpetuates and reinforces the status quo regarding the position of women (Prasad 2005:13). The general categories identified in the construction of gender dichotomies include powerlessness and passivity against authority and power, with the former associated with women and the latter with men (Van Zoonen: 1994). The Indian media appropriate the cultural norms that relegate women to the private sphere, which performs a secondary socialization by reinforcing typically female roles (Smart and Smart 1978:2). Although previous blatant sexism has dissipated in Indian media, this has evolved into subtle distortions due to the media's patriarchal structure (Joseph and Sharma 2006:42). coverage reinforces these socially appropriated roles. The question is whether there have been any changes to move away from such stereotypes, overt or clandestine.

Social Scientist, Walter Lippmann, first used the term stereotype in 1922 to refer to an image that individuals hold in their heads about a specific topic. In his critically acclaimed book, Public Opinion (1922), Lippmann explains that the way things are in the real world are often not the same as the images

¹⁹ As cited in The Monochrome Lens of the Media? Women's subordination in news print coverage of rape in India. Available at

<http://www.southasia.ox.ac.uk/sites/sias/files/documents/The%20Monochrome%20Lens%20of%20the%20Media.%20Women%27s%20subordination%20in%20news%20print%20coverage%20of%20rape%20in%20India%20K%20S%20Sandhur%202014.pdf>

²⁰ As cited in Chad Brewer:2005

that exist in the minds of individuals within a given society, yet the dominant group perpetuates the inaccurate images. Ford and Tonander (1998) stated that "...traits which differentiate a social group from people in general are more likely to be judged as stereotypical than traits which are less differentiating" (p. 373). This means that the dominant group tends to label traits or characteristics of another group, that stand out as unique, as stereotypic of a particular group.

Stereotypes tend to separate individuals into certain subgroups within society based on a particular group membership. Thus, one might conclude that society, itself, is partially responsible for forming the group concept of a stereotype. In society, stereotypes become comfortable and easy ways for those in the majority to refer to those in the minority. They are unrealistic at times, but they are also unreliable generalizations that give rise to negative feelings and associations of negative qualities with certain groups. For this reason, prejudice often finds its way into society through stereotypes (Kanahara: 2006). On the other hand, the very need of the dominant group to achieve self-esteem enhancement can affect the stereotype formation of a particular subordinate or minority group drastically. This means that those members of the dominant group may often put down on members of another group in order to make themselves look better to society. The dominant group needs to believe that it is better than those that are different from them (Ford & Tonander: 1998).

Individuals often use stereotypes in the media to differentiate between the characteristics of two particular groups, such as men and women, without focusing on the legitimacy of the claims themselves. Often in the media, women become the stereotyped group and men become the group who stereotypes (Rettew, Billman, & Davis: 1993). Researchers believe that understanding media stereotypes is important because stereotypes lead to discrimination among the sexes. They hope that their research will provide information that will help minimize public evaluations based on misinterpretations by the media.

Intersectionality is a feminist theory, which can be used as an analytical tool to study and understand the convergence of multiple identities with gender and to respond appropriately to alleviate the discrimination against oppressed classes. The theory is based on the premise that individuals simultaneously belong to multiple communities (that have emerged from social and power structures in the society) and would experience oppression and privilege both at the same time (Symington: 2004²¹). In this study this theory is applied to analyse the status and position of women, particularly in media's portrayal of women out of the discrepancies prevailed in the name of gender and sex.

Multiple identities tend to push women to extreme fringes and make them more vulnerable to discrimination in terms of access to basic human rights, opportunities, resources etc. Intersectionality as a theoretical paradigm helps us gain a better understanding, by voicing the opinions of the victims themselves, as opposed to self-interest groups. Intersectionality as a theoretical framework has been used for more than a decade and is different from diversity management in its research focus, intended outcomes and methodology of implementation. Its main focus is to advocate for the basic rights of minorities like women, disabled, colored, LGBT's, and indigenous individuals (Symington: 2004)²².

²¹ As cited in Mrudula Anne et al:2014

²² Ibid

Women Issues in India: Current Perspective

“As women are generally the poorest of the poor ...eliminating social, cultural, political and economic discrimination against women is a prerequisite of eradicating poverty ...in the context of sustainable development”.—International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, 1994

Women’s issues²³ first began to be addressed in India when the State commissioned a report on the status of women to a group of feminist researchers and activists. According to the Report (1974) “Towards Equality” the heterogeneity of Indian experience reveals that there are multiple patriarchies contributing to the existence of multiple feminisms. “Patriarchy” according to Sylvia Walby is “a system of social structure and policies in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (1990), and “Indian society is oppressively patriarchal”(Suma Chitnis:1988).

In India, there is systematic discrimination and neglect from early childhood of women's in India, which could be in terms of inadequate nutrition, denial or limited access to education, health and property rights, child labour and domestic violence. The fear of sexual violence has been a powerful factor in restricting women's behaviour and sense of freedom. The struggle against violence is actually the struggle against the unequal distribution of power both physical and economic between the sexes. It is important to address the root cause for the subordinate status of women in the Indian society (Purnima: 2010).

Hillary Clinton, US secretary of State, addressing the Delhi University students on 20 July 2009 said that “women's roles and rights are as important as any issue we can list. Women are the key of economic growth. It's been established through research”. Men should perceive women not as subservient being but as empowered individuals who are equal partners. The issues need to be seen in the context of a patriarchal social framework and a value system based on ‘son preference’, such as the son being responsible for the carrying forward of the family name, support in old age and for performing the last rites. Further, the practice of dowry and the tag of ‘Parayadhan’ translate into daughters being considered an economic liability. Women's are not only entitled for survival but also to a life with dignity, grace and equal opportunities so that they can grow to their full potential. There is an urgent need to pay attention to the issues that concern this section of population. The focus should be on poverty reduction, gender justice, health, nutrition, sustained awareness of rights and redressal, eradication of social evils etc. (ibid).

1.6.1 Political Issues

Political status of women implies a degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by women in sharing of power and importance given by the society to the role of women in the political system. The equality and active political participation are inseparable. Participation of women in political arena is integral to the advancement of women (as cited in Vikas Nandal²⁴: 2013).

