

## Changing Face of Women Journalists in Leading Kannada Television Channels: A Study



### Mass Communication

**KEYWORDS :** Status of women journalists, Images, Pay Parity, Working Conditions

\*H.B. Vaishali

Research Scholar (Part-time), Dept. of MCJ, Mangalore University, Mangalagangothri, India.

\*\* Dr. G. P. Shivram

Professor, Dept. of MCJ, Mangalore University, Mangalagangothri, Mangalore, Karnataka, India.

### ABSTRACT

*Mass media is considered as the fourth pillar of democracy. It has made a great impact on our lives. Media has always been male-dominated. Women have gradually carved out a space for themselves with their innovative ideas, confidence, punctuality, and hard work; women journalists in media have assumed a new dimension.*

*It is interesting to note that there has been a tremendous metamorphosis in the composition of journalistic forces in Karnataka. They are working in Kannada newspapers, magazines, radio stations, TV channels, online newspapers, dotcoms, and news portals. There are about 400 women journalists, including part-timers, working in different media organizations in the capital city of Bengaluru.*

*The present study focuses on the changing facets and status of women journalists in leading Kannada TV channels in Karnataka particularly in Bengaluru. The study sample consists of about 50 journalists including both men and women journalists involved in production and administrative positions in various Kannada TV channels. A detailed qualitative analyses will be made based on the in-depth interview method.*

### Introduction

The media plays a crucial role in today's society. It is the most powerful tool of communication in the emerging world and increases awareness on a wide range of issues. Media includes mass media like TV, news channels, newspapers, radio, journals, magazines, and more importantly, internet, email, Facebook, and Whatsapps.

The sphere of influence of the media is increasing day-by-day as the coverage of a small news article is very wide these days, and more importantly, in this modern society, media plays the role of a facilitator of development, disseminator of information, and an agent of change. Today, media is considered as the fourth pillar of the state the world over. More importantly, this is true in context of the biggest democracy like India (Kumar, K.J, 2002).

Media has proved a boon to human society. Nothing has influenced the lives of modern men as much as the media has. It is a powerful means that not only influence today's world, but will also shape the globe of tomorrow (Aggarwal, V. and Gupta, V.S, 2001, p.2).

### Women in Kannada Journalism

With the advent of satellite news channels, the 24-hour news channels had arrived. It brought a much faster pace of news production with increased demand for stories that could be presented as news. This was opposed to the day-by-day pace of the news cycle of printed daily newspapers. A high premium on faster reporting saw a further increase with the advent of online news. A complete news cycle consists of the media reporting on some event, followed by the media reporting on the public and other reactions to the earlier reports.

Chandana, a regional [Kannada Channel of Doordarshan](#), also encourages women journalists as producers on contract basis. Udaya TV is a regional Kannada language television channel and also the first Kannada satellite channel in Bengaluru. It gave opportunities to women journalists to work in television channels. After 2008, this was a new wave in Kannada journalism when numerous television channels emerged and create a platform for journalists in Karnataka, particularly in Bengaluru.

In Karnataka, there are ten 24x7 news channels, namely, Udaya News, TV9, Suvarna, Samaya, Janasri, Kasturi, Public TV, Btv, Etv News, Raj News and Praja TV. These channels have a great im-

act on viewers.

### Significance of the study

The television media in Karnataka is growing. Many new faces of women journalists can be seen working, both on-screen and off-screen of the television. The present study will focus on the overall status of women journalists in television channels. The study will also focus on the role of women journalists; their image and working conditions. It will provide guidelines to employers to work out a structure, by providing a favourable atmosphere to women journalists to carry out their responsibilities.

### Objectives of the study

**The objectives of the study are as follows:**

- To analyze the jobstatus of women journalists in Kannada television channels.
- To identify the role, job security and problems of women journalists in different TV channels.
- To examine the issues related to pay parity, promotion, maternity leave, and harassment, if any.
- To study about overallworking conditionof women journalists in Kannada TV channels.

### Methodology

The present study is based on in-depth interview method. The study aims to collect the opinions of 50 journalists, including females and males from different leading Kannada news channels from Bengaluru. An interview schedule was prepared for the purpose. The sample consisted of more than 30 women journalists and 20 men journalists. The researcher collected data through personal interview method using a separate interview schedule. In some cases, telephonic interview was undertaken. A qualitative analysis of the data is made to present a wider perspective of the issue.

### Scope

The media profession is quite challenging and glamorous, especially the television news channels, which are attracting youngsters, both males and females because of this reason. There is greater scope for women journalists, especially in the TV medium. There are numbers of colleges and universities offering different courses of UG and PG in Mass Communication and Journalism. In most of the courses, girls outnumber boys. Majority of the electronic media houses prefer women graduates with a degree in journalism.

