

A Literature Review on Role of Television as Mass Media in the Lives of Indian Women: An Analysis

¹Nidhi Bhandari; ²Dr. Sudhanshu Jayaswal

¹Research Scholar, CJMC, HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar (Garhwal), Uttarakhand (India)

²Associate Professor, CJMC, HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar (Garhwal), Uttarakhand (India)

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Corresponding Author

Email: nidhibhandari.89[at]gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Television has been profoundly influencing the lives of Indian women since its advent. Television as a powerful mass media in India has become the major source of enlightenment, leisure and infotainment. Television has proved to be vital medium in effecting the attitudes and emotions of Indian Women. Television as a mass media has been successful in creating awareness among Indian women about their constitutional and legal rights. Television has established itself the most powerful medium of communication both among educated and uneducated women. In this paper an extensive review of literature has been carried on to have a better understanding on the role of Television in the lives of Indian Women. Literature review has been done from various books, journals, published papers etc.

1. Introduction

Television is the most powerful of all the media of mass communication. It is in fact, a revolution in communication process in a modern society. It has brought not only the whole world into the homes of the viewers but has earned their confidence in regards of its reliability. They have become vulnerable to its influence. People are regularly exposed to it **Mahajan, Kamlesh (1990, p-226)**. Amongst all the mass media today, television attracts the largest number of viewers. Its audience is greater in size than any of the other media audiences. This is because television is able to attract the audiences of all age groups, literate and illiterate and of all the strata of the society **Kundra, Shipra (2005, p-113)**.

It is the most evident fact that technological development in the field of mass communication has made television as the most effective tool of mass media. Infact, Television is being considered as the most powerful persuasive mass communication tool at present. The way it is used for development processes determines the effectiveness of television. **Dorr (1986)** mentions in his studies that TV stands out exceptionally from all the other media, as it is generally being used more and is capable of presenting more lively content than most of other form of mass media.

The growth in television both in technology and reach in the last few decades has been phenomenal. It was basically conceived as a mass medium and a mass educator for its large population scattered in remote and culturally diverse areas. It is supposed to disseminate the message of development and modernization to create awareness for generating public participation. It is expected to support government plans and programmes for bringing about social and economic change and to protect national security as well as advance the cause of national integration **Kundra, Shipra (2005, p-115)**. **Marshall McLuhan** observes, "TV is the most appropriate medium for mass communication especially for the developing countries

because its involving and absorbing nature TV involves the viewers as a whole. The emergence of satellite TV has brought about a global change".

The advent of television in Indian society has helped in upholding unity in diversity in Indian pluristic society. Television as the most impactful mass media tool has capability of reshaping the opinion of the people. Besides just becoming the source of entertainment, television has been greatly successful in creating information about the outside world and exposure to other ways of life. Discussing the importance of television as mass media, Saxena says, "Television in India has acquired today newer dimensions, greater popularity and a much wide reach. The moving image of television fascinate, demand attention and eventually influence their thoughts and behavior. The small screen has indeed turned out to be large enough to compress, within itself, India's tremendous cultural diversity over a rather broad social spectrum. Television has become part of our popular culture-part of our life itself", **Kundra, Shipra (2005, p-117)**.

2. Diffusion of Television in India

It was in the historic day in the history of India which marked the advent of Television in India was on September 15, 1959. Since years it was a debatable issue whether a poor country like India is in a position to afford luxurious television. There were further speculations that the television might create a rift from our cultural roots and would lead Indian people to a path of consumerist culture. Consumerism would increase the hunger for comforts and luxuries. All this ultimately would increase frustration and lead to social conflict between the rich and the poor. But there was a strong demand among manufactures, businessmen, educational institutions for TV in India.

Finally, UNESCO offered a grant of twenty thousand dollars to Indian Government to buy community sets. The U.S.A. also offered some equipments for this cause. The company Philips

India limited offered a transmitter at a low price. Ultimately, the first Television station was set up at Delhi on an experimental basis. Its particular aim was to discover whether Television could be able to achieve ultimate goal of community development and formal education. The transmission was to be within an area of 40 km. in and around Delhi. The programmes were being run only twice a week. Each programme was of the duration of 20 minutes. The earliest viewers were members of 180 tele-clubs. These clubs were provided with free Television sets for community viewing by UNESCO.

