
UNIT 11 GENDER AND MEDIA

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11.0 INTRODUCTION

Gender as a theoretical concept has evolved during the last few decades. Rooted in women's movement and based on the premise of unequal relationship between men and women in any society, gender today involves a vast array of issues and concerns. It has also emerged as an academic discipline by itself and is accepted as an area of utmost importance by activists and academics alike.

In this unit, the focus of our discussion will be on the relationship of gender with media and implications of that relationship for media producers as well as the members of the society - both men and women. Most often we view gender as a dichotomous binary but in some societies there are three or even four genders. In Asian, South Pacific and North American Indian societies individuals who adopt gender behaviour ascribed to members of the opposite sex; they live, work or dress beyond their biological binary. Gender refers to the relative position of man or woman in a given caste-class-race-geography contexts.

In any given society the roles, qualities, behaviour of 'biological' man or woman are defined by the members of the society. Since your childhood, you as a male or a female are told what is expected from you. For example, if you are a boy and you cry, in the Indian context you are told 'why are you crying like a girl'. If you are a girl and if you want to study further and work, some of you may be advised that to learn to manage household chores and think about marriage rather than career. Most often the valuation associated with 'female' roles-qualities-behaviour is inferior. Males get certain advantage or freedoms in terms of mobility, resources,

sexuality, fertility, property and so on. Being female means restrains over mobility, behaviour, sexuality and lack of access to resources and opportunities to generate resources. You would have noticed even within your own family or around how girls and women are asked to ‘be conscious about being female’ whereas boys and men usually get relatively flexible code of behaviour and role concessions.

Media as earlier discussed, refers to anything that is used to reach out to people in any society. It could be street plays, text books, out of house media, proverbs, songs, stories, drawings and paintings or technology mediated mass media like television, radio, newspapers or films and even Internet. It is necessary to understand that when media portrays a particular ‘stereotype’ it reinforces ‘expected’ code of conduct in a given society. Apart from stereotyping media selectively presents the reality about roles-behaviours-qualities of women as well as men. Even about caste, class, religion, race and ethnicity. Such representations inevitably influence the members of the society as well as people in question.

Apart from the way media ‘shows’ gender realities, issues like who are media personnel and how they influence ‘what is shown’ have also become critical in recent years. If media has only upper class and upper caste people, and men more than women working as employees, more often realities, especially of women, poor lower caste people would not become part of media content. These audiences when they do not see such realities being shown feel more marginalised.

11.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this unit you should be able to:

- explain the concept of gender and its relationship with media;
- describe issues associated with gender and its relationship to media;
- examine implications of gendered representations in media on society; and
- discuss some national and international projects and institutions working on issues of gender and media.

11.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER AND MEDIA

UNDP Human Development Report (2007/2008) states, “Women’s historic disadvantages - their limited access to resources, restricted rights, and a muted voice in shaping decisions -make them highly vulnerable to climate change (and everything else in the development process). The nature of that vulnerability varies widely ... But climate change (*and everything*) is likely to magnify existing patterns of gender disadvantage”.

You can try and analyse what are the messages you grew up listening about your ‘being’ a boy or a girl. You would realise that it was the list telling you of code of behaviour, expected role and anticipated qualities depending upon your biology being male or female. Media is one of the main players in this socialisation. Media showed women as ‘submissive housewife’, ‘domesticated bahu’, ‘aggressive husband and coy wife’. Occasionally it shows them counter opposites of ‘dominating woman’ in form of mother-in-law or ‘submissive husband’ as a considerate man.

Gender is all pervasive and it is a cultural construct. Language is a critical part of culture. Gender becomes part of society even by the words indicating ‘expectations’ and ‘prevalence’. Words like ‘cameraman’ and ‘chairman’ make men all pervasive and marginalise women. As you are aware the term sex is variously employed and it includes everything from the sex cells to sexual behaviour. Gender and sex are different conceptual constructs. Sex invariably is a physiological whereas gender a sociological construction. Sex refers to biological differences between men and women, boys and girls. Gender characteristics are culturally constructed. Differences in biological functions of males and females are genetically determined and immutable but cultural belief systems determine gender definitions.

