



## MEDIA'S PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN

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### INTRODUCTION:

On contrary to popular practice, this paper doesn't aim at blaming the masculine gender for the distressed status of women. It aims at pointing the changes that humankind, collectively, regardless of gender needs to make, in order to produce a better society i.e. a society, where in women are not collateral damage for the mistakes of men and other women. Give how the society reacts to the same mistake done by a man and woman, a thought? When a man does a mistake, it sure does put a lot of materialistic values at stake. Except, when a woman does the same, her morality, character, values and materialistic things are judged and challenged. Now this is what begins to elucidate the changes this paper aims at bringing about.

**"Women have been called queen for a long time, but the kingdom given them isn't worth ruling"**

Only when women are provided with equal resources and respect, which they deserve, the true power of women will be enshrined in India.

It is witless to criticize women before you get to feel their true power. Only this would enable the evolution of the whole country. It is not a choice for the people of India to fight with women for their safety and development, but the only course available to evolve as a society.

Media, i.e. your everyday newspaper, WhatsApp to advertisement, movies, etc. play a significant role in changing the perspective with which women are viewed, in India. But the same media, rather than being used for creative purposes is exploited for dreadful purposes. This research primarily deals with women empowerment through media, problems faced by women in media, failure of government in addressing women distress, women's safety and feasible solutions.

### PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN:

For every boon, there is a dozen corresponding bane. Similarly, for all the merits of media there are threats, demerits and consequences that are of serious nature. Media creates false, unreal expectations in the minds of people about women. To explain this, take a commercial that promotes a product used domestically. The advertisement usually shows women in distress and discomfort, which is how they are everyday and all of a sudden, the particular product comes in their life and showers the household with luxury. This induces the basic ideology that women are supposed to be like that, for the household to function normally. Movies, Cartoons, TV Dramas also portray women this way and strengthen the stigma that women are supposed to be treated so. The reputation of women is also spoken low in the above said industries. Disturbing content, predominantly sexual, objectify women and lower their dignity by portraying them inappropriately. When content of this sort is viewed, over time, people casualize it and feel no deal in incorporating the same in reality. Now here is where the problem arises. People for



numerous psychological reasons do not get the difference between 'on screen activities' and 'off screen activities'. The content creators also fail to realise that majority of the people are vulnerable to the bad content and they are most likely to grasp what they see. Because, after all as Genna Daris said, "if they can see it, they can be it".

Media's influential power is like a match stick. It can provide warmth when gasped as well as sets dreams ablaze. Women face a lot of problems because of this.

### DESTRUCTIVE EFFECTS OF MEDIA IN WOMEN'S LIVES:

Applications through unjust terms and conditions receive the permission from its users to use their personal media to its own advantage. Eg : morphing through the faceapp.

Women Journalist face serious threats when they are working on exposing content relating to people high of profile.

Stalkers can now monitor their target's every move without the target knowing there are being monitored.

Hidden spy camera's in unexpected places are installed for sole purpose of representing women indecently and making financial benefits by selling out the content to unauthorized and illegal sources such as pornography websites.

Majority of the society due to traditional stigma believes that victim should be blamed for enduring such a situation. Due to which the reputation of the women is being spoilt<sup>1</sup>.

One gets used to something when experienced constantly or frequently. When

content having inappropriate acts is viewed by the public over and over again, human brain generalizes it as something which is not of serious nature. Due to this, the consequences of committing the act are not taken seriously and the sentiments of the aggrieved are not respected. Example: Domestic violence in households, Sexual Harassment of a subordinate by superior (in corporations) etc.

The psychological importance of treating women like subjects, rather than objects cannot be stressed enough. These 'ought to be followed' ideologies need to be incorporated in everyone's mind from childhood itself. The older one grows, the lesser he would comprehend the importance aspects of this sort. Unfortunately, not everyone is able to understand that women, just like men, are humans and need to be treated that way. This is not something they should be fighting or protesting for because this is their natural right.

Movies mould culture. People understand morals from movies more than from anywhere else. But movies also majorly objectify women, represent them indecently or inappropriately to get the public's attention. The more content of this sort is given to the viewers, the worsen they would start expecting in the future. Incorporating movie aspects in reality is also a major factor that exploits women and adds to their problems.