In October 1972, the Bombay Television centre was inaugurated. In the year 1973, Srinagar and Amritsar Kendras also started producing tele programmes. Pune too started relaying programmes from Bombay that year. In the year 1975 Calcutta, Madras and Lucknow Television centres were set up in 1975. Thus, it could be seen that the actual development of Television in India happened in the seventies. On 1 January 1976 telecast of commercial service started at all the Television centres. In same year there was the separation of Television and All India Radio, making Television an independent media unit under the new banner "Doordarshan". The most revolutionary outbreak in the journey of Indian television was the one year long Satellite instructional television Experiment which commenced on 1 August 1975. It formally introduced the series of innovative and constructive educational television programmes for national development and most prominently for educating the Indian masses living in remote rural areas.

The colour transmission was introduced in the year 1982. With the series of reforms in 1991, there was the advent of private and foreign broadcasters for operating in India. Just with the start of 41 sets in 1962 and only one channel till late eighties, by 1995, Television in India covered more than 70 million homes giving a viewing population of more than 100 channels. According to Broadcast Audience Research Council of India has 153.5 million TV household in 2016.

3. Indian Women :A General Viewpoint

There has been the change in the lives of Indian Women since ages. During early Vedic period, Indian women held high and equal status with men in all spheres of life. According to Patanjali and Katyayana, Indian women in ancient times also had the opportunity to get educated. But in later Vedic period the status of Indian women started declining. The customs like early marriages, non-participation in religious ceremonies etc. began to be prevalent in the society. In Medieval period, the position of women in society further deteriorated. The advent of Muslim rulers on Indian land brought the custom of purdah system for women. They were trapped within four walls of home, secluding them from social lives and educational opportunities were largely denied. Infact, the Indian rulers too started restricting the lives of women. Many saints of that era tried to bring reform in the status of Indian women by spreading awareness among the masses and encouraging them to renounce old customs which were meant for exploiting women.

During the British Raj many social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswarchand Vidhya Sagar who worked really hard for the social upliftment of Indian women. The British government also supported their movement by bringing various legislation like Abolition of Sati Act, 1929, Widow Remarriage Act, 1856 etc, which really helped in improving the condition of

Indian women. These efforts made for the social upliftment of Indian women lead to their empowerment and they started taking part in the social movements and freedom movements. Women's quest for equality with men has become universal thought and they are continuously progressing ahead on this path. The history of women's status has been through many ups and downs. Their social status was greatly influenced by social, economic and political conditions prevalent at different times in Indian society.

Chitkara (2001) in her book "**Women and Social Transformation**" states that the major focus in the recent years is in bringing about a change in the attitude and mindset of Indian women and that has particularly come from the national movement for independence. The active participation of Indian women in the politics of the national movement reflected their feeling of patriotism and thus, to some extent the political arena became respectable for a woman. The necessity for the change in the status of Indian women is imbibed in the history of status of women itself. Manu, the Hindu law maker held both the positive and negative views about the status of women in particularly with respect to family and society as a whole. His ideology states that the woman should have the submissive status with respect to man throughout her entire life.

The India constitution is imbibed with the concept of equality that has been through widely promoted by various provisions such as laws concerning marriage, divorce, widow remarriage, prohibition of sati, dowry, child marriage, etc. These laws have greatly helped in the building present status of women. It has also improved economic, social and political status of Indian women.

4. A Literature Review on Role of Television as Mass Media in the Lives of Indian Women: An Analysis

The present scenario shows television as an impactful medium of mass communication for women. Television of the major sources of information, entertainment and education for them. It has become an integral part of Indian women's lives to watch television on daily basis these days. The easy availability of television to almost every section of women has largely helped television in doing the work of reshaping the opinion and attitude of Indian women. Television as mass medium has greatly influenced the thinking and understanding level of Indian women, thus, really aided in widening their mental horizons. Its widespread influence can be clearly seen in social lives of Indian women. Television has helped the women to take their first step towards modernization. Television has such an impact in the lives of Indian women that it has become a prime medium by which women get information about the outside world. It is used by women as a medium to relax themselves from closed and monotonous living conditions. The present study is largely focused on exploring the role of television as mass media in the lives of Indian women by reviewing the relevant available literature from various sources. **Mahajan, Kamlesh (1990, p227)** It can be said in definite words that television possesses a great potential to be used in furthering the cause of women development.