Sexism is reflected and reinforced by gender differences and inequalities in language, language use and non-verbal communication. Simplest example of it is the way we call ‘history’ as ‘his story’ and ‘mankind’ in spite of women bearing the burden of human society. The chairpersons are referred as chairman. We almost always define doctor as male and nurse as female. There is a variation in degree of ‘equality’ amongst males and females. This variation has been historical as well as cross-cultural. There is a radical female disadvantage across cultures globally.

When woman cooks food in the family, she does not get or expect economic benefit and it is looked upon as ‘her duty’. But the chefs in restaurants are mostly men. While sewing is more often done by women without economic returns, most tailors are men who earn for the same work. The concept of private sphere refers to women to be confined within the four walls of house/family taking all the burdens without recognition. The same activities in public sphere get economic returns and recognition for men. Contrary to it if men cook in the house, it is occasional and usually not appreciated even by the woman of the house. Even if he does so in absence of woman, it is looked up as ‘woman’s work’.

You should realise that the values and meanings attributed to gender identity are encoded, preserved and transmitted through public symbols. These symbols are shared by the members of a particular society. At a basic level they are vocabulary and convention of language itself. On a complex level they are thoughts and behaviours. Media contributes to this process of meaning making.

Activity-1

What are the qualities that you associate with females and males? Analyse, to what extent your response is culturally constructed rather than biologically defined?

11.3 VISIBILITY AND INVISIBILITY

You must have been watching television and films, reading newspapers. You might be coming across men and women and even ‘third gender’ (Hijras, LGBT- Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgender, Intersexual) in your day to day life. If you pay attention, you will realise that media simplifies the diversity within the third gender. If you examine how ‘local/domestic’ media presentation of gender roles are different from ‘global/international’ media presentation. India now officially includes a third option in the gender categories that citizens can select, opening the way for stronger recognition of sexual and gender minority rights.

All media are gendered. Women continue to be shown in advertising to add glamour value, they are objectified and commodified. Bare bodies of women and now even men form an integral part of media content. Media even define those bodies as size-zero female or six-packed male. Health, nutrition, beauty, language and so on get shaped by media, and all these are gendered.

Even American media is not different. Research by Dr. Stacy Smith of Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism for The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media reveals that males outnumber females 3 to 1 in family films though they are just over half of the population in the United States. The study revealed that this ratio, as seen in family films, is the same as it was in 1946. Even the Gender Media Monitoring Project in 2009/10 clearly showed while women form half of the population, women become news subject only one fourth times compared to 76 percent of men. Only 13 percent stories globally were women central stories and only ten percent had gender-policy reference. Only six percent stories highlighted gender equality.

Media makes gender issues visible as well as invisible at the same time. Television programmes like *Balika Vadhu* or *Satyamev Jyate* made child marriage or many other social issues visible, it also made them visible from a stand point. While certain visibility is 'good' the invisibility leads to absence from mainstream discourse. Farmer suicides, child sexual abuse, smoking and drug abuse, honour killings and many such issues while represented in media, on one hand creates public opinion, may lead to stereotyping, selective representation or even misrepresentation.

11.4 PORTRAYAL AND REPRESENTATION

The most discussed and commented area with reference to gender and media is that of portrayal. Portrayal refers to 'way of showing'. In a recent Delhi gang rape case, a premier English daily of India referred to the girl as 'nirbhaya' to 'portray' the 'girl who was raped'. Usually women/girls having faced sexual assault (rape being one of it) are referred as 'victim'. This change of terminology may or may not have led to real change in the attitudes of society but it has definitely led to creation of space to talk about such issues, public opinion and some legislative amendments.

