WOMEN, DEMOCRACY, AND MEDIA:
AN EXPLORATION OF THE INDIAN CULTURAL CONTEXT

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by

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To
my parents
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ABSTRACT

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Feminist political theory argues that democratic political foundations have been gender-biased and suffer from various discrepancies that prevent women's participation in the political public sphere and limit their role as political citizens. Parallel to this, feminists have questioned the role of media in representing women's concerns; since media are a dominant part of the public sphere and are crucial sites of debate where meanings are constructed and public consciousness is shaped, their role in political awareness is important.

Using such frameworks, this study explores the relationship between political theory and media practice in India, which offers a democratic political system and an autonomous press modelled after the Western political system. However, within the context of a Third World traditional society, the relationship between theory and practice in relation to women's rights is not the simple equation that the Western feminist political theory suggests. A historical and cultural analysis of Indian society reveals that higher-caste patriarchal culture - a Brahmanical hegemony - still defines women's roles and position. Although an explicit model of democracy guarantees legal and political rights to women, the state remains undemocratic and patriarchal towards women, and strengthens the traditional social order in its practice, thus also demonstrating a connection between cultural practices and political practices.

Using content analysis, the study reveals that the Indian national press has contributed towards the existing patriarchal order and supported the social consensus by making certain women's issues 'invisible' in a democratic polity. Its insensitivity towards women's issues is examined through the analysis of the media content, in the journalistic practices in covering women's news/issues, and in opinions of journalists towards women's issues and the women's movement. It has been argued that the press and/or journalists are part of the same culture and cannot proceed without values prevalent in India's patriarchal society.

Interviews with women activists and journalists suggest that apart from the cultural prejudices, a myriad of issues like poverty, basic needs, etc. facing majority of the population in a developing country impinge upon gender, leading to its perceived insignificance, and causing ideological differences between journalists and women activists.
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Chapter 1
Women, democracy, and media

The relationships between the three components, women, democracy, and media, are the central focus of this study. These concepts hold a significant status within feminist scholarship. Of these three terms, 'women' denotes a social or cultural category of female as gendered persons. The differences among 'women' of different races, classes, and cultures cannot be denied. However, the identification of 'woman' as a key social category exists in all societies. The second term, 'democracy', stands for a form of government which promises equal participation to all citizens in decision-making processes and asserts to represent their interests irrespective of differences like sex, class, religion etc. And ‘media,’ such as press, television, radio, are the channels through which citizens convey their opinions and participate in the decision-making processes in a democratic society. They are crucial sites where debates regarding various issues are carried, determining the direction of society.

Both democracy and media form a part of the public sphere in contemporary times. Originally offered by Habermas (1989), the ‘public sphere’ stood for a social space in which private citizens fought against the powers of an absolutist state. This social space arose under the development of capitalism in Western Europe. However, today the concept is highly contestible within social theory (see Keane, 1995; Fraser, 1992). But within the context of this study, public sphere signifies a formal political sphere represented through democracy, of which media form an integral part. Feminist scholars have questioned the role and status of women as political citizens within this public sphere. Setting the three components mentioned above in a triangular relationship, feminist political theory has offered a debate around each of these relationships, that is, women and democracy, democracy and media, and women and media. Describing this debate and building up a triangular relationship between three components is the major objective of this chapter. It will explore the democratic foundations to determine the status of women as political citizens in democratic theory and practice. By implication, it will question the role of democratic media in representing women's concerns. From this vantage point, the current chapter will provide an insight into the specificities of India where this study was carried, and set out the concerns of the present study within the broader structure of arguments. The organisation of the chapters of the thesis is presented at the end of this chapter.

I begin from a universal contention that, despite differences in levels of economic development, political institutions and cultural values, a certain universalism
regarding the subordinate status of women exists in most human societies. History might vary in terms of time, space, and actors, but certain issues like women's oppression or the struggle of women to enter the public sphere share a commonality giving rise to global feminism or the notion of sisterhood despite variations in cultures and societies. The issue of private and public realms in world histories share certain similarities whether it was Mary Wollstonecraft's aspiration to enter the political public sphere or the humiliation in the form of "don't listen to a woman" which Madame Ranke faced in New York City's Thompkins Square in 1857 (see Ryan, 1992: 270) or the struggle for democratic reforms by women and men in colonial India.

An emphasis on the need to maintain private sphere and family unity either by Rousseau in 18th Century France or by Vivekanand in 19th Century India implicitly legitimises the role of women in the private and men in the public. Or private virtue regarded as the 'fountainhead of public order' or the family as the 'foundation of public morality and intelligence' in American history on the one hand (see Ryan, 1992: 273), and Lord Krishna's patriarchal advice to Draupadi not to let her personal hurt overshadow the national problem in Indian mythology on the other (see Mankekar, 1993) convey that the problems faced by women in the private sphere must be marginalised, however right they may be, for the building up of a strong nation and a strong public order.

In 1793 France, perturbed by the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women, the Committee of General Security justified women's roles by stating that "each sex is called to the kind of occupation which is fitting for it. To begin educating men, to prepare children's minds and hearts for public virtues, to direct them early in life towards the good, to elevate their souls, to educate them in the political cult of liberty: such are (women's) functions after household cares" (Baker, 1992: 200). A similar notion was the essence of society in ancient India promoted by the laws of Manu. According to the Hindu view of life "man has a duty towards his ancestors in his worldly life and his duty to the needs of the spirit... and a woman's traditional task is strictly to help a man accomplish his duties. To a woman her husband is her lord. The wife is described as an inspiration of spiritual merit, for wealth earning and

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1 The term 'private' like 'public' also holds a critical position in social theory. There may be several meanings of 'private' (see Fraser, 1992), however, in the context of this study, 'private' or the 'private sphere' signifies domestic or family life which constrains women's wider social roles.

2 An Indian social reformer of the 19th century (see Singh, 1990; Jayawardena, 1986).

3 A Hindu God

4 One of the most important female characters in the Mahabharata (an ancient Indian tale)

5 The Hindu Law-giver (the creator)
"gratification of the senses" (Baig, 1958:113). Condorcet, a liberal defender of women in French history, was concerned "that granting political rights to women would take them away from those duties that nature seems to have reserved for them" (Baker, 1992: 202). In a similar vein, the Hindu Code reforming areas of personal law, such as marriage and inheritance, initiated by the All India Women's Conference in 1934 in India was opposed by many National elite leaders (see chapter 2). Although it was passed after the first general elections in India, opponents of the Bill argued that women's inheritance rights would lead to women refusing to marry (Liddle and Joshi, 1986). Even Gandhi, who is credited with bringing women into public life to join the nationalist movement and who agreed that "woman was suppressed under custom and law for which man was responsible" (Gandhi, 1962: 224), nevertheless felt that his "ideal woman was the mythical Sita, the self-sacrificing, monogamous wife of the Ramayana, who guarded her chastity, and remained loyal to Rama in spite of many provocations" (Jayawardena, 1986: 96).

In most national histories, the countries have idealised the private virtues of women and public roles of men. If the Victorian English woman was an ideal in English society, Sitahood remains an ideal in Indian society. It was mainly with the emergence of a class of women and/or women's organisations that old notions were challenged. Middle class women questioned their own identities, their worth, usefulness of their lives and gendered divisions. These subaltern counterpublics then set out the struggle with different themes and motives unique to each culture and society. But to say that women's consciousness towards their rights and roles developed overnight would be an oversimplification. Feminism, whether in the East or West, was not born on its own. It was the result of certain forces happening in society in different historical moments. While most Third World women's struggles are mainly rooted in the colonial histories of their countries, as in the case of India (see chapter 2), Western women had other social forces which formed the basis of their struggle. For instance the Evangelical movement, the French revolution, and the Enlightenment played a significant role in the development of feminist consciousness in both Britain and the United States (see Banks, 1981; Randall, 1982, 1987; Holton, 1986).

\[^4\] Fraser (1992) defines subaltern counterpublics as subordinated social groups like women, workers, people of colour, gays and lesbians, who emerge in response to exclusions within the dominant publics.

\[^5\] Feminism(s) represents various tendencies and ideologies all over the world. In this study, 'feminism' stands for a self-conscious movement which questions the exploitation and/or oppression/subordination of women in any context. Other terms like 'women's movement/groups', 'women's liberation', are also used in a similar vein. These expressions do not signify any particular ideological position unless specified. Similarly 'feminist(s)' or 'women activists' signify all those women and/or actors raising concerns on women's subordination or engaged in this struggle.
It is not within the scope of this chapter to detail the history of the Western women's movement but it is beyond doubt that Western women engaged in a strenuous struggle to win voting rights and to achieve access to the political public sphere. However, as noted by Ryan (1992), the female franchise and official access to the public sphere did not lead to gender equality and "women found themselves the conquerors of a hollow fortress" (p. 262). The statistics show that except in Nordic countries, women figure in national politics at something between 2 and 10 per cent. Phillips (1991: 61) seems perturbed at the small number of women in politics: "we all know there are more men than women in politics, but the details still come as a shock: only forty three women out of 650 members of the British parliament? Only twenty-eight women out of 435 members of the US House of Representatives?" Pateman (1989) observes that Governments, parliaments, courts, police, workplaces, trade unions, etc. look like men's clubs "from all of which women are excluded or to which they are mere auxiliaries" (P: 210). According to Enloe (1989) a sarcastic comment like 'what about Margaret Thatcher?' is not by itself a satisfactory basis for a full feminist analysis of international politics. In fact, the success of a few women like Mrs Thatcher or Mrs Meir "should not blind us to the near absence of other women from the political firmament" (Randall, 1982: 70). The exceptional success of a few women has left untouched the structure of political life of ordinary women.

While discussing the representation and role of women in formal electoral politics, Phillips (1991) argues that consistent under-representation of any social category points towards a problem and indicates that this disparity could not be an accidental result. This cannot be simply attributed to the biased notions of women being naturally indifferent to politics or in Enloe's (1989: 6) words "inherently anti-militaristic or anti-authoritarian". There has to be something that precludes their participation. So what is wrong? Why are women not active participants in the formal political sphere regardless of all democratic political rights? Feminists indicate towards major loopholes in democratic political thought as follows:

**Women and democracy**

Western feminist research (Phillips, 1991; Enloe, 1989; Tickner, 1991; Pateman, 1988a, 1988b, 1989; Elshtain, 1981) has maintained that democracy has failed to recognise women as political citizens in its theory and practice. A critical analysis of theory of liberal democracy indicates that it has been more rewarding towards men.

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1 The number of women increased to 61 in 1995.
than women and is gender-biased. Feminists argue that the establishment of democratic governments for the interests of propertied men made a distinction between private and public spheres, which consequently became associated with women and men. Women were excluded from the public sphere, in which political economies were run on capitalistic and patriarchal values. Thus, a division between private and public has been the result of social mechanism of gender inequality and not biological anatomy. But unfortunately, feminists point out that the issue of the structure of social relations and relations between the sexes is considered irrelevant to political equality and democratic citizenship (Pateman, 1989; Phillips, 1991).

Questioning the nature and goals of democracy since its birth in ancient Greece and later developments in 17th Century Europe, feminist research has noted that dominant strands in democratic thinking have sidelined women and their concerns in their theory (see Phillips, 1991; Pateman, 1988a, 1988b, 1989). These two moments have been examined because the idea of democracy took birth in Greece. Later, the democratic tradition based on logic of natural freedom of subjects was revived in 17th Century Europe.

Feminist research points out major discrepancies in early democratic thought. The Athenian ideals of participation or the rights and responsibilities of citizenship were confined to a minority. Women, slaves, and immigrants found no place in it. A distinction between private and public realms was fundamental in that society in order to avoid illegitimate interference of the state in the private. At this stage the private sphere was composed of both production and reproduction, that is, economy and family. The household was necessary but not considered congenial to nurture thoughts of wisdom and rationality required by the polity (Phillips, 1991). Thinkers like Aristotle and Plato found the public sphere of 'polis' counterposed to the private sphere of household and maintained that women, in particular, had no place in politics. Within this private sphere, as noted by Arendt (1958), were hidden "the laborers who with their bodies minister to the (bodily) needs of life, and the women who with their bodies guarantee the physical survival of the species. Women and slaves belonged to the same category and were hidden away not only because they were somebody else's property but because their life was laborious, devoted to bodily functions" (p. 72). Arendt (1958: 32) further notes that "the polis was distinguished from the household in that it knew only 'equals' whereas the household was the centre of the strictest inequality". Though Plato considered women competent to occupy the highest political office, he believed in the incompatibility of the household with public life (see Phillips, 1991).
Similarly, the individuals whose interests mattered to classical liberals were men of property, and government had been formed to respond to their interests. Those who were not acknowledged as individuals were children, lunatics, servants, who existed as appendages of their masters, and women, who were subsumed under men. Liberalism recast the boundaries between the private and the public. While in the ancient world, the private or household was composed of both family and economy, liberalism made two distinctions changing the significance of the private/public divide. This meant that the economy moved out of the home into the market and a third category was formed which was called the social (see Arendt, 1958). Now society was composed of private, public/civil, and public/polis. It also meant that both civil society and polis were the domain of men, and that freedom was located in these realms. The 'domestic' disappeared from view.

Pateman (1989) argues that since civil society was conceptualised apart from domestic life, the latter remains absent in theoretical discussions. As a result, the distinction between private and public was reinstated as a division within civil society or within the world of men. The exclusion of domestic from the civil society produced a 'private' individual who was abstracted from familial relations, and it was largely because of this freedom that he could move into the political arena as a classically liberal owner of property in his person. Thus the masculine and patriarchal formation of civil society, according to Pateman, was based on sexual inequality at home, and home was not considered a part of the democratic realm of the public sphere. Pateman (1988b) defines this phenomenon as a fraternal pact, that is, a pact or an understanding between brothers. Within this pact, individuals enter into a social contract (see Rousseau, 1968) to enjoy civil liberties and the state guarantees and protects those rights of individuals. Since women's world was centred at home, their sexual subordination remained hidden and unquestioned and their concerns did not become a part of public thought.

Feminist research on the bourgeois public sphere of 18th Century Western Europe and of 19th Century North America, for instance, provides ample evidence that this elite public sphere was based on masculine interests and assumptions. It was composed of mainly educated and propertied men and was not open and accessible to women, thus assigning women to a non-political private sphere. In North America, women of all classes and ethnicities along with other disadvantaged groups were excluded from official political participation on the basis of gender status (see Ryan, 1992; Baker, 1992; Fraser, 1992; Benhabib, 1992; Eley, 1992 ). Eley argues that
domination by men in the public sphere must have enhanced their power and status over women. In the words of Davidoff and Hall (quoted in Eley, 1992: 312)

"the experience of such associations increased the confidence of middle-class men and contributed to their claims for political power, as heads of households, representing their wives, children, servants and other dependants. This public world was consistently organised in gendered ways and had little space for women. Indeed, middle-class women in the second half of the nineteenth century focused many of their efforts on attempting to conquer the bastions of this public world, a world which had been created by their fathers and grandfathers."

Although by the 19th Century the property qualification was abolished and citizenship was extended to the majority of men, women were still deprived of this right as it was thought that their husbands, fathers, brothers, represented their interests. At a later stage, thinkers like John Stuart Mill stressed the importance of political participation and development of decision-making capacities among workers and employers in the regulation of their working lives. Though Mill advocated the enfranchisement of women, he had no doubt that women would opt for motherhood and home (Phillips, 1991; Pateman, 1989). It was after a long and tough struggle that liberalism gave consent to women’s claims to be considered as political citizens. Right to vote was granted to women in early 20th Century in both Britain and the United States.

A distinction between the private and public spheres and the failure of democratic debate to explore the nature of the private sphere remain critical issues within feminist thought. Questioning liberalism’s image of the ‘individual’, feminists have maintained that the ‘individual’ or ‘citizen’ of liberal democracy is not gender-neutral and is supposedly ‘male’ (see Pateman 1989; Phillips, 1991). According to Pateman (1989) liberal democracy is based on the theory of consent, i.e. voluntary submission of individuals, which is rooted in the idea that individuals are born free and equal to each other. But why would free and equal citizens allow anyone to govern over them? The justification of authority according to liberals is that to preserve freedom and equality, individuals must voluntarily commit themselves. This voluntarism presupposes that individuals are rational and have the intellectual capacities to give consent. An important question in this regard is: are women naturally free and equal individuals? If yes, then “why should a free and equal female individual enter a contract that always places her in subjection and subordination to a male individual”? 
Drawing from the works of earlier thinkers like Locke, Filmer, and Rousseau, Pateman (1989) has argued that these thinkers had accepted the assertion that women were 'naturally' subordinate to men and a wife's subjection to her husband had a foundation in nature. Thus, "if a wife's subjection to her husband has a 'natural' foundation, she cannot also be seen as a 'naturally' free and equal individual" (Pateman, 1989: 74). And if a woman is not treated as a naturally free and equal individual, her consent holds no relevance. According to Pateman (1988a) the pre-condition of democracy is the sexual subordination of woman at home. She argues:

*today, women have won an independent civil status and the vote; they are, apparently, 'individuals' as well as citizens - and thus require no special attention in discussions of democracy. However, one of the most important consequences of the liberal individualism and the establishment of universal suffrage has been to highlight the practical contradiction between the formal political equality of liberal democracy and the social subordination of women, including their subjection as wives within the patriarchal structure of the institution of marriage* (Pateman, 1989: 214).

As socialists believe that class inequalities undercut supposed political equality, feminists think that inequalities in marriage and home make a nonsense of equal political rights (see Phillips, 1991; Pateman, 1989). "Women have not been incorporated as citizens like men, but as members of the family, a sphere separate from (or in social exile from) civil society and the state" (Pateman, 1989: 182). The organisation of private life i.e. domestic life, is the major obstacle to the democratic involvement of women (Phillips, 1991).

On the grounds of these discrepancies in the democratic political thought, the presumption of liberal democrats sounds inadequate when they claim that by providing the voting rights to women, they had provided all necessary rights and freedom to them. Liberal democratic thought, argues Pateman (1989), has ignored the existence of widespread and deeply held convictions and of social practices that give them expression that contradict the formally equal civic status of women. Both the supposedly natural differences between women and men justifying the subordination of women to their husbands in the institution of marriage, and the division between private and public, which is also a division between women and men, are central to the patriarchal order of liberal democracy. "If the assumption of natural subjection
did not still hold, liberal-democratic theorists would long ago have begun to ask why is it that an ostensibly free and equal individual should always agree to enter a contract which subordinates her to another such individual" (Pateman, 1989: 218). Pateman further stresses that "democratic ideals and politics have to be put into practice in the kitchen, the nursery and the bedroom. Women cannot win an equal place in democratic productive life and citizenship if they are deemed to be destined for one ascribed task" (Pateman, 1989: 222). Therefore, the argument is made that "politics has to be reconceptualised without the blind spots of gender, and democracy rethought with both sexes written in. Old concepts must be fashioned anew" (Phillips, 1991:3).

Giving an economic perspective to the 'individual' of liberal theory, Tickner (1991) argues that women's work does not fit into the paradigm of liberal individualism. Liberal theory counts the individual as the basic unit of analysis. According to liberals, human beings are by nature economic animals driven by rational self-interest. Rational economic 'man' is assumed to be motivated by laws of profit maximisation. 'He' is highly individualistic, pursuing 'his' own economic goals in the market without any social obligation to the community of which 'he' is a part. Tickner (1991) argues that the highly individualistic, competitive market behaviour of rational economic 'man' could not be a norm if women's experiences were taken as the prototype for human behaviour. Most of women's work in the provision of basic needs takes place outside the market, in households or in the subsistence sector of Third World economies. Moreover, when women enter the market economy, they are disproportionately represented in caring professions as teachers, nurses, or social workers - choices that are generally not made on the basis of profit maximisation but on the basis of values that are emphasised in female socialisation. Therefore, most women's (and some men's) motivations and behaviours cannot be explained using this model of rationality.

Questioning the gendered nature of 'citizen', Walby (1994) has given an excellent critique of the theory of citizenship. It has been established that citizenship is composed of three elements viz., civil, political and social citizenship (see Walby, 1994; Murdock and Golding, 1989). Civil citizenship contains freedom of speech, freedom of thought and religion, freedom of movement and association, and freedom to own and dispose of property. Political rights are concerned with the exercise of political power i.e. holding public office, electing members, involvement in exercise of laws. Social rights involve the security of basic standards of life, for example, connecting with the educational system, social services etc. Arguing that 'citizenship'
is gendered, Walby (1994) demonstrates that women in Britain (before 1928) and in the US (until 1920) did not have many of the features of either civil or political citizenship. For example, women did not have liberty of person as they were deprived of the right to abortion and contraception, thus not in control of their own bodies. Married women did not have the right to live separately from their husbands, did not have the right to own property until the late 19th Century. Most importantly, women did not have political citizenship until the vote was granted to women in 1918 and 1928 respectively. Similarly, women were denied civil rights in the form of restricted employment. Walby (1994) argues that describing the US as a 'liberal' society in the 1840s is inappropriate because political and civil rights were confined to only a minority of population. The US did not become a full 'democracy' until the 1960s when civil and political rights were extended to all adults. Even in its present form, as Walby (1994: 391) argues, "the male-dominated family-household is incompatible with full citizenship". Therefore, it is difficult to understand 'citizenship' without looking into its gender component.

From the foregoing discussion it is clearly evident that women were not granted access to the formal political sphere until the beginning of 20th Century in most Western countries and hence they were not treated as equal citizens. Although after a long struggle women won political rights and access to the formal political sphere, there are serious drawbacks noted in traditional democratic thought which impinge upon women's participation in political life. Even the crudest indicator like the number of women in politics bears testimony to it. It is mainly because social inequality remains a major hindrance in women's participation, and sexual subordination at home still falls outside the realm of public/political thought.

The feminist movement has gained momentum in each part of the world raising women's concerns at a political level. Women's groups have proliferated everywhere in the past two decades, and women activists have been lobbying for women's rights, situating themselves within or outside the formal political system within each country. There is a diverse range of issues on feminist agendas which are specific to each culture and society. While the feminist struggle continues, the role of media in representing women's concerns has become a crucial part of feminist debate. In contemporary times any discussion on the role and participation of women in the political public sphere is incomplete without looking at the dimension of media's role in representing women's concerns. It is because media in today's society are one of the most powerful institutions of the public sphere where opinions are exchanged, controversial issues are debated and public consciousness is shaped. The importance
of media, according to McQuail (1994) lies in the fact that media are a 'power resource' in terms of exerting influence in society and are a major means of communication. They are a 'location' where public affairs are played out; they are a 'source' of varied definitions of social reality and represent changing culture and values of society; and most importantly, they are a source of the 'public meaning system' which signals the public definition of 'normality' and 'deviance' in society.

**Democracy and media** enjoy a very close relationship. A democratic society cannot function without a free media representing public interests. The democratic tradition and liberty of press go hand in hand (see Keane, 1991). Briefly, the doctrine of freedom of speech associated with the press took birth in liberal political philosophy. It was recognised that freedom of speech, especially in the form of freedom of the press, had an important political role to play in a democracy. A representative government in democracy is elected by the people. It represents the majority's interests and secures the interests of minorities. In order to choose between real alternatives, democracy also ensures the fullest possible and qualitatively best participation of interested parties. A free press in this situation performs the watchdog function of protecting against the tendency of the state to abuse the rights of its citizens, and it also performs the democratic function of providing information to the electorate on interested parties and fostering debate on issues they would be voting on (see Keane, 1991; Lichtenberg, 1990; Kelley and Donway, 1990). Early liberal thinkers emphasised more on the role of the press as a watchdog against a despotic government. They believed that "the right to a free press was a political trump held by individuals against government" or "as a check upon the conduct of the ruling few" (Keane, 1991:4 & 16).

While the role of media in early liberal thought was defined mainly in terms of a watchdog, the expectations from this medium widened with the development of mass society. In the words of Dahlgren (1991:1) "as the vision of democracy has evolved historically, so has the view of the desirability and feasibility of fora where the ruled can develop and express their political will to the rulers". And media are the key vehicles through which the 'ruled' can convey their opinions to rulers. Among the various expectations from media as outlined by Gurevitch and Blumler (1994) are: reporting developments likely to impinge on the welfare of citizens; identifying key issues of the day and setting the political agenda; acting as spokesperson of various perspectives and interest groups; facilitating a dialogue between rulers and mass public and across a diverse range of views and so on. Hutchins Commission, in 1947 in the US, specified the additional role of the press which was: "to provide full,
truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which
gives them meaning; to serve as a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism
and be common carriers of the public expression; to give a representative picture of
constituent groups in society and goals and values of society" (McQuail, 1994: 124).
With such developments, media occupied a significant role in society.

Media scholars like Dahlgren (1991), Curran (1991), Eley (1992) have defined media
in modern society as a part of the public sphere which is available to citizens to
receive information on political and public issues and through which citizens can
convey their opinions to policy makers. In a very general and common-sense manner,
the concept of public sphere, according to Dahlgren (1991) can be used as a synonym
for the processes of public opinion or for the news media themselves. The idea of
defining media as a public sphere has been extrapolated from the model of the
'Bourgeois public sphere' offered by Habermas (1989). In his celebrated work on the
origin and development of the bourgeois public sphere in 18th Century Western
Europe, Habermas defines the public sphere as a social space between market
(economy) and the state in which private citizens get together to discuss public issues
and question the absolutist state. While in the 18th Century only privileged people
had the right to participate in this public sphere, the democratic political system in
contemporary times theoretically provides this right to all citizens to participate in
public affairs and to decide the direction of society. Present society is extremely
diverse and pluralistic in nature with different political and social groups competing
to influence political definitions and decisions. Notions like 'freedom', 'equality',
'order', 'public interests', which form the foundations of democracy no longer carry
homogeneous meanings. With increasing consciousness towards one's rights,
different perspectives are available on the same notions. For instance, with its slogan
of the 'personal is political', feminism offers an entirely different perspective on
values like 'order', 'equality', 'public interests' and their implications for women.
Such is the case with other social movements. In a situation full of complexities and
confusion, it is difficult to arrive at a consensus. Therefore, citizens also look for a
common platform where all interests can interact with each other in order to reach a
compromise and to decide the course of society. In such a situation, the media may be
defined as a "liberal, constitutional public sphere permitting a rational, well-informed
conversation between equals capable of resolving their differences by non-coercive
means" (Schlesinger and Tumber, 1995: 9). According to Curran (1991), accessibility
to this sphere and freedom to interpret social reality can be emancipatory in many
ways. On the one hand, it provides an opportunity to subordinate groups to offer their
perspectives and to question the dominant ideologies and structures. On the other
hand, this freedom and accessibility can also promote understanding and tolerance among people towards alternative perspectives.

To what extent do media represent women’s concerns, and to what extent can women participate in this public space? Women, half the world's population, have acquired political citizenship in most societies. And with this development, they have raised various issues regarding their roles and status and have defined the popular issues of freedom, equality, public interests from a different angle (than men) based on their lived experiences. By constitutional definition, this social category is supposed to have equal say and equal access to the public sphere of media. This right under democratic societies raises the issue of the relationship between media and women and prompts us to examine the democratic role of media in relation to women.

Sreberny-Mohammadi (1994a) rightly points out that feminist theory has efficiently exposed the ‘masculinist foundations of political thinking’, but unfortunately there has been little work done in exploring the relationships between political theory and media practice. For instance, are women treated as citizens by the media? Do they have the right to communicate and be heard? Do women's concerns and perspectives get incorporated in the media? What kind of ideas and ideologies are perpetuated by media in relation to women? Some of these issues have been addressed by feminist scholars in different parts of the world and some common results have been derived from those studies. I shall look into these briefly.

**Women and media**

As mentioned earlier, although feminist research has made some useful contributions towards exploring the relationship between democratic political thought and women, much remains to be done in the field of media. There are no clear accounts of the relationship between women and media in the past or the role of women in development of commercial media in the Western societies. The representation of women in the media or the status of women in media organisations themselves came under scrutiny only in modern times with the emergence of women's groups or movements in various countries.

As pointed out by scholars (see Cantor, 1988; Gallagher, 1992; Steeves, 1987), a number of studies carried out in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States looked mainly at images and portrayals of women in various media and established that media promote a traditional sexist attitude towards women. There were only a few
studies conducted which looked into other concerns like attitude of media towards the women's movement (Tuchman, 1978a,b; Morris, 1973; Robinson, 1978), coverage of women's news (Molotch, 1978; Tuchman, 1978b; Epstein, 1978). Further research, however, progressed with the growth of feminism and concerns were expressed on a wide variety of issues like analysis of women's news (Rakow and Kranich, 1991; Van Zoonen, 1988, 1991a; Bailey, 1994; Ross, 1994), representation of women politicians in media (Ross, 1995a; Liran-Alper 1994; Robinson and Saint-Jean, 1994), relationship between the women's movement and media (Van Zoonen, 1992; Rush and Allen, 1989), role of women journalists in media organisations (Castellon and Guillier, 1993; Van Zoonen & Donsbach, 1988; Van Zoonen, 1989; Lunenburg, 1993; Rush and Allen, 1989; Smith, 1980), construction of gender by media (Ang and Hermes, 1991; Van Zoonen, 1995), feminist perspectives on media (Steeves, 1987; Van Zoonen, 1991b, 1994) and so on. Most of these concerns have emerged mainly within the West.

Feminism has many schools (liberalism, radicalism, Marxism/socialism) and ideologies but each school establishes that media have undermined women in their coverage. Media have been viewed as a major vehicle in transmitting patriarchal ideology and maintaining the social order with women at the bottom of the hierarchy. Research has focused on various media like newspapers, television, advertising, magazines etc. Various issues mentioned above have been debated within the organisational, ideological, and structural constraints of media. Further, the role of women journalists in promoting women's issues, development of alternative media by women's groups and its significance also hold an important place on the feminist agenda. Studies (see Morris, 1973; Robinson, 1978; Van Zoonen, 1992, 1996) looking at the coverage of the women's movement have found that newspapers have largely blacked it out or presented it in a bad light. Under-representation of women's issues and/or delegitimization of the women's movement by media gives rise to a question that if media in a democratic society ought to give space to divergent values in order to initiate dialogue, then why are women's issues and the women's movement ignored? Research (see Schudson, 1991; Curran, 1982) in media studies points out various factors (economic, political, cultural, organisational) which influence the democratic functioning of media in society and which determine who gets listened to and who does not. A controversy over theorising of the relationship between women and media remains unresolved within feminist scholarship since it is still an under-researched area. Nonetheless, it provides a starting point for further research.
In sum it may be argued that media are an embodiment of democratic values and are an essential part of the public sphere which represents the interests of public or citizens. They are a cornerstone of democracy and have replaced the model of face-to-face communication or public gatherings of past to discuss public issues. In a modern society (capitalist, industrialised, ruled by democratically elected governments) (McQuail, 1994), media are the carriers of public opinion and play a significant role in giving voice to people. They are a part of the political process and play an important role in setting the agenda for policy makers and for the audience. They mediate the concerns of various political actors and act as mediator between them and policy makers. How far have media represented the concerns of women? What is the status of women’s issues on the agenda of media? And what relationship can be established between political theory and media practice? These are some of the crucial questions which need to be addressed in order to examine the democratic role of media towards women.

**Focus on India**

This chapter started with an exploration of Western feminist political theory and further questioned the role of media in representing women’s issues. It must be noted that the major reason for my using the Western feminist scholarship lies in the logic of 'need' and not 'want' since there is lack of such theoretical concerns within Southern feminism. Third World feminism has not developed much in building up this triangular framework on the relationship between women, democracy and media. It may be because the democratic model itself did not develop theoretically within the Third World as it has been adopted by most of those countries only after gaining independence from colonial powers. In such circumstances, one may also argue, as Spivak (in Bhatnagar et al 1990: 69) does, "I believe in using what one has, and this has nothing to do with privileging First World theories...". Thus the contextualisation in the present chapter has provided me an insight into an ongoing debate and a platform to pursue research within the Indian context which also offers a democratic political system and a democratic press.

