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Coverage of women's issues by Print media

A study of newspapers from 2010 to 2015

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Introduction

The mass media act as an effective tool for disseminating information to masses simultaneously (McLeod et al., 1999). Among others print media has been satisfying the information needs of majority of the people. They cater to the public by providing necessary information that augments welfare of the people and help in the progress as well as development of the nation. The good newspaper and the good reader are involved in the serious business of trying to understand man and the universe in which he lives" (Bradley p.22). The newspaper doesn't just provide information but helps to interpret, to understand their significance and also to entertain. Newspapers which were published from big cities later expanded to smaller places also. Recently they have been following the news value of proximity and have even started as small media enterprises. In many of the third world countries they have been trying to reach even interior areas.

Apart from various revolutions in politics, agriculture, industry, education, manufacture of paper and modernization of the art of printing enabled the countries of Western Europe and North America to have mass circulation of newspapers by the end of the 19th Century. Research shows that over time, high quality news content positively affected circulation (Thorson, 2004).

Indian press

In India the print media has emerged strong despite the disturbances and strong competition from electronic media. Despite challenges news papers are going strong and continue to dominate. From the early newspaper such as *Hickey's Gazette* started *by* James Augustus Hickey to the current times the number and quality of newspaper had improved. Along with the vernacular newspapers, small as well as local and the specialized newspapers have been occupying the market. Raja Ram Mohan Roy himself founded the first vernacular *Sambad -kaumaudi* in 1822 while Fardoonji Murzban started the vernacular newspaper in Gujarati, *Bombay Samachar* in the same year. Although newspapers were started, they did not have considerable subscribers.

The newspapers witnessed a steady growth in the country. While in 1858 there were only 12 papers with total circulation of little over 3,000 by 1871 there were 39 papers with a total circulation of over 10,000 (Natarajan p.70). The period from 1857 to 1885 witnessed a phenomenal rise in the number of newspapers in India in English as well as in the Indian languages. Apart from organizations individual's especially popular personalities like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi started publications through which they could motivate millions of people to participate in freedom struggle. Gandhi edited a number of journals starting with "Indian Opinion" in South Africa in English, Tamil and Gujarati as well as "Young India""Navajivan" and "Harijan" enjoyed wide circulation. The Indian newspapers had to struggle to with stand the competition from news papers run by English people and were equally good at creating as well as reflecting public opinion (Prem Narayan p. 283). Though small in numbers they were more close to the public as they were edited by natives and were brought in local vernacular languages. The editors of the Indian language papers gave greater importance to the problems such as racism, famine, unemployment, oppression by the administrative officers etc.

In the post independence era Indian press which played a powerful role in the national movement and was effective in rousing the sentiments of the people to fight against foreign rule was forced to concentrate on nation integration and national development. The newspapers continued to improve their circulation slowly.

With regard to Indian print media language newspapers have shown tremendous growth over all these years. The language panorama is so wide that newspapers are being published in as many as 87 languages. As in the previous years, highest number of newspapers was published in Hindi (4,946), followed by English (3,440), Bengali (1,376), Urdu (1,234), and Marathi (1,047). Apart from these five languages Tamil (771), Malayalam (719), Gujarati (688), Kannada (592), Telugu (520) also had more than five hundred newspapers. Number of newspapers in all the principal languages improved, except Kashmiri, Sanskrit and Sindhi. While in the case of Kashmiri and Sanskrit, there was no change; the number of Sindhi newspapers fell short by one with respect to the figure in 1979.

Changing trends in print media

After Independence newspapers slowly converted themselves from views paper and later again to newspaper. Today newspapers have become consumers product to meet the market demand and satisfy the customers. Majority of the newspapers were started and managed by family owned enterprises. In the recent past due to significant changes such as globalization and entry of FDIs some newspapers have gone public while some have diversified in allied and other fields especially into entertainment field with Television, cinemas and film distribution etc. Flow of funds through additional resources such as FDI/IPOs is supporting the newspapers to expand and also modernize the equipment. They helped in starting new editions, new titles, all-colour pages, acquisitions/ mergers that have transformed entire newspaper industry's scenario in India. The English medium dominates the industry in terms of advertisement revenues, though vernacular newspapers outperform the English newspapers in circulation. Currently India has hundreds of big newspapers, besides thousands of medium and small-sized ones. The number is increasing steadily as existing newspapers bring out new editions apart from new players joining the bandwagon.

Many organizations have adopted new technologies, and news strategies of marketing.

Today, readers prefer all-colour editions and more and more newspapers have come out with all-colour editions. This has necessitated the newspaper publishers to opt for CTP (computer to plate) technology, which by default has improved the print quality and reduced the waste percentage. Besides, the newspapers are also going in for makeover of their publications, in terms of layout, front pages and sometimes even masthead.

