

ROLE OF PRESS IN EMPOWERING WOMEN IN KARNATAKA: A STUDY

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Abstract: Empowering women aims to inspire women with the courage to break free from the chains of limiting self belief patterns and societal or religious conditioning that have traditionally kept women suppressed and unable to see their true beauty and power. Media plays one of the significant roles in women's development and its empowerment. Media can create an awakening inspiration to achieve their potential as prime movers of change in society.

The present study focuses on the analytical perspectives of empowering women in Karnataka in Kannada Press. The research design is based on exploratory method. The direct interaction and interface with the selected women as well as men journalists from the leading Kannada dailies and magazines will be made.

Keywords: Education & employment, gender equality, political empowerment and women issues.

Introduction: "There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing" - Swami Vivekananda.

The most significant and longest social movement continuing is movement for emancipation of women. Though the primary goal for women empowerment is to improve the quality of life of women but it has also deep ramifications in social, economic and political scenario of body polity. Women play a very strategic role in the development of society in particular and development of economy in general.

It would be a sad commentary on the subordinate role of women in India when woman is ideally viewed as Shakti (Power), the origin of power itself but in reality found as helpless, hapless woman without any identity except that of a wife, or the mother who has very little voice in decision making and has very little by way of her own basic choice.. [Prakash, N, 2005]

Media is a powerful tool that provides us with information and entertainment. It reflects our society and it influences the way we think. The demonstrated gender inequality in the media has significant consequences. Media affects our ideas of who we are and what we could be.

We create our identity in relation to the images we see around us from a young age. The current widespread access to media's limited representations of gender can have undesirable effects. When people are repeatedly shown images of women as victims, sexualized, or in domestic roles, they are more likely to accept these images as normal. When women are portrayed as passive, dependent or weak, it can seem unusual for them to be active, independent or powerful in society. [www.academia.edu]

Status of women in Karnataka: Women in Karnataka play a crucial role in their social, cultural, economic and religious ways of life. But they are still lagging far behind in the various walks of life like education, employment, health and economic empowerment. Educated women have found a new freedom in the life of big cities. More than 75 per cent of the women who lives in the rural areas are still living with illiteracy, ill health, lack of

access to technical skills, science and technology, information and knowledge, proper training, new employment avenues and political power.

According to current census the present sex ratio of female was 964 per 1000 males in Karnataka. Crimes against women is raising country wide, more than 2,150 rape cases were registered in Karnataka alone in the past three years. According to Legislature Committee on Women and Child Welfare statistics 9,201 cases of sexual harassment and 936 dowry death cases were reported in last three years in Karnataka. And 180 women die out of every lakh population because of poor health.

National Policy for the Empowerment of Women – 2001: The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of State Policy. The Constitution not only guarantees equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution in 1993 have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision-making at the local levels. India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993. [www.wcd.nic.in]

Significance of the study: The empowerment is an aid to help women to achieve equality with men or, at least, to reduce gender gap considerably. Without empowerment certain social roles cannot be performed. There is inequality and vulnerability of women in all sphere of life. They need to be empowered in all walks of life. Without the active participation of women, establishment of a new social order may not be a successful one because women constitute half of the population. Women should realize that they have

constitutional rights to quality health care, economic security, and access to education and political power.

Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

- To examine the present status of women in Karnataka,
- To assess the role of press in empowering women,
- To study the coverage of women issues by the print media for the cause of empowerment,
- To explore the extent of various schemes and projects meant for women and its reach.

Methodology: The present study is based on exploratory method. An In-depth Interview design using interview schedule was prepared for the purpose. The sample consisted of 30 journalists- both men and women from different leading Kannada newspapers from state capital Bangalore. The data was obtained through Telephone interview. Qualitative analysis of the data is presented to give wider perspective of the issue.

Kannada Language Newspapers & Magazines in Karnataka: There are many Kannada language newspapers that have served the media industry significantly and have also earned significant recognition. Some of the prominent Kannada language newspapers (dailies) include Kannada Prabha, Prajavani, Vijaya Karnataka, Udayavani, Samyukta Karnataka and Vijayavani all are published from state capital Bengaluru. Prajavani is considered as the largest circulated Kannada dailies in the recent years and it is the sister publication of Deccan Herald. The Kannada language newspapers are playing an important role in disseminating valuable information about the latest happenings in and around the world.

Role of Press Empowering Women in Karnataka: The Kannada language newspapers playing a important role in empowering women in Karnataka. The subject of how media portrays women has been much discussed during 1980's. The mass media in the 21th century have assumed a powerful role in modern society. The press has by and large not degraded the status of women.

Prajavani: All leading dailies cover health related news, articles especially about women. Even there is a separate section also. But in Prajavani daily, there are separate columns for women regarding health. Women can write all types of health related questions to the doctors and doctors will answer it.

In the main sheet we find very less news on women empowerment. But every Saturday, it carries four pages supplement called Bhoomika. This supplement is reserved only for women and her health, education, employment, life-style etc. It carries articles; interpretative stories on omen professionals, entrepreneurs and women related NGOs and developmental stories. Eminent writers also write articles on particular issue. It carries health related news under the title of Kshema-Kushala. This daily gives more importance for health related news and also women liberation.