Within the framework set out in the current chapter, the present study aims to explore the coverage of women’s news/issues and the Indian women’s movement in Indian national press. Although feminism all over the world has expressed its concern over the subordination of women in general and the under-representation or misrepresentation of women in various media in particular, the differences within
different societies need further probing. The issue is under-researched particularly in Third World countries.

It seems relevant here to point out some specificities of Third World countries. After gaining independence, many Third World countries adopted Western political models to run the administration of their countries. India, in particular, has adopted many features from its colonial power, such as a democratic political system and an autonomous press based on Western models. Today India is the biggest democracy in the world. The Constitution of India guarantees freedom and equality to all citizens regardless of sex, class, caste, religion, or other social and economic differences. With the exception of the state of emergency, freedom guaranteed to people manifests in free elections, free press, freedom to form associations, access to government officials etc. Indian political culture and law also provide room for movements to develop, for people to mobilise openly, and to voice their opinions on controversial issues (Calman, 1992).

As a part of political liberalism and sweeping reforms, Indian women achieved the status of political citizens without any opposition. While Western women had to struggle hard to obtain political citizenship, success came to these Third World women quite easily. Women won the franchise at the same time as men i.e. at the time of national independence in 1947. Further Third World women's liberation movements often have their origins in the national liberation movements. For instance, Indian women joined the national liberation movement and simultaneously worked towards their own emancipation as well. After independence, they got legal, economic, and political rights. However in the late 1970s, as Ryan (1992) argues within the US context, Indian women realised that they were winners of a hollow fortress as the social structures had largely remained unchallenged after independence. Women, who had participated in the struggle for freedom with same zeal as men for nation's independence, were pushed back into the private sphere after the political goal was achieved (see chapter 2). As Lateef (1981) argues, independence movements provided women favourable legislation in many Third World countries, however, it was left to later women leaders to deal with the problems created by political and economic restructuring and to evolve a new ideology to meet the post-independence requirements of their constituents.

Another characteristic which may be noted in Third World Asian countries is that they are countries born of ancient civilisations in which traditional social institutions are very strongly established. Although many elements in these countries like
political administration, economic system, industrial and technological development etc. have been modernised, the traditional structures like the caste system in India and patriarchal structures remained unchanged, particularly in relation to women's roles and status (discussed in chapter 2). Also, in their fight against external powers, Third World societies were often extremely protective of their culture, and the responsibility to carry traditions in such situation mainly falls on women. Being the carriers of culture women are expected to live up to the traditions, and hence retain the nation's identity against foreign cultures. Trapped within the complexities of a transitional society with a 'modern face but traditional soul', the position of women in Indian society remains powerless in spite of its being the biggest democracy in the world. The disparity of status between women and men, not only in the private but also in the public spheres, negates the ideals enshrined in India's Constitution.

The role of a democratic press is particularly significant in a traditional society since it not only carries a responsibility to act as a watchdog over government actions or provide information to citizens about government policies but also it is expected to encourage progressive values and bring forth change. Women are worst affected in a traditional/developing society i.e. poor women are oppressed both as workers when being marginalised in the processes of economic development and within the domestic sphere, and non-working women are mainly oppressed within the confines of a traditional patriarchal culture. Although in poor socioeconomic conditions the majority of women and men face similar problems in terms of fulfilment of basic needs, women as a gendered category have less political and economic resources. According to development scholars like Anand (1992) no real development is possible unless the everyday preoccupations of women are addressed. In such situation, as argued by Sreberny-Mohammadi (1994b), media can help to focus attention on issues which are important to women and can give voice to women's perspectives. In her words "media are ends in themselves, influential sites of representation where gender sensitivity and new imagery, women's creativity and women's voices can be presented. Media are also means to other ends, vehicles to facilitate public debate about broader social issues and concerns - the eradication of poverty, sustaining the environment, health, peace - about which women have a great deal to say" (ibid. 5). As far as subordination of non-working women within the domestic sphere is concerned, it may be argued that media exist at the boundary between the private and the public and they are supposed to discover, unveil, and create what is public (Nelson, 1994). The crucial question then is how far have Indian media contributed towards women's concerns? And which issues have received public definition within the elite sphere of media?
Within the above framework, the present study initiates an enquiry into the coverage of women's news/issues in the media within the Indian context. This study analyses the coverage within the wider social and political contexts and addresses three broad concerns, which are:

- what is the position of women in Indian democracy?
- what is the status of women's issues and the women's movement on the media agenda? and
- how can media practices be explained through the cultural and political practices of Indian society? In other words, what similarities can be drawn between the cultural practices, political practices, and media practice towards women's issues and the women's movement?

This study is exploratory in nature and adopts a multi-dimensional approach to achieve its objectives. It begins with a detailed historical and cultural analysis of women's role and position in Indian society, the treatment of women by the democratic state, the formation of Indian women's movement and issues on its agenda, and so on. This analysis is essential for an understanding of India's sociocultural context in relation to which I will later analyse coverage of women's news/issues in the press. This contextualisation will help in demonstrating the linkages between women's social status and media practice. The analysis has been offered within the framework of a culturalist perspective.

After exploring the nature of coverage of women's news/issues and the movement, the relationship between women activists and journalists are investigated. Some of the concerns raised in this context are: the status of women activists within an elite public sphere of media and polity; the patterns of interaction between women activists and journalists, and women activists and policy makers; the role of media as agenda-setters; and the role of women activists as agenda-builders. The analysis takes its reference point from feminist media research, movement-media relationship, and agenda-setting function of media.

At the fourth stage, the opinions of journalists regarding the coverage of women's news/issues and the movement are explored to gain further insight into the factors which may influence the coverage of the issue in question. Various forces which may be at work within activists-journalists relationship are examined, and the role of women journalists in covering or promoting women's issues is assessed.
It is important to understand that this study is the first of its kind analysing the status of women's news/issues in the press within the wider cultural context of Indian society. It is not based upon any previous empirical studies because such studies do not exist to the best of my knowledge. Thus it may be called a preliminary study which would provide a platform to researchers for conducting further research in India. The study has a wide base and touches upon various dimensions of the issues involved. Further research may also be developed on different components in the study (see chapter 9). Apart from this it must be noted that in order to understand the sociology of media, this study stands back from a media-centric approach and analysis media's role within the wider framework of society.

Lastly, owing to my own subjectivity within an urban middle class Indian society, I shall focus this study on the status of women’s issues with in an elite political arena. It is also because my three constituencies i.e. the government (including policy-makers), press, and women’s groups function at an elite level of society. It is at this level that policy-decisions regarding women’s issues are taken which impact upon gender construction and women’s position in general. While in content analysis of press coverage (see chapter 5), I will examine the issues/themes which may have an impact on women of which ever strata, in the interviews with women activists and journalists my main concern is to determine the status of women’s concerns within an elite society (see chapters 7 and 8). I have emphasised largely on middle class women’s issues in this study who also largely come from higher castes. The reason for this emphasis is that the gender stereotypes are stronger among middle class and/or higher castes (see chapter 2), and policy-decisions/legal decisions can affect this strata of women more in terms of gender construction. Further, middle class women have always provided leadership to the women’s movement in India and have lobbied for women’s issues at political level and hence their status and concerns need to be addressed and analysed.

Organisation of the chapters

This project was carried out in India. Therefore, a background to the status of women at different periods of Indian history reflecting a social and political attitude towards women, origin and development of the Indian women’s movement (IWM), issues on its agenda, various social and political hurdles facing the movement, are essential to the understanding of the study. Chapter two examines these issues in detail and offers a historical and cultural analysis of the position of women in Indian society. Women’s
status as citizens in the democratic polity of the post-independence period is explored. This chapter forms the context for the study and provides a major framework to study the attitude of news media towards women's issues and the women's movement since media are part of the same culture.

While chapter three carries a briefing on the Indian national press, chapter four outlines the theoretical framework(s) which inform the present study and reviews the literatures. Chapter five explains the research methods employed in the thesis to achieve its aims and discusses their appropriateness for the present study. It also describes the selection of newspapers for content analysis, the selection of women's organisations and journalists for interviews, and the framing of the coding schedule and interview schedule.

Chapter six analyses the coverage of women's news/issues and the Indian women's movement in the selected newspaper, i.e. The Hindustan Times. It discusses the particular nature of coverage within the selective framework(s). It examines the relations between media practice, political practice and cultural practice. It also highlights the missing themes on the media agenda against the feminist agenda analysed in chapter two.

Chapter seven focuses on interviews with women activists. It examines activists' opinions on coverage of women's issues in the press, patterns of interaction between activists and journalists, media strategies of women activists, patterns of interaction between activists and policy makers. A major aim of this chapter is to examine the informal patterns of interaction between the said actors and to determine the role of media as agenda-setters and women activists as agenda-builders.

Chapter eight looks at the opinions of journalists regarding the coverage of women's issues and the women's movement in the press; opinions of journalists towards women's movement/groups/activists; gender differences in reporting of news and women's issues in particular. With the help of the findings from chapter six, factors affecting the coverage of women's news/issues and the women's movement, the relationship between journalists and activists are analysed in this chapter. Apart from that, women journalists' role as media professionals is assessed. The summary and conclusions are presented in the final chapter.
Chapter 2
Indian state and society: A Brahmanical cultural paradigm

The universality of female subordination, the fact that it exists within every type of social and economic arrangement and in societies of every degree of complexity, indicates to me that we are up against something profound, very stubborn, something we cannot rout out simply by rearranging a few tasks and roles in the social system, or even by reordering the whole economic structure (Ortner, 1974: 67).

Feminist anthropologists like Rosaldo (1974) and Ortner (1974) have suggested that the secondary status of women in all human societies is a universal phenomenon despite cultural specificities. They strongly argue that biological differences between women and men are not sufficient to explain a woman’s inferior status in cultural value systems which deprive women of authority while giving it to men. In her celebrated piece ‘Is female to male as nature to culture,’ Ortner argues that biological differences between women and men become significant only within cultural systems. Thus the particular social roles and psychic structure of women are cultural rather than a fact of nature. In the words of Rosaldo (1974: 23) a woman’s "giving birth to and raising children leads to a differentiation of domestic and public spheres of activity that can shape a number of relevant aspects of human social structure and psychology". Such a perspective is also shared by psychoanalysts like Chodorow (1974) who attributes the construction of a feminine personality to the universality of female socialisation experience born out of universal features of family structure which relegates early child care responsibilities to women. However, from a materialist angle, scholars like Rubin (1975) also remind us to take into account the political economy of sexes i.e. the contribution of gender systems in strengthening the economic and political power of certain segments and so on (also see Harris, 1979).

While a debate on the origin of women’s oppression remains contestable, the fact that women have a subordinate status in most societies is indisputable. From this agreed terrain I turn now to the cultural specificities of Indian society where the focus of this study lies. I pointed out in the previous chapter that India is the biggest democracy in the world; however, the position of women in Indian society remains subordinated and powerless. In this chapter I will provide a historical and cultural analysis of women’s position in Indian society starting from ancient India to post-independent

1 ‘Brahmanical’ can also be spelt as ‘Brahminical’, and ‘Brahmin’ as ‘Brahman’. Both usages are correct. ‘Brahmanical’ is derived from ‘Brahmin’, which is the highest caste within the caste-hierarchy in India.
democratic regimes. I attempt to show how a casteist-patriarchal society dictated women's roles in the pre-independence period and how a higher-caste hegemony still prevails and defines women's roles in daily life. I further demonstrate that the Indian state remains intensely patriarchal in its attitude towards women despite the liberal democratic rhetoric embraced by it. I wish to argue that oppression of women in India's traditional society has become an integral part of its patriarchal culture and that it is sustained through various discriminatory practices both by the society (i.e. people) and the state. This background is essential to understand the cultural system and the environment in which news media operate. And it is in relation to this existing culture that I shall examine the coverage of women's news/issues in the media. This chapter also focuses on the formation of the Indian women's movement, various issues on its agenda, its continuing struggle for women's rights and the attitude of the state towards various issues raised by it. The media's agenda analysed in chapter six will be compared against the feminist agenda presented in this chapter.

The chapter has been divided into three sections. The first section examines the position of women in the pre-independence period, that is, before and during British imperialism. Section two looks into the post-independence period, discusses the formation of the second phase of the women's movement vis-à-vis women's position in a democratic society, issues on the feminist agenda, and the attitude of the state. In section three I theorise women's position within a cultural model i.e. Brahmanical hegemony which continues to define women's role in Indian society. It is important to specify at the outset that different themes viz., position of women in Indian society, formation of the women's movement, patriarchal nature of society, and the attitude of the state run parallel in the chapter and are not necessarily discussed under separate headings. The interlocking nature of various issues means they cannot be addressed under separate titles.

Section 1: Pre-independence period

The political struggle of Indian women against their unprivileged status dates back to the 19th Century under British imperialism. It is in the context of women's participation in national liberation movements that Mies (1986) has commented that if the French revolution made the proletariat aware of their rights, imperialism made Third World women aware of their identities. But giving such credit to imperialism in awakening women has been questioned by some scholars (Mazumdar, undated; Liddle and Joshi, 1986; Jayawerdena, 1986). Liddle and Joshi (1986: 73) have argued that "the resistance of women in India did not arise primarily from the liberalising
influence of British imperialism, nor from the direct influence of the British women's movement, but from powerful influence of the women's own cultural heritage, and from their particular position in the social class structure which provided economic opportunities and potential independence from the existing relations of gender and social hierarchy. For instance, anti-caste movements in the pre-independence period always raised the issue of women's oppression. Further, the development of social classes as a result of foreign domination provided a platform to many women from the urban middle class to break away from the patriarchal caste system and become economically independent. Jayawerdena (1986) does not deny the significance of imperialism and Western thought but rather believes that historical circumstances produced important material and ideological changes that affected women in many Third World countries.

Similarly, Mazumdar (undated) while questioning the role of women in various movements against the caste system and social inequalities in India's medieval history, wonders at the causes behind women's participation in such movements. She asks "did women join the anti-caste movements in medieval India because they offered them greater freedom? Or was it their entry that raised issues of women's roles and status within the movement"? (p. 4). She argues that "by canonising them as saints and spiritual adventurers, our society has prevented any critical examination of the lives, the social objectives, and the support base of these women" (p. 3). For instance "Mira2 is known only for her devotional poetry, but not for her rejection of the caste system, the convention that forced wives to follow their husband's religious beliefs and practices, and the politics of violence" (p. 3). She argues that even in contemporary times, the historians who have applauded women's participation in the freedom movement as one of the achievements of Gandhi have never looked beyond his charisma to provide an explanation for women's participation (Mazumdar, 1985).

The arguments forwarded by these scholars indicate that the penetration of women into political public sphere in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries has its own history and is embedded in its own social structures. Though this history has been confined mainly to the lives of women of the upper castes, it is those same women who made their entry into a male public sphere and their participation led to the formation of the women's movement in the modern nation-state. What was the impetus behind this participation? How did feminism grow out of nationalism? What was the attitude of male national leaders? And what did women achieve out of this

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2 A Rajput princess (1504-1550) who renounced everything and became a saint-poetess (see Nanavatty, 1958).
In order to place this study in a proper historical context, the background of upper caste women, their position and status in Indian history which formed a basis of their struggle ever since must first be presented.

Before British imperialism

In order to determine the status of upper caste women, I need to trace Indian history briefly to find out the reasons for their struggle and participation in the freedom movement, and to examine how Indian women's struggle was embedded in its own sociocultural structures. There is not much literature available which can highlight the ancient and medieval Indian society from a gender perspective. A major limitation in studying women's role in history, according to Mazumdar (undated) and Jayawerdena (1986) is this paucity of literature. So research has been confined to a few available texts. Moreover, it is not within the scope of this study to analyse the role of women in ancient or medieval India in great detail. An overview would be sufficient to link it up with the present conditions. I shall draw this background mainly from the works of Liddle and Joshi (1986), Thomas (1964), Baig (1958), Jayawerdena (1986), and Gatwood (1985).

The traditional structure on which contemporary Indian society rests has its roots in ancient India. It must be noted that it is difficult to present a monolithic or homogenous picture of ancient Indian society since history is always fractured and full of discontinuities due to gaps in archaeological research. However, certain events are marked off distinctly within particular social and political contexts in human societies. In the following discussion I shall present an overview of such events and situations. I shall go back to the times of Aryans around 1500 BC. It is generally argued that women enjoyed a high status in Indian society before the invasion of Aryans (see Baig, 1958; Thomas, 1964). But after their arrival, an inferior status was assigned to them. Society was divided on the basis of caste into four major groups, viz., Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (traders and artisans), and Sudras (agricultural labourers and untouchables). The concepts of Dharma (sacred law) and Karma were of central importance in this age. According to the theory of Karma, the actions of an individual determine his/her status in the succeeding life, and the morality of action is judged by its conformity with Dharma. Caste was made hereditary and it was required that a person belonging to a particular caste should perform the duties associated with that caste - it was considered his/her righteous action. Within this caste hierarchy, Sudras were the most polluted and their only
Dharma was to serve men of higher castes (Liddle and Joshi, 1986; Thomas, 1964; Jayawerdena, 1986). Similarly a woman's duty was to serve her husband and look after the family. Both Sudras and women were barred from participation in spiritual life (Baig, 1958). "Women could not sacrifice to the gods, because their presence was considered polluting, so a man had to have male children to perform the sacrifices which would allow his soul to rest after death" (Liddle and Joshi, 1986: 62). The lives of upper caste women were mainly confined to the domestic sphere with no rights over immovable property and with total exclusion from the public sphere of the productive economy. Further, their sexuality was controlled through arranged marriage, child marriage, prohibition of divorce, strict monogamy for women resulting in sati (widow burning) and a ban on widow remarriage including child widows. The control over women within the higher castes characterised their ritual purity and was an important part of a rise in caste hierarchy.

Thus "control over women's sexuality was essential to the development of the patriarchal caste hierarchy, both for the maintenance of the caste and for the legitimisation and control of inheritance" (Liddle and Joshi, 1986: 57). It is further pointed out by Liddle and Joshi (1986) that upper castes never imposed their codes or regulations on lower castes. Instead, they used the mutual differences to enforce caste hierarchy and prevent their women from coming into sexual contact with lower caste men. Thus, it helped to maintain a social exclusiveness. Thomas (1964) argues that this prejudice has persisted through the ages to the present day.

Caste hierarchy and oppression of women was challenged by lower castes at various times which often corresponded to changes in the economic order. The opening up of trade around the last few centuries BC. brought many new economic opportunities for lower castes. The development of new religious sects like Buddhism and Jainism also attracted lower castes because of their humanitarian basis. These atheistic religions also threatened the authority of Brahmins and sanctions of the old Vedic religion (see Liddle and Joshi, 1986; Thomas, 1964; Srinivas, 1962, Gatwood, 1985). The resistance to the authority of Brahmins by lower castes and expansion of trade resulted in further oppression of women of upper castes as Brahmins tightened their control over women to prove their supremacy over lower castes. Education was limited mainly to themselves, and women and Sudras were totally constrained. High caste women were also withdrawn from their previous occupations in education and arts. Although from the earliest Aryan times a woman's purpose had been limited to

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3 It is worthy to note that even today women's entry is restricted in many temples during their menstruation period. This code is also followed in many Hindu temples in England. The belief that menstruating women are impure is still pervasive in Hinduism (The Guardian, 15 January, 1996).
producing sons for her husband, many other elements were added into the law books at this stage. Manu wrote: "A woman should never be independent. Her father has authority over her in childhood, her husband in youth, and her son in old age". Also "a man could only achieve merit by protecting the purity of his wife and, through her, of his sons" (see Liddle and Joshi, 1986: 63; Gatwood, 1985). The Brahmanical ideal of the *pativrata* (husband worshipping) was emphasised at this time. A Brahmin woman's first duty was to worship her husband as god. The most famous woman ideal promoted at this stage was Sita of the Ramayana epic (see Baig, 1958; Thomas, 1964).

As documented by Liddle and Joshi (1986) women's position declined further around 500 AD. Their position deteriorated in particular among upper castes. Child marriage was made compulsory and widows were despised. The earliest evidence of widow burning was noted in 510 AD., and this act characterised the highest religious merit and was common among *Kshatriyas* in the Northern regions. Brahmins had established their economic and social supremacy in Northern society by consolidating their land holdings over *Kshatriyas* and *Vaisyas* and becoming land owners, thus providing the material basis for their caste supremacy and their power over their women (see Gatwood, 1985).

The maintenance of land and other property within the joint family was the material basis of the patriarchal family structure and the in-marrying nature of the caste system which was regulated by religious laws. Property used to be passed down to sons and not daughters because daughters went to live with the husband's family after marriage. Women were used to be given a part of movable property known as dowry. Property was the basis of controlling woman's sexuality because the distribution of her property coincided with her sexual attachment. So the rule of in-marriage and control of sexuality not only maintained the purity of caste but also ensured that the property remained within the caste. At this time also, women and *Sudras* were regarded as life-long slaves, ascriptive as they were by the social position and status. Women's position deteriorated with the economic supremacy of the caste and this deterioration had a material basis in the maintenance of property within the caste. Thomas (1964) also notes a relationship between property rights and caste among Aryans in ancient times. A woman was not allowed to marry a man from a lower caste. Thomas argues that morality among the ancient Aryans originated from notions

\[\text{In the words of Thomas (1964: 177 & 183), "Sita, whose greatness lies in the annihilation of her individuality, is a paragon of feminine perfection, from the time the Brahmanic ideal of wifehood has established, and has been held as an example to be followed by Hindu women, down the centuries to the present day".}\]
of economic responsibilities and property rights in women and children, and had little
to do with sex relations as such.

The position of women worsened in the Middle Period (Thomas, 1964; Panikkar,
1958). Invasions of Arabs and Turks in the 11th and 12th Centuries and Mughals in
the 16th Century led to another tightening up by Brahmins on women's position.
Around 1000 AD, even child widows were restrained from remarriage among the
higher castes particularly in North India (see Panikkar, 1958). The incidence of sati
increased and seclusion of women became a common practice amongst higher castes
to protect their women from foreign invaders. Women's secondary position during
Islamic power was reinforced amongst the higher caste Hindus. Purdah (veil), child
marriage, widow discrimination, and the pativrata ideal were the norm amongst high-
caste Hindu women and were regarded as symbols of prestige (see Liddle and Joshi,
1986; Baig, 1958). The Mughals ruled in India until the arrival of the Europeans in
the 18th Century. With the invasion of Europeans, and with the establishment of the
British empire in India, a new era was heralded which affected women in diverse
ways. Britain established full control over India by the first half of the 19th century.
The seeds of the social reform movement in India also date back to this period. The
origin of the women's movement lies in the social reform movement which was
initiated by male reformers and taken over by women later (see Jayawerdena, 1986).
In the following section I shall look at the position and role of women under British
imperialism.

British Imperialism

Women's question took a new form under the influence of two movements during
British rule in India, that is, the social reform movement and the nationalist
movement. By the mid-19th Century, British rule had been strengthened and the
infrastructure of a colonial economy had been established. The Imperialists needed
local administrators to act as mediators between them and millions of people in India.
They needed "a class of persons Indian in blood but English in taste and opinion"
Therefore, they encouraged higher caste men to avail themselves of the new
opportunities. The English educational system introduced in India produced a local
english speaking bourgeoisie, who were then exposed to European ideas of the

5 The post-colonial scholars (see Ashcroft et al, 1995: 4) argue that "there is a need to distinguish
between what is proposed as a standard code, English (the language of the erstwhile imperial centre),
and the linguistic code, english, which has been transformed and subverted into several distinctive
varieties throughout the world". As a part of this argument, I shall use english (with lower 'e') in this
Enlightenment which stressed human rights of man and resistance to oppression (Jayawerdena, 1986).

Reform movements have usually been attributed to external factors such as the impact of English education, missionary activities, liberal ideas from the West, and internal factors such as the nationalist agitation against imperialism and a religious cultural resistance to the challenge of Christianity and Western culture (Jayawerdena, 1986). In the Indian context, as maintained by Mazumdar (1985), the women's question emerged essentially in the context of an identity crisis of the new educated middle class - the first products of colonial education. Many of them trying to imitate the life styles of rulers found the condition of their own women to be a stumbling block (Mazumdar, 1985). It must be remembered that when British rule started, the position of women in India was the worst in the history of the country (Thomas, 1964). The common practices followed at this stage were sati, child marriage, purdah, polygamy, devdasi\(^5\) system, denial of education and employment and property rights, widowhood constraints etc. Europeans associated the low status of women with the general backwardness of the country. Therefore, a struggle to improve the status of women was launched by social reformers. The notable reformers of this age were Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Dayanand Saraswati etc. (see Jayawerdena, 1986; Patel, 1988; Mazumdar, 1985; Minault, 1981).

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was highly influenced by thinkers like Locke, Smith and Bentham. Mukherjee (quoted in Jayawerdena, 1986: 81) describes him as "one of the male feminist thinkers of the 19th Century" and thinks that Roy's "arguments on women's status were like those of Mary Wollstonecraft's". Roy fought on four issues related to women's rights, viz., sati, polygamy, women's education and women's property rights. Other issues raised by reformers were widow remarriage, monogamy, child marriage. Scholars (Jayawerdena, 1986; Mazumdar, 1985; Forbes, 1981; Desai, undated; Lateef, 1981) have pointed out that the issues raised by reformers were mainly the problems of certain categories of higher caste Hindus. While child

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\(^{5}\) Devdasi is a slave of god (see Thomas, 1964: 236). In certain districts in India the devadasi system is still practised. A girl who is to be a devdasi is dedicated to a goddess before she reaches puberty. The girl is supposed to get transformed into an incarnation of the goddess herself. She is married to a god. Thereafter, she is a permanently married woman. She is not supposed to marry any living man. She becomes a priestess; begs for alms; sings songs in praise of goddess; and is invited for auspicious occasions. However, she can be a mistress of a man who formally promises to look after her. Now-a-days devdasis are lured into the prostitution business (Datar, 1990:180). 'Devdasi' is also defined as the 'Hindu temple dancer-priestess-prostitute' (Gatwood, 1985: 21).
marriage was considered a religious and social obligation by higher castes, the practice was followed by lower castes to protect their daughters from upper caste men with economic power (Mazumdar, 1976). Similarly non-inheritance of property rights was particularly harsh on Hindu widows. It has already been pointed out that subordination of women was essential to maintain the caste hierarchy (Liddle and Joshi, 1986). Jotirao Phule (1827-1890) coming from a lower caste, was the first thinker who suggested a relationship between caste oppression and women's oppression. It is for these reasons that anti-Brahmin movements also advocated women's rights in Indian history (see Jayawerdena, 1986; Mazumdar, 1985).

However, it can be asserted that if elitist male social reformers fought for women's emancipation, it was not to give complete freedom to women as individuals. The reformer's aimed only at the 'dignity and status' of women within the family. Women were not encouraged to become economically and legally independent (see Forbes, 1981). Further, various issues were addressed under the influence of liberal ideas and also to counter the attacks and criticism of the British who defined Hindus as barbaric. Also, until Indians redeemed the image of their society, they had no grounds to bargain for freedom with the British. This is reflected in the comments of Sir Herbert Hope Risley who said: "a society which accepts intellectual inanition (sic) and moral stagnation as the natural condition of its womankind cannot hope to develop the higher qualities of courage, devotion and self-sacrifice which go to the making of nations" (quoted in Forbes, 1981: 52). Forbes argues that with such ideas coming from their rulers and inculcated by foreign education, it was not surprising that the early nationalists were eager to improve the position of their women.

At the same time reformers also noticed the negative consequences of certain customs and practices which were not appreciated by society. For instance, one of the consequences of banning widow marriages was prostitution. Mazumdar (1976: 49) argues that "with increasing urbanisation, prostitution became more commercialised... The large number of young high caste widows, helpless victims of family neglect and even torture, was an obvious recruiting ground. This was a threat that could not be ignored by those who wanted to preserve the family and its economy from destruction. The debate on ill-treatment of widows, the denial of re-marriage, child marriage and polygamy which resulted in widowhood - which raged in the newspapers and journals of the 19th Century, bear ample testimony to this fear among reformers". Thus the issue of widow remarriage was addressed to save the disintegration of the institution of family. Furthermore, it was easy to handle the practice of *sati* and widow remarriage because these practices had not existed in very
early times, and were confined to the upper castes and classes. If remedied, this would give India the appearance of being civilised without endangering the traditional family structures (Jayawerdena, 1986).

Reformers also believed that social evils could best be rooted out with women's education and therefore they supported it to a large extent (see Mazumdar, 1976; Jayawerdena, 1986). Women's education was also considered important to oppose Western culture and promote indigenous values. It was believed that education would improve the status of women within the family on the one hand, and on the other hand it would also introduce a break on the increasing influence of Western values and culture over the minds of young men. Reformers believed that "education would not turn women away from their familial roles, but improve their efficiency as wives and mothers and strengthen the hold of traditional values on society, since women are better carriers of these values" (Mazumdar, 1976: 50). Thus the issue of women's education was also infused into cultural nationalism. Further, "the policies to promote woman's education and the kind of education were not intended to promote women's emancipation or independence, but to reinforce patriarchy and the class system" (Jayawerdena, 1986: 89). Linking it to the identity crisis of middle class men, Jayawerdena (1986: 14) further argues that "in search for a national identity the emergent bourgeoisie harked back to a national culture: the new woman could not be a total negation of traditional culture. Although certain unjust practices needed to be abolished, women still had to act as guardians of national culture, indigenous religion and family traditions - in other words, to be both 'modern' and 'traditional'.

However, the reform of education provided an opportunity to many higher caste women to explore avenues of employment and social work that had been previously refused to them (see Baig, 1958). Such women availed the opportunity and went for studies to different parts of the world though they had to fight against the heavy forces of conservatism (Jayawerdena, 1986). Jayawerdena quotes the instances of Rukmabai who obtained a medical degree from London university in 1895: "Rukmabai rebelled against Indian traditionalism in order to study medicine. She left her husband who filed a suit against her. She was bitterly criticised and even sentenced to six months imprisonment if she did not agree to live with him. A compromise was finally reached whereby she had to pay a large sum of money to her husband. It was, however, decreed in accordance with Hindu Law, that Rukmabai could never marry again" (p. 89-90; also see Bedi, 1958). Similarly, Pandita Ramabai and her family had to face plenty of hardships to get education. Her father was cast out of the society for teaching Sanskrit to his wife against social convention. The
family had to live like nomads because they held progressive views (see Jayawerdena, 1986). Jayawerdena (1986) has pointed out that many examples of protest by women have been lost to history. But most of these women came from higher castes and also the majority of them were linked to families whose men had participated in religious or political reform movements (see Lateef, 1981; Forbes, 1981). Gradually these women joined the reform movement in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. Some notable names among women reformers were Pandita Ramabai, Ramabai Ranade, Sarojini Naidu, Lady Bose, Bhicaiji Cama, etc. (Chattopadhyay, 1958).

It is important to specify here that the 19th Century social reformers also attached considerable importance to legislation as a means of social change. Legislation for abolition of practice of sati, for widow remarriage, for raising the age of consent for girls was passed through social reform movement (Desai, undated). It is also important to note that the 19th Century reformers were primarily concerned with problems of the newly emerging urban middle class and they focused their attention on the problems faced by women of this class, who also belonged to the higher castes. Mazumdar (1985: 3) argues that "the image of the suppressed, subjugated and secluded Indian woman - Hindu or Muslim - that preoccupied the Indian literate and their counterparts in the West took no note of the millions of Indian women who formed the back-bone of the Indian economy, and who were far greater victims of the colonial transformation of the economy than even the men in their family". Such women worked in the jute industry, plantations, silk, textile industries and other village industries which had been greatly hit by the changes in economy. Women had also played an active role in peasant movements of the 19th and 20th Centuries but they were never paid attention by the reformers (Mazumdar, 1985; Chattopadhyay, 1958). Commenting on this discrepancy, Mazumdar reasons that since most history has been recorded by men from the urban middle class, they tend to forget the struggles and role of women of all classes in various movements at different periods of time. She further argues that "a narrow definition of the women's movement limiting it to organised demands of elite women in the 20th Century, omits the struggles of non-elite women down the ages, and ignores the historical roots of movements by women" (Mazumdar, undated: 3).