## Findings

### Status of Women in Kannada News Channels

The television industry is dominated by male journalists in Karnataka. Majority of the channels are owned by men in Bengaluru. All the prominent positions of chief editor, news editor, fiction and non-fiction heads are predominantly men-oriented. They are in the majority and leading positions..

An in-depth overview of the field reveals that even here women have been subjected to oppression and denial of opportunities. Even though women are an inseparable part of this field, their efforts, merit, dedication, and innovation are not given recognition.

It is surprising to note that a person with 2-3 years' experience in the field feels that "there is considerable politics in the journalistic field. Opportunities are provided on the basis of caste, color and beauty. Professionalism alone can reign than other parameters".

### Images of Women Journalists in Media

In media, women get more prominence for their beauty than to their personality. This is practiced in a large measure

According to some anchors from Suvarna News and TV9, "none of the television channels insist on a journalism degree for the post of news casters. Qualifications such as good looks and capacity to read clearly the news would be sufficient".

A senior journalist from Janasri News feels that nowadays, journalists are driven by their desire to appear on the television screen more than their professionalism. Only a handful of journalists have made a name in politics, sports, and crime. The vast majority of women journalists stick to glamour, lifestyle, cinema, and other routine subjects.

Some channels have based their programmes keeping women viewers in mind. To cite an example, Suvarna Channel had a show 'Suvarna Girls' in its initial stages. In this programme, several anchors would interview a celebrity. Even though it was considered as a new feature, its intention was to get TRP rating by using many women anchors.

There is no doubt that the image of a TV journalist has changed. Popular anchors are shining as cinema stars. Sheetal Shetty, who was a news reader in TV9, is acting in films, and modelling for many advertisements. Suguna, who was a cinema reporter, has acted the role of a journalist in a couple of movies. Vijayalaxmi Shivaruru from Suvarna News is playing the role of a police inspector in a Kannada movie. Additionally, this trend is not confined to women journalists, but has gripped the men folk, also.

### Role of Women Journalists

There was a time when newsrooms meant areas where women were not seen and was an exclusive conclave of men. Times have changed and women have proved in more than ample measure that they are in no way inferior to men in the field. Women have established that they can take up any challenge.

Women journalists who once confined themselves to newspapers, magazines, and radio have made their presence felt in a big way. Their numbers are also increasing along with those of men in equal measure. Their roles, which were confined to copy editing and translation, have changed now, and they can be seen in areas of reporting, live discussions, politics, crimes, sports, etc. In addition, programmes based on family, health, emotions, entertainment, and literature have been taken over by them and they have a large presence in these areas.

Some of the senior male journalists from TV9 and Public TV say that the number of women in television has increased only in entertainment and soft beats, except one or two. Lack of seriousness and subjectivity is the cause for the same. If they have the capacity, there are many opportunities.

Many women journalists in Kannada television channels are happy with the role they are playing in television. Some of them are disappointed because they have not yet made it to the screen and their basic goal is to be a newscaster.

According to one TV journalist, women are suitable for certain programmes on TV. In some emotional areas, where delicate understanding of subtle emotions are to be handled and portrayed on the screen, it is women who handle such tasks. Certain interviews and discussions require feminine qualities of compassion, understanding, and moderation, which are handled and managed by women much better than men.

In several fields, the priority has changed and women are given preference, whereas in other areas, they are the preferred choice. There is another factor to be considered. Women professionals leave on several occasions after marriage to manage their families, children, and in some cases, to look after their parents and in-laws. It can be for one or two years or forever. Thus, their number in the profession decreases. Leaving aside this issue, in some areas of the media, they have an upper hand and are not denied or deprived of opportunities.

Women are capable of working and managing almost all areas of the media. There are instances when women refuse to take certain responsibilities due to their individual perception, which accounts for their not being seen in large numbers in senior positions.

Some shocking information was disclosed by a few of the journalists. According to them, there are only a handful of professionally skilled and experienced lady journalists in the field of television media. They say that women do not like to take risks, and hence, prefer to take up light jobs, preferably without much responsibility. Some of them consider it fashionable to be in the TV media. In their opinion, women journalists should get rid of such flimsy and frivolous ideas and should aspire to grow into highly skilled and respected professionals in the field with grit and determination.

However, there is sufficient evidence that women journalists are here to stay and grow in the field of visual media in most of the Kannada channels.

### Working Conditions

It is a fact that the conditions, particularly the working conditions of women working in the field of visual media has improved. Although there are still instances where she is facing discrimination for being a woman, being treated less than equally, and of being harassed. It is unfortunate that these things exist in a field, which has the avowed objective of bringing to light the inconsistencies, irrelevancies, and paradoxes of the entire world.