The most commonly researched and discussed portrayal issues are stereotyping. Women are most often shown as delicate, pretty, docile, helpless, unintelligent whereas men are shown 'in control' of situation. Masculinity is valued and femininity is shown as unimportant. Apart from creating male-female stereotyping, media also creates caste-class-religion-education and other variable stereotypes. In most Hindi films heroine is shown wearing western outfits and the moment she is married, she gets wrapped in a *saree* while educated women are shown as selfish. Also most often you would have seen that heroine in trouble due to her clothes abused by goons is 'saved' by a hero. Majority of times, film and television represents Hindu iconography and rituals for a country as diverse and secular as India.

In UNESCO's review of literature on women and media, Gallagher (1981) notes that her review presented "*a picture remarkable only for its overall consistency when compared from one country to another*" (p 70). The report noted,

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. Characterised 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 un-newsworthy, 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.

Leela Rao (2001) stresses the need to formulate an explanatory and representative theory that encompasses the various domestic, urban, rural, and global factors that shape the current Indian social order, which is closely affected by the global consumer culture. Rao further remarks that “most of the women who articulate the inequalities of gender in media belong to urban, middle class and upper caste segments of society, they inevitably face accusations of their ‘Western-ness’ and consequent ‘in authenticity’ and questions: “What should be the criteria to evaluate the media projection of a homogeneous pan-Indian identity of woman?” (Rao, pp. 47) when there is no such single and identifiable identity.

Alexander Georgia, Rudaba Nasir, and Huyen Tran (2011) argue that gender misrepresentation in mainstream media is common across countries and cultures all over the world. They remark that especially now that globalisation has initiated the spread of a strong global culture that has permeated and changed societies, values, traditions, and perceptions. This means that although there are similarities in the way in which women are misrepresented in media, there are also certain differences dependent upon the indigenous culture and values and how the global culture interacts with these local values, cultures, and societies. They give examples from India, Chile, Latin America and the USA pertaining to gender and media.

<p>Activity-2</p> <p>List the role expectations from you in your family and compare the same with role expectations presented in an Indian television serial or film. Are there variations? If yes, what are they? Now watch an international television programme and see if role expectations differ from the Indian media?</p>
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Check Your Progress 1

Note: 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1) What qualities are associated with women vis-à-vis men?

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2) What are role expectations from women vis-à-vis men?

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11.5 GENDER IN MAINSTREAM AND ALTERNATE MEDIA

The Main Stream Media (MSM) is all pervasive, largely commercial and privately owned media. In India too MSM constitute large part of English or Indian language media. MSM producers usually stick to what is supposedly expected by the large majority of its audiences, the conventions used in MSM therefore are also stereotypical and largely gendered.

Leela Rao (2001) observes that media monitoring by various women's groups have produced three main insights: print media's deceptive and insensitive portrayal of women's issues, highly patriarchal content of television programmes portraying women as having limited or no role outside the house, and female models in TV commercials trivialising women's domestic work and achievements outside the 'home' domain. "When there is a success story, the sufferings/exploitations are not highlighted; when women are victims, their struggles/strengths are not projected; newsmakers were mostly politicians and male; the more local the media, the less the reference to women" (Rao, pp. 46). The GMMP report of 2015 observes that only 24 percent of newsmakers in the world and 22% in India are women in contrast with, 78 per cent men in Indian media and 76 per cent worldwide. Across the different reports the most worrying is the fact that there has been no change in women's news making role in the traditional media since 2005 (Gallagher, 2016). With few women being newsmakers the stereotypes about men and women continue to abound in them. The 2015 GMMP report further reinforces these aspects with its findings of only 4% of stories challenging gender stereotypes, in comparison to 42% that reinforced them, and women were only central to 11% of online news stories, compared to 13% of traditional news media.

In India and across the globe there are numerous advocacy groups, non-government organisations and government organisations working for public service. Such agencies inevitably showcase gender more sensitively than the MSM. But as we know, alternate media remains 'alternate' having a limited reach. In last few years the Internet has contributed immensely in connecting gender advocacy groups globally. There are projects and organisations dedicated to media literacy and gender sensitisation.

