

## **Television as an Agent of Social Change among Indian Women: An Analytical Study**

\*Nidhi Bhandari

*Centre for Journalism & Mass communication, HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar (Garhwal),  
Uttarakhand, India*

*Corresponding Author: Nidhi Bhandari*

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**Abstract:** Television has profound impact on our Indian society. It has occupied an important position in Indian households and therefore it is bound to make an impact on the individual and the society as well. Television in India is developing fast as the major source of enlightenment, leisure and infotainment. Television has been strongly influencing the social lives of Indian women since its advent in India. It has strongly affected their attitudes and emotions. Television has played a vital role in changing the personalities of Indian women by improving their thinking and understanding abilities. Television as a mass media has created awareness among Indian women about their privileges and rights. Television has established itself the most powerful medium of communication both among educated and uneducated women. Though, it has affected the relations within the family, yet its effective role in moulding the personalities of women could not be denied. Thus, television is playing a vital role in bringing prominent social change in Indian women's lives

**Keywords:** Television, Society, Mass Media, Communication, Social Change.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

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 accepted fact that technological development in the field of communication has given us television as effective tool of mass media. Television is the most powerful persuasive mass communication tool. The way it is used for development processes determines the effectiveness of television. **Dorr (1986)** states that TV stands out from other media as it is generally used more and can present more lifelike content than most of other media.

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)**. 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)**.

The development of television has created a hope in upholding unity in diversity in pluristic society like India. Television is the most powerful tool of mass media which is capable of reshaping the opinion of the people. 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". As a whole, the purpose of any media is to inform, evaluate, direct, influence, teach, image projecting, orientation and create suitable environment for effective decision making. Media consumption captivates long hours each day in the lives of every man. Beyond providing entertainment, television vastly increases both the availability of information about the outside world and exposure to other ways of life. **Dorr (1986)** states that TV stands out from other media and is generally used more and can present more real content than most of the other media.

Television stimulates and reinforces ideas, beliefs and tendencies already possessed by the viewer. For example, television repeats and thereby reinforces the messages on family planning, importance of girls' education, marriage age, environment protection, energy conservation etc. Thus, it serves persuasive function. Television has more flexibility and mobility in its coverage due to audio-visual presentation. This is the reason why it has become a family medium. Family members receive messages in their own environment. It can show what happened and how it happened. It can show landing of a man on mars, functioning of heart or division of cell through animation. Above all, it can provide entertainment also. Thus, television as a mass medium informs, educates, inspires and motivates. **Kundra, Shipra (2005, p-116)**. In a diverse country like India where population and illiteracy are the two most burning problems, electronic media provides extraordinary reach for disseminating information even in remote areas. India has diverse cultures, religions and traditions, therefore, audio-visual mass medium like television can play a very vital role in developing common understanding among the people and bringing them closer. It opens the prospective of educating villagers in the remotest areas and thus bringing them into the mainstream task of development, along with creating wider vision of the world.

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)**.

## **II. DEVELOPMENT OF TELEVISION IN INDIA**

The advent of Television in India was quite late, on September 15, 1959. For years it was on debate that whether a poor country like India could be able to afford luxurious television. It was further feared that television might alienate us from our cultural roots, that it might spread a consumerist culture. Consumerism would increase the hunger for comforts and luxuries. It might increase frustration and lead to social conflict between the rich and the poor. But manufactures, businessmen, educational institutions continued to make strong demands for TV in India UNESCO offered a grant of twenty thousand dollars to buy community sets. The U.S.A. also offered some equipment. Philips India offered a transmitter at a low price. Ultimately, the Government yielded. It set up a TV station at Delhi on an experimental basis. The declared aim was to discover what TV could achieve in community development and formal education.

The transmission could cover an area of 40 km. in and around Delhi. Programmes were beamed twice a week. Each programme was of 20 minutes duration. The viewers were members of 180 tele - clubs. These clubs were provided free T.V. sets for community viewing by UNESCO. Programmes were beamed from an improvised studio at Delhi. In 1972, (October) the inauguration of the Bombay TV centre came about. In 1973, Srinagar and Amritsar Kendras started producing tele programmes. Pune too started relaying programmes from Bombay that year. Calcutta, Madras and Lucknow TV centres were set up in 1975. Thus, we can see that the real expansion of TV in India came about in the seventies. On 1 January 1976 telecast of commercial started at all the centres. In same year television was separated from All India Radio and became an independent media unit under the new banner "Doordarshan". The revolution in the journey of Indian television was the one year long Satellite instructional television Experiment which commenced on 1 August 1975. It marked the introduction of series of innovative and constructive educational television programmes for national development and for educating the Indian masses living in remote rural areas. The colour transmission was introduced in 1982. A series of reforms were introduced in 1991 which allowed private and foreign broadcasters to operate in India. Starting with 41 sets in 1962 and one channel, by 1995, TV in India covered more than 70 million homes giving a viewing population of more than 100 channels. According to Broadcast Audience Research Council India has 153.5 million TV household in 2016.