Working women journalists say that in the television media, women are subjected to sexual harassment, discrimination in payment of salaries, compensations, denial of promotion and opportunities, and so on. Some of the women who are subjected to such kinds of injustices do not register their protests due to fear of losing their jobs. A number of Kannada channels have undergone considerable losses, and therefore, are not able to provide a hike in salaries and promotions

Kannada media has to undergo considerable improvement when

compared to the national media. This is particularly so in the working conditions of women working in these organizations. There is no any parameter to asses' quality of work in media organization. Women have accepted and adjusted to several changes of conditions in journalism and other allied fields. They have accepted the night shift work and overtime work, including those involving hazards and risks, physical or otherwise as part of their profession.

They have the capacity to handle difficult types of jobs independently are well- recognized by now. In this situation, it is reasonable to expect equality with men in all respects, including assignments, compensation packages, promotions, salaries, perks, recognition, promotions, etc. Nevertheless, they are still slogging areas of copy-editing, soft story writing, anchoring, and other similar work where they continue to work for years without hope for much change.

When they undertake family responsibilities of marriage, family, and children they may not find many opportunities on their return to work in the profession. Very few women avail maternity leave because it is difficult to regain their earlier positions and they have to struggle to get promotions, salary increases, etc. Therefore, many women prefer to resign from their profession. There is lack of job security.

Women also feel unsafe in their work place, but continue to work in spite of the absence of basic security. According to one women journalist, there is no mechanism to lodge a complaint against harassment in the workplace. There are no committees even to register a protest. Many of the committees are mere formalities and are unable to provide any substantial relief or protection.

### Harassment

On the issue of harassment meted out to women journalists of Kannada TV channels, there is smixed opinion among women journalists as well as their male counterparts. Most of the journalists interviewed refused to talk about any type of sexual harassment. About one- fourth strongly admitted that there have been such incidents.

What is shocking to observe is that some of the talented and independent women journalists have faced many unpleasant situations because of their male colleagues. Some of them have even quit their jobs.

A veteran male journalist felt that often women journalists go out of the way to please their male colleagues, primarily to grab some kind of benefit or promotion. In a strange incident, a woman journalist confessed that male journalists treat her differently since she was somewhat reserved and did not utilize the official vehicle and her husband conveyed her to her place of work in their personal vehicle.

### Recommendations

Women journalists should not be portrayed as promotional objects, but should be given more importance for their professional input. Every organization must give importance to gender equality and maintain the fairness doctrine, while recruiting or assigning work to women journalists. Media organizations should provide job security for women journalists. Policy decisions should help promote women journalists to responsible positions on par with men. Media organizations should have institute an independent committee to look into the various issues of women journalists. It should also take care of women who are handling risky beats and provide proper security for them.

### Conclusion

Women are a part and parcel of Journalism. They occupy every section of the newsroom. Kannada news channels are growing at a much faster pace as compared to before. More than 10 news channels have their headquarters in Bengaluru and are extremely competitive in providing news to the society. They offer a big platform to women journalists to prove their ability. A number of young women are showing interest in the profession of journalism. Still they are under-represented in the Kannada television channels. Women face domination and discrimination from their male seniors. The Kannada media has to change in many ways to improve the working condition of women journalists.

## REFERENCE

- Abraham, Nargis. (1990) Sexuality and the Media, Vidura, Journal of Press Institute of India, New Delhi, Vol.27, No.3, p 29. | Agarwal, H. (1995) Society, Culture and Mass Communication: Sociology of Journalism, Jaipur, Rawat Publications. | Ahmer, T. (2004) Gender and Media in South Asia, A Workshop held in Kathmandu on June 26-27. www.southasianmedia.net, retrieved on 12.10.2012 | Akhileshwari, R. (1988) Male Chauvinist Media, Vidura, Journal of Press Institute of India, New Delhi, Vol.25, No.1, pp. 25-26. | Akhileshwari, R. (2000) Women Journalists: Still waiting in wings, Vidura, Journal of Press Institute of India, New Delhi. Vol.37, No.1, pp 27-28. | Devendar, B., (2014) Status of Working Women Journalists in India: A study of Delhi NCR, www.shodhagangainflibnet.ac.in, retrieved on 28.2.2015 | Joshi, U. Pahad, A., Manihar, A. (2006) Images of Women in Print Media - A Research Inquiry, Indian Media Studies Journal, New Delhi, Vol.1, No.1, pp 42-43. | Mahajani, N. (1989). The problems faced by women journalists in India, Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre, 8-17 Feb, Singapore. | Murthy K Nadig (1966) Indian journalism, Prasaranga, University of Mysore, Mysore. | Sharma, R. K. (1990) Journalism as a Profession in India: A Sociological Perspective, Bombay: Media Promoters and Publishers Pvt. Ltd.