Activity-3

Compare and contrast how local media is different from the mainstream and international media in showing women-men-transgenders.

Analyse the material developed by an NGO or advocacy group and see how they present issues differently.

11.6 IMPLICATIONS OF GENDER- MEDIA RELATIONSHIP

Kamla Bhasin and Bina Agrawal (1984) argue, “by reinforcing sex-stereotypes and constantly glorifying motherhood and subservient wifehood the media makes it difficult for women to break out of those prescribed roles, norms and behaviour patterns. Such conservative depictions reduce the few statements about sex equality and equal participation of women contained in the constitution to mere window dressing”.

Fair gender portrayal can not only benefit present society but also the future of the society. If children grow up with non-stereotypical gender roles and unbiased gender identities, every member of the society gets the chance to discover one’s full potential.

According to UNESCO (2009) Fair gender portrayal is professional and ethical aspiration, similar to respect for accuracy, fairness and honesty. It is the other side of the coin that says women need to be more present at higher levels of the news business, both at work and in the unions. In a world where hard news is still mainly reported and presented by male journalists there is a need to stand up for gender equality. This equality is not just a women’s issue; everyone benefits from eliminating discrimination.

Some implications of misrepresentation of gender in media are stereotyping, socialisation, omission and commission.

11.6.1 Stereotyping

One of the most long lasting impacts of gender representation in media is that of ‘stereotyping’ which refers to ‘defined way of showing’ or ‘fixing certain characteristics’ with individuals. Stereotyping provides a ready-to-use template for everyone. Most often cultural stereotypes form part of popular culture. Media producers find it easier to use stereotypes as it makes the communication easy to reach. But the ease to reach out cannot be at the expense of gender.

As we discussed in the earlier sections how women are stereotyped as weak and men as strong. Similarly, morality and sexuality are defined through representation. Heterosexuality is considered ‘norm’ and homosexuality as ‘abnormal’. Such stereotypes not only make it difficult for people who do not ‘fit into the fixed norm’ but also create resistance for deviations in the society. Like communalism and fundamentalism, stereotyping influences ‘normalcy definitions’ of a given society. It also makes you think of a group as inferior or superior. The people who are stereotyped may get impacted in their perception about themselves.

11.6.2 Socialisation

You have read about cultivation analysis by George Gebner and his colleagues in Unit 2 on Media Audiences. Their research revealed that children who watch cartoon shows got influenced by violence shown and replicated it in real life. While debating the role of media and society as to who influences whom, one cannot ignore the fact that media does play an important role in socialisation. The way media shows men, women or third gender impacts the way people

perceive them in real life. While school text books state that “My father goes to work and my mother is at home”, the orientation towards ‘not-working’ homemaker is inculcated in the child’s mind. Any form of misrepresentation or stereotyping contributes to the gender identity formation. It gives him/her acceptability if their mother is not working and creates dissonance if they have a working mother.

We cannot deny the fact that people live beyond media and media cannot influence people so much. But at the same time, commodification of women in advertising, promotion of unwanted needs through consumerism, projection of unsustainable life styles are realities of media-saturated times making viewers getting carried away by what is shown and gender is no exception.

11.6.3 Omission and Commission

Sanjay (2006) quoting Centre for Social and Development Studies survey of 37 Delhi-based media organisations remarks, “Hindu upper caste men hold nearly 71 percent of top jobs in the national media. Women, non-upper Castes and Muslims are grossly under-represented”. Due to profile of people working in media the ‘nature of content’ covered and presented by them may carry ‘class and caste’ bias.

Apart from media personnel, media inherently eliminates certain realities and exaggerates certain other due to varied societal and institutional compulsions. English media many times does not do full justice to the regional contexts while the regional media may be coloured by local contexts of creation and consumption.