²³ The period between 1960s-80s were significant globally, regarding women studies as this period was significant in bringing women issues to the forefront. During this period a number of studies in line with feminist thoughts on the place of women in society were spurred on as a result of second wave feminism and most pointedly the women’s liberation movement.(Pillay, Nerisa: 2008)

²⁴VikasNandal (2013) Participation of Women in Panchayatiraj Institutions: A Sociological Study of Haryana, India,

In recent years there have been explicit moves to increase women's political participation. The Women's Representation policy Bill is, however, a very sad story as it is repeatedly being scuttled in the parliament²⁵. Government of India through 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts reserved the one-third of seats in all local elected bodies for women as a sign of political empowerment (Purnima:2010;Dr. Alok Mishara et al:2014). But still their power is restricted, as it is the men who wield all the authority. Their decisions are often over-ruled by the government machinery. It is crucial to train and give real power to these women leaders so that they can catalyze change in their villages regarding women. In recent years there have been explicit moves to increase women's political participation at top level. However, the Women's reservation bill is a sad story as it is repeatedly being scuttled in the parliament. All this shows that the process of gender equality and women's empowerment still has a long way to go (Purnima: 2010; Ahmed S: 2014).

1.10. Economic Issues

India's patriarchal society thinks of women only as homemakers and sexual objects and is generally subjected to exploitation and torture (Dube, 2001²⁶). Status of women can be broadly defined as the degree of socio-economic equality and freedom enjoyed by women. Economic, social and cultural factors interplay for reinforcing the gender differences in ownership, control and access to land through inheritance, marriage or informal networks (Arun:1994). Women's economic status in the household, depends on three levels of influence, viz., women's acquired economic and social power, the socio-economic status of their households and the level of support and opportunities in the community (Zhao: 1991)²⁷.

Women have extensive workload with dual responsibility of profession and household and they have to balance household demands with those of their profession. Development policies and programs of the country tend not to view women as integral to the economic development process. This is reflected in the higher investments in women's reproductive rather than their productive roles, mainly in population programs. Women are engaged in economically productive work and earn incomes though their earnings are generally low (Purnima:2010; Dr.AlokMishara et al:2014).

Most of the women work in agricultural sector either as workers, in household farms or as waged workers. It is precisely livelihood in agriculture that has tended to become more volatile and insecure in recent years and women cultivators have therefore been negatively affected. The government's policies for alleviating poverty have failed to produce any desirable results, as women do not receive appropriate wages for their labour. There is also significant amount of unpaid or non-marketed labour within the household (ibid).

1.6.3. Social and Cultural Issues

"Girls are the world's most squandered gift. They are precious human beings with enormous potential, but across the world, they are generally the last to have their basic needs met and first to have their

²⁵ Ahmed Shamshed (2014) Crimes Against Women in India in K.M. Baharul Islam (ed). Issues in Women's Rights: A Practitioner's Book. New Delhi: Allied Book Publishers pvt.ltd.

²⁶As cited in Problems and Challenges Faced by Urban Working Women in India by VarshaKumari (2014).

²⁷Ibid

basic rights denied.²⁸”The socio-cultural attributes in society have left a deep mark on women empowerment in India. Parents depend on sons for support in old age and looked to them as potential builders of family prestige and prosperity whereas daughters are considered to destine for others. Women's in India need and expect equal access to education, health, nutrition, employment and productive resources. In fact they are fighting for their rights to decide their own path for development (Purnima: 2010; Dr. Alok Mishara et al: 2014).

1.6.4. Education

Napoleon was once asked, what the great need of France was. He answered, ” Nation’s progress is impossible without trained and educated mothers. If the women of my country are not educated, about half of the people will be ignorant²⁹.”The female literacy rate in India is though gradually rising; it's lower than the male. As per the census of 2011, an effective literacy rate for men was 82.14% whereas for women it was 65.46%. Though there has been seen a substantial increase in the number of literate women and this gap is narrowing, it still persists³⁰.The gender gap in education is far greater in northern states of India. Although in states where enrolment rates for girls are higher, many girls drop out of school after a few years of education. Factors such as inhibition on education being imparted by male teachers to girls once they reach puberty, is responsible for drop out. Consequences are that early marriage and child birth pronounced in families of lower socio-economic status (Purnima: 2010; Dr.AlokMishara et al: 2014).

1.6.5. Health and Nutrition

The health of Indian women is intrinsically linked to their status in society. Research on women’s status has found that the contributions Indian women make to families often are overlooked, and instead they are viewed as economic burdens. There is a strong Son preference in India, as sons are expected to care for parents as they age (Victoria A. Velkoff & Arjun Adlakha: 1998).The socio-cultural practice of women eating last in the family has eminent effect on her health especially if it is a household in low economic status. Most direct effects of poor health and nutrition among women in Indian society are high mortality rates among young children and women of child bearing age. A women health and nutrition status influence her newborn's birth weight and chance of survival. Post neo-natal death is generally caused by infectious diseases. The incidence and severity of most of this disease are affected by controllable factors such as immunization, health care and nutrition. Due to gender biased, these factors are not controlled equally for male and female children. Maternal mortality in India estimated at 437 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, result primarily from infection haemorrhage, obstructed labour, abortion and anaemia (Purnima:2010; Dr.AlokMishara et al: 2014).

1.6.6 Crimes against Women

Crimes against women are of various natures. It include crimes involving sexual exploitation for economic gains like prostitution & trafficking, adultery, abduction, rape, wrongful confinement, and murder etc on the one hand and crimes related to women's property like dishonest misappropriation,

²⁸As cited in Socio-cultural Issues in Contemporary India. Available at

<http://www.nios.ac.in/media/documents/SecIChCour/English/CH.20.pdf>

²⁹As cited in ‘Status of Women Education in India’,Dr. Jeetaedra Kumar &Ms.Sangeeta (2013), Educationia Confab,Vol.2, No-4.

³⁰As cited in Low Female Literacy Rate and Its impact on our Society (Ranadeep Kaur:2013)

criminal breach of trust, domestic violence, dowry extortion and outraging the modesty of women etc on the other. These crimes are not only injurious and immoral for the women but for the society as a whole (Purnima: 2010; Dr.Alok Mishara et al: 2014).