By the end of the 19th Century, in urban areas, women liberated by the social reform movement had formed their groups and represented their opinions before government and the public. But working within existing limitations, these groups also aimed at improving the status of women within the family by urging support for raising the age of marriage, for women's education and widow remarriage. This movement provided
a platform to women leaders and a number of women rose to prominence. Later it led to the formation of the Women's Indian Association in 1917 and the All India women's conference in 1927 (see Forbes, 1981). The first wave of the women's movement flourished in India along with the national movement. It aimed to bring women together to advance their status through education, social reform and politics. It demanded women's suffrage, lobbied for women's issues, and promoted candidates for election to the councils and appointment to government commissions. Apart from this other issues raised were problems of children, and the plight of untouchables, which were extensions of their nurturing roles. The leaders of these organisations came from reformers' families. These women had been educated as a result of their male family members' interest in education or their interest in improving the status of women. Through male family members, women leaders had built up contacts with prominent male nationalists. But these women, argues Forbes (1981: 54-55), "explicitly denied any similarity between their movement and the movements of Western 'feminists' with their implied sexual antagonism". Women leaders did not like to be called feminists since they did not favour an antagonism between men and women on the one hand, and on the other they could not risk losing the support of the Congress party which was committed to women's cause. Another reason offered by Liddle and Joshi (1986) is that the term 'feminist' suggested the priority of the women's question over the nationalist question. Whatever the reasons, women did not encounter male criticism due to their anti-feminist stand.

As political activity increased in the country a number of women got involved in revolutionary activities. With the enlargement of the national movement, women's participation became highly visible. Mies (1980: 117) argues that "for the early pioneers of social and religious reform, women were at first objects of their emancipatory efforts, but in the course of the 19th and 20th Centuries they became more and more subjects in the political and social sphere". Gandhi mobilised a mass movement seeking the support of women as active participants in that struggle (see Forbes, 1981). He encouraged women to join the political movement by emphasising their importance and by giving them specific tasks which appealed to them. He believed that women were true satyagrahis (non-violent activists), embodying the talents which were needed for non-violent struggle: courage, tolerance and self sacrificing (see Forbes, 1981; Katrak, 1992). In the mass movements of the 1920s and 1930s, women's participation was much in evidence in certain acts such as the khadi (home-spun cloth) campaigns, in the picketing of shops selling foreign goods, and in the salt march of 1930, as well as in general political demonstrations and mass agitation which resulted in the call by Congress for civil disobedience (see Baig,
1958; Jayawerdena, 1986). Chattopadhya, a militant Congress activist and a participant in the salt march recalled: "thousands of women strode down to the sea like proud warriors...they bore pitchers of clay, brass and copper ... How had they broken their age-old shell of social seclusion and burst into this fierce light of open warfare? What had stirred their ancient quietude and turned them into militant rebels"? (Chattopadhyay, 1958: 19; see Basu, 1976).

The struggle for freedom continued till India got independence in August 1947 and women of all classes participated actively in the mass movements. During this struggle the national leaders pledged that in independent India there would be no discrimination of any kind against anyone. Women in particular were given full rights in the Constitution of India. The political model of the West, that is, liberal democracy was adopted. This first phase of women's movement was over with the declaration of constitutional rights for women. Women became complacent and their political activity waned for sometime. But this phase certainly provided the impetus for another phase which followed in the 1970s. Before I examine the other phase, it is important to look into the patriarchal ideologies of national leaders like Mohandas Gandhi which remained hidden to women of that period.

Patriarchal ideology of national leaders

Gandhi has the credit of bringing women into the political sphere by encouraging them to participate in the national liberation movement, thus creating conditions for them to move out of the domestic sphere. In fact Gandhi was successful in mobilising not only the women from upper castes but also peasants, lower castes, untouchables etc. to aim at imperialism (Forbes, 1981; Liddle and Joshi, 1986). It will not be wrong to say that he offered women an opportunity to break from a secluded past as a result of which women developed their sense of worth and identity in later years. Gandhi's approach appealed to women because they had spent long years in passivity and silent suffering, and also to men who had great faith in Gandhi and therefore they did not fear entrusting women in Gandhi's custody (Liddle and Joshi, 1986). However, critics also argue that Gandhi did not perceive women's liberation from the patriarchal structures and traditions, injustices within the gender relations and that he required women mainly to turn his campaign into a mass movement. In Gandhi's opinion women were by nature non-violent and superior to men in being self-sacrificing. Commenting on women, he once said "to me the female sex is not the weaker sex; it is the nobler of the two: for it is even today the embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith and knowledge" (quoted in Jayawerdena,
1986: 95). This glorificatory image of women promoted by Gandhi fitted well into his philosophy of political non-violent resistance. Thus Gandhi used women mainly as tools in the nationalist movement and did not attach much importance to their personal, political and economic identity. On the political front, he liked to command women's actions. For instance, he encouraged women's involvement in picketing cloth and liquor shops but did not approve their participation on the salt march. At times, he would be furious when women refused to follow his dictates (see Baig, 1958; Liddle and Joshi, 1986).

On the economic front, as argued by Jayawerdena (1986) and Mies (1980), Gandhi had no notion of economic equality for women. Mies (1980: 126) argues that "in Gandhi's idealised image of woman her economic activity, especially the aspect of her economic independence, is not emphasised. As the most important activity he recommends to women spinning and weaving, both of which he considers as religious acts and conforming to the 'nature' of woman. On the economic independence of women he speaks evasively. The image of the modern independent career women does not fit into Gandhi's conception of the ideal woman". In fact Mies suggests that "Gandhi created a myth of Indian womanhood, Sita-like in her devotion to service and self-sacrifice, whether in her family or to her nation" (quoted in Forbes, 1981: 52). It is further argued by Jayawerdena (1986: 95) that "Gandhi's view of women's equality was located within a religious sense of the word and within the patriarchal system, projecting a concept of women's role as being complementary to that of men and embodying virtues of sacrifice and suffering". In the virtue of self-sacrifice, he considered women superior to men but in other areas he promoted women's role as secondary and complementary to men. For instance, he supported women's education but for him the purpose of education was different for men and women. He said: "In framing any scheme of women's education this cardinal truth must be kept in mind. Man is supreme in the outward activities of a married pair and, therefore, it is the fitness of things that he should have a greater knowledge thereof. On the other hand, home life is entirely the sphere of women and, therefore, in domestic affairs, in the upbringing and education of children, women ought to have more knowledge" (Gandhi, 1962: 231). Further, although he criticised the ban on widow remarriage, he seems to have propounded widowhood when he said: "voluntary widowhood consciously adopted by a woman who has felt the affection of a partner adds grace and dignity to life, sanctifies the home and uplifts religion itself..." (Gandhi, 1962: 228). The fact that Gandhi promoted the ideal of Sita and values like chastity and honour for women is clearly reflected in his statement that in defence of her honour, a woman should have enough courage to die rather than submit (Gandhi, 1962).
In view of these opinions, it is not difficult to assume that in Gandhi's custody women moved out into the public sphere only for the nationalist cause and then returned to the private sphere. Their participation did not politicise their own subordination and was merely an extension of their nurturing roles. The patriarchal social system remained untouched, leaving a discrepancy between the laws and real equality in society, family and workplace. It "continued to demand and expect gender hierarchy, thus negating the legal equality embodied in the constitution" (Katrak, 1992: 402).

Nehru, another prominent national leader of that age, seemed to be more progressive than Gandhi in his views on women (Chattopadhyay, 1958; Jayawerdena, 1986). He stressed the need for women to work outside the home, to obtain economic independence and not to adopt marriage as a profession. He believed that economic dependence was the root cause of the troubles of the Indian women, and also believed in the insignificance of superficial reforms in the emancipation of women. In one of his speeches, he said: "I must confess to you that I am intensely dissatisfied with the lot of the Indian women today. We hear a good deal about Sita and Savitri. They are revered names in India and rightly so, but I have a feeling that these echoes from the past are raised chiefly to hide our present deficiencies and to prevent us from attacking the root cause of women's degradation in India today" (quoted in Jayawerdena, 1986: 98). Nehru did not believe in a fixed sphere for women or that education for women should therefore have a different emphasis. In another speech, he told women: "...the future of India cannot consist of dolls and playthings and if you make half the population of a country the mere plaything of the other half, an encumbrance on others, how will you ever make progress? Therefore, I say that you must face the problem boldly and attack the roots of evil" (quoted in Jayawerdena, 1986: 98). For Nehru, women's struggle was clearly two-fold, that is, against imperialism and also against oppression by men (Jayawerdena, 1986; Mazumdar, 1976).

However, despite the progressive ideas of some leaders, women's roles were subsumed within the broader political struggle. Men set the parameters and moved history by setting the roles to be played by women in the national movement. Liddle and Joshi (1986) argue that support for the women's cause in practice was ambiguous within the nationalist movement. Women's demands were acceded to when they furthered the nationalist cause, but the alliance would split over issues which posed a direct challenge to male privilege. For instance, there was support for women's suffrage because it allowed national leaders to prove that they were more advanced
than the British and were capable of self-rule. Secondly, women’s suffrage added to
the nationalist cause because an increase in Indian political representation was likely
to be unfavourable to the British. Further, the notion of equal citizens in both sex and
caste terms was a revolutionary idea in Indian politics, but on matters of personal law
reform, many men did not accept the principle of sexual equality in practice.

The demand for a Hindu Code reforming areas of personal law such as marriage,
divorce and inheritance was initiated by the All India Women’s Conference in 1934.
But male leaders opposed the implementation of the principle in marriage and
inheritance because it threatened their own privileges as men in the family. In 1943
some changes were introduced in the Code like giving a share to a widow in the
husband’s property; banning polygamy; legalising inter-caste marriage and making
divorce possible. But when women demanded further changes, demonstrations were
held against these demands in some cities. In 1945, the Indian political elite became
divided over the Hindu Code. They reached an agreement on economic and political
issues but not on domestic issues like marriage and inheritance. After independence,
the issue faced opposition in the assembly. The opponents argued that women
assembly members were not representative of women’s opinions; that the reformers
were influenced by Western education and law instead of Hinduism and were
unpatriotic; and that women’s inheritance rights would lead to women refusing to
marry (Liddle and Joshi, 1986). The supporters of the Bill argued that political
equality was meaningless in the absence of social equality.

However, after the first general elections, the Hindu Code was finally enacted, but as
pointed out by Liddle and Joshi (1986), when it came to implementing the principle
of sexual equality in the domestic arena, many nationalist men were forced to admit
that whilst they were determined to resist national subordination they did not want to
forgo their domination of women. Thus equality was granted in the areas of politics
and employment, but, the authors (ibid.) argue that “it was in precisely the area which
characterises women’s subordination, the very feature which distinguishes gender
oppression from other forms, namely in personal, domestic, sexual and family
relations, that the men resisted conceding their privilege” (p. 38). This resistance
proves how political is the nature of relations in a patriarchal family. It is the area
where women have to deal with men on a personal basis and it is the area where legal
reforms cannot be put into practice because it is considered a private sphere (see
Mies, 1986).
Liddle and Joshi (1986) conclude that women received tremendous support for their cause and achieved revolutionary legal changes through fighting the women's issue on the nationalist platform. But the breakdown in the coalition indicates that although the two issues were related, they were not identical. For instance, Kumari (1993) noted that while the right to vote was granted by male leaders, the Devdasi Bill which banned temple prostitution of young girls was opposed by them. Forbes (1981) also argues that when women's issues did not threaten patriarchal society, they could easily coexist with the nationalist movement. She maintains that the Indian nationalist leaders had inherited an ideology from early reformers which was to support women's cause as progress of women was an indicator of social and political progress. Since the 19th Century, the reform movement had propagated that "women must not be ill-treated and must be given some dignity and status, because they are the custodians of the family" (Forbes, 1981: 53). Gandhi's commitment to women's activism became an ideological precept with the Congress party in the post-independence period, as suggested by Katzenstein (1981). However, it cannot be denied that the seeds of the women's movement were born out of the nationalist movement and that by their participation in the political movement, Indian women helped their own struggle for liberation (Lateef, 1981).

Section II: Post-independence period

The women's question in India has usually gained momentum in the wake of socio-political upheavals in Indian society (Phadnis, 1989). The social reform movement and the nationalist movement in the pre-independence period took up women's issues as a result of social, economic, and political changes in society. Even after independence, the women's question emerged within the same context but this time it was initiated by women themselves. This phase has been called the second wave of the women's movement and it was political in its approach, that is, it questioned the subordination of woman within the patriarchal social structure and called for democratisation in every sphere. What was the impetus for this movement? Who set the agenda? What issues were raised? In the following section I shall look into the origin of the second wave of the women's movement, the issues on its agenda and the attitude of society and state towards those issues.

Second phase of the women's movement

The second wave of the women's movement was the result of internal change in India in the 1970s, and was also influenced by the growth of international feminism. The
internal changes were associated with political repression, the failure of the Indian government to fulfil the economic needs of poor people, and its disregard towards human rights issues. By the mid-1970s, the Indian state was in turmoil. It had failed to address the needs of its people, and to integrate people into the political process. The community development schemes of the 1950s and the green revolution7 of the 1960s had failed to close the gap between the rich and poor. It gave rise to many radical movements in India like the anti-price-rise movement, the anti-corruption movement, student protests, peasant movements, and other working class movements focusing on unemployment, low wages, distribution of land etc. Women were an integral part of this process of struggle and self-expression. They also took up issues related to oppression of women like violence in the family, sexual discrimination at the work place, alcoholism, wife-beating, eve-teasing8, etc. all over India.

To maintain its power, Indira Gandhi’s Congress government declared a national emergency in 1975 as a result of which many political and civil rights of citizens were affected and their activities halted under the state repression (for details see Calman, 1992). People were badly affected by the emergency, and when it was lifted in 1977 the issues of civil liberties and human rights became high priorities. Movement politics became an alternative to party politics (Calman, 1992). The non-party organisations mushroomed seeking rights for the powerless. Violence against women in the form of dowry deaths, bride-burning, and rapes in police custody, were made visible during this period. During the Emergency, Sanjay Gandhi’s special focus on the custom of dowry turned women’s attention to dowry deaths as a result of which such deaths were investigated by a woman’s organisation called Mahila Dakshata Samiti (MDS) after the lifting of emergency. Dowry deaths were highlighted by the press as a part of human rights issue after they were made public by women activists. Similarly rapes of poor or tribal women in police custody as a part of state repression also came to the notice of women. Many autonomous women’s groups were developed at this stage and these women were largely drawn from the middle class (see Calman, 1989, 1992; Gandhi and Shah, 1991; Patel, 1988; Katzenstein, 1989; Kumar, 1989; Sharma, 1992).

A second important factor which contributed to the growth of the women’s movement was the results of a Report on the Status of Women in India called ‘Towards Equality’ which had been prepared on behalf of the Indian government (Calman, 1992). In 1967 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a declaration on the elimination

7 A development programme in agriculture.
8 Sexual harassment is popularly known as ‘eve-teasing’ in India (see Gandhi and Shah, 1991: 220; Calman, 1992: 82).
of discrimination against women. As a follow up, it requested all member states to submit reports on the status of women in their respective countries. The Government of India formed a Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) in 1971. This report, tabled in 1974, was written after three years of intensive investigations across the country (Mazumdar, 1991) and was released in May 1975 before the declaration of emergency. But since "the report was published just prior to the emergency, its recommendations languished. Along with other concerns about human rights, this was one of the frustrations that burst forth at the emergency's close" (Calman, 1992: 51).

The CSWI reflected upon various aspects of women's lives in India. It focused on their sociocultural, economic, political, health and educational status. The general scenario of women's conditions as highlighted by the report and the recommendations it made need some attention here as it was the first official report prepared on women's status after independence. The demographic survey of the report indicated a decline in the ratio of females to males since 1901 in India as against the reverse statistics of all the countries in the world. It pointed out a higher female mortality rate; the marriage of young girls around the age of ten as a common practice; and lower literacy levels among women as compared to men. The committee argued that such disparities were the results of preference for sons; neglect of female infants and a general neglect of women at all ages. It also argued that "the women in India who hold high positions in government and intellectual life constitute a small, elite group and do not reflect the position of the enormous majority" (Calman, 1992: 52).

In discussing the sociocultural status of women, the report suggested that various oppressive Hindu customs and social practices hindered the development of women as independent individuals, and woman's inferior status was being strengthened by the freedom of various religions to have their personal laws. The committee asked for a Uniform Civil Code in the country. It also pointed at the derogatory images of women in Hinduism, for instance, a woman "is called fickle-minded, sensual, seducer of men; given to falsehood, trickery, folly, greed, impurity and thoughtless action; root of all evil; inconsistent; and cruel" (see Calman, 1992: 53). The status accorded to woman by ancient thinkers like Manu still dominated as an ideal of woman in Indian society. The report found out that the ultimate destiny of woman was considered to be marriage and after marriage a girl was expected to live with her in-laws and to change her loyalties accordingly. This emotional, legal, and economic

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9Due to the non-availability of this document in England, the quotations and data are cited mainly from Calman, 1992.
transference to another family has a negative impact on the well-being of a woman. As mentioned earlier, a son is treated as an asset and daughter a liability and parents do not invest in daughters which affects their education and the sex-ratio in society. Arranged marriage was still a practice; segregation of sexes is encouraged; dowry legislation had no effect on society and is still practised all over India. The rise in education has promoted the custom rather than removing it; a non-working wife is still a sign of her husband's wealth and contributes towards his status.

Further, the report argued that the lower economic position of women originates from social mores which prescribe appropriate roles for women. Modernisation and technology had adverse effects on women's jobs. With the advent of capitalism, the family was no longer the economic unit and precedence was given to individual labour. Women, deprived of education in general and technical education in particular, lagged behind in the labour market. It found that "women are the greatest victims of employment and underemployment, and that the proportion of women below the poverty line exceeds that of men" (Caiman, 1992: 57-58).

In politics, women's participation had decreased since independence. "Despite the achievements of a few elite women, women as a whole have been underrepresented throughout India in both appointed and elected positions; they have minimal power within the parties; and they participate in elections as candidates and as voters with less frequency than men" (Calman, 1992: 60). Women's interests which affected their daily lives were not being addressed by the political process. Also, women who have been active in political life, were mainly from economically and politically privileged families and did not succeed on their own merit. The authors of the report contended that "the political elite as a whole had neglected the concerns of women, apparently believing them to have been solved by the constitutional and other protections adopted after independence" in 1947 (Calman, 1992: 61).

Similarly, in the areas of health and education, the report pointed out the inadequacies of medical attention to women particularly in maternity services. It argued that a negligence towards women's health was embedded in the culture because women tend to serve men first and neglect their own health particularly in families affected by poverty. Frequent pregnancies and lactation also contribute towards their ill-health. The reason for several children is generally the desire for sons. In poor families several children also means several hands in economic terms. While government was emphasising the role of family planning to reduce pregnancies, the committee asserted that not family planning methods as such, but an improvement in the status
of women in terms of education, employment, age of marriage, and better living conditions could lead to the adoption of family planning methods. Education has been considered an important tool for improvement in their status but unfortunately rural girls do not have access to education and it is limited mainly to girls from privileged classes. Literacy for women was emphasised particularly for the provision of good health, employment, exercise of legal rights etc. The report also objected to teaching the traditional values to girls in schools. It said "if education is to promote equality for women, it must make a deliberate, planned and sustained effort so that the new value of equality of the sexes can replace the traditional value system of inequality" (Caiman, 1992: 62).

In sum, 'Towards Equality' maintained that "gender equality per se was not possible, that gender inequality was rooted in various other kinds of inequalities of an exploitative social system. And unless there was a move to remove those other inequalities it would not be possible to remove gender inequality; the Committee said that certain temporary measures would be necessary to transform de jure into de facto equality; gender equality was essential, not merely for social justice for women, but as a basic condition for India's social, economic and political development" (Mazumdar, 1991:1).

The Committee assigned an important role to women to fight against their own poor status. It emphasised that the problem could not be resolved only through legal and political resolutions but there was also a dire need to raise women's and society's consciousness towards women's issues. It called for movement activity, the need to mobilise public opinion, to launch campaigns against practices like dowry, to educate women regarding their legal rights, to spread an awareness in the society, and above all to shake the political system to respond to women's needs (Calman, 1992).

The second phase of the women's movement thus emerged as antagonistic to the democratic myths and the state in the post-independence period, particularly after the internal emergency period. In the pre-independence period, the particular oppression of women within a hierarchical society had been posed and accepted as natural. Women were constructed as subordinate subjects within a casteist-patriarchal society. With the social reform movement and the national movement, "liberation" for women appeared for the first time. Unfortunately, at this stage, their concerns were confined only to certain reforms. An idea of equality grounded in a democratic revolution emerged as a potential force and was fully realised only during the emergency period.
It was then extended to all spheres of women's lives with a special focus on atrocities in the domestic sphere.

While the structure of the women's movement is discussed in chapter seven, in the following section I shall look into the feminist agenda and intervening strategies of activists to deal with various issues in the political arena. The section also reflects upon the issues facing women vis-à-vis their position in a democratic society and attitude of the state towards issues.

Feminist agenda and strategies

As discussed earlier, women's groups proliferated in the 1970s under the impact of a general climate of agitation, rising out of the social, economic, and political changes in the country, in which almost all segments of society like peasant women, students, trade unions, etc. were actively involved (see Patel, 1988; Calman, 1992; Datar, 1988). The repression of political activists, prisoners, and people in general by the state had provoked the intelligentsia and politically conscious sections of populace including media. An awareness about democratic rights brought with it an awareness about atrocities on women (Patel, 1988). Further, the report on the status of women 'Towards Equality' published in mid-1970s brought to attention the plight of women in the post-independence period and triggered this second phase of the women's movement in India (Calman, 1992). By 1979-80, women's groups became active in various ways, from campaigning against dowry murders to making unions of women workers, slum dwellers etc. Violence against women was picked up as a major issue by the women's movement at this stage, and politicised as a human rights issue in the post-emergency period. Police atrocities on poor masses and mass rapes of poor tribal women in various parts of the country came into attention (Patel, 1988; Calman, 1992; Sharma, 1992; Datar, 1988). 'Rape' caught special attention as a part of civil liberties issue, and became the immediate cause of women's actions. A few rape cases carry special significance in the history of the women's movement because these cases raised women's consciousness and led to the formation of many women's groups. The agitation and mass mobilisations on these cases also led to certain changes in law.

Mathura, a 14 year old girl, who came from a poor family was called to the police station and was raped by two police constables in 1972 (see Calman, 1992; Patel, 1988; Datar, 1988; Sharma, 1992). The sessions judge declared the police constables innocent on the basis of Mathura's loose morals. The High Court changed the decision of the lower court and sentenced the policemen to seven and a half years of rigorous
punishment. But the Supreme Court reversed the High Court judgement in 1979 and upheld the session court's judgement of innocence. It was declared that the incident took place with Mathura's full consent since she had not protested and also did not show any physical injuries. Commenting on this callous approach of the judicia, Calman (1992: 66) argues that "apparently, the justices of the Supreme Court found no reason to doubt that a nice girl - impoverished, powerless and frightened though she might be - would have resisted the orders of two armed police officers". In the words of Patel (1988: 123) "this blatant anti-woman judgement gave birth to nationwide anti-rape protests". Several anti-rape women's organisations developed in various cities of India during this period. Demonstrations and meetings were held at the initiative of autonomous women's organisations. The Government was pressurised through newspapers, magazines, signature campaigns, slogans, and posters. In September 1979, four university law professors, two women and two men, wrote an open letter to the Chief Justice of India criticising the decision of the court and questioned the human rights of women. However, the Court did not allow women's organisations to file appeals in the Mathura case (Kumar, 1989; Gandhi and Shah, 1991; Datar, 1988). Sharma (1992: 14) argues that "the Mathura case became the symbol for mobilising against sexual oppression of women particularly from the lower caste/class groups who were victims of custodial rape, gang rape and sexual harassment during caste and communal conflicts".

Rameeza Bee's case in 1978 also caused an outrage and fury among women's groups and people in general. Rameeza Bee was gang raped by the police and her husband was beaten up (see Gandhi and Shah, 1991; Calman, 1992). This incident also led to disturbances in Andhra Pradesh since the angry crowd attacked the police stations. Twenty six people died in the protest with police firing and teargassing. In 1981, the sessions court again declared the policemen innocent. Several women's organisations filed an appeal and this was the first time when women's organisations were granted locus standi to move a court in a rape trial (Calman, 1992). The issue of rape got public attention with this development. Under the pressure of women's organisations the state government to which Rameeza Bee belonged, also registered an appeal. But even in this case, the High Court acquitted the police officers due to lack of evidence, and with the help of false witnesses Rameeza Bee was declared a prostitute.

In June 1980, a 23 year old woman called Maya Tyagi from a well to-do farmer's family was raped by policemen and her husband beaten up. In the words of Gandhi and Shah (1991: 39) "Maya was dragged out, beaten, robbed of her ornaments, stripped naked and paraded through a marketplace before she was brought to the
police station and raped”. In order to justify their action the police presented this case as an encounter with dacoits and claimed to have shot three dacoits.

Gandhi and Shah (1991) argue that these stories are common in India but what made these cases unusual was the attention they received from women’s and civil rights organisations and the media. These cases demonstrate how the protectors of law and order can themselves violate human rights. They also point towards a ‘cold blooded legalism’, an ‘obvious male and pro-police bias of the judgement’ touching ‘a deep inner core of fear within each woman’ (ibid. p. 36-37). The authors further write that “the case of Rameez Bee will be remembered as a particularly grotesque rape; for the fantastically arrogant and cunning police cover-up, for the sexism and blindness of court judgement and the spontaneity of public protest” (p. 39). Mathura’s case was never revisited; in Rameez Bee’s case, the police came out clean in spite of the findings later that they had manipulated the whole case; and Maya Tyagi’s case took eight years to get justice (Gandhi and Shah, 1991; Datar, 1988).

These incidents gave rise to many women’s organisations all over the country like Forum Against Rape, Saheli, Platform Against Rape etc. Around the same time, women’s groups in Delhi started looking into the cases of ‘suicides’ and ‘accident’ cases of young married women. To their utmost surprise, they found that women, even from educated middle class families, were being burnt, harassed and forced to die because of demands for dowry. Such incidents were defined as dowry murders or bride-burning by women’s groups. Many demonstrations against dowry murders were held jointly by women’s organisations outside the houses of suspected murderers, police stations, etc. in Delhi because police officials always failed to act in such cases or with the connivance of family would declare it a suicide case (Calman, 1992; Gandhi and Shah, 1991; Kishwar and Vanita, 1984).

The issue of violence against women surfaced only after the emergency. Even the Committee on the Status of Women had missed this issue in its report (Mazumdar, 1985). Starting with mass rapes of women during emergency to digging out of dowry murders in the late 1970s, violence still dominates the agenda of women. But with time the definition of violence has been widened, and now includes domestic violence, wife battering, sexual harassment of women on the streets and in the workplace, women’s degrading portrayal in the media, sex determination tests leading to female foeticide, infanticide, sati, violence committed on women during communal riots, discriminatory population policies etc. some of which are discussed later.
Coming back to the issue of rape, Gandhi and Shah (1991: 44) argue that "of all the issues taken up by the movement in the last ten years, rape has provoked the most intense anger, frustration, some of the most militant actions and an equal amount of despair and disillusionment". Data show that in 1992, 10,827 women were raped in India, which means that nearly 30 women are raped each day. This figure rose from 10,410 in 1991. Child rape is up 278 per cent from 394 in 1990 to 1,099 in 1991 (India Today, 1994). Who gets raped? It has been observed that it is mostly economically and socially disadvantaged, low caste and low class women, who are potential rape victims because of their limited capacity to fight back. It has also been noted that mass rapes have been used and are used to suppress low-caste communities (Gandhi and Shah, 1991; Datar, 1988; Mies, 1986; Sharma, 1992). Singh (1990) describes rape as a political tool to keep economically poorer sections in their place.

What makes rape the most heinous crime in Indian society is the stigma attached to it. Gandhi and Shah (1991: 46) quote a woman politician according to whom, "like a glass vessel breaking to pieces when it falls, a woman's life is irretrievably shattered after she is raped". It is largely because of the values of chastity and virginity placed on women by the traditional culture. The Hindi film industry is a major promoter of this ideology. Women raped in movies usually commit suicide out of shame instead of living with 'disgrace' (Seth, 1995). In cases of rape, the victim and her family lose respectability but not the rapist. Apart from this, rape victims "have to endure the humiliating ordeal of callous policemen, insensitive doctors, inadequate rape laws and trials which question their character" (India Today, 1994: 62; see Mies, 1986). This process has also been defined as 'second rape' within the Indian cultural context (India Today, 1994).

As shown in the cases of Mathura, Rameeza Bee etc., an insensitivity on part of the legal system, its sexist bias, and the dismissive attitude of police adds to the agony of a woman. In a recent judgement, the Supreme Court of India reduced the prison term of two young men accused and convicted of rape, on the basis of their very young age, and on the grounds that in the company of a woman (i.e. the victim), the young men became the 'victims of sexual lust' (see India Today, 1994: 62; The Pioneer, 1993). The non-clarity of the definition of rape and consent under the law in India often treats woman as the accused (India Today, 1994; Gandhi and Shah, 1991). Further, pre-marital sex, as in the case of Mathura, is often made an excuse to turn a woman into an accused. It is largely because, as argued by Sharma (1992), the legal system confirming with the social system also stresses on the desirability of the virginity and chastity of women in India in its judgements (emphasis added).
Often, cases pend in the courts or police stations for years and then simply disposed of. The following table shows the statistics of such cases:

**Disposal of rape cases by police**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total cases</th>
<th>Investigation refused</th>
<th>Charge sheet filed</th>
<th>Cases pending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>12,067</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7,244</td>
<td>3,237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>13,010</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7,836</td>
<td>3,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>13,644</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8,181</td>
<td>3,864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>14,277</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8,430</td>
<td>4,368</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: India Today (1994)

**Disposal of rape cases by courts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total cases for trial</th>
<th>Convicted</th>
<th>Acquitted</th>
<th>Cases pending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>23,194</td>
<td>1859</td>
<td>3,231</td>
<td>17,882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>25,848</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>3,643</td>
<td>20,051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>28,223</td>
<td>2566</td>
<td>3,611</td>
<td>21,465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>29,985</td>
<td>1819</td>
<td>3,507</td>
<td>24,416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: India Today (1994)

Rape poses a very big problem to women's organisations. Though they have taken cases to courts, provided shelter to victim women, held public meetings, demonstrations, conducted street plays to raise consciousness, lobbied with the government, and established centres for victims, most rape victims do not want publicity because of humiliation and rejection by the society (Gandhi and Shah, 1991; Mies, 1986; Davies, 1994).

**Sexual harassment** known as 'eve-teasing' in India has been defined as 'psychological rape' by Gandhi and Shah (1991). Women are harassed on the streets, in buses and trains, at the workplace, irrespective of their age, class or dress. Gandhi and Shah (ibid. p. 49) have observed that "harassment can range from verbal lampooning and abuse with suggestive sexual overtones or physical manhandling, and fingering to "accidental" jostling against women". It is one of the few crimes which is committed in broad daylight and which is largely overlooked by both the police and the public. Sexual harassment is a common practice in colleges and on the street. As in the case of rape, even here the 'teasers' are not accused; rather it is the woman's
character, her dress or her being out of home at odd hours which becomes questionable. Girls are socialised and prepared at a very early age to accept this degradation to their identity, their bodies, and their worth. Connell (1987) and Singh (1990) have argued that the street is a gendered institution where 'boys' stroll even in the dark suggesting to women that their proper place is in the home. And "women who protest against harassment on the streets or in buses and trains are routinely hushed by other people, and made to feel that their own dignity would be best protected by pretending to ignore the harassment" (Kishwar, 1984: 239). A woman who quietly bears this indignity is considered a 'true woman'.