Some studies about women working in media have revealed that they face pressures due to their being women. Stories by women journalists may not see the light of the day due to bias of male editors. Homosexuals face discrimination at work place due to their gender preferences. At the same time if the editor is positive about homosexuals, s/he might give preferences to their stories. #MeToo is another journey in gender and media space that is in a process of development.

The above discussion would have helped you to understand how gender can influence media content creation as well as consumption and that gender and media has long lasting implications.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) List some films in which the heroine is not interested in the relationship and hero keeps following her up. In your opinion what does this process suggest? How does it impact relationship between men and women in our society?

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2) Why such representation should be opposed?

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11.7 PROJECTS AND ORGANISATIONS

It would be pertinent to discuss a few projects and organisations working in gender and media. You also must know that work in the area of women and media is more comprehensive compared to gender and media. Women’s movement has historically addressed control and access issues with reference to media for over four decades. Gender being more recent academic formulation has limited literature forthcoming.

11.7.1 Projects

Several initiatives regularly undertake media monitoring and examine the gendered aspects of the media as well as advocacy activities that promote change in policies, within newsrooms. and journalism practice.

Global Media Monitoring Project: The GMMP is a longitudinal research and advocacy initiative on gender in the world news media, globally co-ordinated by The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC). The research has been carried out in 5-year cycles since 1995 to monitor change in selected indicators of gender in news media content. Data was collected in 108 countries for the fourth research in the series, in 2010. The report is available online (http://www.whomakesthenews.org/images/stories/website/gmmp_reports/2010/global/gmmp_global_report_en.pdf).

In 2015 one more round of monitoring was carried out but the findings did not bring any relief. In spite of the fact that women are half of the humanity, they are represented proportionately only one fourth and most often do not have their own voice. The project examined women as news sources/providers, media professionals, news subjects and their portrayal in news stories.

Resource Kit: WACC and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) launched a resource to promote gender ethical journalism. The *Learning Resource Kit for Gender-Ethical Journalism and Media House Policy* is the outcome of a project launched in July 2011 to promote fair gender portrayal within media houses and the journalistic profession. The kit is organised in two books. *Book 1* concentrates on conceptual issues about gender in news reporting. *Book 2* presents gender-ethical thematic guidelines on reporting climate change, disaster, economic news, sexual and reproductive health, human trafficking, peace and security, politics, and sexual violence.

Training Kit: Screening Gender is a co-production of NOS/Netherlands, NRK/Norway, SVT/Sweden, YLE/Finland, DR/Denmark and ZDF/Germany, with financial support from the European Commission’s Fourth Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. The training kit has

been produced within a three-year project Promoting Good Practice in Gender Portrayal in Television, 1997-2000. Based on the conviction that non-stereotypical gender representation is a vital element in quality programming, the project selected programme examples to illustrate common patterns in gender portrayal. The kit is primarily aimed at media professionals for use in training, as well as in programme development and evaluation.

Handbooks: The Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies from the Republic of Cyprus has created ‘The Gender and Media Handbook’ in 2005. The handbook ‘promoting equality, diversity, empowerment’ is available online (<http://medinstgenderstudies.org>). It notes, “There are many obstacles to changing media cultures. We see everywhere persistent negative or stereotypical portrayals of women in the conventional media that are perpetuated and accentuated by new media (for example video games, the internet and music videos). There is, furthermore, a distinct lack of media depictions of minorities or the disabled, especially in this country. In Cyprus there is an overwhelming lack of women in decision-making positions, and a lack of gender-sensitivity among media decision-makers as well as those who write policy. There is a clear lack of role models and mentors for women journalists and no support from donor agencies for alternative media produced by women”. There is another handbook by Greta Gober and the International Network of Women in Radio and Television gender mainstreaming project publication available online

(https://www.iawrt.org/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2019/02/GMP_Handbook_IAWRT_ebook.pdf) titled Working towards Gender Equality in the Media published in 2019.

Curriculum: UniTwin (The International UNESCO UniTwin Network on Gender, Media and ICT- www.unitwin.net) is in a process of developing curriculum for gender sensitive coverage of media issues for media schools. It is in a process of publishing under the title *Gender Media and ICTs: New Approaches for research, education and training*.