One of the reasons why the upcoming generations are spoilt from a very tender age is cartoons. Back in the days, cartoons represented innocence and fun. These days, even cartoons have genres like Drama,

<sup>1</sup> Rajyashri B, Media and victims of sexual assault, Legal Service India, (Nov 28, 2019, 10:30 P.M)

<http://www.legalservicesindia.com/article/1840/Media-and-Victims-of-Sexual-Assault.html>



Romance, Sci-Fi, Sex, etc and they use vulgar language too. Every genre has an element of sex at some point or the other and this pretty much gives a new definition to cartoon.

Advertisement portrays women to be weaker, subjugating gender and encourages sexism in a lot of aspects.<sup>2</sup> For instance, commercials that promote household products usually involve a woman working so hard, distressed and tired and then the product makes it easier for her to finish the particular chore<sup>3</sup>. Or it's a woman trying to make her husband or her family happy by using a product and doing other household chores. Or a working woman who comes back home after a long day, returns home and cooks for the family using the advertising product. All these commercials have at least one aspect that makes it a point that women are expected to forego their comfort for the sake of others. Commercials influence people. And it's an underrated aspect when it comes to consideration In **Ajay Goswami v Union of India**<sup>4</sup>, is a relevant case which drew provisions from the Indian Penal Code, Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act etc to challenge the obscene content in newspapers.

8 out of 10 Indian TV dramas have a mother-in-law that abuses the daughter(s) –in-law physically and mentally for the most minor of all inconveniences and the aggrieved, suffer in silence. The husband also, supports his mother and does nothing about the abuse. And the daughter-in-law cooks, cleans, does

the dishes, does the laundry and other chores and constantly stays in distress and depression. These dramas influence people and they unconsciously or consciously adapt themselves similar to the character and expect the family to function analogical to that of the on screen family. This is how irrational, influence can be.

### **MEDIA'S ROLE IN EMPOWERING WOMEN:**

Media and women's talent are analogical to a car and fuel. Though the element of talent was always vested in women, the ideal stimulating element was missing. But these days, women are reaching unbelievable heights and miraculous milestones with media unveiling their talent. Social media platforms, YouTube, Film Industry, TV dramas and all the other influential platforms have witnessed great involvement and contribution of women in various fields. Apart from this, victims of veiled crimes can now enlighten a greater audience about the pain they have been through, what helped them overcome it and how important it is to speak out, in order to get justice. Since it is a vital topic, consider this instance. Rape, a penal offence u/s 375, though happened at the same rate since time immemorial, is brought to light, frequently in the recent days because of media. It is a very serious issue regarding which people did not choose to talk about.

Justice Krishna Iyer in the case of **Rafiq v State of U.P**<sup>5</sup> made a remark that, 'A murderer kills the body, but a rapist kills the

<sup>2</sup>Naina Jha, The Role of Advertising in Portrayal of Women, Safe City, (Nov 24, 2019, 7:15 PM), <https://safecity.in/the-role-of-advertising-in-portrayal-of-women/>.

<sup>3</sup>Rani Premkumar, Law women and advertisement, legal services india, (Nov 26, 2019, 08:35 A.M),

<http://www.legalserviceindia.com/article/1210-Law,-Women-And-Advertisements.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Ajay Goswami V. Union of India , AIR 2007 SC 493, (2007) 1 SCC 143.

<sup>5</sup> Rafiq v. State of U.P 1981 AIR 559. 1981 SCR (1) 402.



soul'. Literally interpreting this quote, it signifies the importance of soul as something more than that of a body. Though speaking out is not going to eradicate rape completely, it would definitely spread awareness among the public and it is agreeable that

'prevention is better than cure'. Besides influencers, bloggers and victims, homemakers also get to showcase their talent by creating YouTube channels that is exclusively for cooking, tailoring, teaching, fashion and other domestic activities. This way, the interests of people who prefer working from home is also protected. After all, not all heroes wear capes.

### CONSTRUCTIVE EFFORTS OF MEDIA:

Section 22 of The Hindu Marriage Act 1955 i.e. In camera proceedings, safeguards the reputation of women when sensitive matters are concerned.