Eve-teasing, as rightly pointed out by Gandhi and Shah (1991), is designed to create an environment of fear where women might feel helpless and eve-teasers take pride in their power over women. Society's attitude in terms of 'boys will be boys' encourage this activity presenting it as an 'innocent or frivolous activity'. If it is an innocent or frivolous activity, then why do not women also tease men? Some of the reasons put forward by men in the context of eve-teasing is that women wear Western dresses or they go out late in the evenings, implying that women should conform to their traditional images and roles and that their proper place is in the home. In the words of Kishwar (1984: 232) "the usual assumption is that if a woman is out at night, she must either be a prostitute or a vagrant". Many girls' hostels are usually closed in the evenings and girls are confined to hostel premises. Hostels for working women also, at times, function similarly. Kishwar (1984: 233) argues that "arising from the repressive family and community restrictions, university colleges and hostels for women function like prisons so that their guardians may feel 'secure' in sending their wards to study there".

The issue of dowry harassment and its consequences for women remain an unresolved problematic in Indian society. Dowry is an age-old accepted practice which used to be especially prevalent in upper-caste Hindu society (Gandhi and Shah, 1991; Liddle and Joshi, 1986; Lateef, 1981). But this 'contagious' custom has spread to most castes and communities over the years changing in form and content. The practice of bride-price which used to be followed in some communities has also been replaced by dowry (see Mies, 1986). At one stage dowry was woman's property, her share in a land-dominated, agricultural economy, according to Gandhi and Shah

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10 This can be related to Rosaldo's (1974) argument that a woman is defined mainly through her sexual functions. The ideas like purity and pollution apply primarily to women, who must either deny their physical bodies or circumscribe their dangerous sexuality (p. 31).

11 In bride-price system, rooted in the matrilineal tradition, groom's family pays to the bride's family at the time of marriage. Mies (1986) argues that bride-price system still valued a woman as subsistence producer, whereas dowry-system completely devalues her contributions.
(1991), but today it not only means gold, clothes and utensils, it also includes consumer items like refrigerators, cars, washing machines, video recorders, televisions or even cash to the groom and his family. These are given not only at the time of the marriage, but in most instances throughout life. Over the last three decades dowry demands have increased as a result of a consumer boom among the rapidly expanding Indian middle class. Dowry is perceived as the quickest way to get rich without having to work for it (see Mies, 1986). According to the latest statistics, more than 20,000 women have been killed or have committed suicide in disputes over dowries since 1990; dowry deaths increased from 4,836 in 1990 to 5,582 in 1993 (INNDa, 1994).

Dowry murders caught the attention of women's organisations in the late 1970s. It was found that women, even from urban educated families, were being maltreated and murdered by in-laws for more dowry. But these 'murders' used to be presented as 'accidents' or 'suicides'. Most of the times even the police registered them as suicides (see Singh, 1990; Kishwar, 1984). Mahila Dakshata Samiti (MDS), a women's organisation, investigated these murders and reported their real nature (Gandhi and Shah, 1991; Kishwar and Vanita, 1984). Women's organisations initiated the anti-dowry campaigns; held demonstrations in front of suspected murderers' homes and police stations; involved neighbours in demonstrations; met police commissioners, ministers and even the Prime Minister in some cases; pressurised the police to investigate the cases. At a broader level, street plays were held, poster sticking and wall writing were used, seminars and debates were conducted for consciousness raising (see Gandhi and Shah, 1991). As pointed out by Gandhi and Shah (1991) the major goal of this activism was to humiliate in-laws and husbands. Many catchy slogans were invented against dowry. Legal change was another target of organisations since many culprits used to be freed on benefit of doubt in the absence of concrete evidence. Organisations themselves established many support centres to help individual women to survive, to retrieve their belongings from in-laws, to help them at the legal front etc. Under pressure from women's organisations, a special police cell called 'Crime Against Women Cell' was created to look into this crime. But all these changes have not affected the practice of dowry. It is still widely practised by most communities in all parts of India. Even the education of girls has not helped to remove this custom since educated girls have to look for educated boys which means an increase in dowry to get an educated boy (Kishwar, 1984; Mies, 1986). Kishwar (quoted in Gandhi and Shah, 1991: 61) has argued that "dowry is supposed to act as a bribe to the son-in-law to keep the daughter, who after a certain age is totally unwanted in her parental home. It's significance is not primarily
economic but political in the sense that it defines power relations between the man and the woman”.

The insignificant status of women clearly shows through in the practices of foeticide and infanticide in India. According to the Hindu view of life "a male child alone can rescue the souls of dead ancestors from hell" (Baig, 1958: 112), therefore it is essential to have at least one male child in the family. Thomas (1964) notes the ancient practice of 'pumsavana' (male-producing) ceremony in the third month of gestation, at the time of his writing. Female infanticide derives its roots from ancient India. Even in the early Aryan period, instances of people disposing of unwanted daughters in infancy have been documented (Thomas, 1964). Cultural patterns dictate the greater worth of males, as both producers and heirs, in most of India. The birth of a son is an occasion for celebration while that of a girl is greeted with silence. A Punjabi saying, 'eat jaggery and weave cotton, you go and send your brother' illustrates how female children were killed at birth and sons were wished for in Punjab in olden days. A little bit of jaggery was put in their mouth and some cotton was placed in their palms after their death and the killer dai (mid-wife) merrily sang the saying (see Sehgal et al, 1990).

In some hamlets of the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, murdering girls is still sometimes believed to be a wiser course than raising them. Some of the reasons are pervasive in grinding poverty, an age old bias against women, and the traditions of some Hindu sub-castes (INNDb, 1994). Rajivan, chief government official in Madurai reasons that women take away dowry and do not bring in a bride price. Therefore, to the father of a child, a girl is net outflow. In the backward areas of Tamil Nadu, as many as 196 girls died under suspicious circumstances in 1994. Some were fed dry, unhusked rice that punctured their windpipes, or were made to swallow poisonous powdered fertiliser. Others were smothered with a wet towel, strangled or allowed to starve to death. In just one district of Tamil Nadu - Salem - 1600 cases of female infanticide were noted in 1992-93. Although families who kill their daughters face legal risks which could mean life imprisonment or even death penalty, in reality it means nothing. In Madras, Tamil Nadu's capital, top social welfare officials know of only 11 prosecutions for infant murder in the first 12 months of a state programme against female infanticide launched in October, 1992 (INNDb, 1994).

Though still practised in various parts of the country, female infanticide has been largely replaced by female foeticide with the advancement of medical science. In

12 Soft brown sugar
Bombay alone, 7999 of 8000 aborted foetuses were female (see Mies, 1986; Narasimhan, 1994). Just in Jaipur, capital of the state of Rajasthan, prenatal sex determination tests result in an estimated 3,500 abortions of female foetuses annually, according to a recent medical college study (INNDb, 1994). Every day 3000 female foetuses are aborted in India now, and four out of every ten girls are killed (BBC Channel 4, 8 September, 1994). It has led to a declining female: male ratio in India, which is now 929 women for every 1000 males (INNDb, 1994; Davies, 1994). In Northern India, the sex-ratios are even lower (Sachar et al, 1990). But prenatal sex determination centres have mushroomed all over the country. It is common to find advertisements in papers or hoardings on the streets saying ‘pay 500 Rs today and save five lakhs tomorrow’. Sehgal et al (1990: 145) fear that “a society which spares no efforts at discarding daughters, may soon find its female species on the verge of extinction”. Arguing against people who believe that women themselves choose to abort female foetuses, Shukla et al (1987) and Miller (1990) believe that such decisions are not made in a social vacuum. Shukla et al (ibid. p. 239) ask, “brought up as they are, right from the birth, among male supremacist ideas and placed as they are in the plight of being son-less wives, what alternative is there for them but to submit themselves to the tests”? Even on the part of the doctors, the authors argue that although doctors make money out of it, at the same time they regard it as helping a woman by providing a legitimate means of family planning. Some of the clinics and hospitals consider it their moral duty to perform sex-determination tests on the grounds that they do it only when a woman already has one daughter and not when a couple already has one son. Thus, an ideology regarding a balanced family is also set by individual doctors (Shukla et al, 1987).

Women’s groups took many measures against sex-determination tests. The Forum, based in Bombay, started with a poster campaign, mainly concentrating on the railway compartments of suburban trains, designed to counteract advertising by sex-determination clinics. Later it held workshops where activists, researchers, doctors and journalists gathered to discuss this issue. Wide newspaper coverage was given in newspapers in Bombay, demonstrations were held and a film documentary was also produced (see Shukla et al, 1987). At a legal level, women activists pressurised the government to ban sex determination clinics. But unfortunately only one state, that is, Maharashtra, implemented this action while central government has not taken any measure against it13. Sharma (1992) argues that the Medical Council of India has been

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13 According to one report published in ‘The Guardian’ (15 January, 1996), the Indian government banned the use of pre-natal tests that determine the sex of a foetus in January 1996. However, Alibhai-Brown, the author, argues that ban will not have much effect since majority of the
highly reluctant to take any action against medical practitioners involved in such practices and making huge profits by capitalising on a deep-rooted prejudice against the female child. The clandestine nature of this crime also poses a problem in taking action against individual families. For instance, Shukla et al (1987) argue that if a female child or a woman is being maltreated or harassed by a family, at least the neighbourhood would be aware and may take some action but in cases of foeticide the incidents remain hidden and therefore the question of criticising or taking action against a crime does not even arise.

Female children, who are not aborted or killed, also have less of everything except suffering and deprivation. Studies have established that difference between allocation of health and medical care has been strongly biased against female child (Karkal and Pandey 1989; Gandhi and Shah, 1991; Sachar et al, 1990) The prevalence of childhood malnutrition is much more in female children as compared to males. This is also responsible for a high mortality rate amongst females (Sachar, 1990). The diseases for which the incidence seems particularly high among female children are those which may reflect neglect or poor nutrition, and the fact that wanted children in general and wanted daughters in particular have a higher probability of surviving, confirms the notion that there is an element of choice or at least unconscious neglect involved in these deaths. That most of the children who are taken to medical centres are male, helps to confirm this pattern (Simmons in Karkal and Pandey, 1989). Boys and girls also do not get similar educational opportunities. Two out of every ten girls at the primary level are still not enrolled (Noopur, 1990), and two-thirds of the illiterates in India are women (Kishwar, 1984). Noopur (1990: 112) observes that male children are "taught to achieve, to advance and to create, while girls are deprived of their innocent childhood and the joys of love and tenderness by being rushed into the 'mother's role' by the time they are able to stand and walk". Girls start helping their mothers with household chores at a very young age and also have heavy family responsibilities that interfere with their education. It is estimated that 30 per cent of the total work of fuel gathering, fetching water and farmwork is done by girls aged 6-11. Almost the entire burden of sibling care also falls on the girl child (see Karkal and Pandey, 1989).

There is no doubt that educational opportunities are available to middle class women in India, but even in this case the kind of education is mostly decided by the family population, including the educated middle classes, think that girls are a burden and a curse on a family. She attributes this discrimination to the religious values.

14The total enrolment of girls in secondary classes (between the age-group of 14-17 years) is only 33.0 per cent, and that of boys is 77 per cent.
and a general tilt has been towards learning of household management. Omvedt (1980) argues that the early upper caste social reformers who fought for women's education spent a great deal of time reassuring their contemporaries that education was not subversive, that an educated wife would be a real asset to the home, better able to serve her husband and teach her children. Thus as pointed out by Kishwar (1984) women's education is usually planned to meet the requirements of the marriage market. Although Saraswati is worshipped as a goddess of knowledge in India, most families still consider women's education a wasteful affair. A small number of English educated elite women from the upper castes and classes may be considered as a mark of progress of women, however, even within the middle class most women, despite their education, lead vulnerable and powerless lives.

Among other issues facing women are suicides and wife-battering. According to Gandhi and Shah (1991) these two issues largely remain invisible. It is because wife battering is "hidden in the many intimate, intricate and complex layers of the relationship between a husband and wife with overtones of romanticism, sexuality and patriarchy" (ibid. p. 61). Therefore, this issue does not even have social recognition and harassed women might only attempt suicides. Between 1983-86, 1725 young married women committed suicide in Maharashtra, and other states reported two-fold increase in women's suicide cases (see Gandhi and Shah, 1991). The authors (ibid.) argue that one of the reasons of invisibility of this crime is the acceptance and attitude of women themselves to this violence. The police also do not register such cases as they are treated as 'private matters'. Further "suicide is also dismissed as a symptom of an unbalanced mind or disbeliefed and passed off as a freak event" (ibid. p. 84). Suicides by unmarried young girls also leave the mystery as to whether it is the fear of dowry system or general oppressive environment which encourages women to commit suicide.

Several advances have been made in the judicial system in response to mass campaigns by women's organisations and efforts made by legal activists and journalists (see Sharma, 1992). The response of the judiciary has been mixed in terms of leaving loopholes in laws referring to rape, dowry, sexual harassment, wife-battering etc. (see Patel, 1993). It is not within the scope of this study to elaborate on this. But briefly the laws on these issues are mostly a white wash and are also not implemented in practice. As already shown in cases of rape, the courts invariably exercise their discretion to lower sentences, and as pointed out by Sharma (1992) judgements are passed on the basis of 'questionable character' of the victim. Rape has been viewed as an attack on women's chastity and not an offence against human
rights and dignity (Sharma, 1992). It indicates that the law and law makers do not consider rape a serious crime. Putting it in the context of a cultural value system, Gandhi and Shah (1991) argue that the recommendation of stricter punishment also depends on the values of a society and its abhorrence of certain crimes. If society is blind to violence perpetrated on women, the law cannot be expected to be fair.

Further, in the area of privacy, the law recognises violence by male members of family but only in terms of physical torture and death. It is not comprehensive enough to deal with wife-battering and is restricted to criminal cases alone. Similarly, in one of the sections of dowry legislation, the law holds both the giver and the taker of dowry guilty. Gandhi and Shah (ibid.) argue that if the giver is guilty who will provide the evidence against the dowry seeker? They further point out that the giver or bride's family are in a particularly vulnerable position since for them it is a matter of a family's honour before marriage, and after marriage "every demand is like a ransom note with the usual threats of cruelty and torture if its conditions are not met" (ibid. p. 220). In such circumstances, a bride's family would not take action for their daughter's happiness. Also dowry-givers cannot be simply held guilty for giving dowry since their actions cannot be judged independent of social pressures. It has also been observed that dowry murders are rarely prosecuted (Calman, 1992; Sharma, 1992). Thus even when laws that guarantee women's rights exist, they are rarely implemented without sustained, organised pressure.

In cases of sexual harassment or eve-teasing, in the first place women do not register complaint because of honour and shame and if they do the court is usually unwilling to consider only the victim's word as proof and asks for physical evidence, proof of intention or witnesses. The offenders are also granted bail quickly which leaves women open to reprisals from their tormentors. And, as in all cases, the ever-present delay and lengthy court procedures discourage even the most determined women to register cases (Gandhi and Shah, 1991). Gandhi and Shah (1991) contend that changes in law as such cannot make any difference because in the first place police does not give priority to this crime at all. Most complaints are dismissed on the grounds of its being a "petty" problem. There is also no provision in the law which deals with the issue of sexual harassment at the workplace leaving women 'oscillating' between the employer and the police.

The establishment of special police cells by the government under pressure from women's groups was treated as a great accomplishment in the 1980s. In Delhi in 1986 the Anti Dowry Cell was converted into the 'Crimes Against Women Cell'. But as
pointed out by Gandhi and Shah (1991) it has no special powers or guidelines for functioning and working with women in distress. Firstly, the cell personnel have no specific training to deal with cases of violence or harassment against women by family members; secondly, police personnel unaware of the problem usually try to resolve the matter within the family and try to send the women back to their in-laws family; thirdly, police have not been very helpful in retrieving dowry articles from in-law's homes; and finally there have hardly been any convictions in spite of the arrests made and cases registered. Women activists argue that such cells without any assistance by social workers serve as another police station (see Gandhi and Shah, 1991).

Apart from the issue of physical violence, many other issues facing women like health, population policies, religion and fundamentalism etc. defined as 'state violence' by women constitute an important part of the feminist agenda. Concerns about women's health, its impact on their reproductive capacities, and government's population policies have been important issues on the agenda of women's organisations. In Indian society, it is commonly said that "a woman prepares the food but is the last to eat" (Gandhi and Shah, 1991:102; see Karkal and Pandey, 1989). Even in Satapatha Brahmana (a Hindu scripture), as pointed out by Thomas (1964), it was emphasised that a wife should take her meals only after her husband had finished his. Miller (1990) also observes that self-sacrifice is considered the primary virtue of women, coupled with unquestioning dedication to promoting the health and welfare of male family members. Further, if food items identified as having status or prestige are scarce, such items are either never eaten by women or reserved for men (Appadurai and Thiagaraja, quoted in Karkal and Pandey, 1989). It may be noted that more women die in India in one month than die in all of North America, Europe, Japan and Australia in one year. Further, the maternal mortality rate in India is one of the highest in the world (Karkal and Pandey, 1989). Karkal and Pandey (1989) argue that women's socioeconomic status in the family greatly affects their health and the health of their children, in particular female children. Therefore, in order to understand the health status of women, health and health care system must be seen from beyond the medical framework. They go on to say that "health is very much dependent on social conditions, culture and ideology; ... and the causes of their morbidity and mortality cannot be dealt with by taking measures like use of medical and social expertise and training of birth attendance..." (34 & 58) (emphasis added). The Committee on Status of Women also pointed out that "the cultural norms that particularly affect women's health are the attitudes to marriage, age of marriage, the value attached to fertility and sex of the child, the pattern of family organisation and
the ideal role demanded of the women by social conventions. They determine her place within the family, the degree of her access to medical care, education, nutrition and other accessories of health... Cultural insistence on the marriage of women in the early phase of their child bearing period, leads to high fertility rate and each additional child is a burden on the mother, affecting her physical and mental health... Furthermore, women's nutritional requirements are often sacrificed to provide a little more nutrition to others in the family" (see Karkal and Pandey, 1989: 63-64). The authors argue that to improve the health of women, it is very important to give greater attention to the sociocultural conditions that determine their health.

Despite their poor health status, women are the major targets of family planning and population control policies. Sterilisation contributes most to India's family planning programme, and the larger share is borne by women. Figures reveal that 4.1 million women were sterilised in 1993. According to government figures, 43 per cent of all couples in India practice birth control, and of them more than 70 per cent do so by having the wife sterilised. About 97 per cent of all sterilisations are performed on women even though Indian medical officials say male vasectomies are much safer and result in far fewer complications than female tubectomies (INNDc, 1994). In order to reduce the stay of women in hospital, laparoscope sterilisation is used which only takes 45 seconds. Most of these women return to their villages within three hours of operation and receive little or no follow-up medical care, despite infection and pain. Most of the women are poor and illiterate and are lured into sterilisation by the government’s promises of land or loans. It also indicates that family planning in India has degenerated into quotas, and human beings (mainly women) have become targets. Critics say that the sterilisation program is inhuman because it relies on quotas, targets, bribes and frequently coercion, and in the end does little to curb population growth (INNDc, 1994). Although the government claims its programs to be voluntary, many people question the 'voluntary' nature of these programmes.

In its anxiety to control population and to bring younger couples under the programme, the government also introduced some contraceptives which are banned in developed countries due to their harmful side-effects. It intensified the conflict between women activists and policy makers. Women activists argue that family planning programmes grossly neglect women's health by making them victims of experimentation. Further a distinction between family planning and population control is overlooked. Shukla et al (1987) and Anand (1992) have argued that population control is quite different from family planning. Family planning means spacing between children. But selective control of a population focusing on a
category of powerless people by those wielding social and political power is clearly anti-democratic. Also, women often do not have an access to methods of choice or an option to discard a problematic method and choose another. They are not provided full information about the possible side-effects and long-term risks of the methods and are persuaded to accept the target oriented approach of government. Balasubramanyam (quoted in Karkal and Pandey, 1989) observed that in order to achieve these targets, even basic safety norms are flouted and women's health is allowed to suffer.

After a long and silent activism, women activists protested against the discriminatory population programmes of government in 1994. At the same time they also raised their voice against the introduction of some harmful contraceptives in the Indian market. An Indian pharmaceutical company which had signed a deal with an American company to introduce a contraceptive had to face the wrath of women activists in Delhi, when some women activists interrupted a press conference called by the company directors. Women also met drug control inspectors, lobbied against the drugs with the government. Finally, it was approved by the policy makers that drugs would not be sold in the market without a prescription by the doctor (see The Hindustan Times, 22 May, 1994; The Pioneer, 1994).

In fact, some scholars argue that the government ignores the sociocultural factors which impinge upon family planning targets. Such factors include giving birth to one or two children immediately after marriage to prove fertility; the desire for sons; the economic status of a family which affects size of the family (see Karkal and Pandey, 1989; Shukla et al, 1987; Calman, 1992; Gandhi and Shah, 1991). Apart from this, men are generally not interested in family planning because they do not have to bear children and also because society respects a macho image. During the internal emergency in India, thousands of men were forced to have vasectomies by the ruling government. After the emergency was lifted, allegations of compulsory sterilisation became a major issue which also contributed towards the ruling government's electoral defeat. Therefore because of the sensitivity of this issue no political party has called for control of population nor has any election manifesto mentioned it since 1977 (Hardgrave and Kochanek, 1993; INNDa, 1994). Another important reason why men are not forced into family planning is that men influence the voting decisions of their wives, daughters, mothers etc. If they are coerced into such practices it would affect vote banks.
However, it is very important to note that women do not have autonomous status in the family to decide about the size of the family since much of the reproductive behaviour is conditioned and controlled by the family and particularly men. Important decisions are taken by men, and women are not in a position to undertake contraception unilaterally (INNDc, 1994). But as a part of the family planning process, the government of India also accepted the recommendation of the Fourth Pay Commission that **maternity benefits** be given only up to the second child to encourage small families. Women activists have criticised the action as unjustly burdening women with the responsibility of limiting family size. In Indian society, the fact that it is a woman who bears the children does not mean that she also decides on the number of children to have (see Karkal and Pandey, 1989; Calman, 1992). Above all, there is always an overwhelming desire to have a male child and women's position in family largely depends on that. Restricting maternity benefits would not restrain a man from trying for a son after the birth of two or three daughters. Moreover, not being able to get maternity leave would be hard on a woman as she would have to work till the last possible date and go back to work at the expense of both her health and her child. Karkal and Pandey (1989) argue that any scheme of incentives and disincentives should be aimed at both men and women.

Rising **fundamentalism and communalism** in India and its impact on women has caused alarm among women activists in the recent years (Mazumdar, 1991; Sharma, 1992; NWO report, 1993). Mazumdar (1991) points out that previously the women's movement was facing fire fighting issues like hunger, poverty, and marginalisation - leading to a most peculiar demographic phenomenon in which women die at a faster rate than men, and rising incidents of violence against women as identified by post-1977 movement. But now there is another fire to fight which is the rise of revivalist and fundamentalist and fragmentative movements. She fears that whatever consciousness has evolved during the past years would go in vain with the destruction brought by fundamentalism as it poses a grave danger to gender rights.

Two specific events which brought this issue on the agenda of the women's movement are as follows. In April 1985, an old Muslim woman, Shah Bano was granted maintenance from her husband, who had divorced her some years back, by a lower court (see NWO report, 1993; Singh, 1990; Kumar, 1989; Calman, 1992). But her husband challenged the decision of the lower court on the grounds that under Muslim Personal Law, he was no longer obliged to pay maintenance to her after many years of divorce. Under Muslim Personal Law, a husband is obliged to pay maintenance for the period of **iddat** - that is, only three months after divorce. This
issue raised a great controversy and in the end it turned from a simple issue of right to
maintenance by a woman from her husband into an issue of Muslim identity in the
secular Indian state. In order to secure Muslim votes, the ruling government enacted
the Muslim Women's Act 1986. The Act deprived divorced Muslim women of a right
enjoyed by all other women in similar situation under Section 125 of the Indian
Criminal Procedure Code (Joseph and Sharma, 1994). Although women's
organisations campaigned around the issue and tried to mobilise public opinion in
favour of women's rights, women activists were themselves caught in a dilemma since
the issue caused a communal tension between the Hindu majority and Muslim
minority in India. The demands for a Uniform Civil Code by the women's movement
could have been interpreted as supporting the majority community and therefore
Hindu fundamentalism, which they did not mean to imply (Calman, 1992; Kumar,
1989).

This case indicated how the right of freedom of religion in India impinges directly on
the basic rights of women as citizens (Dietrich, 1992; Sharma, 1992). Freedom of
religion has been interpreted to mean that religious customs, even if blatantly
discriminating against women, will take precedence over other civil laws, particularly
in areas of marriage and family structure, ownership of property (see YWCA, 1988).
This is in spite of the fact that the Indian Constitution claims to be democratic,
guarantees freedom and equality to all persons regardless of sex, class, caste or other
social and economic differences. One can see that the disparity of status between men
and women, not only in society or in the economy, but also in law negates this
idealistic statement. The Indian Constitution's conformation to personal laws
prescribed by different religious communities governing all spheres of domestic life
is the major reason behind it (see YWCA, 1988; Dietrich, 1992). The Shah Bano case
mentioned above was caught between the dichotomy of freedom of religion and
women's rights and the ruling government voted in favour of freedom of religion and
a poor woman's right was sacrificed on the altar of religion. The demand for a
Uniform Civil Code by the women's movement has not been met because the subject
of family or personal laws is probably one of the most complex and sensitive issues in
political climate (Gandhi and Shah, 1991). Sharma (1992) argues that the whole
concept of secularism in the Indian context needs to be re-examined, particularly in
view of the rising communal forces and the emerging ideologies on women vis-à-vis
religion.

Further, for the women's movement, a direct implication of fundamentalism and
communalism is the division among women on religious lines. Communal riots also
have much more disastrous effects on women than men. It is because women bear violence in a gender specific way (Gandhi and Shah, 1991). Women activists' investigations (see NWO report, 1993) revealed that in riot situations in various parts of country, the most savage atrocities, including sexual attacks, took place much more on women of the minority community, along with the killing and burning of men, women and children.

In another incident in 1987, a widow from Rajput community called Roop Kanwar committed sati (an act of immolation) on her husband's pyre in Rajasthan (see NWO report, 1993; Joseph and Sharma, 1994; Narasimhan, 1994). In this case also, the government's failure to enforce existing laws encouraged Hindu fundamentalists to organise themselves in defence of the practice of widow-burning in the name of religious and cultural rights. In the words of Gandhi and Shah (1991: 222) "the sati case of Roop Kanwar was a murder blessed by fundamentalism and political opportunism". While preparations for chunri mahotsava (a religious ceremony held after the immolation to honour the dead woman) were going on, the government chose to remain silent and did not react until pressurised by the public and by women in particular. It is also worth noticing that among the millions who visited the spot to seek sati mata's (goddess) blessings were some noted politicians. And on the part of the then Prime Minister, he took 23 days to condemn the incident (see Singh, 1990). Later a law was modified both by the local government and the central government without proper thought which contained serious loopholes (Kumar, 1989; Gandhi and Shah, 1991).

Gandhi and Shah (ibid.) have pointed out that one of the sections of the Bill stated that anyone attempting sati is punishable for six months, or with a fine or with both. They argue that it is ridiculous that a woman driven to death be punished if she happens to survive. In their words, "the law-makers persist in seeing the oppressed, exploited, and vulnerable woman as a free person making a free choice" (ibid. p. 224). They further argue that while in cases of rape or sexual harassment and domestic violence, the in-built prejudice can blame or direct women to keep away from streets to avoid rape or not to incite a violent husband, but in the case of sati, it is impossible for a woman to be the offender even technically because she does not light the pyre herself. Linking up this insensitivity with a cultural value system, Singh (1990: 103) argues that the linkage between sati and dowry deaths, female foeticide, sexual harassment, sexual crimes "is the fact of woman being regarded as a nonentity, a non-person, with no identity except that bestowed on her as some man's daughter, sister, wife, mother etc."
In both cases mentioned above it was evident that fundamentalists, whether Hindu or Muslims, were against women's rights. These cases also showed a close connection between politics and fundamentalism on the one hand and fundamentalism and opposition to gender equality on the other. Women activists argue that "in the battle of identity politics, women are projected as the carriers of the "purity" of the bloodline and second as the custodians of cultural traditions" (NWO report, 1993: 4). In a state of political turmoil, the self-proclaimed saints are setting the political agendas while advocating Hindu Rashtra (nation). Narasimhan (1994: 43) rightly points out that "religion and culture have been used, more than any other reasons, to defend practices oppressive to women around the world" (emphasis added).

Similarly in the area of property rights, Gandhi and Shah (1991) have observed that though the Hindu Succession Act allows property rights to mothers, wives and daughters without regard to chastity and remarriage, the terms give a better deal to sons through which brothers can increase their share over sister's property. Also pointed out by YWCA, (1988) under all personal laws, women upon divorce have no claim on their husband's property unless it is in their joint names or is proved to have been given at the time of marriage. Not only is this difficult to prove but property which may be in joint names is usually transferred to the husband's or in-laws name. However, argues Agarwal (1988), even when social legislation passed by the state has been progressive in a given context, this has seldom been strictly enforceable where community norms are to the contrary. Therefore an important question is "is the social system in which those laws operate supportive"? (YWCA, 1988:39). In Indian society women are, by and large, ignorant of their property rights. Inheritance and control of wealth is usually assumed to be the right of men. Secondly, women are generally not trained to demand their rights against the social stigma of family feud over property and the emotional pressures brought to bear on them by friends and relatives. Treated as a burden from her childhood, can she suddenly ask for more than what is given to her in charity? (YWCA, 1988). In a situation of meagre resources, women are not even provided education or encouraged to be on their own. Such privileges go to the male child because of the practice of patrimony. Land ownership is mostly in the name of men and most economic transactions are also handled by men. In a situation where women rarely handle money or properties of this sort in a commercial situation, they cannot gain economic power (YWCA, 1988).

Finally, in the area of politics, the representation of women in the formal political structure of the country is still low (Chatterjee, 1992; Manikyamba, 1986; Kumari,
1993). Though the strength of women in Indian legislatures is better than that in countries like the United Kingdom and France (Manikyamba, 1986; Katzenstein, 1981), the percentage of women in Indian politics has never gone beyond 10 per cent and has registered a decrease since independence. This is despite the fact that India was ruled by a woman Prime Minister for more than a decade. Manikyamba (1986) argues that the socialisation process in India transmits to women attitudes, values, and behaviour patterns inconsistent with political involvement. She points out that even Gandhi had propounded that procreation and consequent care of children are inconsistent with public life. For a woman, family comes first, job second, and politics third. Similarly, Katzenstein (1981), tracing the roots of Hinduism, also argues that there is little in Hinduism that would give respectability to a woman’s claims to political power. In Hinduism a woman must not read the Vedas or perform any sacrifices; knowledge of shastras is proscribed, and a woman is grouped with sudras in the possibility for reincarnation.

Whatever number of women are there in politics is also due to their family background and affluence. Scholars have noticed that kinship factor plays an important role in the participation of women in Indian political system. Most women politicians come from politically privileged families, or when male members of families are themselves in politics and encourage women from their families to participate in politics (Everett, 1993; Katzenstein, 1981). Thus, as argued by Kishwar (1984) it is easier for a reasonably talented woman to become a minister, or to reach other such offices of power when she comes from an influential and well-connected family which is sympathetic to her and encourages her, than it is for an ordinary woman to acquire the right to exercise an effective say in village or community politics.

Most women activists in India refrain from participating into party politics or electoral politics for reasons like money and muscle power required; kinship and affinity factor; fear of violence and slander; distrust of political parties; and problems in representing women’s interests (Chatterjee, 1992; Calman, 1992; Choudhury, 1992; Kumari, 1993). It has been found out that with the criminalisation of political life, women decision makers not only face character assassination and threats, they also become a target of violence (see Kumari, 1993; Patel, 1993). However, at the same time some women activists also believe that “mobilisation of women at the grass roots has to be coupled with intervention at the levels of policy and decision making, in
order to effect change (Desai, undated). Following this, women activists' struggle resulted in the implementation of 30 per cent reservation for women at the local and state level which was heavily opposed by male politicians (Patel, 1993). Women and politics has become an important issue on feminist agenda now. It includes issues ranging from definition of politics to women's participation in various struggles; exposing political candidates who have been insensitive to women's issues or have indulged in violence against women.