1.7. Violence against women

Violence³¹ against women has been clearly defined as a form of discrimination in numerous documents. It has its origin in the patriarchal structure that oppresses women³². Gender inequality is the underlying determinant of violence against women³³. The World Human Rights Conference in Vienna, first recognised gender- based violence as a human rights violation in 1993. In the same year, United Nations declaration, 1993, defined violence against women as.....

“.....any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to a woman, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life” (UN :1994, as cited by Gomez:1996; Montiel, Aimee Vega:2013)

Radhika Coomaraswamy identifies different kinds of violence against women, in the United Nation’s special report, 1995, on Violence Against Women³⁴---

a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non spousal violence and violence related to exploitation.

b) Physical sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution.

c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the state, wherever it occurs. This definition added ‘violence perpetrated or condoned by the State’, to the definition by United Nations in 1993.

Coomaraswamy (1992) points out that women are vulnerable to various forms of violent treatment for several reasons, all based on gender (ibid)---

1) Because of being female, a woman is subject to rape, female circumcision/genital mutilation, female infanticide and sex related crimes. This reason relates to society’s construction of female sexuality and its role in social hierarchy.

³¹The perpetration of men’s violence against women is understood as to be a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women. (Wall, Liz:2014)

³²Amoros:1990, as cited in Montiel, Aimee Vega:2013.

³³Gender inequality as a cause of violence against women also underpins approaches to prevention by organisations such as the World Health Organisation and in Australia, VicHealth, as well as, much of the research on the topic (Yodanis: 2014, as cited in Wall Liz)

³⁴As stated in Women at Risk: Understanding power and Violence in Kashmir (AneesaShafi& M. Sallem Jahangir 2013)

- 2) Because of her relationship to a man, a woman is vulnerable to domestic violence, dowry murder, sati. This reason relates to society's concept of a woman as a property and dependent of the male protector, father, husband, son, etc.
- 3) Because of the social group to which she belongs, in times of war, riots. Or ethnic, caste, or class violence, a woman may be raped and brutalised as a means of humiliating the community to which she belongs. This also relates to male perception of female sexuality and women as the property of men.
- 4) Combining these types of abuse with the concept of hierarchical gender relations, a useful way to view gender violence is by identifying where the violence towards women occurs.
- 5) Essentially, violence happens in three contexts - the family, the community and the state and at each point key social institutions fulfil critical and interactive functions in defining legitimating and maintaining the violence.
- 6) The family socialises its members to accept hierarchical relations expressed in unequal division of labour between the sexes and power over the allocation of resources.
- 7) The community (i.e., social, economic, religious, and cultural institutions) provides the mechanisms for perpetuating male control over women's sexuality, mobility and labour.
- 8) The state legitimises the proprietary rights of men over women, providing a legal basis to the family and the community to perpetuate these relations. The state does this through the enactment of discriminatory application of the law (Mathur: 2004).

Margaret Schuler has divided gender violence into four major categories³⁵;

- 1) Overt physical abuse (battering sexual assault, at home and in the work place)
- 2) Psychological abuse (confinement, forced marriage)
- 3) Deprivation of resources for physical and psychological well being (health/nutrition, education, means of livelihood)
- 4) Commodification of women (trafficking, prostitution)

Adriana Gomez has also talked about two basic forms of violence, that is; structural and direct. Structural violence arises from the dominant political, economic and social systems, in so far as they block access to the means of survival for large number of people; for example, economic models based on the super-exploitation of thousands for the benefit of a few, extreme poverty in opposition to ostentatious wealth, and repression and discrimination against those who diverge from given norms. Structural violence according to her is the basis of direct violence, because it influences the socialisation which causes individuals to accept or inflict suffering, according to the social function they fulfil. Open or direct violence is exercised through aggression, arms or physical force. (Larrain and Rodrigue:1993³⁶)

³⁵VarshaJawale (2015) Violence Against Women: Its causes and Consequences, Sai OM Journal of Commerce and Management, Vol.2, Issue 8.

³⁶As cited in Violence Against Women (A Literature Review). Available at http://www.crpc.in/women_violence.html

The Fourth Conference of Women, 1995 has defined violence against women as a physical act of aggression of one individual or group against another or others. Violence against women is any act of gender-based violence which result in, physical, sexual or arbitrary deprivation of liberty in public or private life and violation of human rights of women in violation of human rights of women in situations of armed conflicts³⁷. (Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995 Country Report).

In Indian society, it is widely accepted that within the family the man is the master and women is the inferior and subordinate partner and societal pressure force women to maintain this status quo. Wife beating is the most prevalent form of violence against women in the Indian society and it is viewed as a general problem of domestic discord. According to National Crime Report Bureau, 1.5 lakh crimes against women are registered annually out of which nearly 50,000 are related to domestic violence in their homes(Purnima:2010).

1.7.1. Female Infanticide and Feticide

This is playing a significant role in lop sided sex ratio in India. Poor families in certain regions of the country sometimes resort to killing baby girls at birth, to avoid an unwanted burden on family resources. Sex selective abortion has also been common in the country³⁸. It's dangerous to abort the foetus after 18 weeks of pregnancy and quiet harmful for mother too at such a late stage. Various techniques of sex determination and sex pre-selection have been discovered during the last fifteen years, such as sonography, fetoscopy, needling, chorion biopsy and the most popular amniocentesis have increasingly become household names in India. Amniocentesis technique is used in the small town and also in some cities of states like Gujrat, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Tamilnadu, Rajasthan etc. Mumbai and Delhi are also the major center for sex determination and sex pre-selection tests (Purnima: 2010; Dr.AlokMishara et al: 2014).

1.7.2 Dowry

Dowry is one of the most ancient practices of India. The dowry system is a social evil, prevalent in all parts of India and almost in all the countries of the world. In India many of the traditional customs have been given up, but the custom of dowry has not only continued, but flourished over the years (Nithya N.R:2013).