Section 228A of Indian Penal Code of 1860, prevents the disclosure of the victim's name in offences under section 376 of Indian Penal Code 1860.

Applications that concerns with the safety of women are the positive outcomes of tragic events in recent times. eg:

KAVALANAPP.

Media provides a platform for women who prefer to work from home.

Victims can now enlighten the world about their silent suffering without having to jeopardize their reputation or their families.

Media provides a platform for women as well as men to express their opinion on the situation of women in India. The women

need not worry about the controversies since the identity and gender can be masked in media. The topics of women inequality, safety and perception are widely discussed among various media such as instagram, facebook, bloggers, etc.

It provides a platform to showcase their skills and talents.<sup>6</sup> Women can publish their writings through bloggers and other media, promote their business through facebook etc, promote themselves as models, make videos such as tik tok, dub smash, etc and show case their skills such as cooking, exploring, etc in YouTube, bloggers, etc.

Media provides access to information on all fields without gender or any kind of discrimination. The media is used as a medium to gain popularity but is not partial or unfair. The reach of the content you publish is based on the quality of the content. Higher the quality higher the reach goes. Media can mask the identity of the person publishing the content so that the content doesn't get discriminated based on gender, caste, race, colour, etc but only criticized based on the contents that is published.

Violence against women has been persistent in India since time immemorial. But the birth of newspapers and introduction of other types of media in India, has been increasing awareness about the distressing situation of women in India. Though there has been no drastic decrease in the occurrence of violence against women, media has contributed in increasing awareness about the violence against women on a daily basis. There are cases where the government took extra care and focus in order to get justice for women

<sup>6</sup>Anuj Jain, Career Opportunities for Women in India, SiliconIndia, (Nov, 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019, 4:35 PM), <https://blogs.siliconindia.com/careercounseling/Caree>

r/Career-Opportunities-for-women-in-India-bid-F3b40Ad150349596.html .



after the reach of news widely in media such as whatsapp, facebook, instagram, etc. For instance, in the recent Unnao Rape Case, the victim wrote a letter concerning her situation to the CJI, Ranjan Gogoi, which never reached him, as per sources. But, the CJI acknowledged the letter through the news and social media posts which are nothing but media.

Media can be used to teach public about the need for changing the public perception over women<sup>7</sup>. The contents of media largely impact the users or viewers, especially young children who have tender and vulnerable minds. Media can be used to teach the young generation of our society the significance and greatness of women rather than spoiling them with various commercial contents. This way there would be no need for change in perception after the youth reach adulthood. Further the views would be passed on to the next generation so that the women need not face any obstacles, hopefully, in the future.

#### REFORMATIVE MEASURES:

Violence, of all sorts being the prime issue of concern, is addressed majority in this section. The global implementation plan to end violence against Women and girls was a recommendation from the multi-agency expert group meeting (EGM) on the prevention of violence against women and girls. The EGM was organized by UN women in collaboration with five other UN bodies. In March 2013, during the 57th session of the United Nations commission on the status of women, four main conclusions were agreed upon and they are :

- To strengthen the implementation of legal & global policy frameworks and accountability.
- To address structural and other causes and risk factors to prevent violence against women and girls
- To strengthen multi sectorial services, programmes and responses to violence against women and girls.
- To improve the evidence base.

Several sections of the Indian Penal Code are framed solely to protect women and their interest from media . For instance, section 228A protects the identity of victims of offences under section 376 from being disclosed. 228A(2) specifically extends the sub clause (1) contents from being disclosed to printing or publication in any media .

Section 22 of the Hindu Marriage Act deals with "in camera" proceedings. These are the proceedings that take place in the judge's chambers, in private and only the parties to the dispute participate in it . Usually this type of proceedings are opted when matter is pertaining to the morality of women , or any other sensitive matters like so on . No publication of any sort is encouraged and thus , this section saves women from media.

The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act 1986, this Act punishes the indecent representation of women, which means the depiction in any manner of the figure of a woman.