The feminist agenda can be summed up here as containing the following issues: rape, sexual-harrassment, dowry, foeticide and infanticide, malnutrition, education, illiteracy, suicides, wife-battering, health, family planning and population control, maternity benefits, fundamentalism and communalism, Uniform Civil Code, freedom of religion, sati, property rights, political representation, access to land and other productive resources, environmental degradation, media representation, alcoholism, trafficking, police atrocities, prostitution, devdasi system, women prisoners, caste conflicts, gang rape of tribal and dalit women, economic inequality, unpaid domestic labour, non-registration of marriages, widowhood, child marriage, discrimination against girl child, harassment by political cadre, day care/creche facilities, political representation at village levels, control of women's sexuality, fertility, and labour by the family, society, and state (see Sharma, 1992; in personal interviews with women activists in April/May, 1994).

Class, urbanism and women's roles

After having reviewed women's position and investigating some of the crucial issues on the feminist agenda since the late 1970s and early 1980s, the class distinction between women requires some attention. While many of the issues like property rights, Uniform Civil Code, representation in politics, legal rights, denial of opportunities etc. are the concerns of middle class women drawn from higher castes, lower class women's concerns are centred around basic needs. However, it cannot be denied that patriarchal order is largely followed at all levels. Issues like dowry, domestic violence, infanticide, etc. have extended to all strata of population.

15 A debate among Western feminist scholars regarding the role of 'femocrats' (i.e. women working for the state) and the role of 'state feminist' institutions (i.e. institutions/bureaucracies working to promote gender equality) to further feminist cause is available in Valente (1995); Bergqvist (1995); Jensen (1995); Squires (1995); and van der Ros (1995). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to engage into this discussion.
It must be noted that overriding customs and traditions are followed by most communities and undermine the legislative or other gains which women may make (Lateef, 1981). While education of women is encouraged in urban areas, other social changes such as self-determination in marriage, independence in economic matters, and separation from family without marriage are unacceptable. The organisation of community life, kinship, family, marriage, and descent, all emphasise the importance of marriage and motherhood. In the words of Kishwar (1984: 242) "marriage is posed as the be-all and end-all of a woman's life". Urban middle class women are certainly privileged in terms of getting education, jobs, health care, medical attention, and using family planning methods etc., and elite women can be found in areas as diverse as medicine, law, science, administration. But these women are usually confined to big cities and are less in numbers. Moreover, as pointed out by Kishwar (1984), this ability to easily absorb and accord positions of honour and prestige to small sections of women from elite groups is nothing new. It is rooted in a long historical tradition as most of the social reform movements have supported this tradition.

But the success of a small ratio of women does not mean that they have overcome the problems of domestic violence, dowry, sexual harassment, denial of opportunities in many areas, patriarchal oppression in the domestic sphere, unequal employment opportunities, etc. Rather women from higher castes (and middle class), as pointed out earlier, have to bear stricter norms than women from lower castes and classes because of their different sociocultural and economic backgrounds. In fact, the stricter division between the private and public spheres is also followed within this strata of women. These women are supposed to be both traditional and modern. Modern, in terms of education and social manners, and traditional in terms of maintaining the traditional culture. It is also pertinent to point out that the oppression which women from middle class and/or higher castes undergo is extremely private in nature. For instance, problems like dowry pressures, domestic violence/harassment, female foeticide, denial of basic rights/opportunities like professional education or higher education, right to movement and form associations, widowhood constraints, denial of property rights, values of chastity and honour, control of sexuality, and a complete

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16 Even at a universal level, as pointed out by Rosaldo (1974: 37) "women in men's roles constitute an elite segment of female humanity; few women in history have achieved a dominant position in the working world, and even fewer have competed with male politicians and become political leaders or queens".

17 Chodorow (1974: 55) has argued that "sex-role development of girls in modern society is more complex. On the one hand, they go to school to prepare for life in technologically and socially complex society. On the other, there is a sense in which this schooling is a pseudo-training. It is not meant to interfere with the much more important training to be "feminine" and a wife and mother, which is embedded in the girl's unconscious development and which her mother teaches her in a family context where she is clearly the salient parent".
denial of individuality under patriarchal oppression remain hidden in the private sphere.

Liddle and Joshi (1986) point out in their study that gendered roles of women under caste hierarchy have been replaced by class now. While in the caste system, women from upper castes were completely secluded, in class system these women are allowed only the selective categories of education and employment which enhance the status of family and particularly of men in the family. For instance, in case of employment, only a few categories of work like medicine and teaching are preferred because it ensures the control of women's sexuality. Firstly, it is an extension of motherly roles, and secondly, there are less chances of women's mixing with other men. Also, the flexibility of jobs allows women to do the household work. In short, the same social processes help to maintain male dominance in the class system as did so under the caste system, but in modified form. There is no liberation for women under the class structure, despite the gains women have made at the top of the social hierarchy.

As mentioned earlier, lower class women's preoccupation is the need for shelter, water, food, health care, child care, literacy, income, etc. It is because the processes of economic development have affected women most in terms of their marginalisation in work force leading to feminisation of poverty (Anand, 1992). Many mass movements in India aiming at broader political and social changes had massive number of poor women's involvement. Some of the noted movements were anti-price rise movement, the Bodhgaya land struggle, the Chipko movement, the Adivasi struggle, the Fish worker's struggle, and Women's struggles in Chhattisgarh etc. (see Sen, 1990; Dietrich, 1992). Some of the issues around which these movements were formed were preservation of forests, housing rights, access to resources and building material, issue of land ceiling, land distribution, access to water for poor etc. Thousands of rural or poor women were in the forefront of these campaigns and movements. Women in these movements do not strive for autonomous or independent articulation of only their women specific demands (Sen, 1990). But at the same time their articulation of demands and issues exert a pressure on their movements to take cognisance of the women in their mass base.

In view of the pertinence of these issues, the urban women's movement in India has changed its direction and concerns. The issues raised by women in the 1980s represented only the concerns of middle class women whereas grass root activism represents the concerns of millions of women. As observed by Joseph and Sharma
(1994), the IWM turned its attention from propaganda campaigns of the 1980s to grass root activism and research in the 1990s. They took up issues which are not essentially gender based but which affect daily lives of women. In short, the whole issues of development and a perspective on human rights has gained momentum within women's organisations in the 1990s.

Summary

Against the masculine democratic foundations embedded in Western history, ancient Indian society was based on caste in which women and sudras (outcast) were placed at the bottom of the hierarchy. The social order was maintained by the higher castes with Brahmins on top of the ladder. There were strict codes for higher caste women who were barred from education, employment, religious ceremonies etc. and mainly led a life of seclusion. The meaning of a woman's life and existence was mainly confined to standing by her husband in the accomplishments of his duties and producing a male heir. For a woman, her husband was the lord. As mentioned in Section One, control of women's sexuality was significant for the development of patriarchal caste hierarchy. This control over women was maintained through child marriage, arranged marriage, prohibition of divorce, monogamy for women, sati (widow burning), ban on widow remarriage, no provision of property rights, and social exclusiveness particularly with no contacts with lower caste men. The incoming of traders, expansion of the economy, invasion by Muslims, and Mughals, furthered this tightening on women of higher castes to protect women from foreign invaders leading to purdah and a greater incidence of sati. It was a Brahmanical culture that prevailed as far as the status of women of higher castes was concerned.

British imperialism changed the face of Indian history and Indian women, with English education and Enlightenment philosophy influencing higher caste men in particular. The latter were employed by the British to run the local administration, and hence they also gained access to English education. A new middle class was born out of these developments. These English educated higher caste men were representative of a masculinised public sphere as defined in the Western context. But these men drastically differed from Western men on the point of women's participation in political activities. In fact, the reform movement started by early male reformers had women's issue as one of the major issues on its agenda. Women were constantly encouraged to participate in the struggle for freedom. But as discussed earlier, imperialism was projected as a main enemy and hence the root cause of all problems in order to mobilise people for the nationalist cause. Social discrepancies
like the caste problem, patriarchy, feudal system, gender, religion, were all subsumed under the political struggle against a common enemy, that is, the British. There is no doubt that women formed their own caucuses during this period but gender remained beyond their purview also. The national struggle in India achieved a political revolution but not a social revolution.

After getting independence, India adopted a Western political framework, that is, the model of liberal democracy. A very lengthy and flexible Constitution incorporating rights for all sections was framed. It was declared within the Constitution, and by the national leaders that there would be no discrimination on the basis of caste, class, sex, religion, in independent India. All rights including education, employment, political participation, suffrage, legal rights etc. came to women automatically in the name of progress, civilisation, and political liberalism. Women's definition of equality at this stage was also confined to equal legal rights after the attainment of which they were satisfied. So what hindered women's progress and development in the post-independence period? As discussed in Section Two, it was realised by many scholars that the struggle for freedom was mainly a political struggle and therefore did not bring social revolution. The internal problems of the country mentioned above remained untouched. Women were provided the rights in areas of education, employment, politics, but flexibility was denied in areas of patriarchal family, sexual relations, and domestic life. Even freedom to practise the Personal Laws was retained which directs women's personal and domestic life. This phase was limited to reformism and not revolution, and it can be seen that the core principles of Brahmanical culture imposed by the higher caste male politicians were still in place.

A harsh reality regarding women's position in Indian society came to the surface in the 1970s, and particularly after the lifting of the Emergency in 1977. An official report on the status of women called 'Towards Equality' documented the reality of women's lives in various areas. Women activists realised the hollowness of legal and democratic rights provided by the state. Apart from the social, economic and political factors, cultural factors were found to be playing an important role in the areas of health, education, attitude towards women and female children etc. It was realised by women that the problem was deep-rooted and could not be resolved only with rights of equality enshrined in the Constitution.

At the same time, the unveiling of violence inflicted on women in the form of rapes characterising the state repression during the emergency, and later the knowledge of other kinds of violence like bride burning, dowry deaths, suicides, domestic
harassment, characterising an oppressive patriarchal set-up were pointed out. A battle against these undemocratic and unlawful practices was launched by women's organisations, which developed in large numbers in the late 1970s. Later on many laws were amended and new laws introduced on the issues ranging from dowry, rape, sexual harassment etc. under women's pressure. Women activists also realised that during the struggle for freedom, attention was paid mainly to the problems of higher caste women whereas the problems of lower caste/class women which mainly revolved around the basic issues of survival and development remained uninitiated. It led to grass root activism and changes in the working of the women's movement in the 1990s. From the activism of the 1980s, the movement turned to grass root research, issues of development, irrespective of whether they were women specific or not.

However, at an elite level, as noticed in the preceding sections, politics submits to patriarchal culture and/or the traditional order in many instances, for example, in the cases of Shah Bano, sati, and population policies. No doubt, the government acts for its own political gains, for instance in the sati case, government was concerned with votes of Rajput community; in the case of Shah Bano, government was concerned with Muslim votes. But the actions of government seem to have derived their strength from a biased and gendered culture nurturing personal laws in the name of freedom of religions and male domination. Religion impinges upon women's rights making Indian governance non-democratic. Similarly, in the case of population policies and Maternity Benefits Act, a clear reflection of a patriarchal society can be noticed. Essentially, within the Indian history, the upper-caste culture (precisely the Brahmanical culture) has determined women's status. Family is a major institution which limits girl's rights to education, work, life, employment, movement, property etc. (see Kishwar, 1984). The State, law, religion, and community strengthen this oppression accordingly. Thus, most women, to date, do not enjoy many civil and political rights in a 'liberal democracy', which clearly implies that women are by and large not treated as political citizens by the democracy. Most importantly, the 'private' nature of women's oppression is largely ignored by the society and it remains invisible.

**Brahmanical culture: some key concepts**

An analysis of women's position in Indian society reveals that it is deeply patriarchal in its attitude towards women. It also shows a disadvantaged status of women as citizens in a democratic polity. While in ancient society, patriarchy operated at a
private level i.e. in the domestic sphere, in independent India it has taken a public form as can be witnessed in the cases of sati, Shah Bano, Maternity Benefit Act, population policies, judgements in rape cases, law on dowry, treatment meted to women by both police and the judiciary, etc. It is argued that the set of practices may not be conspiratory but gradually they have become naturalised way of life and thought, particularly at the social level where dowry harassment, foeticide, denial of various fundamental rights to girls, sexual harassment, etc. are not questioned.

The two concepts which demand attention here because of their problematic nature are 'patriarchy' and 'culture'. They will be discussed and theorised within the context of Indian social structure. Patriarchy would lead the discussion because finally a traditional culture, particularly when being discussed in terms of subordination of women, subsumes patriarchy in itself.

**Patriarchy**

Although patriarchy means male power or the subordination of women, the components of this subordination vary in each analysis. Beginning from the definition of patriarchy, Randall (1982: 16) defines patriarchy as "forms of male power stemming from the authority of the father or male household head". Beechey (1979: 66) notes that "theoretically the concept of patriarchy has been used to address the question of the real basis of the subordination of women, and to analyse the particular forms it assumes". Mies (1986: 37) however, argues that male dominance has gone beyond the rule of father to "the rule of husbands, of male bosses, of ruling men in most societal institutions, in politics and economics, in short, what has been called 'the men's league' or 'men's house". Walby (1989: 214) calls patriarchy "a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women". The commonality in all definitions is the domination of men over women or oppression and exploitation of women in various forms.

How do various tendencies in feminism explain the oppression of women? Briefly, radical feminism points out sex-differences or biology of women as the basis of men's domination. The biological vulnerability of women leads to dependency relations between men and women, and thus form the basis of women's subordination according to this school. Another strand of feminism stresses ideology, culture and gender (see Randall, 1982; Acker, 1989). It stresses the role of socialisation which produces masculine and feminine identities, sexual division of labour or a gender based division of labour and private - public spheres whereby women are confined to
the domestic for the care of children and for the maintenance of family and men take up public roles. Thus, the roles are constructed by the society and male dominance is defined as a cultural phenomena. Acker (1989) argues that an exploration into how gender is continually produced in social processes would lead to better analysis of women's subordination.

Above trends have been criticised heavily by Marxist feminists for not taking into account the relationship between the subordination of women and the organisation of various modes of capitalist production. They suggest that the pre-condition for capitalism is women's domestic labour at home, and they point out women's exploitation as wage labour in the market (see Walby, 1989; Mies, 1986). Mies (1986: 37) has named this phenomena capitalist-patriarchy "to denote the system which maintains women's exploitation and oppression". She argues that while "the term patriarchy denotes the historical depth of women's exploitation and oppression, the concept capitalism is expressive of the contemporary manifestation, or the latest development of this system" (p. 38). She defines even man-woman relations in the private sphere as a part of capitalist-patriarchal relations and strongly opposes the separation of the two.

However, while all these schools emphasise one aspect or the other as important in women's subordination, Walby (1989) offers a very attractive and useful analysis of patriarchy. As mentioned earlier, Walby defines patriarchy as a system of 'social structures' and 'practices' in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Her usage of the term social structure rejects "biological determinism and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every individual woman in a subordinate one" (p. 214). She distributes patriarchy into six structures viz., the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in male sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions like religion, media, and education. All these structures together constitute a system of patriarchy.

Briefly, the first two categories i.e. patriarchal mode of production and patriarchal relations in paid work focus on economic discrimination at the work place and the exploitation of women in the form of domestic labour within the confines of home. Women's labour at home is expropriated by men, and this major form of division of labour also impinges upon other social relations. Further, exclusion of women from paid work or segregation and inequality in paid work also adds to their devaluation in society. While defining the state as another patriarchal structure, Walby argues that
"its impact on gender relations is not a consequence of it also being a capitalist state but of the patriarchal nature of the state" (p. 224). The patriarchal state everywhere in the world denies access to women to its resources and power. Women lack political power and they are not usually found in the decision-making positions in the political sphere. Coming to the fourth structure of patriarchy i.e. male violence, Walby argues that even male violence has a social structural nature. It is embedded in various practices like rape, wife beating, sexual harassment at work, which shape women's actions. Not all men use this power but the actions of some men force women to change their behaviour patterns, routines, and they constantly live with fear of male violence. It is further strengthened by the lack of state intervention or at times even legitimised by the state.

Patriarchal sexuality forms the fifth component of patriarchy. Sexuality is important in constructing social relations and gender. Also, heterosexuality as a norm is encouraged and women are pushed towards heterosexual marriage. Lastly, patriarchal culture is also a structure containing various practices. Patriarchal culture "is a set of discourses which are institutionally-rooted, rather than as ideology which is either free-floating or economically-determined" (Walby, 1989: 227). Patriarchal cultures include religious practices shaping conducts of men and women, educational institutions, and media.

To translate the above analysis within the Indian context, it may be argued that all these structures can be found in Indian society. In this chapter I have not focused on the patriarchal relations at work place. Regarding other structures, it was highlighted earlier that the state is very patriarchal in nature - be it police, judiciary, or policy makers. It was noticed that the police do not even recognise many crimes against women as crimes, particularly those which take place in the private sphere. Judgements passed by the judiciary in many instances have been biased and against women's interests. The biased laws passed by the state on issues like sati, rape, dowry, Shah Bano etc. have been intensely patriarchal in nature and have significant effects on gender relations. Further, women are not significantly represented in Indian politics which is also symptomatic of a patriarchal state.

Violence against women in the Indian context has always been a major issue on the feminist agenda. Various kinds of violence noted in the chapter were rape, wife-battering, dowry harassment, bride burning, domestic harassment, sexual harassment, foeticide, infanticide etc. It was pointed out earlier that in India 30 women are raped and 3000 female foetuses are aborted everyday. According to one report, 1000 dowry
deaths are registered every year in the State of Gujrat alone (Kerr, 1993). Many other kinds of domestic violence remain unregistered and unnoticed. As noticed above, the state has been biased in its judgements particularly in cases of violence which further strengthens male violence and the patriarchal order. As regards sexuality, homosexuality or lesbian/gay relations are still alien in traditional cultures and heterosexuality is considered the norm. Heterosexuality is largely promoted by presenting marriage as the ultimate reality for women in India. Other institutions like religion, media, and education, support and strengthen the images and ideals of Sitahood and motherhood. Religion, in particular, plays a significant role in defining women's roles and position.

The other two forms of patriarchy articulating with the six structures are private patriarchy which Walby discusses mainly in terms of women's confinement to home and her exclusion from social space, and public patriarchy which is further divided into market and state. Public patriarchy does not eliminate women from certain sites but it does subordinate women in terms of their discrimination at the work place and their lesser participation in the state affairs. The nature of private patriarchy and public patriarchy (particularly state) within the Indian context was reflected through out this chapter. It can be argued that the private upper-caste patriarchal culture, the Brahmanical culture of the past, has turned into a public patriarchal culture in its modernised form.

Culture

Culture has no single and unproblematic definition (Hall, 1980a). In simple terms "the domain of culture refers primarily to essential aspects of collective social life, especially to meanings and practices (social customs, institutional ways of doing things and also personal habits)" (McQuail, 1994: 60). Fiske (1989: 1) defines culture as "the constant process of producing meanings of and from our social experience..." According to Carey (1988: 34), "social life is more than power and trade ... it also includes the sharing of aesthetic experience, religious ideas, personal values and sentiments, and intellectual notions - a ritual order". A feminist perspective describes culture as a "process of generating and sustaining systems of meaningful forms (symbols, artefacts, etc.) by means of which humanity transcends the givens of natural existence, bends them to its purposes, controls them in its interest" (Ortner, 1974: 72). All the definitions somehow suggest that culture is a process in terms of sharing certain practices by people.
Derived from the Latin for 'cultivating' or tilling the soil, culture indicates ways of taking care of things (Hall and Neitz, 1993). Williams (1976, 1977) explains how the concept of culture has passed through various stages of development and still carries variation and complications. For instance, society was an active fellowship, company, common doing, before it was viewed as a general system of order; economy was the management of a household and then the management of a community before it was described as a perceived system of production, distribution, and exchange; culture was the growth and tending of crops and animals, and by extension became the growth and tending of human faculties.

But owing to developments in society, the definition of culture undergoes changes. For instance, the notion of civilisation was first expressed as being 'civil' and later extended to the concept of civil society which meant opposition to barbarism and was an indication of historical and social progress. Civilisation and culture were also used interchangeably at one stage. However, at another stage, the concept of civilisation was attacked on the grounds of its being superficial, artificial or unnatural, "a cultivation of external properties - politeness and luxury - as against more human needs and impulses" (ibid. p. 14). A different concept of culture then introduced was the development of inner or spiritual developments against external developments. As a result, the concept of culture became associated with religion, art, family and personal life against civilisation or society. "Culture or art and literature were seen as the deepest record, the deepest impulse, and the deepest resource of the human spirit" (ibid. p. 15).

However, developments like liberalisation and secularisation gave rise to newer forces of materialism, commercialism, democracy, socialism, which further intervened into the concepts of civilisation, civil society, and culture from various angles. For instance, Marxism defined civilisation and society simply as a bourgeois concept. The relationship between society and economy, and idea of material conditions determining class relations by Marxism turned cultural history into a 'superstructure', that is, "a realm of mere ideas, beliefs, arts, customs, determined by the basic material history" (ibid. p. 19).

Culture as a constitutive social process determining the ways of life, did not develop much in Marxism (Bocock, 1986; Williams, 1977). Marxism stressed the importance of economy as a base in class relations and did not attach sufficient importance to cultural and political sphere. Thus the history of society came to be written in terms of a materially driven process, with society (economic and political resources and
power) as the 'base' and culture as 'superstructure' (McQuail, 1994). However, it was realised by later scholars that economy alone does not explain the inequality in relations. Marxism assumed that "once a change in the ownership of the main economic means of production, distribution and exchange has been accomplished, there will be no major obstacles to a truly democratic, and free society" (Bocock, 1986). This view ignored the other areas of civil society and state.

The shortcomings in Marxist thesis led to other developments in social theory. While retaining the 'economy' as the base or infrastructure, Althusser (1971) added a set of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), like education, family, religion, communication, etc. and argued that these apparatuses enabled the state to rule without force and coercion. He defined these ideological institutions as superstructures. Althusser sums up that "the ideology of the ruling class does not become the ruling ideology by the grace of God, nor even by virtue of the seizure of State power alone. It is by the installation of the ISAs in which this ideology is realised and realises itself that it becomes the ruling ideology" (p. 172). But Althusser also claimed that the ideologies existing in a social formation could only be explained from the angle of classes, i.e. of the class struggle. However, Althusser has been criticised for over-estimating the role of state and ignoring the role of human agents in the processes of change (Bocock, 1986).

The theory of hegemony introduced by Gramsci (1971) did not exclude economy but argued that there were other institutions in society which were neither part of material production nor state funded organisations, like religious institutions, means of communication, family, etc. which were run by people and in which power was being exercised and hegemony established (Bocock, 1986). Hegemony according to Gramsci was "the naturalness of a way of thinking about social, economic, political and ethical issues" (see Bocock, 1986: 8). Thus, Gramsci was concerned with the role of culture in a ruling group's domination of social order, which he called 'cultural hegemony' or 'cultural domination'. "Cultural hegemony is maintained by the promotion of any culture that accommodates people to their social fate, so long as it is not threatening to ruling class interests" (Hall and Neitz, 1993: 156).

Precisely, "hegemony refers to a loosely interrelated set of ruling ideas permeating a society, but in such a way as to make the established order of power and values appear natural, taken-for-granted and common-sensical" (McQuail, 1994: 99). Hegemony works through common sense and not with coercion or direct political or economic power, and hence it is different from rule. Williams (1977) provides a
useful distinction between hegemony and rule. Hegemony is different from rule in the sense that rule is expressed in directly political forms and in times of crisis by direct or effective coercion. But the more normal situation is a complex interlocking of political, social and cultural forces, and hegemony according to different interpretations is either this or the active social and cultural forces which are its necessary elements (Williams, 1977). Williams argues that hegemony emphasises the wholeness of the process and therefore goes beyond ideology. The conscious system of ideas and beliefs are not the only definite elements, rather it is the "whole lived social process as practically organised by specific and dominant meanings and values" whereas "ideology is a relatively formal and articulated system of meanings, values, and beliefs, of a kind that can be abstracted as a world-view or a class outlook" (p. 109).

Hegemony differs from rule in its refusal to equate consciousness with an articulate formal system. It is a lived system of meanings and values which, as they are experienced as practices, appear as reciprocally confirming. Therefore, it is a sense of reality for most people in society because they cannot possibly move beyond that reality in most areas of their lives. In the strongest sense, it is a 'culture', but a culture which needs to be viewed as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes. An important feature of hegemony is that it is always an active process and not a static system or structure and hence it is flexible and receptive. "It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own" (ibid. p. 112). Hence, the concept of counter-hegemony and alternative hegemony, which also have real existence come into being. Various hegemonic forces which work in a society like traditions (certain practices, values) institutions (church), family, education, socialisation etc. form the foundations of hegemony.

The theory of ruling ideology has mostly been discussed and analysed from a class perspective. While Marx focused on the power of capital and described State as a repressive agency which works for the interests of ruling class, Althusser added ISAs into the existing framework of class relations and asserted that ideologies could be explained only from the angle of class struggle. Even in Gramsci, the hegemonic model was theorised in terms of class structure. The power relations as existent in the social formations, and the dominant ideologies unfortunately have not been looked into from a gender perspective in the above philosophies. Giving a critique to Marxist theory, feminists have pointed out that it does not incorporate women's domestic labour into the relations of production. But after incorporating the component of
women's domestic labour into Marxist thought/analysis, Marxist-feminism also puts the women's question largely under the rubric of the class question.

However, women's oppression cannot be explained only through the class question as noted in the previous sections. Women can be oppressed or effectively subordinated within patriarchal structures and by cultural forces which operate through patriarchal and gender relations. Mouffe (1988), while opposing the class reductionism where all social subjects necessarily become class subjects, strongly emphasises the importance of other social relations like sex, race, nationality etc. in determining the positionalities of social agents. She argues "a person's subjectivity is not constructed only on the basis of her/his position in the relations of production" (p. 90). She further claims that:

all social relations can become the locus of antagonism insofar as they are constructed as relations of subordination. Many different forms of subordination can become the origin of conflict and struggle. There exists, therefore, in society a multiplicity of potential antagonisms, and class antagonism is only one among many. It is not possible to reduce all those forms of subordination and struggle to the expression of a single logic located in the economy. Nor can this reduction be avoided by positing a complex mediation between social antagonisms and the economy. There are multiple forms of power in society that cannot be reduced to or deduced from one origin or source (p. 91).

Similarly, Rubin (1975) argues that although an economic perspective is important in analysis of women's position in society, it is not sufficient to explain oppressive practices like foot binding and chastity belts inflicted upon women in the history of human society. She further argues that analysis of the reproduction of labor power does not even explain why it is usually women who do domestic work in the home rather than men. For her, explaining women's usefulness to capitalism is one thing but to say that "this usefulness explains the genesis of oppression is quite another" (p. 163). MacKinnon (1988) also asserts that "we cannot talk about everyday life without understanding its division by gender, or about hegemony without understanding male dominance as a form of it" (p. 116). Marxism does not, somehow, take into consideration the role of various other kinds of power in society or hegemonic forces (say culture) which are significant in the subordination of women. All this suggests that there is a need to revise existing theories and add other dimensions to the social knowledge. A question which seems pertinent in this regard is: does the economy
form a 'base' in women's subordination? Does patriarchal culture have its basis in material life?

Drawing from materialistic accounts of Marx on the relationship between 'men' and nature and between 'men' themselves embedded within the material production, Hall (1977) eloquently describes the emergence of 'ideological' form of 'culture' from within the material culture. ‘Men’ intervene in nature with the help of certain instruments or tools and reproduce their material conditions of existence. This process involves collaboration of 'men' in terms of divided labour, exchange of tools and goods, and leads to the formation of social individuals and finally to social organisation. Therefore, the relations surrounding the material production form and determine the basis of social structures, that is, division of labour, type of society, civil and political associations, type of family and state, 'men's' beliefs, ideas, theoretical constructions, social consciousness appropriate to the existing situation. This process renders a materialist understanding of human history and social development. However, this whole process of organisation of labour, circulation of goods, development of associations, family life, determine a way of living among the social individuals and groups. This pattern of living was:

the result of the interconnections between the different levels of social practice. The pattern also expressed how the combined result of these interconnecting levels was 'lived', as a totality, by its 'bearers'. This seems to be the best way of grasping, within a materialist theory where precisely culture arises... Thus, 'culture' refers to the arrangement - the forms - assumed by social existence under determinate historical conditions... If the term 'social' refers to the content of the relationships into which men involuntarily enter in any social formation, then 'culture' refers to the forms which those relationships assume... 'Culture' does not refer to something substantively different from 'social': it refers to a different aspect of essentially the same phenomena (ibid. p. 317-318).

What would have been the role and contribution of women in the history of this human development? There is no doubt that women must also have produced the material conditions for their existence (see Slocum, 1975). But what would have happened when women were presumably in their most vulnerable roles (i.e. bearing)? Who would have produced material conditions for them? It can be easily figured out that women would have been dependent upon men in certain circumstances. So how would this dependence have been seen in social organisation, and how would women
have been perceived as social individuals? It is not easy to answer these questions, but it can be argued that women's dependence would have determined their role and status corresponding to the situation and inscribed into the definition of culture. Feminist anthropologists (Rosaldo, 1974; Ortner, 1974) have argued that women's physiological functions limit their social movements and confine them to the domestic sphere. It further determines their social roles and psychic structure as a result of which their activities are circumscribed and a gendered division of labour is constructed between women and men. Thus this given matrix would have produced elaborate forms of social structure. Therefore it can be deduced that: sex is to woman what labour is to man. It seems to be an important reason of the exclusion of role of women or analysis of women's roles in discussions on class relations and production of labour.

Sexuality in case of women seems to have determined the power relations between men and women. The thesis that women's dependence and exclusion of women from producing material conditions leading to particular social structures can be seen in terms of gendered division of labour, women as mothers/wives and men as producers and earners particularly in traditional societies. Thus, the history of human development can only be hypothesised on the basis of existing evidences, social structures, forms of associations and power relations. It can be further argued that the particular social formations viewing women as dependants would have assigned specific roles to women and would have formed the basis of (contemporary) culture. Early human history became objectified and social relations became culturally encoded, ideologised and natural. Material culture thus leads to an ideological culture containing meaningful symbols, values, which determine the behaviour of individual and through which social actors communicate (Hall and Neitz, 1993). The 'way of life' gets integrated into 'ideas' and through social practices culture becomes a 'whole way of life'. Thus ideas and practices together make the culture (see Hall and Neitz, 1993). Hall (1980a: 60) argues "culture is not a practice; nor is it simply the descriptive sum of the 'mores and folkways' of societies... It is threaded through all social practices, and is the sum of their interrelationship".

Within the Indian context, it may be argued that a specific culture in the form of certain values, practices, traditions and customs may be perceived by the contemporary generation as a key determinant in the subordination of women. The role of culture as a 'superstructure' might have been relevant at one point in time. However, in its present form culture may be perceived as a 'given' and a 'natural' phenomena which is further strengthened by patriarchal social forces. Since this
culture has its roots in the culture of higher castes, specifically Brahmins, it may be defined as Brahmanical hegemony in process.

The Brahmanical-patriarchal culture is a strong structure/practice in India at both the internal (family, community, religion) as well as external (external state) levels of functioning. As noted earlier, it is strengthened by the state in its laws and practices or by non-intervention or biased judgements as shown in the cases of violence against women. It may be noted that even improved economic condition of middle class women (higher castes) does not relieve them from the shackles of an oppressive culture prescribed centuries ago in the Indian context. The hegemonic forces of Brahmanism, that is, control of women's sexuality, oppression of women in the form of restricted education, employment, their right to movement, to form associations outside marriage, their right to property, an insensitivity towards their person and individuality, denial of opportunities etc. are still widely followed. Women may not be following traditions and norms in the contemporary times as a part of their Dharma but they may do so for the fear of criticism. Kishwar (1984) has analysed how the family structure in India ensures the subordination and exploitation of women in a way that puts them beyond the purview of most of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution. She argues that all fundamental rights and civil liberties are frequently snatched away from women by the powerful members of their own families. For too many women in India, their own fathers, brothers and husbands act like virtual prison guards, holding them captive and keeping them in a state of perpetual fear within the walls of their own homes, and denying them the right to make or even to take part in making the most fundamental decisions about their own lives. Not that men are the main exploiters and women exploited. Women quite often play as tyrants vis-à-vis other women but it is important to note that by doing this they do not strengthen the power of women as a group but rather the power of the male dominated family.