11.7.2 Organisations

A number of organisations as well as networks of women media professionals are also working in diverse ways to monitor and critique media trends and support women in the media.

National Organisations: Way back in 1983, Government of India constituted committee on portrayal of women in media. Working Group on Software for Doordarshan noted in its report, “Girls are socialised to be passive, submissive and docile because they grow up with such role models which also define their lives as a preparation towards marriage and motherhood in almost total exclusion of any other aspect. Therefore, it is important that the children’s programmes should be always conscious of projecting the values of equality and breaking those of sex stereotypes” (GOI, 1985, P-144). The report also known as Joshi committee reported devoted a chapter to women titled “Women-The Neglected Half” and made several recommendations for women’s programme on Doodarshan, public service broadcaster of India.

Many women’s groups and women’s magazines like *Manushi* made gender issues visible in mainstream media space. Autonomous Women’s movement has many

groups all over India which fight for gender discrimination and women's portrayal in media. AWAG (Ahmedabad Women's Action Group and SEWA Video in Gujarat, SKILLS Madras (now Chennai) based group, Video volunteers, Women Feature Service in Delhi, The Network of Women in Media (NWMI) in 16 centres across the country, groups working for the sexual minorities are also working for gender and media.

Many organisations have worked in the direction of media literacy, training of women in screen printing and other media production, gender sensitisation and so on. It is challenging in a country like India to have central documentation due to linguistic and cultural diversities but it can be aimed for in the coming years.

International Organisations: The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media was founded in 2004 by Academy Award-winning actor and advocate Geena Davis. The Institute and its programming arm, see Jane, are at the forefront of changing female portrayals and gender stereotypes in children's media and entertainment. The website notes that it is the only research-based organisation working within the media and entertainment industry to engage, educate, and influence the need for gender balance, reducing stereotyping and creating a wide variety of female characters for entertainment targeting children 11 and under.

Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) in collaboration with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) carried out training programmes with programme producers and published a booklet 'Broadcasting for All: Focus on Gender' in 2011. The booklet also provides resource links besides addressing issues of gender and media. It remarks that gender is a human rights issue and great challenge for media organisations and professionals and for governments and women and men in the wider society.

In 1979, Jean Kilbourne's lecture about image of women in advertising was made into documentary "Killing us softly: Advertising's image of women". It has been revised and updated four times. The videos with examples from American advertising is informative and educative about women in advertising. In 2010, Still killing us softly IV was made by Jean Kilbourne with The Media Education Foundation. It examined objectification, sex stereotypes, body/self image and representation issues in advertising.

The Global Women's Studies and Gender Research Network was established in 2006 by UNESCO. UNESCO has continued work in the area of gender and media and has number of publications to that effect (UNESCO, 2009, 2012). In November 2014 UNESCO organised first meeting of the International Steering Committee (ISC) of the Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG) in Geneva. The alliance strengthened action in the direction of gender and media. UniTwin (University Network in Gender, Media and ICTs) worked on curriculum for journalism programmes. In 2019 they came up with a publication titled "Gender, Media, and ICTs: New Approaches for Research, Education and Training".

11.7.3 Women Communicators

In the history of time, women have voiced their concerns. Most often that did not receive mainstream attention and action but women have not been silent. There have been women communicators who have created gender sensitive media

in India and abroad. Women as folk artists, song writers, poetess, authors, painters, directors, novelists, dancers, journalists, documentary filmmakers, actresses, photographers, reporters, anchors, news-readers, even politicians, CEOs and business leaders have been communicating with diverse impact in the society.

There is media created by women and there is media created for women. Not necessarily all the media created for women is gender sensitive. Much of women's magazines refer to women's role in cooking, beauty and child care. But organisations like Jagori, Nirantar, SEWA, CHETNA and many other have created volumes of material which is gender sensitive. There are newsletters, story books, reading material for neo-literates, diaries, annual reports, event documentations and much more. Such material may not be seen by lots of people, but it does exist, and provides insights into processes of the organisations, individuals and collectives which view women as individuals.