## **III. TELEVISION AND SOCIAL CHANGE**

Television was seen as a catalyst of social change and national development, sensitizing society about social justice, educating the population and developing and uplifting its human resources (**Acharya, 1987:90,117**). Television at present has occupied an important position in homes and research studies have pointed out that perception of the television messages, images and ideas shape the entire social system. The present out reach of television has created awareness and appreciation of the socio-cultural ethos of our different regions. Television has contributed to breaking the social barriers and inculcation of scientific temper in our masses. Studies have shown that exposure to media leads to the appreciation of social and cultural ethos. For any social change to take place flow of information is of prime importance. It increases the understanding of the people regarding the issues and develops common feeling for the need for social change. Information bridges the gap of understanding between the people and helps them to unite for the cause. Television has done this job by contributing to the information explosion **Devi, Meena (2009, p-166,167)**.

Television is a highly influential medium of mass communication and plays a vital role in the construction of reality. **BSS Rao (1992)** It is generally recognized that among the mass media television is the most powerful instrument yet devised, whether it is for influencing public opinion or for reshaping social life, its potential is considered to be immense and for reaching in our country, is still it is being nursed with high hopes to take new challenges. The purpose of television is to inform, evaluate, direct, teach, influence, image projecting, orientation and create social environment for effective decision making. Beyond providing entertainment, television vastly increases both the availability of information about outside world and exposure to other ways of life. TV does need deep pockets. TV needs vision. TV needs participation. TV is the highway that will bring social change, which will open our minds and allow us to compete (**Malevika p-34, 35**)

**Shipra Kundra(2005)** Public television in India has the following social objectives:

- To act as a catalyst of social change.
- To promote national integration.
- To stimulate a scientific temper in the minds of the people.
- To disseminate the message of family planning as a means of population control and family welfare.
- To provide essential information and knowledge in order to stimulate greater agricultural productions.
- To highlight the need for social welfare measures including welfare of women, children and the less privileged.
- To create values of appraisal of art and our cultural heritage.

While describing television an agent of social change, **Saxena (1996)** expressed that the process of change in a developing society has generally been slow. All the more, in a highly tradition bound country like India. Our people generally resist change. Mass media should help create in them a general awareness of what is happening around the world. They're to motivate them to 'accept' and 'achieve' something new. And eventually, to let them decide how best and fast that could be done. At different stages of this transition, television, being visual, played a more dynamic role.

## **SOCIAL CHANGE AND INDIAN WOMEN**

Change is the law of nature. It refers to the shift from the established pattern of living. The Social change refers to an alteration in the social order of a society. Social change may include changes in nature, social institutions, social behavior or social relations. Social change may refer to the notion of social progress or socio-cultural evolution, the philosophical idea that society moves forward by dialectical or evolutionary means. **Sharma K.L (2008)** in his book "Indian Social structure and change", has explained that the concept of social change is a very broad one. It consists of constellation of process of change in human society in terms of place, time and context. Besides the concepts of social change, the concepts of evolution, revolution, progress, development, social movements and process.

There has been a revolutionary change in the status of Indian women. This change in the status of the Indian women is due to the strong position provided by the constitution of India. The protection of their rights and raising their social and economic status are the most issues these days for the Indian government. This has provided India women an opportunity to come in the mainstream of development process of the country. Today Indian women are involved actively in the field of politics, social activities, media, art, bureaucracy, science and technology. Now a role of Indian woman is no longer passive and submissive. They are well aware of their legal and constitutional rights. They have developed the quest for equality with men.

## **HISTORY OF INDIAN WOMEN: A BRIEF PROSPECTIVE**

Change in the lives of Indian women is not only seen in the present time but, change has been taking place since many years. **Chitkara (2001)** in her book "women and social transformation" mentions that, the major impetus in recent years, in bringing about a change in the attitude of Indian women has come from the national movement for independence. The participation of Indian women in the politics of the national movement was an act of patriotism and thus, a political life became a respectable vocation for a woman.