Bhagat and Mathur (1985) studied impact of television on lifestyle of farm women. Sixty-seven per cent mentioned that it

has improved information level, 67.30 per cent said it gave knowledge about new developments, 49.40 per cent felt it gave knowledge on women related matter and 45.80 per cent expressed that it entertained and gave happiness.

B.S. Bhatia (1986) commenting on the negative portrayal of women in the various television programmes says that "It is very essential to be sensitive to the kind of values our TV programmes consciously or unknowingly tend to propagate. Many situations in Indian cinema tend to glorify violence for some cause, superstitions, blind faith and morals etc. are integral part of many songs, cinema and drama situations. In most cinema and drama situations, the women tolerating torture is glorified, her lower status for women is reinforced. Most women's programmes deal with subjects like cooking, childcare and kitchen gardening. The sole objective of most songs seems to be to present tantalizing scope of the hero and heroine in close proximity leading to formation of wrong concepts and expectations in teenagers."

Sharda (1989) in her study stated that a lot of criticism has been received from the respondents regarding TV programs. Though popular, too much cricket on TV is often criticized especially by some of the aged people. Some elderly villagers expressed deep concern, as students spend more time before television and neglect their academic studies. Further, she quoted that a young woman in Jaipur village of Rangareddi district heavily criticized the daily programmes on TV for their non applicability in day today life. A landlord questioned the relevance of agricultural programmes when there was a severe water problem prevailing in the land. Some of the farmers found to be more advanced in various agricultural techniques than those showed on television. On the whole, the agricultural programmes according to any of the respondents were not applicable in the actual field.

Kottak (1990) reported that in Brazil, the introduction of television affected views on gender, moving individuals towards more liberal views on the role of women in both the workplace and in relationships.

Mahajan (1990) in her study of television and women's development investigated the role of television in the process of modernization. Based on the data collected from women college students she inferred that in terms of modernizing process Television is not an unalloyed blessing and it can be counter-productive to the tele-4he modernizing effort, if not rationally planned. She also found ambivalence among the respondents about the effects of television on traditional values

Mehrotra and Aujla (1991) stated that television viewing affects the normal life style of women in terms of need for rescheduling of activities to enable them to view it. As each household was found to view television for about one to three hours, altered planning or rescheduling of activities was necessary in order to find time to sit before TV. The findings also showed that advent of television in Indian households has resulted in re-scheduling or altered planning of activities ranging from child care to cooking as well as shopping to social visits.

Neelam and Parmjit (1991) observed that TV viewing affects the normal style of households because they need to reschedule of activities in order to find time to sit before TV and also TV has more of negative impact on household activities.

Apama and Lanjewar (1993) studied the impact of television programmes on rural women. The study revealed that majority of the rural women gained knowledge about current events through television as mentioned by the rural women, television had also spread information about social problems like dowry system, family planning, early marriage, drug addiction, immunization etc. The respondents also received useful information about sports, health diseases, balanced diet, agriculture sanitation etc.

Eashwar (1994) studied the impact of cable television on women in terms of activities, time management and interactions with family members and the outside world. The findings of the study revealed that cable television did not have a profound effect on the activities of women. It increases considerably the isolation of women by restricting her interactions with husband, children, and other members of the family, friends and neighbours. This happens due to her own involvement with the television as well as the involvement of each member of the family in watching cable television and regular television programmes.

Mansingh and Seetharaman (1995) concluded that the activities performed while viewing STAR TV is common by all of those surveyed were reading newspapers/magazines, taking meals and personal grooming. Most of the family members adjusted taking meals in accordance with the TV programme. Students developed the responsibility of finishing home works in advance and house-wives cooked meals in advance for viewing STAR TV programmes.