Regional Character of the News Papers

One of the significant features of the Indian Press is the phenomenal

growth of Indian language papers since 1959. As Chalapathi Rau wrote "the figures of the Indian Press mean essentially the future of the Indian language press. India will have gradually mammoth circulation in all the Indian languages (Chalapathi Rau P.14)

In many south Indian states such as Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil nadu there are a number of small town dailies giving news of the town and the district.

According to Krishnamurthy the rise of the small town papers is an important feature of the Kannada press. As he predicted that such small town papers giving local news will become a significant feature in the other states also.

Especially big groups like the *Indian Express* and *the Times of India* have started a number of Indian language dailies, weeklies, fortnightlies and monthlies which have very high circulation. Over the years the small town papers who have been giving local news increased in number tremendously and added a significant feature in the other states also. Addition of Information Technology resulted in better coverage with great speed and affordable price. Till 31st March, 2015 as many as 1,05,443 publications have been registered in India witnessing a constant growth of the Print Media. It is understood that despite tremendous growth of audio visual media i.e. radio and television print media is far ahead of the times. From the data it is understood that though the print media has been facing competition from proliferation of audio visual and digital media steady growth in the number of registered publications as well as their circulation is noticed. It empowered the common man, to assert his right and ultimately to participate in strengthening the democracy. According to the RNI 2007-08 figures, there were 2168 Telugu newspapers in the country, including 405 dailies, 372 weeklies, 340 fortnightlies and 971 monthlies. As per the IRS Q-2, 2011 results, the top five Telegu daily newspapers in terms of readership were *Eenadu* (Readership: 59.5 lakh), *Sakshi* (50.56 lakh), *Andhra Jyothi* (21.1 lakh), *Vartha* (3.44 lakh) and *Andhra Bhoomi* (2.53 lakh). Telugu dailies 720, weeklies 108, fortnightlies 114, monthlies 385, quarterlies 7, others 5, total 1339 were registered in telugu language. As per "The Press in India 2014-15" report the circulation of telugu publications reached 2,72,01,064 indicates that it grew tremendously and has been reaching more and more people.

History of Telugu Journalism

In telugu journalism publications were started for promotion of religion and as a tool to ameliorate society. The earliest Telugu journals were initiated by the missionaries for propagation of religion (Chatterjee, 2016). *Satyadoota* was the first Telugu monthly published from Bellary in 1835. Later *Hitavadi,* started publishing but ceased to exist after a few years. Scholars and social reformers started publications. K.Veeresalingam Pantulu, scholar, educationist and social reformer started Vivekavardhani and devoted it to social and language reform. Andhrabhasha Sanjivini, was edited by Venkataratnam Pantulu, also a scholar and socio-religious leader started its publication. *Vrittanthini* a Telugu monthly *Varthamanatharangini*, a forward looking Telugu Newspaper published between 1842 and 1850 had wide circulation. "*Kaumudi", Samvada Kaumudi*, are some of the names of the news papers that appeared for some time.

Formation of the Andhra Pradesh state in 1953 witnessed flurt in the Telugu journalism. Four dailies *Andhra Janata* (from Hyderabad), *Andhra Bhoomi,* Rajahmundry *Samacharam* (Rajahmundry) and *Vishalandhra* (Vijaywada) were started at around this time. *Eenadu* daily, launched in Visakhapatnam on August 10, 1974, brought about revolutionary changes in the journalism not only in Telugu newspapers but among other languages also it made its own mark.
Telugu newspapers, like in other states, went for multiple and multi-location editions in a big way. *Andhra Jyoti,* which was first published in Vijaywada in 1960, started editions in Hyderabad (1986), Tirupati (1987) and Visakhapatnam (1991). *Andhra Prabha* of the India Express group, which played an important role in freedom movement spread out from its base in Vijayawada to Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam and even outside Andhra Pradesh to Bangalore and Madras to serve the Telugu speaking people there. By the new millennium, many Telugu newspapers were being published from Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Delhi and other places. *Vaartha,* a daily newspaper was published in 1993 by the Sanghi group. In 2008 Congress chief minister Y.S.Rajasekhar Reddy started a news paper *" Sakshi"* on his own. The state of Andhra Pradesh is known for cross media ownership as many publishing houses started sister publications.