Section 67 of the IT Act is the most serious legislative measure against pornography. The wordings of section 67 are wide enough to cover all perpetrators of cyber pornography, be it the Internet service providers, web

<sup>7</sup> Shamika N. Sirimanne, What if our future were equally designed by women?, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development,

<https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=1993>



hosting entities or the persons behind the actual website.

Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 prohibits the transmission of advertisements on the cable network which are not in conformity with the Advertisement Code.

Constitution of India Act, 1950 Ensures right to life that includes right to human dignity Right to live with human dignity enshrined in Article 21 derives life breath from the directive principles of State policy.

In **Maneka Gandhi v Union of India**<sup>8</sup>, it was ruled that right to life is not merely confined to physical existence but also includes within its ambit the right to live with human dignity.

In **Chandra Raja Kumari v Police Commissioner, Hyd**<sup>9</sup>, it had been held that right to live includes right to live with human dignity or decency and therefore holding of beauty contests is repugnant to dignity or decency of women and offends Art 21 of the Constitution.

Article 19 : Freedom of Speech and Expression

In **R v Hicklin**<sup>10</sup>, the court held that a publication or content is obscene if it tends to produce lascivious thoughts and arouses lustful desire in the minds of substantial numbers of that public into whose hands the book is likely to fall. Hence, the freedom of speech and expression are restricted in the interest of decency and morality.

The National Human Rights Commission and the State Human Rights Commission can

look into violations of dignity of women, even in commercials. S. 2 (d) of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, defines human rights as the rights relating to life, liberty, equality, and dignity of an individual guaranteed in the Constitution or embodied in the international Covenants and enforceable by Courts in India. The NHRC takes essential precautionary and sanctionary steps in order to protect women and their reputation, dignity and ethical value.

The Press Council Of India is a statutory body established by the Press Council Of India Act, 1978, for the purpose of preserving the freedom of the Press and of maintaining and improving the standards of newspapers and news agencies in India. S. 14 of the Act gives the power to censure

### FAILURE OF GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS THE DISTRESS:

It is the duty of government to every taxpaying woman in India to serve them with honesty and provide them with what they deserve. But the government has not made any effective legislations and execution of such legislations is poor.

The government of India has formulated several legislations in order to secure the dignity of women and provide them with equal resources and respect. But the execution of the legislations is very poor leading to the very purpose of the legislations being unattended. The law requires extensive procedures even after conviction for initiation of the punishment.

<sup>8</sup> Maneka Gandhi v Union of India, 1978 AIR 597, 1978 SCR (2) 621.

<sup>9</sup> Chandra Raja Kumari v Police Commissioner, hyd, 1998 (1) ALD 810, 1998 (1) ALD Cri 298, 1998 (1) ALT 329.

<sup>10</sup> R v Hicklin (1868) 3 Q.B. 360.



The Nirbhaya fund<sup>11</sup> which was allocated for executing policies for women's safety has not been used. Only 20% of the Nirbhaya has been used in the last 7 years since the allocation even though there are vast areas of women's safety to be taken care of.

The National commission for Women, 1992, which is supposed to be the apex body for handling issues regarding woman has not performed efficiently. The powers given to the NCW<sup>12</sup> has to be increased so that it can perform autonomously without any obstacles.

The legislations made by the government lack the intensity it requires in order to generate dread in the minds of people, so that the crime is not committed in the future.

The justice which the woman victims of the Indian society deserve caused due to various crimes such as rape, domestic violence, acid attack, etc has to be given to them as soon as possible. But the system is extensive and inefficient making it slow and hard to achieve.<sup>13</sup>

The cyber space is the place where all the people of India spend most of their time even more than in reality. Such cyberspace has to be managed so that the women do not face any obstacles. But cyber bullying, cyber

stalking, morphing, defamation, trolling etc are highly prevalent in all cyber space. In recent years the violations against women has been doubled and various new violations have emerged in the society.<sup>14</sup>

The government has not taken enough steps to formulate policies in order to improve the health and safety condition of women. The global Nutrition report states that more than half of Indian women of reproductive age suffer from anemia.<sup>15</sup> This condition has not been given proper recognition. The government has also ignored the safety conditions of women which they deserve.