Dowry remains the major reason for discrimination and injustice towards women in India. When dowry demands are not met, it precipitates into serious consequence for the young bride. The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 marks the first attempt by the Government of India to recognize dowry as a social evil and to curb its practice. The act was modified with the Dowry Prohibition Amendment Act of 1984, which has again been modified with Dowry Prohibition Bill 1986. Women's organization have played key role in this process of change. The 1961 Act define dowry and makes the practice of dowry-giving and taking, a punishable offence. However, it is ridiculous to see that even among highly educated sections, the articles of dowry are proudly exhibited in the marriage as a status symbol. The dowry abuse is increasing in India. The most severe is 'bride burning', the burning of women whose dowries were not considered sufficient by their husband or in-laws. Most of these incidents are reported as accidental burns in the kitchen or are disguised as suicide. Dowry is one of those social evils that no

³⁷As cited in Violence Against Indian Women and Human Rights (BinaRai: 2015)

³⁸NirupamaPrakash: Status of Women in Indian society: Issues and Challenges in process of Empowerment; Dr.AlokMishara et al:2014.

educated woman will own up with pride, still many are adhering to it. Practices of dowry tend to subordinate women in the society. Women should be more economically empowered and should be educated properly regarding the various legal provisions such as Section 498A CRPC, protection from domestic violence etc., only then this evil menace could possibly be eradicated from Indian social system.

1.7.3. Rape

Rape is the fastest growing crime in India compared to murder, robbery and kidnapping. According to the report of National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), every 60 minutes, two women are raped in this country. A total of 20,737 cases of rape were reported in the year 2007, registering a 7.2 percent increase over the previous year. According to NCRB, 19,348 rape cases were reported in the year 2006. The biggest number of such crimes was reported from Madhya Pradesh. One-quarter of the victims were minors, 75 percent of culprits were known to victims and 10 percent were relatives. These figures are underestimations as many incidents go unreported due to fear of stigma and non awareness of rights. There are also the countless cases of eve teasing, indecent gazes, pinching, brushes and comments that infringe upon the rights of women, especially in overcrowded spaces and public transport buses and trains. Major cities in the country have become the hub of misdemeanour because of technological reach. Mobile, cyber café, car, beach, mall, restaurant, hotel have become popular apparatus for the criminals. What precipitates the problem is that the incidents of rape, sexual molestation and harassment have been followed by dubious attempts by perpetrators and law enforcers to arm-twist the course of justice. There is a need for a drastic change in attitudes and mindset towards such incidents. Poor investigations, harsh cross examination of victims, senseless adjournment of cases and faulty assessment of evidence and furnishing of evidence by victims in presence of culprits are areas that need reforms.

In the year 2007 for which the latest data is available from the National Crime Records Bureau, seven of the ten fastest rising crimes in India were those against women. While the incidence of all cognizable crimes under the Indian Penal code rose by under 5 percent over the previous year, dowry deaths registered an increase of 15 percent, cruelty by husband and relatives 14 percent, kidnapping and abduction of females 13 percent, importation of girls 12 percent and sexual harassment by 11 percent. Rape and molestation cases grew by a more modest 6-7 percent, but even that was higher than the average rate. Despite the increasing cases of crime against women, they would appear to be not in priority list of the investigating agencies. The NCRB data shows that investigation starts within the same year in only one out of 10 sexual harassment cases and only two out of ten cases of molestation or cruelty by husband and relatives. Similarly, only three out of ten rapes and dowry deaths are investigated within the same year. A comparative study of the data available about these crimes suggest that there were rise in the crimes against women in 2008 compared to the previous year. While a total of 1,012 cases were registered for kidnap of women in 2007, the number went up to 1,494 in 2008. Similarly, the number of incidents related to dowry death rose from 1,226 in 2007 to 1,233 in 2008. Similarly, cases of atrocities perpetrated for dowry rose to 2,230 in 2008 from 1,493 in 2007. Cases related to eve-teasing and molestation shot up to 188 during 2008, 20 more than those recorded in the previous year. Also incidents related to kidnapping of women increased from 1,012 in 2007 to 1,494 in 2008. The fact remains that there is sufficient information about crime against women that calls for appropriate remedial actions.

1.8 Media and violence against women and girls: a feminist scholar agenda

Both the CEDAW and Belem Do Parà call to the responsibility of the media in the elimination of violence against women and girls. In 1995 the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) called explicitly on governments to 'take effective measures or institute such measures (emphasis mine), including appropriate legislation against pornography and the project of violence against women and children in the media' (UN, 1995). The BPfA called on both the media and advertising industries to:

- Establish, consistent with freedom of expression, professional guidelines and codes of conduct that address violent, degrading or pornographic materials concerning women in the media, including advertising.
- Disseminate information aimed at eliminating spousal and child abuse and all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence .At the national level, laws regarding violence against women and girls in countries such as Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Spain and India list specific actions related to media industries. However, while the BPfA listed the actions which would achieve gender equality and stop gender-based violence, there is no single formal policy on gender and communication in most countries in the world.

All these mandates have been followed by extensive research developed by feminist scholars regarding media's role in the reproduction of violence against women. This is why gender-based violence in media content has become one of the core issues of the research agenda. The representation of sexual violence in media content was one of the first issues taken up by feminist communication studies. Feminist critics showed how through the commodification of women's bodies, media content –news, films, magazines– contributed to the 'normalisation' of sexual assault, rape and other forms of sexual violence and how they reinforced gender inequalities.

This first stage was followed by analysis of other specific forms of violence against women. Coverage of domestic violence in the news media attracted special attention as its rise was alarming. Based on a holistic perspective, current research includes the analysis of different forms and modalities of gender-based violence in media discourse (Vega Montiel, 2010). Findings from numerous studies have demonstrated the ways in which media content reinforces violence against women and girls (Benedict, 1992; Cuklanz, 2000; Laguna, 2004; Diez, 2002; Vega Montiel, 2007).