Women like Kamla Bhasin, Deepa Dhanrajand many others have worked on women's issues with gendered lenses. Indian Association of Women's Studies is another organisation that has been instrumental in bringing together autonomous women's groups in the country. There have been male communicators too but few in numbers.

11.7.4 Women's Issues

Women's issues have become mainstream issues in twenty first century. The international women's day has been co-opted by the markets. Women customers received discounts or free desserts were served in restaurants; diamonds purchases were promoted for wife and girl-friend in the name of women's day; buy 1 get 1 free offers were also given. Women's day from struggle concept became celebratory concept. For obvious reasons, women are half of the market and capitalism would not mind co-opting them as consumers. What is unfortunate is that while women as individuals are being promoted in advertising, the concerns about their security in still promoted in news media. The struggles of eighties by women's organisations have come full circle where movements for rape, dowry, body image are becoming more and more relevant in the age of social media. While social media is providing alternative space for voicing women's concerns and lives, it is also promoting women's stereotypes in terms of beauty, childcare and house work. Third gender and decriminalisation of section 377 has led to public acknowledgment of third gender in India.

Activity-3

Examine the focus of newspapers and television channels on International Women's Day. Analyse the relevance of such media content in your own day to day life.

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11.8 LETS SUM UP

In this unit we discussed how media and gender are inseparable and how valuation of feminine as inferior and masculine is superior is all pervasive, globally. Due to skewed media portrayals, the society and people may perceive themselves in a similar light. Thus stereotyping, portrayal, representation, omissions and commission of women, men and third gender in media may lead to distorted socialisation, visibility or invisibility about them in society.

It is in the power of media to question, challenge, and facilitate diverse gender definitions, roles and identities. Newer ways of presenting gender division of work may lead to change in gender identities in a given society. Visibility of women's work and women's role in any society can give them equal opportunities. Women who constitute half of the humanity, if represented equally in media will lead to a more equal society.

There are a number of women communicators who have actively contributed in the alternative spaces and have also been receiving mainstream media glare. In twenty first century women have become an important topic in media content and gender concerns are now mainstreamed. There are individuals, organisations working in the direction of mainstreaming gender sensitive media contents which includes professional associations, United Nations and national organisations.

11.9 FURTHER READINGS

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Curran Rencetti (1995) *Women, men and society*, Allyn and Bacon, third edition, Boston.

Dines Gail and Jean M. Humez (2003) *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader* (Ed.), Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Gallagher Margaret (1981) *Unequal Opportunities: The case of women and the media*, UNESCO Press, Paris.

Gallagher Margaret (2001) *Gender setting: New agendas for media monitoring and advocacy*, ZED Books and World Association for Christian Communication, London.

11.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Media shows women to be feminine and men to be masculine. Women need to be submissive, tolerant, emotional, passive, delicate, pretty, caring. Men need to be strong, tough, aggressive, in control, active and daring.

- 2) Women are expected to be looking after the family, doing household work, taking care of children and elderly, cooking good food, need to keep smiling and happy and never question any decision made by others. Men are expected to be earning for the family, decision-maker and in control. They need to be providing for all the requirements of the family.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Multiple Indian films in all languages show women being pursued by male lead. The heroine does not agree to the advances but the hero does all sorts of things to make her agree to his proposition. Such representation makes it normal that there is no need for a woman's consent in the relationship and it is the man who decides and can 'force' his need/decision on her and whatever he is doing is 'love' and not 'violence'. Film songs, dialogues and sequences keep reinforcing such stereotypes which may lead to an understanding in younger audiences that it is 'acceptable' to do things with 'girl' even if she is not approving of the advances.
- 2) The reason such representation needs to be opposed is that it disrespects women and reduces her agency. It shows power play and objectification of women and minimises her consent in matters related to her own life.