Changing trends in telugu press

The growth of Telugu dailies in the last 20 years has been phenomenal, not merely in terms of circulation, but also in contents, printing, advertisement revenue and influence. Telugu dailies have been revolutionary in their response to changes in technology, setting trends in contents and in introduction new features in layout and design. The high end of competition among the Telugu dailies is the main reason for innovations introduced much before any newspapers of other Indian languages rose to such standard. Telugu dailies were among the first news papers in the country to introduce photo typesetting with computer terminals. Telugu newspapers also went for colour printing on a daily basis. *Eenadu* introduced Sunday supplement of tabloid size which proved to be very popular with the readers. *Andhra Bhoomi* introduced 1/2 demy size Sunday supplement, which has also attracted attention. Both these features were introduced in the country for the first time. Yet another innovative feature of the Telugu press is the launching of district editions - a separate edition which carries district-specific advertisements. There is practically an edition for each of the 23 districts, for four papers namely *Eenadu, Andhra Bhoomi, Andhra Jyothi, Udayam*. This has resulted in a vast network of reporters at the district and lower levels, which again is a novel feature. Infact, they have stringers to cover events locality-wise in the capital city, Hyderabad.

Telugu newspapers have set off several trends, some good and some not so good in reporting, writing and printing. A very high sense of competition marks Telugu reporting. There is an encouraging trend of giving coverage to economy, business, sports and science that were earlier rarely covered. The Telugu dailies also emphasize literature to the point of having special pages for literature and arts. Apart from film reviews and gossip, all papers invariably carry reviews of latest video films. A few papers, notably *Eenadu, Andhra Jyothi, Udayam* and *Andhra Bhoomi* had initiated special pages for women to highlight their problems and related issues. Telugu press can be said to have come of age as far as political reporting, news coverage, investigative reporting and features are concerned. Serious writing in the form of articles and commentaries on national and international developments, however, is mostly taken from news and features syndicates. The concerns reflected in the Telugu press are not merely regional, concerning the Telugu people but cover the country and the world. There is intense competition among the major Telugu dailies with each of them trying to woo the reader into its fold. Each offers special coverage in the form of supplements and several other features that had never been done before. Incidentally this concept of special as well as regular supplements was started with women's pages and later extended to others such as health, sports, life style etc. Though it is *Eenadu* which started "Vasundhara" later almost all dailies in the form of Navya (Andhra jyothi) Naveena, (Prajasakthi)started them. With the resultant response some of them extended the scope and converted them into family pages. However news and stories related to their issues and coverage in regular as well as editorial pages seems to have not improved much over all these years. The only exception is the coverage of the anti liquor agitation taken up by women in 1992. As a part of development support journalism newspapers published news related to most relevant issues such as agitation against liquor started by women in Andhra Pradesh (Murthy, 2010). *Eenadu* took up the cause of anti liquor agitation in 1992 and devoted full pages for the cause of agitation and later it spread the news, stories and even slogans also to other pages. Large number of photos of activists were also published which ultimately

motivated public at large.

Women's issues

Mass media serve as major sources of information to various issues by setting the public agenda, influencing policy makers, affecting research, and prompting them to make use of opportunities. The news media plays an important role in fulfilling the informational needs identified by awareness research and addressing women's primary questions.

- "Coverage of women candidates in the news: An examination of gender differences in US senate campaign in 1982-86" by Kim Fridkin Kahn and Edie N. Goldenberg showed that female candidates for the US senate are treated differently by the press. Female candidates receive less news coverage and the coverage they do receive concentrates more on their viability and less on their issue positions. Furthermore, female candidates' viability coverage is more negative than that of their male counterparts.
- Anhang, Stryker, Wright and Goldie studied "News media coverage of human papillomavirus by USA in 2004". They observed that a total of 111 news stories about HPV were observed from the 10 most circulated newspapers and from 3 major television networks for the period from January 1995 through July 2002. Stories were assessed for predominant theme (STD, cancer, or new tests); information about symptoms, transmission, prevention, and cancer-causing properties of HPV; screening test descriptions; and recommended screening guidelines. It advised that media coverage of HPV could better fulfill women's educational needs by including information about low-risk and high-risk types of HPV and their differing links to cervical cancer; describing HPV prevention, transmission, and symptoms; explaining the benefits and consequences of HPV testing; and outlining the latest screening guidelines in every story.
- Newspaper coverage of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women was analyzed for themes indicating backlash against feminism. The study found that several backlash themes, such as women in conflict and stereotypical portrayals of women, were present throughout *New York Times* and *Washington Post* coverage. Further, lack of substantive coverage of the conference issues and agendas indicated an underlying backlash; i.e., if the media do not cover the conference, they do not have to acknowledge the existence of issues that are important to women.
- In India Content analysis of women's issues in newspapers by Garima Goswami, Deepali Dhawan and Archana Raj Singh showed that most of the women's issues were presented in Local / City page but career consultants and Business/ Economy page do not consists of any women's issue in the selected news papers. Results showed similarity with the findings of the survey of "*The Hindu*" (2005) newspaper which reported that localized coverage of women's issues is useful to raise voice of women.
- Coverage of News Related to Women Empowerment in Indian Press: A Content Analysis of Two Famous News Papers of Dakshina Kannada, Karnataka by Deekshitha showed that *Deccan Herald* tops over *Udayavani* by publishing more number of women empowerment news (29.5%) in front page. It is observed that *Deccan Herald* has given priority in its editorial page (23.5%) to news related to women empowerment than *Udayavani* in the editorial page (8.4&). *Deccan Herald* and *Udayavani* have accommodated more news related to women empowerment in inside pages with 66.6 and 47.0 percent respectively.
- "Coverage of women in Print Media and Gender Education: A study of Hindi newspapers" by Aparna Pawar showed that women's coverage in newspapers is mostly in reports on domestic violence, sexual abuse and family issues. Women involved in crimes also make their place in the papers. Coverage of women in sports is very little. They are almost invisible in the economic and professional interventions. Even the worse fact is that, while men clearly have their voice heard on national issues, but women are not. Women are referred to as average citizens and rarely as experts. When women appear in the news, they are mostly projected as passive victims or passive reactors to public events in news media. They hardly appear as speakers or participants in public event. Also, newspaper reports portray women in a much more depressing and degrading manner. Though they make women as a hero sometimes in editorials and features but that is occasionally. The reports of newspapers represent women who need sympathy. It presents a picture of under-representation of women in specific areas.