#### FEASIBLE SOLUTIONS:

**"She wasn't looking for a knight; she was looking for a sword"**

#### Atticus

Women are not looking for knights in the politicians of our country but are looking for swords. Equality and safety. Women must be reserved 33% of the seats in the parliament representing the women of our country rather than leaving the things in the hand of the politicians in our country. It has been 73 years since India achieved independence, in which only men have held most of the significant political positions and the

<sup>11</sup> Jagriti Chandra & Sumant Sen, Nirbhaya fund, The Hindu, (Nov 29, 2019, 10:00AM), <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/only-20-of-nirbhaya-fund-has-been-used-by-states-until-2018/article28230097.ece>

<sup>12</sup> Bhanu Pratab, National Commission For Women, Legal Services India, (Nov 29, 2019, 10:30AM), <http://www.legalserviceindia.com/article/1318-National-Commission-For-Women.html>

<sup>13</sup> Nidhi Surendranath, Justice Delayed, Denied for Women Victim of Harassment, The Hindu, (Dec 02, 2019, 02:20PM),

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/justice-delayed-denied-for-women-victims-of-harassment/article4364331.ece>

<sup>14</sup> Utpal Bhaskar, Cyber Crime In India, Live Mint, (Nov 29, 2019, 11:45AM), <https://www.livemint.com/companies/news/cyber-crime-cases-in-india-almost-doubled-in-2017-11571735243602.html>

<sup>15</sup> Global Nutritional report, Burden of Malnutrition, (Nov 28, 2019, 1:15PM), <https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/asia/southern-asia/india/>



conditions of women haven't improved much. A bill addressing this issue has been pending in the Rajya Sabha for years. The most significant solution to the problem is having women legislators in the parliament who understands the needs and pain of women in our country.

Government should take in hand the process to change the perspective of women in India. Media being the primary source of spreading opinions and views should have been used wisely by government to spread contents that change the perspective of women in India.

Especially the young generation of the society needs to be taught the value of women in their lives and further the need for safety for the women in our society. This way the adults of future (i.e. the youth of current generation) treat women equally, protect them and pass on their views to upcoming generations.

**“Justice delayed is justice denied”**

There must be fast track procedures for handling cases regarding women i.e. rape, domestic violence, etc., so that the victim women need not waste years of her life just for a single case.

The use of cameras for illegal and immoral uses has to be controlled. For this purpose the government has to conduct periodical inspection over places that consist of potential illegal use of cameras. Further the immoral use of public cameras has to be stopped. The public camera which has to be used for the safety of the public is being used for immoral purposes in return for profit. Hence the periodical inspection over cameras in public as well as illegal use of cameras has

to be conducted so as to control the violations of law and morality.

The government should legislate and amend laws punishing crimes against women with the concept of deterrence in the mind so that the other future potential crimes against women get diminished. It is through fear should the government control the potential future crimes against women in our society.

The laws concerning media and cyber space has to be amended, so that hate speech, hurtful contents has to be restricted. Violent porn contents have to be constrained and the procedure to publish porn contents has to be regulated. Publishing porn contents has to be licensed and laws concerning has to be amended.

#### CONCLUSION:

**“I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved”**

**-B.R. Ambedkar.**

Women and men of India rather than holding silence should voice out their support for the distress faced by women. Victims of violence against women are being shamed rather than being supported and taken care of. The Indian women should be provided with equal opportunities and resources along with safe place to work and reside. The McKinsey Global Institute's April report states that the GDP of India would increase by \$770 billion if the women are provided equal opportunities in India. As for the exploitation of women, the loss already happened cannot be undone, but future losses can be prevented by incorporating the importance of safeguarding women's reputation and rights, in all aspects possible. The present youth



needs to leave a legacy behind that enlightens the future about the significance of existence of women and a world that comforts them. The supreme court has taken a giant leap by opening doors to women in military forces by stating that physiological features of women have no link to their rights the mind set must change with thousands of women valiently breaking the stereotypes and thousands of men helping them .Lets hope for a better tomorrow, where women are granted equal pay and equal respect that our grand mothers and mothers yearned for and our daughters rightfully deserve . Equality is the best gift that can bequeathed by us to our future generations.

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