Meenakshi Sundaram and Vijayragavan (1997) conducted a study in Coimbatore district. From the study they concluded that majority of the farm women have favourable attitude towards TV. Farm women were exposed to the scientific advancements in addition to political and current events in the country and throughout the world.

Meenabigai and Ravichandran (1999) revealed that the results with respect to frequency of TV viewing showed that majority of the farm women viewed the farm telecast for the entire duration.

Nehra et al. (2004) conducted a study on effect of television advertisements on home makers in selection of detergent. The study revealed that 60 per cent respondents were interested in watching TV advertisements to get information about products followed by 48 per cent of respondents who were watching TV to know about new products and 44 per cent watched advertisements for entertainment.

Robert and Emily (2007) conducted a study on "The power of TV: Cable Television and Women's Status in India" and analyzed the effect of exposure to cable television on attitudes towards women in India. They argued that the introduction of cable television reduced son preference, fertility and the

reported acceptability of beating and increased women's autonomy and female school enrollment. Overall, the effects were quite positive for women

Jensen, R., and Oster, E. (2009), In short, when cable television is introduced to rural villages, viewers appear to emulate the urban lifestyle, values, and behaviors they see on cable TV shows leading to improvements in the status of women and their families in their own communities. In this paper, we find that the introduction of cable television improves the status of women. Women report lower acceptability of spousal abuse, lower son preference, more autonomy and lower fertility. In addition, cable is associated with increases in school enrolment, perhaps itself an indicator of increased women's status and decision-making authority within the household. Thus, programs to provide televisions, such as the large program currently underway in Tamil Nadu, may in fact have significant implications for important development priorities. For example, television may affect fertility by providing information on family planning services or changing the value of women's time. Or women may be given more freedom to do things outside of the home like going to the market because the value of men's leisure is increased by television.

Munshi, Shoma (2010) The new Indian woman was depicted as an independent and assertive woman, a successful wife and mother, who often had a career or worked outside the home, and led a lifestyle that was significantly different from existing rural lifestyles. These soap operas were an instant success and attracted very high viewership all over India.

Vandana (2011) According to the study "Impact of television on rural women, 47% respondents spent 1-2 hours in a day on viewing television. 48% respondents like to watch family serials. Majority of respondents reported 30% change in their dresses and 23% change in food habits. Thus from the study we have concluded that rural women are an important part of our country. Because of their busy scheduled they have no time to watched television has not impact on the life of rural tissues especially the women. Television brings a good change in their lives.

Ullah, e tal (2014) study found that Television plays an important role in our daily life; it has some positive as well as negative impact. Social behavior is the product of environment, media way to development but most of our adolescents female adopt negative traits from electronic media. Finally study finding

show that extensive viewer of media programs cause of low academic grades among most of the female students.

Devadas and Saravanan (2015) explored that TV is a very successful and impactful mass media in making women literate, helping in children's education, making women aware about family welfare schemes, providing Knowledge about balance diet / nutrition during pregnancy period, informing about children's health, family planning, spreading awareness about organic food and providing knowledge about sports.

Television as a powerful medium of mass communication has been largely successful in bringing change in the lives of women. Indian women view Television not only just for entertainment, relaxation and to pass time but also for gaining knowledge. Television viewing behaviour among Indian women has affected their domestic and other activities, on their family and social interaction patterns and cultural practices to some extent. Indian women have started relating themselves to these television characters and also have adopted their style of living in their day to day lives. In this way television viewing generates socio-economic and cultural changes among Indian women. Television as mass medium has created awareness among Indian women about their constitutional and legal rights and thus, helping in raising their social status within the society.

5. Conclusion

Thus, from the above study it has been proved that Television has been playing a prominent role in the lives of Indian women. Television has come up as the major source of information and entertainment for both educated and uneducated Indian women. It is observed that Television as a mass media has created mostly positive impact with few negative impacts as well. It has also helped in changing the mindset of men towards women. Television is leading Indian women on the path of progression and development. Television as a medium of communication has been successful in changing family ideologies that affect the women and thus creating the most liberal society that could benefit women. Thus, it is an evident fact that Television as an impactful mass media tool has been successful in changing the lives of Indian women in positive manner.

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