Women are seen as pieces of property or as repositories of honour. Any attempt by women at independent decision-making is seen as a blot on the family honour and status. As far as freedom of movement is concerned, most women are subjected to various degrees and forms of seclusion from childhood to the end of their lives. This is particularly visible in terms of their employment; going out in the evenings; strict vigils on women's hostels etc. Rather homely virtues are appreciated publicly. Restricting women's freedom of movement is an important part of the strategy for making women dependent on men. One effect of this is that women's fear of the external world borders on panic, so that many women learn to put up with any
The ideology of the male-dominated family leads people to suspect as 'immoral' any woman who works outside the house. Sexual harassment at work is used as another reason for not allowing women to go and seek work away from home or for not sending them for training to acquire skills. The attitude of contempt towards working women plays a crucial role in making women believe that they can gain self respect only by staying at home and doing unpaid labour. As discussed earlier, women are mostly denied the right to property and this becomes the major source of their economic bondage to men. Women may get large dowries but not an independent piece of property. In the present family system, women are used as commodities, as vehicles for transfer of consumer forms of property from one family to another and as slaves from parent's family to husband's family. Lastly, the most effective censorship on women's speaking out comes from their own families. It is much better than any press censorship or other governmental bans on freedom of speech and expression. This silence is not only limited to cases of atrocities on women by outsiders, but includes many instances of violence within the family. Kishwar (1984) concludes that the feature which distinguishes the oppression of women from that of almost all other oppressed groups is that the denial of their most basic rights takes place first and foremost within the family. This is done so effectively that the hand of the government or any other similar repressive agency is seldom visible in keeping women oppressed.

There is no doubt that the material benefits of controlling women's sexuality and other practices like dowry system, denial of property rights to women, female foeticide etc. strengthen the economic and political power of certain segments and men in particular. However, at the same time such practices get strengthened in the

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18 For instance, Mies (1988) attributes the growing mortality rate of women and female children in India to penetration of capitalist relations in economy and not to sexist ideology or patriarchal family structure. She suggests a close connection between the employment of women in production and their proportion in the total population. Mies (1986) also explains the phenomena of dowry and violence against women as part and parcel of capitalism, although she also believes that violence against women cannot be simply explained through narrow economistic arguments.

19 While discussing the practice of dowry system among civil services probationer officers in India, Joshi (see India Today, 1994: 113) notes that in Bihar cash goes from bride's father to groom's father (the patriarchal head) and 'becomes a part of the family corpus. The daughter-in-law generally does not stake a claim to it.'
process and become naturalised and taken-for-granted i.e. a practice with a material base at one point in time becomes a cultural practice over time. For instance, as a parallel argument, beef-eating might have been banned in the Hindu society as a result of ecological disturbances and not ideological reasons at one historical period as claimed by Harris (1979), however, it cannot be denied that in the contemporary times the taboo on beef-eating is an integral part of Hindu culture and religion.  

Coming back to the processes of Brahmanical hegemony, marriage is still considered a major goal of a woman's life followed by the ideals of producing male progeny and standing by husbands' accomplishments. This ideology is propagated in the Utopia of Ram Rajya and Sitahood, in politics, and in televised serials like the Ramayana. Brahmanical order gave way to reformism under British imperialism and political liberalism in Independent India, since hegemony is receptive, flexible and an active process (Williams, 1977). But the core of hegemonic forces are somehow retained through common sense. Because of a woman's different body than man, and different functions of that body, it is somehow convincing to attribute gender to natural laws, which become rational laws with time. Constrained by family, religion, social customs, values of chastity, and fear of a world 'out there', women become literally dependent upon men and internalise such ideologies easily which propagate that division of labour and women's dependence are a natural phenomenon. Ortner (1974) argues that "indeed the fact of woman's full human consciousness, her full involvement in and commitment to culture's project of transcendence over nature explains woman's nearly universal unquestioning acceptance of her own devaluation. ...As a conscious human and member of culture, she has followed out the logic of culture's argument and has reached culture's conclusions along with the men" (p. 76). In a similar vein it may be argued that the birth of a daughter in Indian society makes people (including women) 'naturally' sad because the desire for a son lies in its patriarchal culture and Hindu philosophy. Giving a psychoanalytic perspective on the mother-daughter relationship, Chodorow (1974) argues that in fact the possibility of a mother's identification with her girl child might be stronger as a result of mother's being a female child herself in the history of her relationship with her own mother. According to her, there is evidence that mothers identify more with their girl children than with boy children. Quite contrarily, many times daughters are not welcomed even by women themselves in the Indian social set up. It may be argued that a woman's desire for a son within the Indian context is the result of a cultural construct, since the birth of a male heir adds to her status and respect in her in-law's family.

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20 Gatwood (1985) points out that in his discussion on the origin of the taboo on beef-eating, Harris has inexplicably missed the symbolic equation of cows with high caste females, the legacy of which is evident in representation of cow as 'Gau mata' (Mother cow).
As noted earlier, the Brahmanical culture is further strengthened by the state, religion, and community. Religion enjoys a special status in traditional societies and is a major promoter of patriarchal values. Particularly in India, which is the home of many diverse religions, secularism, as shown earlier in the case of Shah Bano, expressed in the freedom of personal laws, can impinge upon women's rights directly. The judiciary, as mentioned earlier, despite the most progressive laws continues to pronounce biased decisions as seen in cases of rape, dowry, and sati; police itself violates women's rights and act as patriarchal custodians advising women to compromise and retain family. An exploitative family structure receives crucial support from the government and the state through various laws and rules of behaviour which legitimise the authority of men over the lives of women members of family. Kishwar (1984) argues that unless the concept of fundamental rights and liberties is radically redefined, taking into account the specific nature of women's bondage as rooted in the family, these rights will continue to remain irrelevant for the lives of most women. Unless the censorship imposed on women by their family, community and society at large, and internalised by women in all areas of life, is made a political issue, women's voices are not likely to be heard in social and political life.

Although the Brahmanical culture is mainly prevalent in the middle and upper classes, who largely belong to higher castes, and the lower caste/class culture is supposedly different from elite culture, it is evident as in the areas of women's health, education, attitudes towards female children, preference of sons, education of sons, practice of foeticide/infanticide, practice of dowry, etc. that patriarchal culture is practised in all parts of the country and by most of the classes and communities. It must be remembered that the dowry system, which has spread to all parts of the country and has even replaced the system of bride-price, is a special characteristic of higher castes (see Srinivas, 1962). It is because Brahmanical culture has been an ideal in Indian society, and when a family from a lower caste status moves to a higher caste status (it may not be an easy transformation), it also adopts the cultural practices of higher strata, leading to social exclusiveness of their women according to present times and practices. Srinivas (1962) calls this process 'Sanskritisation'^21 i.e. the adoption of the Brahmanic way of life by a lower caste in terms of customs, rites, rituals, and also Brahmanical institutions and values. Giving an example from his study, Srinivas (1962: 46) explains that, for instance: “among Hindus generally, there

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21 Sanskrit was the language of the higher castes, and the process of its cultural propagation is called 'Sanskritisation' (see Srinivas, 1962: 153).
is a preference for virginity in brides, chastity in wives, and continence in widows, and this is specially marked among the highest castes. The institutions of the "low" caste are more liberal in the spheres of marriage and sex than those of Brahmins. Their sex code is not as harsh towards women as that of the top castes, especially Brahmins. But as a caste rises in the hierarchy and its ways become more Sanskritised, it adopts the sex and marriage code of the Brahmins. Sanskritisation results in harshness towards women".

As opposed to Sanskritisation, the upper castes under British rule moved towards Westernisation i.e. adoption of the Western values. But as argues Srinivas (1962), this does not mean that they have escaped the bonds of caste. According to Kothari (1970), no social system disappears like that, rather it takes other forms under the impact of structural changes. As noted earlier, Liddle and Joshi (1986) have shown how the construction of gender has taken a different form under the class system in line with the principles of caste system in the contemporary Indian society.

The political administration and the bureaucracy is mainly run by higher caste men, therefore, the ruling culture also becomes the dominant and popular\textsuperscript{22} culture. The upper castes were in a privileged position with Western education under the British rulers and the nationalist movement was also led by higher castes. Thus, they were also the first nationalists who benefited from the political and administrative power (Srinivas, 1962, 1991; Kothari, 1970; Beteille, 1991).

Although people from lower castes are now found in the political parties or in administrative services or holding good positions, they still are less in number. The higher castes form the dominant strata (see Navlakha, 1989). In his study on the elite formation in India, Navlakha (1989) took a sample of modern educated-professional elite from diverse areas of industrial-business managers, civil servants, and academics and found that respondents were predominantly Hindus (85.3%), out of which upper stratum of castes comprised 83.8 per cent, and the lower stratum 8.9 per cent. In another study by Jesudason (quoted in Navlakha, 1989), it was found that among Indian students doing higher studies in the USA, 98 per cent of the Hindus belonged to upper caste strata, and only 2 per cent were from the lower, scheduled castes. However, as mentioned earlier, when a caste rises in the social hierarchy it adopts the ways of higher castes with regard to women's roles. It is beyond doubt that the Brahmanical culture is the dominant culture at an elite level of Indian society, and the

\textsuperscript{22}"Popular" in this context means certain practices followed by most strata of the population.
power elite which consists of higher castes largely ignore women's democratic and human rights.

After having reviewed women's position in Indian democracy and having established the continuing hegemony of a higher-caste culture in defining women's roles, the next step would be to question the democratic role of media towards women's issues/concerns since media form an important part of the public sphere. The pertinent questions are: how far have Indian media bring in women's issues to the public attention? Which of the issues are made 'public'? How far have they questioned the traditional order? And how far have they helped the women's movement to achieve its objectives? I now turn to the media in the following chapter.
Chapter 3
The Indian national press in democratic politics

The aim of this chapter is to provide a background to the Indian press and further analyse its structure and nature which will help in understanding the attitude of the press towards women's issues in the following chapters. Apart from this I shall also provide a briefing on the Indian television. However, the main focus of the chapter would be on the English press since this study selected an English newspaper for analysis of women's issues, and most importantly English press is an elite press and plays an important role in agenda-setting. To begin with, I shall briefly review the role and status of the Indian television, and later I will discuss the role of the press, the importance attached to the freedom of the press in Indian democracy, the structure and nature of the press, its role in representing women's issues, and the concerns addressed for the present study.

Television/Doordarshan

The Indian television was born in September 1959 when an experimental TV station was set up in New Delhi to discover what TV could achieve in community development and formal education - which was supposedly the main objectives of launching TV in India. Until early 1970's TV functioned under the banner of All India Radio (AIR). In the early 1970's the demands from urban elites, television manufacturers and the advertising industry increased which contributed towards the decisions to expand the medium nationwide. In 1976, television was separated from AIR and given a new name - Doordarshan (meaning 'distant vision'). It became an independent media unit in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting but has remained under government control. The objectives of television as put forward by the government are:

1. to act as a catalyst for social change;
2. to promote national integration;
3. to stimulate a scientific temper among the people;
4. to disseminate the message of family planning as a means of population control and family welfare;
5. to stimulate greater agricultural production by providing essential information and knowledge;
6. to promote and help preservation of environment and ecological balance;
7. to highlight the need for social welfare measures including welfare of women, children and the less privileged;
8. to promote interest in games and sports;
9. to stimulate appreciation of our artistic and cultural heritage (see Kumar, 1981).

In spite of these objectives and intentions of the government, for majority of audience in India, television is mainly a source of entertainment. In 1976 Doordarshan or DD responded to the demands of market and started accepting advertising spots. The early 1980s saw the screening of first of the sponsored programmes like soap operas on DD increasing its commercial value and also moving away from its original objectives. In the mean time, India launched its first national satellite called INSAT-1A in April 1982 but it failed in August 1982 due to technical problems. INSAT-1B was launched again in October 1983 and it was decided that 32 per cent of the programmes would be devoted to educational purposes, 17 per cent to agriculture and children, 12 per cent to health and entertainment and 10 per cent to news. However, the programmes focussed mainly on entertainment with which the audience was also happy adding to DD's complacency. The original objectives remained neglected. The quality of programmes were also low and news services were largely promoting government policies and ceremonial activities. This also meant that this entire framework left no scope for any controversies or criticism since both audience and government were complacent. Doordarshan did not become an active part of the political arena in terms of representing citizens’s concerns, initiating debates or even acting as a mediator between the citizens and the government. It was mainly because it remained under government control and secondly, it ended up as an entertainment industry which was evident through the programmes it always screened. Such programmes mainly included songs, Hindi films, soaps etc. (Patel, 1996; Kumar, 1981).

The emergence of STAR (Satellite Television Asia Region) in 1991 brought a drastic change in many Asian countries. It provided a range of programmes to viewers including the Westernised and professional programming. However, its audience was confined to English speaking strata and hence it could not gain mass popularity. Nonetheless, the flexibility in the economic policies by the Indian government provided a chance to media companies to launch new stations. Subsequently, Zee TV began broadcasting in India in October 1992. In the beginning it centered its programmes mainly on old DD serials and Hindi films. But by mid 1993 it began broadcasting 24 hours and gained popularity. Quite contrary to STAR, Zee TV transformed its programmes catering to a larger audience. In other words its programmes took into consideration the perspectives and problems of Indian audience
and focused on their life styles. The ideas for soaps, talk shows and game shows may have been borrowed from West but were infused with indigenous values. Its popularity can be measured from the fact that by the end of 1993 STAR had 2 per cent audience, Zee had 11 per cent audience watching its programmes. In the mean time, DD finding itself in a competitive market, introduced a third channel called 'Metro' in April 1993. Metro aspired to devote 50 per cent time to regional programmes, 20 per cent to socially and culturally relevant programmes. However it still has to remain cautious of screening programmes which may offend the minority or religious communities or can lead to disturbances in law and order. Thus it works under tremendous pressures. In 1994 DD also introduced new current affairs programmes, some live programming, fashion shows, Hindi movie channel etc. to catch wider audience (Patel, 1996).

However, as is evident from the ongoing discussion, Indian television is in a state of flux. At the same time it is beyond doubt that it acts mainly as an entertainment industry and not as a platform to carry public debates. At the time of starting and conducting this study, the English press clearly holds a significant status and plays an important agenda-setting function within the elite political sphere. The role of the press in view of changes in media systems may undergo change in the near future - however it remains to be seen. In the following section I shall turn to the role and nature of the press which is the main focus of this study.

India press

It may be noted that like the model of a Western political democracy, model of a free and independent press was retained by the liberal Indian political elite after the independence of India in 1947. Briefly, the struggle for freedom of press in India has a long history behind it (for details see Karkhanis, 1981; Natrajan, 1962). During the British rule there was no guarantee - statutory or otherwise - of individual freedoms. But the value of freedom of the press had been duly recognised by early social reformers and later the press was used effectively by national leaders like Gandhi and Nehru during the struggle for independence. In fact the press played an important role in the national movement and was a significant forum for discussion of political affairs. Indian newspapers under British rule reported extensively on aspirations of Indians for more freedom and opportunities. The press evoked public opinion against the British rule and was a significant element in the withdrawal of the British from India (see Karkhanis, 1981). While the Indian leaders always laid great emphasis on freedom of speech and of the press, nothing concrete could be achieved until the
gaining of freedom in 1947. After independence, the Constituent Assembly showed a profound interest in the freedom of thought and expression. The importance of the free press can be judged from the statements passed by various leaders of that period. Jawaharlal Nehru stated in 1950: "I would rather have a completely free press with all the dangers involved in the wrong use of that freedom than a suppressed or a regulated press" (quoted in Sharma, 1993: 7). Gajendragadkar, a former Chief Justice of India, commented "the freedom is of considerable significance in a democratic society as it gives full scope to an individual for his development and ample opportunity for propagation of his views, philosophy and ideology; and also it plays a vital role in the education, growth and development of public opinion on issues of public importance" (ibid. p. 7). A free press was considered to be an instrument of social and political change.

After independence, the Constitutions of other countries providing for freedom of speech and expression like the USA, the UK, Germany, Switzerland etc. exerted a great influence on the framers of the Indian Constitution. In their debates, frequent references were made to the Constitutions of these countries. For instance, B. N. Ran, a constitutional advisor, pointed out the rights declared in the constitutions or charter of these countries related to equality before law, freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of association etc. and justified them. Similarly, Dr. Ambedkar's draft dealt with the subject of fundamental rights quite extensively. He made it clear that the fundamental rights contained in his draft have been borrowed from countries where conditions were almost similar to the one existing in India. K. M. Munshi, another member of committee, argued that right of free expression was recognised all over the world, and that speeches or writings which had the effects of generating communal or class hatred should be permitted provided they do not go to the extent of causing violence or crime. He argued "this has been the position in all civilised countries" (Sharma, 1993: 50). It is evident that the Western thought influenced the Indian political elite to adopt a model of free press. Freedom of the press, though not specifically mentioned in the Indian Constitution, is implicit in the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech and expression enshrined in the Constitution (see Karkhanis, 1981; Sharma, 1993).

Press has a significant role to play in every kind of society. In other words there is no universal theory regarding the role of the press owing to different media systems in different settings. For instance, the four popular press theories based on Siebert et al (1956) may find justification in their own contexts. Authoritarian theory builds up its case within an authoritarian regime whereby the policies of the state are promoted in
the press since those policies are considered valid and legitimate from the state's perspective. The Soviet Theory also holds true within this framework. Libertarian theory asks for freedom of the media and the theory of Social Responsibility assigns ethical and moral functions to media in representing citizens' interest in a democratic society. McQuail (1994) introduces another theory called Development theory applicable within the developing countries whereby expectations from media are greater owing to the state of social and economic under-development in such countries. Within the above set of normative principles, it may be argued that Indian press enjoys the freedom and autonomy along with the lines of libertarian model and hence it may also be expected to play a socially responsible role in terms of raising issues faced by both privileged and under-privileged sections of society.

The press has an important role to play in a developing country like India. It is because majority of the population is grappled with the problems of basic needs as a result of inequality and stratification. Even after four and one-half decade of development, India faces overwhelming "poverty bred by scarcity of known resources, ignorance, and staggering population growth" (Hardgrave and Kochnek, 1993: 4). The benefits of development have remained largely confined to top 40 per cent of the population and two-thirds of the country go to sleep empty stomach (Srampickal, 1989). At the level of education, India is the largest producer of illiterates in the world. In such situation, free media are expected to bring people's problems to the attention of policy makers. Owing to the problem of illiteracy, it is again the media/journalists who are supposed to reach people and involve them in the democratic processes since most people do not have easy access to the elite political sphere. At the same time, media need to act as a catalyst for democratic reforms and a vehicle for transmitting ideas and bringing change in a traditional society. Karkhanis (1981) argues that role of the press in a developing country like India is varied. "It acts as a communicator of news, the source of information about the world, national and local events. It becomes an instrument of education and helps influence social and cultural attitudes, establish values and develop a climate for change... The press becomes an instrument of political, social and economic progress" (p. 7). But the question is: does the press play this role effectively? In the following section I shall highlight the structure of the press and analyse its nature of functioning.

The structure and nature of the Indian press

Haque and Narag (1983) have divided the Indian press into a) the vernacular press, b) the party press, and c) the english press. There are a large number of papers published
in various parts of the country and in various languages. Although the vernacular press leads in circulation, English dailies occupy a special status in terms of prestige. In words of Calman (1992: 85) the English press is "probably the most compelling in the short run to elites of the central government". This is in spite the fact that just five per cent of the adults in India read English newspapers (see Joseph and Sharma, 1994). The highest readership for English publications is in four metropolitan cities of Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and Madras. The English national press continues to enjoy a position of prominence since the English language is a legacy of imperialism although confined mainly to the ruling class and the elite. Arora and Lasswell (1969) argue that in understanding the influence of English newspapers, it must be taken into account that English has been and remains an official language, and that in practice it is the preferred language of administrators and intellectuals. The journalists and editors who are all-India figures are those who are active in the English press.

The elite English dailies exert a great influence on the educated and articulate sections of the population, reflect the public opinion of influential readership, and play a very important agenda-setting role compared to the vernacular press (Haque, 1986; Haque and Narag, 1983; Joseph and Sharma, 1994). Precisely, the English press "delineates the priorities of the country and condition the expectations of the most powerful segments of the Indian population: the political, intellectual and business elite" (Haque and Narag, 1983: 35). Arora and Lasswell (1969) argue that whatever appears in news and editorial columns of the press instantly enters public domain, and elite individuals are presumed to be as aware of what is published as though a town crier has shouted every item in his hearing. The elite press of India is part of the decision-making. Its power is further strengthened by its class composition as it is run by the same dominant group to which it primarily caters and this is an important factor which decides the nature of news (Joseph and Sharma, 1994). In the words of Joseph and Sharma (1994: 17) "the traditional definition of news, accepted by the mainstream English-language press in India, confirm to the generally liberal, yet elitist, values espoused by the relatively affluent, upwardly mobile, university educated, upper caste urban male" (emphasis added).

Further, the Indian press is commercial in its orientation and is run as a business organisation. Haque (1986: 84) argues that "mainstream dailies, whatever their commitment to ideology or public interest and whatever constraints they may work under, would probably try to appeal as business organisations, to the greatest number of their readers". Most of the prestigious English dailies are owned by industrial barons and they are also profitable for political influence. Haque and Narag (1983:
37) point out that "often the part played by a newspaper in an industrial empire of jute, textiles, cement and automobiles in terms of overall financial resources is small. But a newspaper can provide important advantages to the owners. First, ownership of a newspaper makes an industrial empire less likely, if not immune, to attacks by other newspapers, as other papers know that they are also vulnerable to similar attacks. Secondly, the threat of exposure often serves to force the bureaucracy to meet owner's demands. Third, ownership acts as a deterrent to the government, as it has to be wary against action affecting the owners who have the capability and desire to widely publicise such action and embarrass the government" (Haque and Narag, 1983: 37).

As far as the government's pressure is concerned, it is directed at the proprietors rather than the editorial boards, staff members or correspondents. The press is subjected to different kinds of pressure like the loss of advertisements or reduction of newsprint allocation, etc. (see Haque and Narag, 1983)

Since the Indian press emerged in pre-independence days and played a major role in the nationalist movement, it has continued with its tradition of covering politics more than other issues. It is known to be obsessed with covering political events, local or national (Haque, 1986, Prasad, 1992). Drieberg (quoted in Haque, 1986: 85) argues that "politics remains the obsessive neurosis of the Indian press, and the type of politics one reads about is middle class politics, the power game as it appears to the middle class". Some scholars (Desai, quoted in Haque and Narag, 1983) have criticised this position of the press, that is, the importance given to politics, on the grounds that India is a developing country and the press needs to give more importance to development issues; inform people about their contribution towards decision-making processes, and debate social, economic and political issues. In a study, Haque (1986) found that english dailies attached more importance to politics and government than the development news or any other subject or category. He defines development news as "dealing with reforms and improvement of quality of life" (p. 89). It includes news relating to physical projects, and progress or problems regarding subjects included in the development category. Various issues categorised under development were: health, education, literacy, communication (transportation), agriculture, industry, housing, population training, national integration, energy, and ecology.

It may be argued that the Indian press, having been a part of the national liberation movement, was always occupied with political news or news dealing with communal conflicts, murders, riots, and hence it continued with its historical tradition. For instance, Karkhanis (1981: 87) observed that "the Indian press prior to the
independence had a theme and a goal: to assist in the objective of gaining freedom for India, but after gaining freedom in 1947, the press at least for a while, was at a loss for common goal". Therefore it might be the reason that "after independence, the crusading, anti-British, nationalist press assumed, by and large, a supportive attitude towards the State" (Joseph and Sharma, 1994: 15). Karkhanis (1981) argues that it was difficult for the press to play a role of the 'inspector general' of the political system in the Nehru era because "many journalists, prior to independence, had not only served as the vigorous spokesmen for Nehru and other political leaders but had openly allied with them in the mission for freedom" (p. 191). Therefore, it was not surprising that journalists supported Nehru and his government.

Exploring the relationships further between the press and different governments in Indian political history, Karkhanis (1981) noted that press neither acted as opposition to the Nehru government nor played the role of a watchdog. He asserts that "instead of critically examining the failures and short-comings of the government in economic and social progress, it (the press) praised government leaders despite meagre and slow advances in these areas. Instead of directing the government's attention to domestic instability, it encouraged the government to play an increasingly dominant role in the international scene" (p. 193). Where as the same press did not have a very smooth relationship with Indira Gandhi and her government. Karkhanis (1981) reasons that probably the press after 19 years of functioning after independence had matured and secondly, a different generation of journalists did not feel obliged to be loyal to the government. Apart from that Indira Gandhi's rise to position of the Prime Minister was challenged by the party leaders themselves and her position was quite shaky. Karkhanis (1981: 193) opines that "the press could not back, at least not wholeheartedly, a leader, unstable in her own position". Although Karkhanis does not look into the gender component of the whole situation, there is sufficient evidence that Indira Gandhi was also challenged because she was a woman. The leaders who supported her Prime Ministership after sudden demise of Lal Bahadur Shastri had thought that it would be easier to replace a woman after the situation was normal. But to their utmost surprise, Indira Gandhi proved tough for them. It may be argued that her being a woman was one of the reasons of her unstable position in the beginning of her career (see Everett, 1993). From a gender perspective, the attitude of the press towards Indira Gandhi remains a missing link in analysis of relationship between the press and Indira Gandhi's government.

During Indira Gandhi's tenure between 1966-77, India's involvement at the international level was also minimal, as pointed out by Karkhanis (1981). Therefore,
the press turned its attention to domestic problems of the country like inflation, economic decline, unemployment, corruption etc. Indira Gandhi was not able to provide a strong leadership and easy solutions to domestic problems. The press also openly criticised some of the policies of the government as a result of which government tried to restructure the press. During the internal emergency of 1975-77, the government of Indira Gandhi imposed press censorship. The very existence of the press and its freedom was threatened (see Merrill and Fisher, 1980). Therefore, a major breaking point in attitude of the press was noticed with the internal emergency in India in 1975, when the government tried to curb its freedom (see Karkhanis, 1981; Joseph and Sharma, 1994). Joseph and Sharma (1994) point out that though the response to censorship was not as intense as seen during the British rule, the experience of emergency marked the end of one kind of journalism and introduced a more forceful and investigative kind of news gathering and writing; it was also the beginning to look into a greater coverage of human rights issues and the plight of marginalised social groups.

However, at the same time, scholars (Joseph and Sharma, 1994) also confirm that while these newspapers do not believe in ignoring the interests of minorities and other marginalised groups, their major preoccupation remains with the ruling class. Although the coverage of issues related to human rights and social justice are now visible, this perspective is not always incorporated into the news coverage or editorial comments. For instance, in relation to women's issues, most mainstream newspapers do not follow an anti-woman stand. This is partly because of the ideal of equality of sexes enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Also, measures to ensure equal participation and elimination of discrimination and oppression are among the accepted social goals of the country, and are promoted by all the major political parties. However, it does not necessarily imply that the press does not marginalise women's issues. The commitment to impaired liberal norms, according to authors, can be deceptive. "It may prevent the appearance of overtly communal, openly casteist or blatantly sexist writing, in the mainstream English press. But it does not ensure the incorporation of the perspectives of women and other powerless groups into press coverage" (Joseph and Sharma, 1994: 17). Similarly observes Karkhanis (1981) that the reporting remains confined to the dry and dull activities of the government; there is lack of investigative reporting; and there is insufficient coverage of social and cultural news. Apart from this, the news is predominantly national and international and does not cover rural areas or small towns. It can be argued that press belongs to big industrialists who are not much interested in development issues. It was also evident when the big barons were displeased with Indira Gandhi's socialistic ideals...
and programmes in the early years of her rule, and did not support Indira Gandhi's ideals in the newspapers (see Karkhanis, 1981).

While the class bias of the English press is made explicit by scholars, a feminist analysis on the role of the press towards women's issues has not been explored in much detail. There are not many empirical studies available on the role of the press towards women's issues or the women's movement. It was only during the second phase of the women's movement i.e. in the late 1970s that the women-media relationship was paid some attention. One study conducted by Joseph and Sharma (1994) in the recent past carried an examination of some particular women's issues in the national press. This study found that violent atrocities against women receive great coverage in the media. In its analysis of five issues viz., dowry deaths, rape, *sati*, Shah Bano, and sex determination tests and foeticide, it was found that events and issues related to dowry deaths, rape and *sati* were successful in catching media attention. Shah Bano case received attention because of its communal, legal, and political repercussions rather than as a woman's issue, and sex determination tests and female foeticide received meagre coverage which was also due to women's campaign movement against this practice.

Prasad (1992) and Balasubrahmanyan (1988) also note that the press responds to violence related stories or in other words the stories which have sensational value. Prasad analysed the coverage of women related stories in four newspapers viz., The Hindu, The Hindustan Times, Indian Express and The Times of India. Her study concluded that: the maximum number of stories were related to sensational news items about women; most items were news stories followed by articles and news analysis; features were carried in the special supplements; there were hardly one or two stories on public policies of women's development, legal issues and mobilising of public opinion in the entire period selected; coverage on destitute women, income-generating activities for women, transformation of rural women through NGO's, social problems of prostitution and slum women and sexual harassment of women at work places, was absolutely missing; there were no editorials, no middles, no letters to editor, no photo-features covered; most items were on the local pages followed by the other pages, and there was only one lead article on the editorial page in the entire period; most of the reporting was at the state level and there were no reports at blocks or village levels; the urban bias was evident in all stories.

However, the above studies have not analysed the coverage within the wider social context or drawn any linkages between social practice and media practice on women's
issues. Nonetheless they reflect the attitude of the media towards women's issues. Parts of these studies have been discussed and referred to in the following chapters also.

Apart from this, a popular impression among feminist scholars is that the Indian press played an important role in bringing the issue of violence to the surface and providing a communication link to the movement activists particularly in the post-emergency period (Gandhi and Shah, 1990; Calman, 1992; Kishwar, 1984; Katzenstein, 1989; Datar, 1988). For instance, Calman (1992: 85) writes that "since the emergency, the press has hammered away at a number of women's issues... Of greatest importance has been the press' attention to violence against women, particularly domestic violence, which moved from being virtually unreported to being splashed on the front pages. Dowry deaths previously hidden in the police reports as suicides, were exposed as murders. The issue was thus brought dramatically not only to broad public attention, but specifically to the attention of government officials". However, the author (ibid.) also draws attention to the failure of the press to follow up the cases of violence and its bias towards urban based issues. Similarly, Gandhi and Shah (1991: 73) express that "the initial demonstrations and protests of the IWM (1980s) had very sympathetic media coverage. Small or big actions, interviews of women, photographs of victims, coverage of atrocities or events, were printed prominently. The print media recreated the poignancy of women's suffering, and their anger and struggles reached hundreds of readers". However, the authors (ibid.) admit the fading of women's issues/protests in the newspapers and their hostility towards women's issues and the women's movement.

The relationship between women activists and media/journalists, attitude of the press towards the women's movement, agenda-setting role of the press in relation to women's issues are some of the concerns which remain under-researched. Balasubramaniam (1988) brings to notice the patterns of interaction between media and the women's movement, opinions of activists on the treatment meted to them, tension between women journalists and women activists etc. However, this work again has not analysed the relationships and problematics within the wider context. Also a major problem with this work is that it has not offered concrete conclusions after discussing the context in general.

Since most women activists based in urban areas come from educated middle class backgrounds, they are active in the elite political arena raising women's concerns. As a part of the liberal model, the press is expected to facilitate the process of
communication between women activists and the government, carry messages from activists to audience to enlighten them on new perspectives, and push the government to pay attention to women's concerns. But how far has the press contributed towards this process is one of the important concerns of this study.