Methodology

To find out the status of coverage of women's issues by print media the researchers studied coverage of four popular newspapers in combined Andhra Pradesh. By employing constructive week and continuous week 42 editions from each newspapers i..e from *The Hindu* and *The Times of India* as well as and two telugu newspapers *Eenadu* and *Andhra jyothi* of five years from 2010 to 2014 were selected. They studied editorials, edit page articles as well as first page banner stories related women for five years.

Analysis

Current analysis of two English i.e *The Hindu* and *The Times of India* as well as and two telugu newspapers *Eenadu* and *Andhra jyothi* of five years from 2010 to 2014 showed that the coverage of women's issues is mostly event based. Whenever a policy is designed, a scheme is implemented or any incident happens the newspapers reported in first pages and editorials are published. So is the case with articles. On the occasion of specific days articles are written in newspapers such as in 2010. Only three news papers *The Hindu, TOI* published reservation bill, weapons of destruction. *Eenadu* published an item about raise in bank interests in its first page and an article on girl's day. A contemporary issue related to women i.e surrogacy is published. In 2011 also a policy of creating women's fund has been made first page news only in *Eenadu*. And *The Hindu* reported about an extraordinary women personality. In 2012 articles about women's security, mother and baby health were discussed. Apart from these molestation and subsequent killing of a student in the moving bus in the nation's capital city was highlighted by one and all. Irrespective of language and geography the news and stories about the victim made headlines. From 16.12.2012 the incident of molestation took many turns and was in news for many days. Almost every day a first page news, an article or editorial appeared about the incident in all the four newspapers. It is very interesting to note that in August *The Hindu* reported about women as " where the mind should have no fear" by Brinda Karat, a senior most woman politician A host of articles such as "the backlash against equality", end of violence on 19.12.2012 two days after the incident, were published. Stories such as "time to take a stand " by Kiran Bedi, " she salms Delhi cops for lapse in gang rape problem" were published by news papers.

The same tempo was maintained in 2013 also as it took a serious turn resulting in continuous coverage in all its formats. For many months the follow up of the death, Nirbhyaya case investigation were reported in the opinion pages. In the year the early months have witnessed exhaustive coverage for the crime and wrote many stores especially after the incident was observed. With regard to articles English news papers published more such as"Severe setback for women's reservation bill", "Where the mind should have no ear, "Ordinance on sexual offences", The rapist in the mirror, "Flowed preference by *The Hindu* shows the kind of agenda the news paper has. In *The Times of India*"The backlash against equality", "End of violence", "Delhi cops slammed for lapse in gang rape", "Time to take a stand", "Is Indian women a person", "Its economics stupidity" etc. were published. In 2014 again a host of issues were dealt as articles in English news papers.

Conclusions and suggestions

From the above data it is clear that coverage of women's issues is completely event based. Unless they have significance of national level they do not find place in the main page as well as in editorial

pages. Though there are a good number of problems for women they are not dealt in a sustained manner. In this context the researchers try to offer some suggestions.

- Basically the managements as well as the work force in the mass media should be sensitized about the women's issues and their coverage.
- Not only have the regular employees had even those who prefer to work in the women's pages been provided with the guidance as well as indirection of operation.
- With regard to women's issues news must be given top priority.
- Even editorial boards and expert panel's articles should be consolidated and reported frequently to keep track of the activities of government and other civil society organizations.
- Rather than merely reporting the newspapers can also prefer advocacy to create awareness among the public.

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