These studies show that:

- Media content reproduces sexist stereotypes that associate male identity with violence, domination, independence, aggression and power, while women are depicted as emotional, vulnerable and sensitive, and dependent upon male actions (Elasmar, Hasegawa and Brain, 1999; McGhee and Frueh, 1980; Thompson and Zerbinos, 1995).
- Women are usually stereotyped as sexual objects or even as mere body parts. Some examples show that: female nudity in magazine advertisements increased significantly around the world between 1983 and 1993 (Reicht et al., 1999); teen female TV characters used to be hyper-gendered (Holdden, 2012). In consequence, female sexuality is represented not as the sexual liberation of women but as the availability of women for male consumption.
- Only 24% of news subjects are women, 76% are men. Representation of gender in news is associated with relations of domination and subordination: whereas men are represented as sportsmen, politicians

and businessmen, women are represented as vox populi –that is to say, they use to be associated to the lack of status and power (WACC, 2010).

- News reports of violence of gender tend to represent women as victims –associated to their lack of power– or, conversely, as those responsible for the violence of which they are victims. Usually, aggressors are not part of news reports (Diez, 2002; Vega Montiel,2007).
- Popular music is a powerful vehicle for the reproduction of violence of gender. That is the case with rock and pop music, country, rap and, most recently, reggaeton. Feminist research has also shown how the Internet and ICTs are now part of the gender-based violence environment.

A central problem associated with digital communication is the growing circulation of pornography. Statistics show that there are 4.2 million web pages that offer pornography – 12% of the total number of websites in the world; 100,000 of them offer child pornography. The online pornography industry makes 97.06 billion dollars per year, a much higher profit than Microsoft, Google, Yahoo, Amazon, Netflix and Apple combined (Feminist Peace Network, 2006). Video games are now part of the digital gender-based environment. Some of the most popular ones show assaults on women, rape, prostitution and murder. Some examples are Grand Theft Auto and Benki Kuosuko (Maltzahn, 2006). Linked to pornography is the sexual trafficking of women, girls and boys that has been enhanced through the Internet. What some scholars call ‘virtual traffic’ refers to the implications of the Internet and other ICTs on sex trafficking (Maltzahn, 2006). Sex trafficking operates mainly in countries with a lack of Internet regulation and policy and a high percentage of poor women (UN, 2005).

At this point, we would say that ‘reducing women to sexual objects and making them available for consumption through communication and information technologies seems to be one of the most dramatic expressions of the digital age’ (Vega Montiel,2013,p.21).

A final but no less important dimension of the gender-based violence and media relationship is the increase in violence against women journalists. Forms include sexual, physical, psychological, economic and femicide. This occurs in conflict and post-conflict countries where the human rights of female journalists have become more vulnerable. This happens with the consent of states and in an environment in which news media do not ensure secure conditions for women journalists to develop their work. For this reason, just this year UNESCO and the International News Safety Institute (INSI) launched the Global Survey on Violence against Female Journalists. This effort goes together with other INSI actions, such as publications and training programmes aimed at female media workers.

In this context, we must also mention violence against women working in community media. Community media are crucial to ensuring women’s human right to communicate. In particular, community radio is a vehicle for the empowerment of women and the expansion of notions and debates on women’s human rights in rural communities. However, for decades most women in developing countries have been forced to operate their radio stations under conditions of scarcity as there has not been any official regulation of community media. This circumstance goes together with a context of violence of gender that prevails in rural communities, putting these women in a vulnerable position. As in other areas, feminist communication scholars have been involved, together with activists, feminist advocates and women media workers, in important projects that have impacted at the global, regional and national levels. Examples are: the Who Makes the News? Global Media Monitoring Project, promoted by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) and coordinated by scholars such as Margaret Gallagher; the Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media from the International Women’s Media Foundation, led by Carolyn Byerly; and Advancing Gender Equality in

Decision-making in Media Organizations from the European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE), coordinated by Karen Ross, Claudia Padovani and Erzsébet Barát.

1.9 Establishing gender inequality as a determinant for violence against women

It has been acknowledged that there is a lack of information about causal factors for violence against women at the societal level of the ecological model compared to the individual and community levels (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002; WHO, 2010). Indeed, the lack of research data about societal risk factors makes comparison between settings within countries or between countries difficult to explore.

Cross-cultural studies provide important clues to understanding the ways in which social norms in different cultures affect levels of gendered violence. The work that has been done in this area finds a correlation between cultural social roles and levels of violence (Archer, 2006).

However, establishing the underlying causes of violence against women has been the subject of varying theories. The most prominent of these was the feminist model of causation that came out of the feminist movement of the 1970s. This held that patriarchy and men's indisputable power and oppression of women were the underlying causes (WHO, 2010). More recently, extended models of explanation have been incorporated to develop the theory of gender inequality further and to explore the effects of social roles, attitudes and other cultural factors. The one currently most in use is the ecological model. Heise (1998) advocated for a conceptualization in an ecological model that could take feminist theory further, incorporating other societal and community factors influencing individual perpetrator behaviour and explaining why some but not all men perpetrate violence.

The work of feminist activists in raising the profile of intimate partner violence and other violence against women enabled the issue to be seen as a significant public health problem. This has facilitated an approach that aims for prevention of the problem. However, one of the key factors in public health prevention is identifying the societal factors of the problem at hand Gender equality and violence against women and working to change these. This is more difficult where the problem is not just physical or biological but has a social dimension as well, as is the case with violence against women. This requires investigation of social elements at various levels of the ecological model.

1.10 The role of social norms and gendered expectations

An important aspect of thinking about gender inequality in this societal sense is to understand the role of social norms and social organization in situating groups into a hierarchical structure based on certain features such as gender, race or class (Ridgeway, 2014).

Such structures result in social status being conferred upon those with the most advantageous position. In terms of power and access to resources, these structures sort groups into a perpetuating pattern of inequality as the higher status groups retain their hold on power and resources. Ridgeway observed that social status or status in relation to other groups is therefore a central consideration in entrenched inequality. Entrenched differences in status lead to "status beliefs" and expectations about the social difference, for example that males are more competent, that then become autonomous beliefs which continue to reproduce the differences by perpetuating patterns of inequality (Ridgeway, 2014). This conceptualization of status explains the widely shared cultural status beliefs at the societal level that impact on ordinary social relations at the community, organizational and individual levels, and work to legitimate the inequality of the social structure (Ridgeway, 2014). An important aspect of viewing

inequality as a relational aspect between social group classifications is that it can bring in additional components of social inequality such as race, disability and class.