In light of the historical and sociocultural analysis of women's position in Indian society, my major concern is how has the press responded to women's issues and the women's movement? How far and which of women's issues receive attention from the press? And most importantly, can the attitude of the press towards women's issues and the women's movement be explained by the wider cultural context, as discussed in the previous chapters? These queries have been forwarded on the grounds that press, in a democratic society, carries a major responsibility of representing interests of citizens and provides a platform to citizens to participate in political processes. Representation of women's issues in the media would also signify the importance attached to women in Indian society.
Chapter 4  
Feminist research and media paradigms: A theoretical framework

This chapter puts the theoretical perspectives contextualised in the previous chapters into appropriate media frameworks. Feminist political theory in chapter one exposed the democratic myth which claims to have given all rights to women and effectively unveiled the masculinist foundations of democratic thought. By implication it also questioned the democratic role of media towards women since media are an embodiment of democracy in the contemporary era. Within this contextualisation, chapter two addressed the issue of women’s position in democratic society of India. After a historical and cultural analysis of women’s position, it argued that the patriarchal and cultural forces are still active in the oppression of women. Such forces originated within the culture of higher castes, specifically Brahmins, and thus it was defined as Brahmanical hegemony in process. It also argued that the oppression of women has become a part of the cultural value system and even the democratic forces embracing values of freedom and equality submit to the cultural forces in times of crisis. Thus the private patriarchal culture of ancient society has turned into a public patriarchal culture in modern India.

Media are expected to play an important role in a developing and a traditional society in terms of bringing issues to the attention of policy makers, to facilitate debates, and bring forth change by questioning the dominant structures. Chapter three questioned role of the Indian press towards women’s issues and the women’s movement. On the one hand media may be treated as part of the wider patriarchal culture perpetuating similar ideologies, and on the other free and democratic media are also the representatives of public interests. Caught between this tension, how have media responded to women’s issues and the women’s movement is the leading concern of this study.

After mapping out the research context, I wish to mention here that a major problem I have faced with the present study is to find a single, consistent theoretical framework which can smoothly articulate all the problematics and dimensions. It is partly because the varying concerns raised in the study demand different theoretical models. It is also because feminist research is still young in terms of providing precisely defined theoretical perspectives to feminist studies. In view of this problem, I shall use a combination of theoretical approaches which inform this study in order to contextualise the coverage of women’s news/issues in the press. It is in tune with what Van Zoonen (1991b: 35) says: “feminist theory and practice is often rather eclectic,
incorporating elements from different ideologies as circumstances and issues necessitate”.

Schudson (1991) has outlined three main approaches which are commonly employed to study news-making. These approaches are: the political economy of news; the social organisation of news work; and culturological approach. Political economy of news is a macro perspective which suggests a direct relationship between the economic ownership and the dissemination of messages maintaining the legitimacy and values of a class society (see Mcquail, 1994; Schudson, 1991; Curran, 1982; Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Murdock, 1980). Economy is the key determinant in this approach. It precisely argues that:

_The class which has the means of material production at its disposal does have control at the same time of the means of mental production; and it does seek to use them for the weakening of opposition to the established order (Murdock, 1980: 37)._ 

The second approach offered by Schudson (1991) is the social organisation of news work. Introduced by sociologists, this approach emphasises the role of organisational and occupational constraints in the working of journalists which determine patterns of news coverage (see Gans, 1979; Fishman, 1980; Tuchman, 1978b; Gitlin, 1980). It points out that the organisational requirements of the media shape news, and professionalism largely serves the organisational interests. It is because journalists deal with a bureaucratised world and hence cannot bring their biases into the news. Therefore, it is argued that those organisations which want to be covered by the media also need to function in an organised and bureaucratised fashion to meet demands of the media.

Finally, the third approach, that is, the culturological approach looks at media as an institution which operates within a given culture or a symbolic system which shape the news and in relation to which reporters perform their duties (see Schudson, 1991). Curran et al (1982: 27) note that the “culturalist studies seek to place media and other practices within a society conceived of as a complex expressive totality”. Based upon the Gramscian concept of ‘hegemony’, this approach argues that a ruling ideology is not imposed but appears to exist by virtue of an arrived at consensus. In other words hegemony works by way of discourse and not necessarily through political and economic power (Hall, 1982).
From various approaches outlined above, the present study will employ culturological or culturalist approach as an umbrella approach in order to deal with the cultural dimension i.e. to study the influence of culture on the media coverage of women's issues. Chapter two explained how Indian culture is deeply patriarchal and insensitive towards women both at the level of society (people) as well as the state. Being a democratic set-up, the Indian administration advocates political liberalism but largely complies when the traditional social order is threatened. While the model of Brahmanical culture effectively explains the attitude of society towards women, it is worth exploring its influence on the national press since the press and journalists are part of this mind-set and breathe the same cultural air. Therefore this approach addresses: how does culture seem to impinge upon the press? Further, how are democratic media implicated in the production of a social consensus? The following section reviews the culturalist approach and looks into its applicability for the present study.

I Culturalist approach

The culturalist perspective on news is not an established school (Schudson, 1991), and therefore there is little work done in this area. Many scholars have described news a social institution implying that news is socially constructed, and it is accomplished through set patterns of organisation and routinisation. Sahtins (in Schudson, 1991) suggests that human construction of news can be described from another angle which is that an event is not just a happening: "It is a relation between a certain happening and a given symbolic system" (ibid. 151). Everyday interaction happens within a given symbolic system. But this symbolic given cannot be determined through social organisation of news. It can be determined only through detailed historical analysis of society. It is in relation to this given symbolic system, which is part of a particular culture, that reporters and officials go about their duties or the media cover news. For instance, Hartman and Husband (1981) noted in their study on the coverage of racial conflict in the British mass media that "the British cultural tradition contains elements derogatory to foreigners, particularly blacks. The media operate within the culture and are obliged to use cultural symbols" (p. 274). In this sense, the news judgements of journalists or news worthiness may simply be common sense in a hegemonic system. For instance, Schudson's (1991) asserts:
many beliefs that ruling groups may use for their own ends are rooted much more deeply in human consciousness and are to be found much more widely in human societies than capitalism or socialism or industrialism or any other modern system of social organisation and domination. Patriarchal and sexist outlooks, for instance, may well be turned to the service of capitalism, but this does not make them capitalist in origin nor does it mean that they are perfectly or inherently homologous to capitalist structures or requirements for their preservation (p. 153).

Schudson (1991) further argues that the reason that news places more stress on individuals and not on social structures can also be explained with a cultural view i.e. it contains cultural idealism of the West that individuals are masters of their own destiny, are responsible for their own acts because of the free will they have. Therefore, it implies that it is not the structures or social forces which are troublesome, it is the individuals who are responsible for their own actions. Thus news contains certain 'taken-for-granted' values in relation to which it is constructed. Such background assumptions are usually unquestioned and unnoticed but they play an important role in the selection and framing of news. Thus the cultural air and the whole ideological atmosphere of society is an important filter through which news is constructed. It determines what things can be said and what should not be said (Hoggart, in Bennet, 1982).

Hall (1977, 1981, 1982), situating himself within the model of hegemony, concentrates on the ideological roles and effects of mass media and the way these are sustained. Hall's thesis is that events are identified by the media and presented in a familiar social context in order for audiences to make sense of them. The unusual events are brought to the maps of meaning which already form the basis of audiences' cultural knowledge. If reporters did not have such 'cultural maps' of the social world, the unusual, unexpected, and unpredicted newsworthy events would not make sense to the audience. Thus media perform their function through social identification, classification and contextualisation of news events, and make the world intelligible to the reader. This social process then follows particular journalistic practices on the grounds of various assumptions. One of the assumptions by which media work is the consensual nature of the society. By assigning meaning to events, a consensus is further constructed in which the "meaningful" and "meaningless" contexts are made clear, the "normal" and "abnormal" behaviours are constructed and so on. Thus media work within a framework of taken-for-granted values in the society.
The culturalist interpretation of media has received criticism from some scholars (see Curran, 1990; Stevenson, 1995). Curran (1990) argues that culturalist perspective overlooks an important determinant i.e. the ownership and control of the media and concentrates too much on the ideological aspect. He argues that economy of the media is the most important factor in deciding what goes into the newspaper and what is left out whereas the culturalist perspective assumes that control of the media lies outside, and it is based on the assumption that journalists enjoy a high degree of autonomy and that their reporting is structured by cultural and ideological influences. Similarly, Stevenson (1995: 46) argues that the concepts of hegemony and ideology are “essential for an understanding of the information age”. However, such debates “should be reconnected with concerns related to political economy...”. Although these scholars do not deny culturalist perspective, they advocate a combination of materialist (i.e. political economy) and cultural approaches for media studies.

The reasons for applying culturalist approach for the present study are many. As argued in chapter 2, the issue of women's subordination can be effectively explained independent of their class subjectivity, and can be theorised in terms of patriarchal subordination and/or cultural oppression particularly when the focus is urban middle class women. As also highlighted in chapter two, the concerns of this strata are different from the poor and deprived women, since their subordination in society is embedded within the gendered social structure or the patriarchal family structure and their lives are not economically determined.

Further, at an empirical level it is difficult to establish economy as the key determinant in the coverage of women's news/issues in the news genre. The advertisements promoting certain roles and images of women can point towards the profits of media institutions since that has a direct relationship with the economy of media (Smith, 1980). But as far as news and issues are concerned, it is hard to establish a causal connection between the economy of media and eclipsing of women's issues, i.e. it is difficult to answer how would the exclusion of women's issues boost the economy of media? However, it cannot be denied that the space allotted to women's stories/issues may not profit media particularly when both the media as well as readers lack interest in women's issues.

1 See Gilman (1993) for a discussion on relationship between women and economics. She argues that economic status of a woman is closely linked with economic status of her husband, implying that women have no class on their own. Women, by and large, derive their economic status through men they are related to. de Beauvoir (1993) seems to suggest the same when she argues that women "live dispersed among the males, attached through residence, housework, economic condition, and social standing to certain men - fathers or husbands - ...." (p. 369).
It is also difficult to talk about a conspiratory relationship between the media and polity as far as coverage of women's news/issues is concerned, particularly when the media in question are autonomous. It is because the women's question in itself does not hold much importance particularly in a traditional set up which means that it also does not warrant any deliberate ideology or conspiracy on part of both the media and polity for marginalisation of women’s issues. Women’s issues or women’s actions do not cause alarm at political level or in the media organisations like other issues, say on terrorism, economic policies, etc. For instance, a particular stand taken by media on the issue of terrorism may affect the ruling government. Similarly, a particular action of the government towards terrorism may affect the media or may provoke media thus causing rift between the two. However, women, particularly in a traditional society, are not a powerful political or economic constituency whose actions can cause alarm at national level or pose a threat to either media or the state.

Women’s issues are largely treated as ‘non-issues’ in the Indian society. Although neither state nor media have adopted an anti-women stand openly because of the principle of equality enshrined in the Indian Constitution (Joseph and Sharma, 1994), however, it is observable that the state is intensely patriarchal in its policies and decisions. It responds to women’s issues because of its own perception of being a democratic state but when it comes to implementation it chooses to remain silent. And in some cases, as observed in chapter 2, it openly ignores women’s interests in favour of political interests, and thus strengthens the traditional social order.

It is argued that the media are part of society and journalists consume the same cultural air and hence cannot escape its influence. A particular culture in a particular society may influence the attitude of the media. Within these terms, it seems appropriate to use a culturalist approach to determine media’s attitude towards women’s issues and the movement. To emphasise again, I do not deny that at the broader level economy plays an important role in the determination of news. Coverage of many of women’s issues clearly would not profit media, for instance coverage of a beauty contest promotes the capitalist interests since such coverage also encourages women's roles as sex objects, where as on the other hand a story on domestic violence or female foeticide may not be covered because it also questions the patriarchal structures and threatens the existing social order. An important query, however, is: why are not women’s issues important to the media? Or why do not women’s issues hold importance in the news organisations and in society? While agreeing that women’s issues do not economically profit media, I seek to explore the
reasons of their insignificance within the cultural trends of Indian society which will be examined through the nature of coverage, journalistic practices, and opinions of journalists. I argue that hegemonic factors play an important role in a cultural system which are often neglected by materialists.

The second approach used to determine the status and nature of coverage of women's news/issues and the women's movement is the 'social organisation of news work'. Methodologically, this approach is not used in the study in its traditional convention i.e. the status of women's news/issues in the media is not determined through participant observation in media organisation due to its functional impracticability (see chapter 6), rather it is determined in terms of what newspaper contents seem to convey.

The following section reviews literature on the social organisation of news and later analyse how have these studies informed feminist media debate. Within the feminist media debates, many other feminist concerns linked up with media are discussed which form an important part of this study.

II Social organisation of news

This discussion begins with a popular question in the area of news, which is, 'what is news'? As pointed out by scholars, "the reporter does not go out gathering news, picking up stories as if they were fallen apples" (Chibnall, 1981: 76). Or the world is not "sitting quietly out there waiting to be discovered" (Hartley, 1982: 12), rather it is a result of social construction, journalistic practices, bureaucratic processes and so on. Within the nature of news also, as argued by Lippman (1994: 37) "the news does not tell you how the seed is germinating in the ground, but it may tell you when the first sprout breaks through the surface. It may even tell you what somebody says is happening to the seed under ground. It may tell you that the sprout did not come up at the time it was expected". In a similar vein, Galtung and Ruge (1981: 53) argue that "the building of a dam goes unnoticed but not its inauguration". The efforts to define news, as pointed out by Roshco (1975), tend to dissolve into a list of news making events. The best-known definition according to Roshco only describes what is alleged to be an unmistakable news event: "When a dog bites a man, that is not news; but when a man bites a dog, that is news" (p. 9). Invariably, the definition(s) of news point towards certain characteristics or nature of news. In short, news is about events and people who are newsworthy. But argues Hartley (1982) events do not get into the
news simply by happening. They "need to be known and recognised, coming from a known and trusted - preferably a representative - source" (p. 75).

The studies on news production point towards various factors which go into the process of news making. It is argued that the news organisations cannot define their criteria of news selection every morning and hence they routinise their task to manage the news of the day in terms of its own organisation, practices, sources, beats, and structure of news (see Tuchman, 1978b; Gans, 1979; Fishman, 1980; Roshco, 1975). Galtung and Ruge (1981) have listed various conditions which need to be fulfilled for events to become news. They are: frequency; threshold; unambiguity; meaningfulness; consonance; unexpectedness; continuity; composition; elite nations; elite people; personalisation; and negativity. To elaborate them briefly, similarity between the frequency of the event and frequency of the news medium is an important criteria for selection of news. It is because a newspaper has to come out in a day's time, therefore it needs to catch those events which match with its own pace. Frequency here means time-span required for an event to unfold itself and to become meaningful.

Further, an ambiguous event with inconsistent implications has lesser chance of becoming a news. Therefore, an event which is not ambiguous is easily noticed. Similarly an event which is meaningful or is familiar within a particular cultural framework can catch attention rather than an event which is culturally distant. However, an event occurring at a culturally distant place is relevant if it carries meaning for the reader/listener. Further, an event which is far away from readers' expectation is not registered. In this sense 'news' is about 'olds' because it corresponds to expectations of readers. The unexpected or rare within the culturally meaningful and consonant has more chances of getting into news. Apart from these factors, the other important factors are continuity, personification and negativity. Once an idea which has got into the headlines and has been defined as news, it would continue to be so for some time even if the amplitude has decreased. It is within this category that unexpected becomes familiar. Personification presents the event in personal terms i.e. presenting an event as a result of the actions of specific individuals, and finally events with negative consequences have the probability to become news.

Gans (1979) provides a useful summary of the theories about story selection which are: journalist-centred; news organisation; event-centred. The journalist-centred theory seem to attach importance to the autonomy of journalists when it argues that news is shaped by the professional news judgement of journalists. The theory on
news organisation argues that story selection is affected by the organisational requirements and routinisation. Event-centred approach argues that events determine story selection, and that journalists simply reflect the mirror of society. Apart from this there are other determinants like technological, economic, ideological, and cultural factors which affect the selection of news.

Many scholars (Tuchman, 1978b; Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979) point out that organisational requirements shape the news. Within this paradigm, professionalism serves organisational interests (Tuchman, 1978b), and does not leave much scope for the news workers to infuse their biases or concerns into news. The purpose of a newspaper is to sell news and it has to come out every 24 hours. Therefore a newspaper organisation cannot depend upon the reporters wandering around the city in search of news. The journalists or reporters are placed in locations where stories might occur. Such locations include police stations, courts, hospitals, corporations, political chambers, or other legitimated governmental institutions. The news net is effectively spread over these locations by creating beats which assures the continuous flow of news. Thus the news is constructed within the parameters of a bureaucratic universe (Fishman, 1980) which defines certain practices for the reporters, determines sources and events, and emphasises the time constraints. In Fishman’s (1980: 143) view “newspapers need bureaucracies because the journalistic system of account production is itself bureaucratically organised. The news organisation needs reliable, predictable, scheduled quantities of raw materials because it is set up to process these in reliable, predictable, scheduled ways in order to turn out a standard product at the same time everyday”.

There is no doubt, then, that the media organisations need to meet the requirements of a bureaucratic system that provides regular accounts which serve as the raw material for journalists. For example, since reporters cannot be present at all the crime scenes, they mostly rely upon record-keeping apparatus of police for crime news (Hall, 1981; Chibnall, 1981). It indicates towards a direct relation between the certainty of news and the system of record, according to Lippman (in Graber, 1994). In his (ibid.) view, news which requires trouble to be obtained is beyond the resources of a daily press. Various pressures behind routinisation are: the economy of noting only stereotyped phase of situation; difficulty of finding journalists who can see what they have not learned to see; difficulty of finding sufficient space; economic necessity of catching readers’ attention and economic risk involved in not doing so; and offending reader with clumsy news. "The press can normally record only what has been recorded for it by the working of institutions" (ibid. p. 42).
This process of news gathering and selection indicates towards economic constraints, timeliness, deadlines, story quotas which are some of the factors obstructing long procedures and moulding a news organisation into a system of routinisation because it needs less journalistic efforts (Fishman, 1980). It omits those events which take place outside the purview of reporters. The news net is cast only over certain locales and sources, assuming that people are interested only in specific people, organisations, issues, and activities (Tuchman, 1978b). It obviously implies that ordinary people have only a remote chance of being caught in the news net and they do not have access to the media. It is mainly the 'knowns' who find place in the news. 'Unknowns' like protesters, victims, voters, and many other categories of people get into the media only when involved in unusual activities or in natural disorders and calamities (Gans, 1979).

Apart from external factors, some scholars (Tuchman, 1978b; Gans, 1979) also find the hierarchical system within a media organisation as an important factor in determining news. For instance, stories by reporters are preferred over stringers; material prepared by staff is preferred over news services; topical specialists are subordinate to territorial editors, and so on. Within the news organisations, beat reporters and specialists are encouraged to follow their own stories whereas general reporters are given assignments (Gans, 1979). Knowing big sources adds to professional status of reporters because if the status of sources is higher, it also adds to the status of reporters. For these reasons bureau reporters seek out centralised sources, politicians, and bureaucrats, and they rarely approach leaders of social movements, grass roots leaders or dissidents, etc. (Tuchman, 1978b). It seems that an urge among journalists to contact powerful sources or be with them also determine their choice or taste in the areas of journalistic focus.

It is indisputable that big names/sources make news, which points towards social stratification as a formidable basis of news selection. Roshco (1975) argues that society's definition of news depends upon its social structure or stratification containing certain norms and attitudes. Within this structure, which is the outcome of growing differences in social position, certain people/categories are visible and observable. "The higher an individual's rank in a social hierarchy, whether of an organisation, institution, or community, the more influential his own attitudes are likely to be on other members of the group; and the more consequential his acts are likely to be for others" (Roshco, 1975: 62). The economically and politically powerful people have the facilities to become a part of newsworthy events. It is
because they exert more power, and they are the causes of social arrangements. They are also sought out by journalists whereas powerless people are approached only when their activities produce social or moral disorder news or they engage in obtrusive elements (Gans, 1979; Roshco, 1975).

In normal routine, people who lack power remain invisible which is a big barrier to their becoming newsworthy. It shows that newspapers carry that information or news which itself is hierarchically organised, indicating that the availability and suitability of news cannot be disassociated with power structures. Those who have the power have the right to interpret reality. The "prevailing social conditions, and the social arrangements that cause and maintain them, usually are widely accepted as the natural environment" (Roshco, 1975: 98).

The above processes of news selection have been defined as ideological by some researchers (Gitlin, 1980; Fishman, 1980), in which one picture of the world is systematically preferred over others. The routinisation, as mentioned earlier, idealises and legitimises some institutions/bureaucracies and convey that such institutions function properly. There may not be any conspiracy on part of the media in producing ideologies or on the part of powerful sources to control news, but the ideological character of news is embedded within the practices of journalists and their reliance on material provided by certain institutions and sources. The practitioners may not perceive it to be hegemonic since they incorporate the codes of neutrality and objectivity, but reporters absorb the views of the powerful and share the hegemonic assumptions (Gitlin, 1980). As observed earlier, journalists get training in being desensitised towards the views or lives of powerless people. "By going about their business in a professional way, they systematically frame the news to be compatible with the main institutional arrangements of the society. Journalists thus sustain the dominant frames through the banal, everyday momentum of their routines. Their autonomy keeps within the boundaries of the hegemonic system" (Gitlin, 1980: 269).

In this ideological hegemony, the concerns or views of the deviant or oppositional groups or movements may get attention and may also get coverage but the social conflict is reproduced within the framework of dominant ideology (Gitlin, 1980) or as it happens, the reporters tend to report the performance of these groups and ignore the underlying issues (Roshco, 1975). Roshco suggests that stories on deviants may modify the social structure and contributes towards social change. Countering his argument, Tuchman (1978b) argues that the definition of news worthiness is not static and keeps changing. It is a negotiated phenomenon and sometimes editors make news
together. For instance, coverage of the women's movement in America, the image of which was constructed as bra-burners in its early period, was later transformed into soft news. However, Roshco (1975) attributes this change to the organisational base developed by the women's movement which conferred legitimacy to the movement as a source.

This contradiction apart, Gitlin (1980) believes that since hegemony is adjustable and negotiable, the media do adjust to new social realities. In context of social movements, if the concerns and values of social movements coincide with the concerns and values of the elite in media and in politics, there are greater chances of its getting recognition and incorporated into the dominant news frames. Within these boundaries, again the reformist movements are less vulnerable than revolutionary ones (Gitlin, 1980). However, adjusting to media's routines or sitting in their path does not guarantee the coverage of a movement on its own terms. A movement cannot become a promoter of news as the definitions of media remain powerful.

The arguments of those researchers who seem to emphasise too much on the organisational constraints and journalistic practices as the major determinants of news seem to be fallacious. They basically project journalists as puppets performing their roles without infusing their own concerns or values into news. However, much critical research has looked into the values, cultural discourses carried in the news. These studies have looked into the social, historical, cultural existence of news. For instance, Gans (1979) while questioning the objectivity of news recognises the power of values which may permeate into the news. These values, he asserts, may not be of journalists and may have their origin in the sources or other sectors of society but it is difficult for journalists to proceed without values. The values contained in news can easily reflect a picture of a particular society or a certain social order provided one specifies the nature of those values and order. In this sense news carries various ideologies and cultural discourses which can be defined in relation to other discourses existing in a society (Hartley, 1982). The ideologies may not be deliberate and journalists may not be aware of it or interested in it, but it does not eliminate the fact that news promotes ideology. News is neither neutral and nor natural. It is because any discourse does not exist in a vacuum and has its conditions of existence (Hackett, 1991).

Hall (1977, 1981) describes the process through which media accomplish their ideological work. As discussed earlier, media construct and present a 'cultural map' of the social world as fragmented into different spheres like family, politics, sports,
economy etc.; hierarchically organised in which some spheres, people, institutions, events are more important than others, and which is consensual in nature. A social imagery is constructed which allows people to understand the world beyond their immediate purview and experience, and it becomes the basis of making sense of what is newsworthy. Through a process of identification and contextualisation, events are 'made to mean' by the media. Thus, the unusual and unexpected events carried by the media already are the basis of cultural knowledge, and therefore people can make sense of it easily.

The classification, ranking and ordering of events conveys preferred meanings and interpretations. A distinction is drawn between the preferred and non-preferred rationales; between normal and deviant behaviours, and between meaningful and meaningless contexts. These definitions become a part of an acknowledged order and convey a consensual nature of the society. Through these processes, a common culture or a central value system is strengthened. For instance, crime news is presented as a threat on the one hand but on the other it confirms the consensual morality of a society. "A modern morality play takes place before us in which the 'devil' is both symbolically and physically cast out from the society by its guardians" (Hall, 1981: 352). Apart from that, media also give a primary definition to the issues through primary definers or the powerful sources. Any conflicts must begin with a defined framework called 'inferential structure'. Although media do not conspire to do so, their structured relationship with the powerful sources define the criteria. Thus a particular image of a society is constructed representing some particular interests as the interests of all (Hall, 1978). The groups and voices outside this consensus are seen as deviant or dissident or mad (Hartley, 1982).

It may be summed up that news is the net result of many factors which go into its making and selection. Economy of a daily newspaper which has to come out every 24 hours defines the organisational needs, which further determine the beats, sources, and institutions to be covered. Needless to say, powerful sources have a major strength to define news and/or to become news because of their institutionalised and bureaucratised modes on which journalists depend. In this course, powerless people/groups remain untouched by media because they do not fall in the domain of prescribed beats or locations. Media, willingly or unwillingly, contribute towards idealising and legitimising certain institutions and people in order to meet their organisational needs while marginalising other social groups or their voices. This ideological hegemony in process also indicates towards consensual nature of the society representing some particular interests as the interests of all.
Within the framework of social organisation of news, I shall examine the organisation of women's news/issues through content analysis. I shall enquire - who makes news and why? What events associated with women are deemed to be newsworthy and why? How do such events seem to fulfil the conditions for becoming news? What seems to be the news selection process for women's news/issues? And can that particular organisation be explained in terms of hegemonic forces?

I turn now to a third framework used in the study i.e. feminist media research. It can be argued that research in media studies has been mainly conducted from a masculinist perspective. For instance, theories like political economy of media, social organisation of news, news production etc. have focused mainly on factors like economy, bureaucratisation, and structures in explaining the functioning of media and coverage of political issues. Such approaches have hardly acknowledged the patriarchal and gender dimensions which also seem to influence the functioning of media and coverage of women's issues in particular. How would a feminist perspective analyse the role of media in society particularly in relation to the representation of women's concerns? In the following section I shall explore the various dimensions of feminist media research and look into its concerns for its analysis in the present study.

III Feminist media research

There has been relatively little research conducted in this area, that is, the representation of women in news. The initial interests of feminist studies were largely confined to under-representation or misrepresentation of women in various media like television, fictions, advertising etc. Such studies questioned the sex-role stereotypes and advocated equal participation for women but did not question the socioeconomic structures, the political economy of media, and the cultural contexts in which media operate. This kind of research, classified as liberal feminist research (for details, see Steeves, 1987; Van Zoonen, 1991b; Robinson, 1994) advocated women's participation in media organisations in equal numbers and believed that their participation would lead to changes in media output. But despite a larger number of women in the media industries, the situation did not improve much. This school failed to provide a theoretical framework to understand the continued marginalisation of women in the media. It is not surprising that early feminists stressed the importance of equal participation since women suffragettes before that had been struggling for equal rights under the liberal philosophy. Therefore, the idea of equal participation in
the media in hope of getting fair treatment directly emanated from the liberal philosophy and a desire to treat women as rational beings (see Cirksena and Cuklanz, 1992).

However, in the past decade, feminist media research has come far in its understanding of gender oppression and role of media in perpetuating the myths. In the words of Steeves (1987: 96) "the feminist literature on media is growing and changing so rapidly that a study indicating one set of assumptions may not be representative of a scholar's work". If liberal feminism focused mainly on sex-stereotypes and images, radical feminism pointed out patriarchy as the major reason for women's subordination and advocated separate media structures/organisations for women to achieve their cause. Socialist feminism, concentrating on the value of domestic labour of women, class and economic conditions of women, believes in the structural changes of media organisations as a part of structural transformation of the society, and hence does not offer easy solutions (see Van Zoonen, 1991b; Steeves, 1987). However, the above classification cannot be strictly labelled since feminism has many strands and they do not necessarily fit into the given categories (Van Zoonen, 1994).

Coming to the debate on women's news which is a major focus of this study, varied perspectives can be found explaining the reasons for the exclusion of women or their concerns in news. In the following section I shall examine the literature centred on women and news.

**Women's news/issues**

The foremost issue which demands attention here is the complexity around the definition of women's news/issues. Feminism is a complex phenomena and hence there are no consistent or integrated definitions or approaches available. Different scholars have defined women's news/issues in different ways and have raised concerns regarding the complexity of the issue. As mentioned earlier in the chapter that reasons behind these complexities are that feminist research is still a new area of research and hence carries more confusions than solutions.

Sreberny-Mohammadi (1994b) points out the contradiction precisely that a tight definition of women's issues leads to the risk of marginalising their other concerns and also diminishes the public salience of many social issues. In her opinion, women are in fact everywhere and their perspectives on all issues (author's emphasis) must be
heard. Marzolf (1993: 46) offers that "one way to define women's news is to frame it as information with the greatest impact on women as a category, regardless of race or class, linking all women across their educational and financial divides to the physical, social and cultural characteristics they share". With this approach she brings (American) women under one category on the basis of their experience as women. Those experiences include: women as bearers and care takers of children; women facing discrimination at work place and treated differently; women as victims of rape, sexual abuse, harassment; women as sex objects in adverts; women's legal right to abortion, and so on.

Two criteria to define 'feminist news item' are put forward by Halonen (in Werner, 1994). First criteria defines it as an item dealing with subject areas where women generally do not have a choice. The author specifies that such item should present feminine perspectives on economic and political issues, on issues of power and control, etc. The second criterion is "that the news item should deal with phenomena in the realm of women's own experience, "the feminine sphere", and allow women to interpret them" (p. 38). It argues that news should focus on women's activities and women's movement in particular, and secondly, it emphasises the need to report in a language that breaks with traditional patriarchal symbols.

Many other researchers have defined 'women's news/issues' in various ways in their studies. For instance, Bailey (1994) in her study on women in American news, picked up three kinds of items which were: when a story was women centred, about women's issues or included photos of women. To clarify, various themes selected were: news dealing with birth control, abortion, pregnancy and sexuality in general; sexual harassment, rape, domestic abuse, molestation and incest; as victim other than body politics news; in relation to male; sexism; formal politics including women as 'firsts', health care and education of young, traditional female roles interjected into the political arena; human interest; and finally - women as worker, as business owner, involved in cultural or ceremonial activity, involved in protest, and criminal activity.

In a study conducted by Robinson (1978) women's issues were defined as: events in which women participated as newsmakers; special type of subject matter assumed to be of particular interest to a female audience; and events reported by female media personnel. Graber (1978) interprets women's topics as: family welfare, health, education, rape and child abuse, on the grounds that these issues are believed to be of special concern to women. Many other scholars like Allen (1993), Marzolf (1993),
have referred to women's news/issues in their writing as all issues from a woman's angle or point of view.

While several other perspectives would be available within the following discussion on women and news, the definition or criteria adopted for the present study was: any story/item where the name of any women's organisation/group appears; any story/item which talks about or comments on women's equality or status or emancipation or liberation or movement or feminism; any story/item which takes up or reflects a woman's perspective in any activity or any area of social life; any theme which impinges upon woman as a female sex or as gendered category. Such items include rape, dowry, bride burning, devdasi practice, sati, widowhood constraints, foeticide, infanticide, suicide, unnatural/mysterious death suggesting no cause, domestic violence, sexual harassment/eve-teasing, kidnapping, prostitution or flesh trade etc. According to this criteria my major purpose was to catch those problems/issues which women face in the Indian society. This criteria excludes only those stories/items which were irrelevant to the context such as road accidents, burglary incidents, terrorist killings etc. However, if any of such stories/items carried a sex/gender dimension they were coded. The other items excluded were advertisements. I also wish to specify that I did not consider it important to code stories on the basis of presence of a woman actor in the story. For instance, to me whether a female political leader or a male political leader was speaking on the issue of economic policies with no reference to gender, for example, did not matter. The story/item was coded only if it had relevance to woman whether as sex or gender. To quote two examples, rape is particular to women as a female sex (biological category) and widowhood constraints (within the Indian context) impinge upon women as a gendered (social) category. In the following section I shall review the literature on women and news.