The reason of requirement of change among Indian women is the history of status of women itself. For example, Manu, the Hindu law maker has given both the positive and negative views about the status of women in particularly family and in society as a whole. He considered woman should be submissive to man during her entire life. During early Vedic period, women held equal status with men in all aspects of life. According to Patanjali and Katyayana, women enjoyed the right to get educated. In later Vedic period the status of women started declining. The new like early marriages, non-participation in religious ceremonies etc. were begun to be imposed. In Medieval period the position of women in society further deteriorated. The Muslim advent of Muslim rulers on Indian land brought purdah system for women. They were made secluded from social lives and educational opportunities were vanished. Infact, the Indian rulers too restricted the lives of women. Many saints of that era tried to reform the status of Indian women by spreading awareness among the masses

During the British Raj many social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswarchand Vidhya Sagar worked for the social upliftment of Indian women. Even British government supported their movement by bringing various legislation like Abolition of Sati Act, 1929, Widow Remarriage Act, 1856 etc which really helped the cause of women. These efforts lead the empowerment of Indian women and they started taking part in the social movements and freedom movements. Women's quest for equality with men has become universal and they are continuously progressing on that path. The history of women's status has been of ups and downs. Their status was greatly influenced by social, economic and political conditions prevalent at different times in Indian society.

In the constitution of India the concept of equality have 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.

## **ROLE OF TELEVISION AS AN AGENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE AMONG INDIAN WOMEN: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY**

At the present time television is considered very effective medium of mass communication for women. It is one of the major sources of information, entertainment and education for them. Television viewing habit has become an integral part of women's lives these days. The extraordinary reach of television is available to every section of women and thus television is doing the work of reshaping the opinion and attitude of Indian women. It has greatly influenced the thinking and understanding level of Indian women, thus, widening their mental horizons. Television has also helped in developing the logical thing ability of women. 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.

**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. **Srivastava (1983)** reported that television presented suitable programmes for creating awareness about various legislations, programmes and on the role of women in development. **Sharda (1989)** found out that in case of woman, for majority (74.29%) of them TV happens to be the major source of information. She opined that understanding is more due to visual effect and they could retain their information in their minds for a considerably longer period. TV is not only entertaining the rural masses but is also equally educating them.

**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. **La Pastina (2004)** argued that exposure to tele novels provides women in particular with alternative models of what role they might play in society.

**.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.

**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 1-2hours 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 being a good change in their life.

**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.

**Devadas and Saravanan, (2015)**, 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.

**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.

**Scraser (2002)** reports that several of his respondents thought television might lead women to question their social position and might help the cause of female advancement.

**Johnson (2001)** quotes a number of respondents describing changes in gender roles as a result of television. Further, with the entry of TV, women are doing less work than before. They only want to watch TV. So men have to help their wives in cleaning the house.

Television as a powerful medium of mass communication has been greatly successful in changing the social lives of women. Women view Television generally for gaining knowledge and also a medium of entertainment, relaxation and to pass time. Indian women mostly prefer to watch soap operas and sometimes reality shows, films and music programs. . But now women have started getting interested in serial based on crime, which is also doing their work to make them conscious and aware. On the other hand, the percentage of women watching Discovery and Science Channels is very low. It has been able to enlighten the lives of Indian women to large extent. In a country like India still a large section of women population is education and for them television has proved as a boon. Indian society is still considered as a male dominated society and in this scenario television has come up a exceptional source of awakening. Television viewing habit among Indian women has created a greater degree of effect on their domestic and other activities, on their family and social interaction patterns and cultural practices. Indian women have accepted television characters' appearance and style in their day to day lives to a large extent. They have started relating to these television characters' to themselves. In this way television viewing generates socio-economic and cultural changes. Television as a mass medium has really helped Indian women in gaining self confidence and raising their self esteem. They have become aware about their constitutional and legal rights and in this way Indian women are able to raise their social status within their families and in society as well. They are also motivated to take their decisions independently.

Television as a mass media has motivated Indian women to get an equal opportunities as equal to women. Television programmes have helped in reducing prevalent atrocities on Indian women by motivating them, so that they can stand up and fight for the wrong against them. These programmes have also helped in changing the attitude of men towards women. Women centric programmes like Udaan, Balika vadhu have greatly motivated Indian women to stand up on their own feet and become self sufficient. Television as a mass medium has helped in creating awareness among Indian women various health related schemes run by government for their welfare. These women-centric programmes are changing family ideologies that affect the women and thus creating the most liberal society that could benefit women. Television viewing habit of Indian women has reduced the social interaction of Indian women with their family members and friends to some extent. They have started spending long hours in front of television set and creating their virtual world of imaginary television characters. Although, these fictional characters are motivating most of the time but they always do not seem real.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Television has played a prominent role in the social lives of Indian women. It has proved as the major source of learning and entertainment for both educated and uneducated Indian women. It has created mostly positive impact with few negative impacts as well. It is prominently seen growing dependency of Indian women on television has many social effects in their lives and thus leading Indian women on the path of progression and development. Television as a mass media has really helped in emerging into the new economic patterns that are responsible for making women acquire a new status and a new social stature. Thus, a powerful fact is created that television as medium of mass communication has brought a social change in Indian women in a positive manner.

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