Summarising the evidence around gender inequality as a determinant for violence against women, one of the key features of sexual and family violence is the reality that such violence is disproportionately experienced by women as victims and perpetrated by men (WHO, 2005).

Socio-cultural theories about causes of violence are based on the consideration of power and its relation to social structures such as institutions, political and economic systems as well as shared beliefs and attitudes that may be influenced by these structures. Such shared attitudes and behaviours can be considered to be cultural factors that underlie behaviour in a particular group (Nayak, Byrne, Martin, & Abraham, 2003). In assessing causation of violence against women, interventions that address these specific factors to achieve attitudinal and behaviour change will be most relevant. It is therefore important to look at specific differences cross-culturally and take into account influences such as religion, history and political factors in assessing differences (Nayak et al., 2003). By examining the attitudes across diverse countries and cultures, it is more likely that themes relating to causation of violence against women can be gleaned. It has already been established by research that gender is important in relation to attitudes, for example gender differences in attitudes towards sexual assault and domestic violence have been noted between men and women, with men more likely to endorse violence against women (Fanslow, Robinson, Crengle, & Perese, 2010; Nayak et al., 2003; Victorian Health Promotion Foundation et al., 2006).

1.11 Media Coverage of Women Issues

Media implicitly rank the importance of the public issues according to the amount of press coverage devoted to an issue. Lack of appropriate media coverage of an issue leads to the implication that the topic is not important. Public awareness is significantly lessened if a story is not reported (Purnima: 2010; Lucinda Marshal: 2004). Violence against women is a global pandemic and the consequences of media ignorance and bias are horrific³⁹. In India, the amount of coverage in mainstream media is inversely proportional to the actual prevalence of the kinds of violence and gives a false impression (Dr.Alok Mishara et al: 2014; Lucinda Marshal:2004;Purnima: 2010). Most disturbing is the disproportionate coverage of sensationalized violence. Invariably, rape stories get far more coverage than domestic violence stories. In all likelihood, this is because rape stories usually focus on one individual woman. If she is attractive, she is a very marketable victim. It is no accident that rape is a frequent theme in pornography (Lucinda Marshal: 2004; Purnima: 2010; Sharada Adhikari: 2014).

The sexual brutalization of women is a highly marketable business and a profitable story for the news media. For example the Indian media, be it press or the broadcasters, choose to highlight the rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl rather than to report about the success of women in recent Panchayat elections in the country. The media have no time to show the actual problems of real India at the grass root level, its culture, traditions, faiths and beliefs and so on. They usually show only those handpicked stories which sells and increase their TRPs.(Juluri, V.:2013, March 19; Dr. R.P Raman: 2009,Bihar Times Indian Mass Media and its Role Towards Society whither Goest Thou?;Sharada Adhiari:2014).

³⁹Lucinda Marshal (2004) Media Culpability in the Continuum of Violence Against Women. Available at <http://www.countercurrents.org/gender-marshall300904.htm>

Even the amount of media coverage women get overall is much less than men do. But Indian media needs to be sensitized to gender issues. It should play proactive role in inculcating gender sensitivity in the country and should ensure that women are not depicted in poor light. It should devote special slots for crimes against women in India and discuss all proactive aspects. Media should take a proactive role in creating public awareness on the rights and privileges of women. Constitutional and legal rights should also be advertised and discussed regularly. The latest rulings and judgments are discussed so that the public are made aware of these rulings. Press Council should be given more teeth so that they could intervene effectively to counteract objectionable publications. There must be mechanisms to sensitize Censor Boards and bring about a working dialogue between members of the Censor Board and citizens groups (Nair, G.:2013, Feb 21).

Press, the fourth estate of democracy, has to maintain a balance between good reporting and accountability. Journalists are expected to maintain a standard of neutrality, objectivity but not sans sensitivity. In an era of paid news, media often become agents of propaganda. With electronic media entering the scene, our living rooms are flooded with 24 hours entertainment and news channels. Nothing escapes the gaze of media. While electronic media is a manifestation of the fact that we are living in the information society, there are some pertinent concerns a viewer needs to raise (Parvin Sultana: 2014).

With regard to news channels, the first concern must be whether print and electronic media is able to manage the required standards that are set for good journalism. How do media report on sensitive issues like sexual violence against women, child sexual abuse? Over a period of time the competition of TRPs (Television Rating Points) paved the way for unnecessary sensitization of news. The line between real news and scripted dramatic serials has become blurred. People became mere stories. While print media tried to maintain the code of conduct, electronic media often overstepped its domain (ibid).

A number of incidents made one rethink where to draw the line between journalistic ethics and sheer sensationalism. While covering the Aarushi-Hemraj double murder case of 2008, news channels showed lewd animated pictures of the 14 year old girl along with the other victim in indecent postures. This is not an isolated incident. When a tragic incident of a video going rounds in one of India's premier educational institution took place, media continued to be insensitive. Along with the students involved, media continued harassing the other students by constantly intruding their academic space. Fingers were also pointed at students coming from particular states of the country. The same media was lukewarm towards the institution's struggle for getting their democratic elections back (ibid).

Another shocking incident was a young girl being molested on a busy highway in Guwahati by a number of miscreants in June, 2012 and this was being shown through live telecast by a local private news channel. While a young girl was being pushed and pulled in every direction, the news channel was basking in the glory of being able to provide a live telecast. What happened to the journalist's duty as a concerned human being to intervene and immediately inform the police? Are we pushing notions of a neutral, objective bystander too far? Live telecast of molestation seems like a precedent to live telecast of more serious crimes. Similar behaviour was witnessed during the December, 2012 gang rape case in Delhi where news channels as well as some newspapers were more obsessed with the identity of the victim and her relationship with her male companion as opposed to the crime (Chaudhuri A.:2012; Sultana: 2014).

This recurring insensitivity on the part of media raises some pertinent concerns about whether news media is also commercialised and gendered. Even news items are dovetailed for a dominantly male

audience. News business is rapidly driven by hard news. Entrusted with the crucial responsibility of keeping people well informed on the kind of atrocities happening around the country, journalists of both print and electronic media need to be extra careful (ibid).