Kannada Prabha: Kannada Prabha newspaper is one of the most creative, well designed Kannada language newspapers of Karnataka. The paper seldom carries any detailed news particularly on women empowerment in the main pages. It carries supplements everyday about one or two particular topics. Every Sunday on women (Sakhi), Wednesday on health ArogyaPrabha. Sunday section carries women interviews, education related articles and special articles on women. Women readers also write articles on different issues.

Vijaya Karnataka: Vijaya Karnataka is one of the largest circulated Kannada language daily of Karnataka. Every Saturday in the main sheet a famous lawyer cum journalist write article on women under the column of Jeans -Talk. Here she writes her own opinion and experiences. And one more column 'HudugiyayaHaykugalu' this also related to women especially on young ladies. Vijaya Karnataka every day carries supplement called LavalaVK. In this supplement on Saturday only we can see ArogyaVijaya, i.e. health news page. It gives less importance to women empowerment and problems of women. But it highlights more on women celebrities. Vijaya Karnataka gives more importance for beauty related articles.

Udayavani : Udayavani is a leading Kannada daily of Costal Karnataka. It carries every Sunday supplement called 'Avalu' (she), is only meant for women issues. This supplement covers education related article also. And it also brings out health supplement called Arogyavani weekly once with Sunday edition. It gives more importance for health news coverage. There is a separate column for reader's personal questions on health. Udayavani daily also carries health news every week.. Doctors and specialists write health related articles. And concerned persons write interpretative articles on health surveys, different diseases like HIV, Cancer etc thereby creating awareness among women regarding life threatening diseases.

Over all Findings:

Education and Employment: Education related news is rarely find place in Kannada language newspapers. State government is putting more efforts to educate every girl child in Karnataka. So there are schemes for free education and motivating girl child towards education are implemented. SarvaShikshanaAbhiyana, Kali- Nali (learn and play), Middy meal, providing Cycle for girls, special school for girls etc. One of the journalists says, 'newspapers and magazines pass message through advertisements.'

All leading newspapers cover employment related news weekly once. But recently launched Vijaya Next carrier guidance weekly magazine cover only education and employment related news. It gives clear cut information about government jobs, IAS, IPS, KAS guidance, Teaching, Railway, and Banking, how to preparations competitive exams, fee and application format and other related details. This information will be very helpful to public, especially for women.

Gender Equality: A vast majority of women work throughout their lives but the fact is that it is not officially recognized. Women need to be projected in a manner that they are capable of both house work and professional work. Women are mostly projected as single and looking for a husband earning a fat salary, or a house wife or mother. Even if women are shown as working in offices they are never portrayed as professionals. They are symbolized as being involved in extra marital affairs or in romance. A woman is not shown as dynamic, professional, intellectual or capable of making a living all by her. The media must project the contributions of women to national development. Women are capable of responsibility outside the domestic scene which is always shown down or sidelined.

Political empowerment: The 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Indian Constitution in 1993 provided for reservation of seats for women in the Panchayats (rural areas) and Municipalities (urban areas) respectively, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision-making at the local level. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment created opportunities for political participation of women at the grass roots level. In Karnataka even political parties also doesn't take it as serious. In rural area women are leading life according to men's suggestion. Men domination is a general rule in Karnataka. Politics is also not an exception to this. Kannada language newspapers rarely carry this kind of news. During the time of elections, some of the newspapers publish stories on women empowerment and reservation in politics. According to a lady reporter, newspaper carries news on women participation in politics. These are serious type of news, and these news items find place in editorial page. Most of the women never read or look at editorial page. Even educated women also never read it. So it is far from rural women.

Women Issues: Newspapers cover women's problems drawing the attention of policymakers to issues requiring immediate attention such as the adverse sex

ratio, infant and maternal mortality, crime against women and the effects of poverty on women and their families. But this coverage is very limited with the rest of the space occupied by cinema actresses, models, video jockeys and the affluent women, their life style, hobbies and page 3 parties. Many of the women's magazines are devoted to fashion, glamour, beauty aids, weight reduction, cookery and how to sharpen 'feminine instincts' to keep men and their in-laws happy. There are comparatively fewer articles on career opportunities, health awareness, entrepreneurship, and legal aid, counseling services, childcare services, financial management and public participation.

Women and development should emerge as a vital force in shaping the global future. A majority of men in the state are involved in the decision making process, in the pattern of income distribution. But women have limited access to media/information technology. It is fact that many rural women have a major share of contribution in agricultural production but they have not been focused nor highlighted in the press.

A lady journalist says, 'since almost all newspapers and even women magazines controlled by men, there has been a failure to identify women's problems and there is a continued projection of women through men's eyes'.

Conclusion: The women play a strategic role in the society and in the economy. But in modern India, the woman has always been treated as a second grade citizen. The participation of women in various professionals has increased significantly. But working women are not represented in the media properly. They should be shown more in the roles of lawyers, doctors, judges, journalists, engineers, and scientists. A change of mind set among men towards supporting and empowering women is highly essential. No doubt the Government of India has many weapons to fight for women empowerment. The prompt and strict implementation is quite essential. Unless the Acts, policies, rules and regulations are strictly implemented the idea of women empowerment remains unachieved.

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