Any talk of the role of media cannot bypass a discussion on movies and TV serials which are an important source of entertainment. With increasing number of cases of violence against women, social scientists, and psychologists tried to understand if there is any relationship between representation of women in media and increasing violence on them. While there may not be any direct causal relationship, people who are exposed to a particular degrading portrayal of women are found to be more acceptable of the violence meted out to them. Most mainstream movies and TV serials portray women in two ways - as meek, docile and vulnerable, in constant need of protection of a male or as cunning and calculative. Family and politics at home seem to be central to these women's existence. Very few TV serials or movies take up issues that a working woman faces in her life. How we see a woman and her relationships on the TV screen is crucial in Indian society. In a conservative social set up, families do not give the space to engage on issues of relationship. If movies like "Ranjhnaa"(2013) romanticize stalking to such an extent that male aggression comes to be justified as true love, women are denied agency even in such an intimate relationship. It is only when popular culture questions these deep rooted biases; women will be able to deal with society on an equal footing as men (Parvin Sultana: 2014).

This is the time to rethink and revisit the country's mass media policy. There are many issues which should be discussed threadbare to have an unbiased and healthy media policy in the country. But before that materializes, the stalwarts of Indian mass media should exercise prudence and restraint, show the truth, unadulterated, undoctored and unbiased news and views, unbiased analysis and non-sensationalization of events or incidences whether big or small (Uberoi P.: 2006; Dr. R.P Raman: 2009; Purnima: 2010).

1.12. Degradation of women in media

Media, both the traditional and modern, is in no where exception regarding the portrayal of women. Like television, radio, old folk stories, films, and print media perpetuate gendered role portrayals. Many a time print media are guilty of sexism, distortion of image of women, and propagation of gender stereotypes as mothers, housewives, dependent, passive recipient etc. the prominent image in most of the popular print media is that of the self-sacrificing housewife. Women are seldom shown as working women-capable professionals, laborers, farmers in those media (Nautuyal and Dabral: 2012).

The portrayal of women in the print media is also quite degrading more often than not depicting her as a commercial commodity (Anusha Chopra: 1998). By reinforcing gender stereotypes and constantly glorifying motherhood and subservient wifhood the print make it difficult for women to break out these prescribed roles, norms and behavior patterns. In spite of the boom in electronic media, high tech information explosion, the traditional print media remain unvanquished. It carries credibility, weight and still moulds the opinion of many. Clearly the media do not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world.

The daily newspapers rarely put women's news relating to their development. Rather they prefer reporting on rape, atrocities, crime, sexual harassment and abuse of women prominently in their columns. Besides Sunday or Saturday special glossy editions on women's fashion, beauty, leisure and other luxurious news items with erotic photographs are issued from time to time by daily newspapers. If a woman wins a beauty contest, magazines and newspapers in particular give much importance to the

news and even take her photographs on front page but if a woman gets Nobel Prize she does not get so much coverage. Even the photos of sport stars are also provided in a manner that depicts their body attraction (Nautiyal&Dabral: 2012; Dhar &Patnaik:1998, Portrayal of women in Media at <http://documents.mx/documents/women-portrayal-in-the-media.html> ;Katoch:2013)

Popular newspapers with large circulations many times flash vulgar and obscene glossy photographs with wide coverage of (three days after) the cruel incident of Laxmi Orang, happened on 24th nov,2007 in Guwahati, may be mentioned here⁴⁰. This bias evident, how sensational are print media too. The less moral or responsible media are the more sensational, the more monetary/profitable, they become. The underlying principle of today's media is inclined towards making more money by creating more sensationalism.

Indian magazines contain primarily and predominantly volumes of advertisements and sexist writings. Vast majority of Indian magazines are known for the portrayal of women as sex objects, consumers and the like. Even women magazines, like Femina, Women's Era, and Eve's Weekly foster traditional patterns of female subordination in modern trappings (Katoch:2013).

Movies are another particular aspect of audio-visual media which do have an overdose of sex. Sex and violence are the two usual targets for anyone to take on the film industry. Keeping the moral sense in vain, like advertisements, in movies too women are often depicted as sexual objects either for pleasure or for profit. The film industry is likely to be running on the principle that 'the less you concern ethics, the more you profitable'.

Thus, women image has gone through several unjust projections at the hands of the media. Throughout times women have been portrayed in the media as victims, subservient, nurturing, sacrificing and objectified sexualised beings. Images of women as objects and as the recipients of aggressive behavior do cause a desensitization of violence.

It is true indeed that while the functioning and the sustenance of the media depend highly upon marketing agencies or forces, to go against the compulsions created by these forces is tough for media. Because of the control exercised by the market, there is possible extinction of those forms and contents of media which are unable to meet the criterion of market forces even when they are of undoubted relevance towards creation of a better society. And secondly, there is possible expansion of those parts of media which clearly harm the general societal interest (P.P.Gosh:1998).

Thus the interplay of market and media fixes the route for media functioning. This sort of market mechanism is now-a-days being projected as a nearly flawless mechanism not only for establishing an economic equilibrium but even for deciding the social issues.

Globalization is one of the most relevant factors which have caused changes in both media-inside and the relation between media and market. The process of globalization enabled to have the larger impact upon people. As the market is becoming worldwide, survival in the new global business market calls for increased competition and in order to face increased competition, the use of technology has been maximized.

As the tentacles of globalization have trespassed into electronic media, there is an increase in information flows, a technological change with the advent of fibre optic communications, satellites, and

⁴⁰ The Telegraph, Guwahati, dated 27th Nov.2007

increased availability of worldwide web. The technological base of the media is also causing changes in the media-market relation. The new technology based on satellites, computes etc. not only make the storage, processing and transmission of information much easier, but it does so at a much reduced cost. Because of such cost reduction, information management or media are now attracting more attention as a commercial activity, relegating many of its non-commercial dimensions to the background.

The media functioning viewed as economic activities which disseminate information has also undergone radical changes causing a much larger role of the market forces in its affairs. The most fundamental aspect of this change in the media character is that-earlier information was viewed as a source of knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment, but in today's world, besides these, information is a source of 'power'- an institution which has more information about others is in a position to maneuver and manipulate and hence, more powerful. This power implication of information is what lends it a character of a commodity, commanding a price which may or may not reflect its value (Ghosh:1998).

Another important dimension of information as a commodity is that disinformation is also a commodity and media are a vehicle for both. Just as information makes an individual or organisation potentially more powerful, by being innocently fed with disinformation it can become vulnerable. Advertising is a burning example, where persistent disinformation is able to produce a distorted preference pattern among the consumers, serving the interest of the giant producers. Indeed producers today need not produce what the consumers want, but the consumer can be made to want what the producers produce. Such being the power of information and disinformation; it is very natural that the entire media space is under pressure and it thus yields easily to the market forces. Space is allocated to those messages which are paid for, other messages how so ever desirable, are either altogether neglected or are reluctantly given a little space, just to avoid the criticism that media are wholly a commercial activity (P.P.Ghosh:1998)

The process of globalization has severe implications for the regulation of the media as electronic methods of communication proliferate state regulation is becoming increasingly difficult. So in the globalised media anything (violence, pornography) goes to increase coverage and profit. Thus dehumanizing or devaluing women through media content has become natural (Patricia A.Made:2000). As Margaret Gallagher has pointed out that.....

'...with the globalisation of markets, economic affairs are becoming more and more detached from social concerns. With media regulation becoming more and more difficult to enforce, and with the media increasingly driven by the quest for huge financial profit, the commodification of women in media content is likely to intensify'. (As cited in Patricia A.Made:2000).

Moreover, the dominant trend of our society is also one of the relevant factors. Our society is grounded on patriarchy, where women are supposed to enjoy the secondary status and bear all types of oppressions. As every society has its own norms and values, the patriarchal society is also having its own standards and it always tries to impose its norms and value to all its disseminations including the media. Media is just a reflection of the existing social structures. The reporters, the journalists, producers, editors and other associates of the media are part and parcel of the society. Media have now become a tool to serve the system itself. The main purpose of the media is to serve the larger society by providing information, education and entertainment, whereas media are capitalizing women's distorted images

for sustaining its own survival in the competitive world. It sustains the patriarchal values in order to serve a particular section of society⁴¹.

What is concern is that with the growth of people's awareness about the increasing tendency of commercialization of media, people's reliability on media is going downward. So, media should overcome the situation and follow the ethical guidelines because media can survive in the long run by making compromises with morality, honesty and integrity.

REFERENCES:

B. Axford & R.Huggins, (2001). *New Media and Politics*, Sage publication, London.

Bal, Raka Sinha. (1999). "Sushma Swaraj: Wife, Mother Politicians-A Woman of Our Times", March-April: 10-13.

Ball, M, (1985). January 28, *India: A sleeping giant finally opens doors to the West*. Advertising Age, 56-62.

Bathla, Sonia. (1998). *Women, Democracy and the Media*. New Delhi, Sage Publication.

Bhanderkar, M. (Director). (2011). *Chandni Bar* [Motion picture].

Bharjatya, S. (Director). (1995). *Hum Apke Hain Koun* [Motion Picture].

Boxofficeindia.com (n.d) Retrieved from www.boxofficeindia.com.

Butalia, U. (1984). Women in Indian Cinema. *Feminist Review* (17), 108-110.

Chakrabarti, S.S. (1989). National Identity and the aesthetic realist: Indian cinema of the fifties. *Quarterly Review of film and video* (11), 31-48.

Chopra, A. (Director). (1995). *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* [Motion Picture].

Choudhury, M, (2000), "Feminism in print media", *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 2007; 7; 263.

Das Dasgupta, S., (1988), *The eternal receptacle: A study of mistreatment of women in Hindi films*, In R.Gadhially (Ed). Women in Indian society: A reader pp.209-216. New Delhi, Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd.

Desai, N., & Krishnaraj, M, (1990), *Women and society in India*, New Delhi, Ajanta Prakashan.

Desai, N & Patel, V, (1990), *Indian women: Change and challenge in the International decade, 1975-1985*, Bombay, Popular prakashan.

⁴¹ Sources: dimdima.com/forumnw/message.asp?Tid=1043...media...society. Retrieved on 6.11.2015.

Haripriya, M. (2005), *Women in Advertisement on Television*. In Kiran Prasad (ed.) *Women and Media: Challenging feminist discourse*. New Delhi: The women's press.

Jha, R. (1992), *Woman in print media: Initiating new perspectives*, New Delhi, Northern Book Center.

Joseph, Ammu and Sharma, Kalpana, (1994), "*Whose News?*", Sage publications, New Delhi.

Keval J. Kumar, (1981), *Mass Communication in India*, Jaico, Bombay, pp.140-143

Madhu K. (1990), "*Why I do not call myself a feminist*", *Manushi*, 61:2-8

Pandey, M. (1991), *The subject is woman*, New Delhi, Sanchar Publishing House.

Punwani, J. (1988), *Portrayal of women in television*. In R. Gadhially Ed. *Women in Indian society: A reader* p 225-232, New Delhi, Sage Pb.

Rhode, Deborah L. (1995), "*Media Images, Feminist Issues*", *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 685-709.

Roy, S.S., (2012), "*Portrayal of women in Indian media-In the era of neo-liberal economy*", *Global Media Journal-Indian edition*, Vol.3, no.1.

Schafer, Sharada J., (2006), *Gender in Indian Advertising in privileging the privileged*, Promila & co. New Delhi.

Sharma, Sanjeev K., (2005), "*Depiction of women in Indian Media-A case of Introspection for Media Planners*", *Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol.1, no1.

Shelat, M. (1994), July, "*Has the new man emerged? The changing image of man in Indian advertising*". Paper presented to Gender and Communication Section International Association for Mass Communication Research Seoul, Korea.

Shrivastava, K.M. (1992), *Media Issues*. New Delhi, India: Sterling Publishers Private Limited.

Sudarsana, Jawhari (2005), *Representation of women in Media: The Legal Debate*. In Kiran Prasad (ed.) *Women and Media: Challenging feminist discourse*. New Delhi: The women's press.

Van, Zoonen Liesbet, (1994), *Feminist Media Studies*, Sage Publication, London.