Women and news

Many scholars (Van Zoonen, 1992; Ross, 1994; Rakow and Kranich, 1991; Bailey, 1994; Smith, 1980; Tuchman, 1978a,b; Epstein, 1978; Robinson, 1978; Gallaghar, 1981; Van Dijk, 1996) have noticed the under-representation or misrepresentation of women's news/issues or the women's movement in the news media in both print and broadcast. The need to look at the representation of women in news media has arisen from the fact that news is closer to reality unlike fiction and drama (Van Zoonen, 1991; Pingree and Hawkins, 1978). Also this area is still under-researched. Media in the 20th Century democracy form a part of the public sphere where different political
actors exchange views and where meanings are contested in regard to that. In Ross's (1995b: 2) opinion "media are the primary definers of public discourse and play a crucial cultural function in their gendered framing of public issues and the gendered discourses they present". Therefore, it is crucial to study what women's issues have become part of the public agenda.

As early as 1978, researchers' attention was drawn to the representation of women and women's issues in the news media (see Epstein, 1978a). It was noticed that the American women were found mainly on the family, food, fashion, life style pages of newspapers or when they made achievements in some field as first woman. A report prepared on the Status of Women made news because the commission had been appointed by the President. Formation of the first women's group also made news but lost its 'news worthiness' after a while. Even women candidates got recognition only "as freaks, as unusual, or even as a personality on the women's pages, but they could not have the equality of being taken seriously in the news analysis section" (Rice, 1978: 46). Similarly, Gallagher (1981) noted that women's presence in news did not exceed 20 per cent in any country. She also found that women appeared in news programmes in relation to human interest stories, domestic settings and to give emotional eye witness accounts. It was realised by feminists that women were among those disadvantaged groups who did not have access to the press "for reasons other than non-news worthiness" (Epstein, 1978a: xi).

Many explanations have been put forward by scholars regarding the marginalisation of women in news. They include, for instance, the role of social stereotypes as a news criteria; low status of female media personnel; association of male newsmakers with politics and economics; male domination of media organisations; lack of women in power positions; ideology and organisation of news itself; women as powerless category in society.. and so on. As is obvious, there is no single reason which explains their under-representation in the media. The above points need an elaboration to understand feminist concerns and explanations.

In Robinson's (1978) opinion, news values are embedded within the social stereotypes. Or in other words, social stereotypes determine women's news. Women make news only when they meet the following criteria: having an important husband; are beautiful; are victimised; have political significance; performers in arts or athletics; able homemakers or having a first woman status. These criteria can be compressed into three groups which are: neutral news values; stereotyped; and victimised. Within the social stereotypes, women are considered less newsworthy
because they are homebound, less important as a group. Sex-stereotypical criteria
selects women having important husbands, or with beauty or homemaking abilities.
Neutral values pick up women who have political significance, have attained first
woman status etc. This category applies to both men and women. Lastly, women as
victims adds to sensational aspect of news. Robinson (1978: 89) argues "media, as
institutional and symbolic reality, their audience and those who are daily described,
are all part of a single interacting whole". Defining this phenomena as culturological,
it is believed that media, including journalists, function within the larger stereotypes.
Therefore, "the media content produced is influenced by what journalists perceive to
be commonly accepted ways of viewing and defining reality" (p. 89). Within these
stereotypes, women are widely accepted as housewives and therefore the male
dominated media function within the parameters of this stereotype and do not respond
to women's interests (Pingree and Hawkins, 1978).

However, while discussing the context of news and with particular reference to doing
news about women, Molotch (1978) pointed out that news business is not only the
powerful talking to less powerful but also "it is essentially men talking to men" (P: 180) since news is a man's world and is also controlled by men. Hartley (1982: 146)
supports this idea when he argues that "news is not only about and by men, it is
overwhelmingly seen through men". Many others like Ross (1995b), Bailey (1994),
Pingree and Hawkins (1978), Smith (1980), also find that news is largely produced,
directed, edited and shot by men and hence news is what is considered newsworthy
by men. The press is a male establishment in terms of both personnel and ethos
which does not leave much scope for challenging the news and it is one of the
important reasons that any attempt to change the treatment of women in the national
press wouldn't have much effect (Smith, 1980). Furthermore, there may be a direct
link between the male domination of media and non-coverage of the women's
movement. Men lack interest in covering the women's movement because of the fear
that women might abandon their traditional roles and femininity if they are given
prominence by the media (Molotch, 1978).

Within the American context, Bailey (1994) finds news to be what men, white men to
be specific, define it to be. Within the terms of social organisation of news, Bailey
seems to convey that the stories and narratives usually revolve around groups and
institutions which men are familiar with. And within this organisation, social issues
are relegated to the back seat as human interest stories and women predominantly
appear in those columns. When a woman appears on the first page or in top story
features it is often because she is somehow extraordinary, whereas in case of men it is an ordinary feature.

The fact that media organisations are dominated by men or are basically male establishments also explains the representation of women as passive victims in the media, although a connection between the two has not been explored by feminists from this angle. Many studies have established that women are mostly projected as passive victims in the news media (see Robinson, 1978; Rakow and Kranich, 1991; Ross, 1994; Bailey, 1994). Ross (1994: 3) argues "nowhere is the articulation of power so clear as when the media show women as victims of male violence and aggression... To accept the media's response that they merely reflect real life is to say that conflict is a natural and normal component of relations between the sexes, rather than a symptom of the way in which men and women are socialised into viewing each other".

Similarly, Rakow and Kranich (1991) argue that women not only are less frequent speakers in news rather they also appear as passive reactors or audiences to public events. They hardly appear as participating in public events. Ross (1994) reasons that in order to have excitement and sensation in the news genre, women in pain, suffering, and as victims seem most interesting to media whereas other stories like women coping with adversity or building their lives are entirely missing. Bailey (1994) found many issues absent in the news like involvement of women in peace and environment activities, the issues of how defence, military and economic policies affect women. Many articles on abortion did not even mention women at all and were carried as exclusively political issues where bodies and lives of women remained but an arena for politics to be played out on by predominantly white men. Bailey stresses the need to look into missing themes in order to dismantle the destructive meta-discourse, that is, the motivations and belief systems underlying the narrative and ideology of news. Such a discourse not only deals with what is present in the news but also with what is generally omitted and how could that omission be explained. For instance, the symbolic annihilation of women by the media i.e. their silence over women's issues or the women's movement is a part of a meta-discourse of silence.

As mentioned earlier also, it is argued that women are automatically excluded from the organisation of news because they do not form a part of powerful people whose activities matter to the media. Pingree and Hawkins (1978) add another dimension to the debate when they argue that within the news ideology, the purpose of news is to provide information and not knowledge or in other words its purpose is to make
people aware and not knowledgeable. As a part of this ideology, media emphasise event-oriented stories and ignore issue-oriented items.

A study conducted within the Indian context by Joseph and Sharma (1994) also seems to emphasise that events are prioritised over processes and issues concerning women involve processes. A review of over ten years of newspapers disclosed that dowry deaths, rape, and sati were successful in catching media attention whereas sex determination tests and female foeticide received meagre coverage because these issues are not dramatic in their orientation. It was shown how the event-orientation of media can completely overlook a process like female foeticide. Further, articles on dowry hardly explored the processes rooted in the practice of dowry although changes in laws were recommended and commended. Similarly in the coverage of rape stories, legal aspects were commented upon but there was meagre coverage on relationship between violence and women's oppression. The Shah Bano controversy attracted media's attention and received prominent coverage because of its religious and political overtones whereas an analysis of the position of divorced women in Indian society held a backseat. Similarly the Roopkanwar case (sati) received tremendous coverage since it conformed to the established news values. Its coverage mainly dealt with religious, political and legal aspects of the incident and ignored the gender aspect.

A clash between news values and issues raised by the women's movement is documented by Tuchman (1978b), who argues that news organisation determines the definition of news. Many factors like the economy of paper which depends on continuous feedback, deadlines, etc. convert the occurrences into events and make them public issues. This event-orientation prevents issues to become news because issues involve processes, and women's movement is about issues. "Events are concretely embedded in the web of facticity, the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the traditional news lead. Issues are not; they are based in analytical explanations of the everyday world as a socially experienced structure" (Tuchman, 1978b: 134). Thus the very definition of news ignores the imbalance of power in society and denies access to the powerless and oppressed groups unless they choose to be obtrusive.

As a part of this process, coverage of the US National Organisation of Women was turned into a soft subject despite women activists' good contacts with the media (Tuchman, 1978b). Apart from the news professionalism as an ideology, other factors responsible are: news as a masculine narrative, the organisational problems with
women's organisations, personal attitude of journalists towards women activists and the women's movement, bureaucracy and budgeting, etc. (Tuchman, 1978). Rakow and Kranich (1991) argue that any improvements in women's treatment in news will require not simply more coverage of women but a fundamental change in news as a narrative. The understanding of news must begin with its essential gendered nature as a masculine narrative in which women function as signs and not as speaking subjects.

The implicit symbolic messages carried in the news in terms of women's absence in news, or absence of the women's movement in the news or presenting women in terms of social or sex-stereotypes may serve to reinforce cultural stereotypes about the insignificance of women and their 'proper place' (Pingree and Hawkins, 1978). It can also be harmful in terms of its effects on the journalists themselves in the sense that news definition or criteria tell journalists "to operate within a system of conventions which limit the coverage of women... Such conventions provide symbolic messages about women that can easily be incorporated into reporters' own social attitudes" (p. 128).

The trends can be particularly harmful when it comes to the coverage of the women's movement. The available studies (Tuchman, 1978a,b; Robinson, 1978; Van Zoonen, 1992; Morris, 1973) indicate how the women's movement carries no significance or is ridiculed and largely ignored by the news media. The coverage of the American women's movement in its three phases viz., 1966-69, 70-72, and 73-77, passed through three different stages of silence, ridicule and co-optation, and trivialisation (Robinson, 1978). In its first phase women had no access to the public agenda inspite of its engagement in 'eye catching' activities. In its second phase, a social control through silence gave way to limited access by co-opting certain softer issues like employment, status, inequality etc. Within this phase, it also faced some ridicule. In its third phase many women's groups got access to the public-discussion agenda and raised number of issues like poverty, sports, war etc. These issues were not necessarily related to sex. Scholars also observed that reforms ideas are preferred over radical ideas. Reform ideas for instance, include education, employment, which are usually a part of the value structure and are acceptable (Tuchman, 1978; Robinson, 1978). Further, if given a chance to determine public definitions, media would opt for the 'reform' image rather than the 'revolutionary' (Morris, 1972-73). In a similar vein Van Dijk (1996: 24) observes that "the women's movement may, up to a point, be benevolently covered, as long as it is not "radical" and as long as male positions are not seriously threatened". A total silence on the women's movement in the US in its first phase suggests that the movement did not merit any attention and
was not considered significant to be reported. However, in the third phase, the social control was exercised through narrow selection of issues, which Robinson has defined 'trivialisation', and which is achieved through three mechanisms viz., use of less prestigious language; selection of less prestigious details to report; and ridicule of legitimate claims. This kind of reportage confirms the role of media in supporting existing viewpoints and institutional structures (Robinson, 1978).

While Robinson denies any conspiracy on part of the media in silencing the movement in its first phase, Morris (1973) argues that it may not be possible to define a calculated strategy on part of the media in ignoring women's movement but "the result of lack of coverage would be much the same as if it were a deliberate strategy because the movement would remain unknown to the general public and would be prevented from becoming a news" (p.42). Similarly Bailey (1994) holds that the meta-discourse of silence is as structurally violent as, for example, pornographic stereotypes. The difference is that in the former it is a result of inadequacy, that is, the omission and devaluation of the activities of half the population, and in the latter it is intentional.

National newspapers both in the US and in Britain ignored the coverage of the women's liberation movement in its early phase although the movement was large and significant (see Morris, 1973). There was not a total black-out but the coverage was sparse. It indicates that media enforce the existing social norms. Media did not pay attention to the movement because the movement questioned the basic structure of society. Morris argues that the media should be playing an anticipatory role, that is, reporting about what was going on in society rather than ignoring processes until problems became uncontrollable. If media gave sufficient attention or coverage to the women's movement, it may also help the movement to grow and recruit members although the women's liberation movement was able to grow and recruit new members in spite of the little information provided by the two major newspapers on the women's liberation movement, as noticed by Morris (1972-73).

While confirming the importance of media coverage for a new social movement's growth and development, Van Zoonen (1992, 1996) argues that the public identity of the women's movement is the result of discourses of gender and politics; conflicting organisational routines of the movement and media; and of conflicting individual preferences of journalists and activists. This study found that the media coverage made a distinction between feminism and ordinary women implying that emancipation is legitimate but not feminism as it did not represent the interests of
ordinary women; and that the movement is hostile towards men. It also established that personal politics never gained the status of legitimate politics, for example, wife-battering was treated as a psychological problem which had nothing to do with gendered power relations; feminists were projected as 'deviants', and overall ideology of feminism was presented within liberal framework. As far as organisational conflicts were concerned, the author pointed out a clash between the themes and values of women with that of journalists. Also, the varying organisational forms of women's groups did not fit into the news routines, and the individual preferences of women clashed with individual preferences of journalists.

Apart from under-representation or marginalisation, the women's movement is ridiculed and projected in a negative light (see Van Zoonen, 1992, 1996; Tuchman, 1978a,b; Robinson, 1978; Mills, 1993; Creedon, 1993; Morris, 1973). Marzolf (1993) noted that the feminist agenda never received regular and serious coverage in the mainstream media, and a distorted image of feminists as "bra-burners, man-haters, lesbians and sickies" was projected (p. 44). Similarly, Creedon (1993: 75) finds that the feminists are constantly portrayed as "deviant sexually, a bunch of man-haters out to destroy family values". In the early phase of the women's movement in America, "the news media giggled like awkward adolescents or were grossly hostile" (Mills, 1993: 23), and the "women's movement's identification of constricting undergarments as symbols of social constriction still brought smirks" (Tuchman, 1978b: 154). Even women reporters had to invent jokes about the movement or feminists to satisfy the attitudes of editors in the early phase of American women's movement.

Among many other feminist concerns, the role of women in media organisations holds a special significance (see Tuchman, 1978; Robinson, 1978; Molotch, 1978; Smith, 1980; Linne, 1986; Van Zoonen, 1988, 1989; Rakow, 1989; Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1994; Werner, 1994; Bailey, 1994; Flick, 1989). Many of these scholars advocate the intake of more women in media particularly in decision making positions. They believe that increased number of women in the media organisations would make a significant difference in the coverage and promotion of women's issues. For instance, Sreberny-Mohammadi (1994a) argues that although there is no clear indication that increased number of women in media organisations has led to improved representation, a slow change can be expected in the mainstream media. As in the case of women in politics, she argues that while women politicians should not always be expected to raise women's issues or represent women all the time, but if they do not, then who will speak? One can see a certain parallel between the political
field and media in Ellerbee's (1993: 50) belief that "only by stirring up women, are we going to make changes" in the media.

Many others like Ferraro (1993), Topping (1993), Allen (1993) and Smith (1980) advocate that women in media organisations need to be on top executive positions in order to bring change, to sensitise the management, and to fight discrimination. Ferraro (1993), while discussing the state of media and women in 1993 in the United States, has emphasised that after the successful absorption of women in the news organisations, the need is to have women in top executive positions otherwise the decisions would be made by monotones. Topping (1993) also argues that the problem like how rape cases are covered or whether issues of prime concern to women are adequately addressed would not be solved until there are more women in executive positions. She argues that this is the only way to achieve a degree of sensitivity in the management of media to eliminate discrimination.

Relying on the role of women professionals, Marzolf (1993) argues that news values are not going to change significantly unless women media professionals take on the responsibility for making change. Though on the other hand she acknowledges that news room staffing will not automatically translate into changed news values, she argues that editor's do believe that having more women in the news room makes a difference. Women have introduced many new subjects into the daily news like, stories of homeless women, single mothers and poverty, spousal, sexual and child abuse, abortion, AIDS and women, sexual harassment and breast implant dangers. Promoting the idea of women into the news defining positions at the top of mass media structures, Allen (1993) considers it a challenge for the future. In a similar vein, Smith (1980) in a study on the treatment of women in the national press, observed that women with real decision making power were extremely few in number. Though he believes that it would be extremely optimistic to assume that if more women attained positions of responsibility within journalism it would bring a major transformation in newspaper policy towards women, he still thinks there should be a significant increase in the number of women employed in the various ranks of newspaper journalism.

Similarly, Castellon and Guillier (1993) discovered that female journalists helped alter the media agenda in Chile by introducing topics like increased attention to the Chilean family, concerns and needs of children, marital relationships, women's issues, quality of life and other lifestyle issues. Journalism in Chilean society has been viewed as "a mechanism for social evolution and as an avenue to personal freedom
for an increasing number of female journalists" (p. 239). Ross (1994) while emphasising the role of women journalists, quotes the examples of women correspondents reporting sexual atrocities on women from Bosnia (also see Gallagher, 1995). She believes that women news professionals deliberately look for an angle on stories which they find newsworthy, and which become priorities for them as women and for women in the world. Skard (1989) in her interviews with women journalists in Norway, and Flick (1989) in her study on the relationship between journalists and the women's movement have also emphasised the role of women journalists. Flick (1989) in particular supports the role of women journalists as mediators between the media and the women's movement and describes it a two-step-flow process: from the women's movement via female journalists to the general public. She also argues that professional journalistic standards on what is news and what is not are mainly male directed, although the individual journalist has a great amount of freedom to put an angle on the material herself. Therefore, on this account she again stresses the growing number of women journalists.

The arguments emphasising special role of women journalists also suggest that women journalists have different perceptions as far as general reporting is concerned, and with reference to women's issues in particular. Some scholars (Werner, 1994; Skard, 1989; Marzolf, 1993; Castellon and Guillier, 1993; Quinn, 1993; Allen, 1993) believe that women journalists have different perceptions than men journalists. For instance, Skard (1989) was told in her interviews with women journalists in Norway that men usually neglect areas which are of concern to women like education, social policy, upbringing and culture, and that women are more interested in people, culture, and relations. Castellon and Guillier (1989) argue that women are better at interviewing because they have the ability to feel an empathy, catch intimate angles, and treat their respondents tactfully and with respect. Quinn (1993: 55) herself a journalist, argues that women are better communicators, and it helps them in writing accurately about "what's really going on, in an interpersonal way". She believes that women are less afraid of writing about people and they personalise the coverage more instead of giving 'cold facts'. In the context of Nordic countries, Werner (1994) has documented a few studies which also support that women prefer stories which increase awareness of the world and social injustices, where as men are more interested in 'hard news'. Merritt and Gross (1978) found in a study that while men editors were more interested in covering entertainment, leisure, recreation, women editors covered more club and social news, and the women's movement.
On the other hand some researchers, like Molotch (1978), warned as early as 1978 that there might be a minority of women in the profession who have achieved prominence but the significance of the presence of such women journalists should not be exaggerated because news business is controlled by men. Rakow (1989) further adds that mere presence of more women will not have a substantial impact on media industries unless those women are feminists or are at least politically activated towards collective change. She believes that having unconcerned women in the media industry can only bring the equal opportunity future for women but would not make a dent in the ‘white male system’. Some women might achieve success but the system remains much the same and other disadvantaged groups may not benefit from it. It has been observed in the US context that the profession of journalism itself got devalued as a result of excessive number of women journalists (see Van Zoonen, 1991b).

Within the Indian context, it has been observed that those women journalists who were supportive of women’s cause during the second wave of the women’s movement i.e. around early 1980s have by and large moved to other areas of journalistic focus (see Joseph and Sharma, 1994). In words of the authors, “female journalists today are by and large wary of being labelled as feminists, of being associated with the women’s cause and even of being categorised as women journalists.. Their attitude is: I am neither a feminist, nor a woman journalist. I am a professional” (p. 292 & 296).

Van Zoonen (1988) provides a very critical analysis on the issue of relationship between more women journalists in the media industry and media output. She argues that it has not been empirically supported in Dutch research that an increase in the number of women in journalism will change news content, and argues that such conclusions are based primarily on assumptions. She further argues that this assumption implies that female journalists all tend to seek the same objective, and that they are collectively different from their male colleagues. She questions the very nature of expected ‘change’, the meaning and interpretation of which in itself is complex. For instance, how can women journalists cross-cut the value of ‘objectivity’ related to news discourse? To say that women journalists can transform news content would imply that women do not hold ‘neutral’ professional values, because if they follow the concept of objectivity, they cannot change the content. Further, there are social, organisational and ideological factors which determine the shape of news. Journalists do not have total autonomy in news organisations. Thus it raises strong doubts regarding the special role of women journalists in media organisations.
In another study on professional values and gender in the British and the German journalism, Van Zoonen and Donsbach (1988) found that distinct structural and ideological features of journalism in two countries largely impinged upon journalists, thus assigning a less significant status to gender differences. The study further revealed that in the long run journalists are influenced by the processes of professional socialisation and they tend to follow professional standards than their own ideals (also see Van Zoonen, 1989). This particular observation came through the opinions of younger women journalists who were more idealistic than older women journalists. Thus age was also an important variable in terms of opinions of younger and older women journalists.

While Van Zoonen questions the limits of women journalists in terms of organisational and ideological factors which determine news, Hunter-Gault (1993) also questions the notion of women as homogenous category when she argues that women, 'simply because they are women', cannot make a difference on how news is approached and covered. Although many more issues have come to the forefront with more women in media, she wonders whether it has to do with gender or not, because women as she thinks have been covering beats like politics and foreign policy 'as intelligently as any male correspondent'. She argues that there ought to be more women in the profession because they are qualified and capable, but not because they bring a different voice, although she believes that it would inevitably happen and would be all for the good.

In sum, feminist scholars indicate various factors which obstruct the coverage of women's news/issues and the women's movement. One of the reasons why women do not get into news is because media work within given social stereotypes. These stereotypes indicate that women are a powerless category and mainly home bound, and the strategies which reporters use in social organisation of news cannot catch women because they are lacking in powerful positions, and therefore, they do not fit into their routinisation.

Further, media are dominated by men who have no interest in raising women's concerns. In this sense, news carries a masculine narrative or male viewpoint, which needs to be changed. As a part of this strategy, the women's movement is either completely ignored or ridiculed by the media. The role of women in media organisations is seen by some scholars as particularly significant in raising women's concerns. But at the same time, it is argued that the objectivity and neutrality in news cannot allow journalists to bring in their subjectivity into news. Although women
journalists have been able to raise number of women related issues, their concern or role as 'advocate journalists' remains debatable.

Within the framework of the feminist media debate, the present study will investigate the coverage of women's news/issues and the Indian women's movement in the media and analyse the coverage in relation to India's sociocultural context. Apart from examining the coverage from a culturalist perspective, it will explore other factors which may impinge upon the coverage of women's news/issues in a developing country. The assessment of the role of women journalists in covering women's issues will further add to the feminist scholarship.

IV Agenda-setting

While the coverage of women's news/issues and the women's movement will be determined within the frameworks of culturalist approach, social organisation of news work, and feminist media debates, some other concerns addressed in this study fall outside the above frameworks. Such concerns relate to the status of women activists within the public sphere of media, role of media as agenda-setters, and role of women activists as agenda-builders. The discussion on relationship between women and democracy in the previous chapters gave rise to many questions in their relation to media. Women are "citizens, consumers, clients, and employees, and they are claimants in the arena of public policy, seeking to gain economic and political rewards and contesting for power and access" (Hermes, quoted in Gelb, 1990: 137). By this definition women activists are political actors contesting for women's rights in the policy making areas, setting policy agenda, and engaging in dialogue regarding specific issues. But to reach the policy makers and to have public support, representative women need a platform to engage in dialogue, which has been provided by the modern democracies in the form of media. Do women activists have an easy access to the public sphere of media? Although status of the women's movement will be judged through content analysis of news, the status of women activists with in the public sphere of media and agenda-setting function of media is further explored through the examination of informal patterns of interaction between women activists and journalists; as well as journalists' opinions on women's issues and the women's movement.

It must be noted that there are methodological and functional problems with using the traditional agenda-setting model in this study, and hence it has been conceptualised differently. It is because of these reasons, I will not review the conventional literature.
on agenda-setting. But I will briefly discuss the model to show the problematic of incorporating women's question into the existing paradigm.

Agenda-setting research in political communication has been a dominant interest of scholars (see Protess and McCombs, 1990). It deals with the influence of the news media on the perceived salience of key political issues; or transfer of salience, the movement of issues from the media agenda to the public agenda. Commenting on the role of agenda-setting function of mass media, Cohen (1963: 13) has stated "the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about". It has been asserted that the issues and information on the media agenda become over time the issues and information on the public agenda, which consequently also affects the policy agenda (see, Nelson, 1994).

The main research traditions in the agenda-setting research have been put forward by Rogers and Dearing (1994). They are: agenda-setting, a process through which the mass media communicate the relative importance of various issues and events to the public; and agenda-building, a process through which the policy agendas of political elites are influenced by a variety of factors, including media agendas and public agendas. Authors (ibid.) have categorised the agenda-setting research as : media agenda-setting, the public agenda, and the policy agenda. Media agenda-setting research mainly deals with who sets media's agenda? The public agenda research focuses on how public opinion is influenced by the contents of mass media; and policy agenda research looks into the extent to which media agenda influences the policy agenda.

How would agenda-setting research deal with women's issues? It is worth noticing that "great majority of agenda-setting studies have been concerned only with national issues, and then mostly within the limited context of political campaigns" (Palmgreen and Clarke, 1991: 109), where as women's issues have not been recognised as national issues or political issues and do not occupy an important place on the media agenda. Feminist research has established that in general media do not pay much attention to women's issues and the movement. Therefore, determining their salience or effectivity on public's agenda is a tough proposition.

Secondly, none of women's issues is a 'one-time' issue, that is, with a definite beginning and an end. Since women's struggle for different issues is on-going and a continuous process, it is rather difficult to establish causal connections between media
coverage and policy agenda. Hence the issue which needs to be addressed is: what issues do media actually cover, and whether that reflects women's concerns or not. Hence argues McCombs (quoted in Rogers and Dearing, 1994) that agenda-setting does not co-operate everywhere, on everyone, and always. Under different circumstances, media themselves may react to the agendas of others rather than setting agenda for them (Protess and McCombs, 1991).

These complexities give rise to an important question, that is, who sets media-agenda for women's issues? How do media perceive women's issues and the women's movement? Do media represent women activists' concerns? Have women activists become a part of news agenda? Do media act as mediators for women activists to participate in the democratic process? And do women's groups act as agenda-builders themselves?

Only relevant study which can provide a useful reference point here is by Joseph and Sharma (1994) conducted in the Indian context. Although this study has not explicitly explored the agenda-setting function of media, it clearly demonstrates that media have largely responded to women's issues as a result of the movement's pressure or have reacted to the agenda of policy makers who also largely work under women's pressure. As mentioned earlier in the previous section, this study looked into the coverage of five issues viz., dowry deaths, rape, sati, Shah Bano and female foeticide over a period of ten years. These issues were selected by the researchers because women's movement in India had drawn national attention including media's attention to them. Starting from 1979, the coverage in the national dailies was examined on the basis of each issue's prominence during a particular period of time. For instance, coverage on dowry deaths was examined during particular periods in the year 1979, 1983 and 1984 when the campaigning for this issue was at its height.

The results of the study indicated that in the case of dowry deaths, media covered the issue under the influence of women's movement since an improvement in the coverage coincided with campaigns organised by women's groups. Similarly, a correlation between coverage of rape issue in certain newspapers and movement's activity was evident in the anti-rape campaign in Mathura's case (see chapter 2). Thus both in the cases of dowry deaths and rape, it was women's campaigns which were responsible for drawing media's attention. Further, in case of female foeticide also, the authors claim that if women's groups had not pointed out the connection between the rising number of clinics offering sex determination tests and an increase in cases of abortion, press would have completely ignored or missed out this issue. In the
coverage of *sati*, the authors pointed out that "the multi-pronged strategy of the women's movement and the willingness of women activists and researchers to write in the mainstream press certainly helped in widening and deepening media coverage of the issue, especially in terms of keeping the women's perspective in view" (Joseph and Sharma, 1994: 86).

However, the above study was confined to a few specific issues whereas the feminist agenda today is very extensive and also the women's movement has shifted from campaigning to grass roots activism in the recent years. At the same time, it has also progressed tremendously in terms of theorising women's question and linking it up with the wider social contexts. Further, the above study focused on specific issues and specific periods of time, therefore, it did not look into general trends to draw broader conclusions.

Rather than a narrow agenda-setting research, the present study takes into account a detailed feminist agenda (as presented in chapter 2) and examines its status on the media's agenda. Major issues facing women in India discussed in chapter 2 were verified by women activists in their interviews. The study will examine the missing themes on media agenda apart from determining the status of the women's movement and analyse the reasons for the particular kind of coverage. Further the trends in agenda-setting i.e. whether media play as agenda-setters and whether women activists play as agenda-builders are determined through interviews with women activists and journalists in chapters 7 and 8.

**Conclusion**

This study combines various theoretical approaches to contextualise the coverage of women's news/issues and the women's movement in the press. At a broad level, the study employs the culturalist approach to determine an overall attitude of the press towards women's issues and the women's movement. It involves various steps like

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3 I acknowledge the differences between women as political actors or different organisations having different ideologies and structure within the sample organisations, however, I have grouped all sample organisations together and have referred to them as women's movement or groups or women activists or feminists. It has been done for three reasons. Firstly, all women's groups in Delhi, although work independently in routine, collaborate at the time of lobbying, holding conferences, workshops, and in sending press releases. Secondly, during my interviews with women activists I observed that 'coverage in the press' does not hold a very significant status on their agenda as none of the organisations has devised any particular strategies in order to deal with media. Therefore, I have not examined their media strategies in terms of their different ideologies or organisational structure. Thirdly, even journalists did not speak about women's movement or groups in terms of their ideological differences and the movement as such does not matter much to them which is also reflected in the media coverage where women's movement is almost non-existent.
examining the media contents (i.e. nature of coverage); organisation of women's news/issues (i.e. journalistic practices), and opinions of journalists regarding the coverage of women's news/issues and the women's movement in the English press.

The study examines how women's news seems to be organised in terms of journalistic practices? In other words, it explores how is women's news managed? In what context is it covered? Who covers it? Who are the actors? When do women's groups catch media's attention? Who covers women's groups? What is the status of women's news/issues in terms of their placement in the newspaper and the nature of stories? Some of the queries like when are women's groups approached, who approaches them, etc. cannot be determined through media contents but were examined through interviews.

Feminist media debates provide a useful framework to the study. While adding to the feminist research on representation of women's news/issues and the women's movement in the media, the study questions the role of women journalists in covering women's issues, examines men journalists' interest in women's news/issues, looks into differences and/or similarities in their opinions, and discrimination towards women journalists in media profession, etc.

Lastly, the study will remain alert to the agenda-setting function of media through out the discussion. It will examine the coverage of issues on the media agenda against the feminist agenda discussed in chapter two, conceptualise the role of media as agenda-setters, and role of women activists as agenda-builders.
Chapter 5
Research Methodology

The role of India’s free press, in living up to its espoused values in relation to representing women’s concerns and setting agenda for women activists to bring issues to the public attention, can best be judged through what the newspaper contents seem to convey. It is in line with an argument forwarded by Pingree and Hawkins (1978: 117) that in order to determine de facto definition of ‘women’s news’ or how news definitions affect women, the more direct way is “to examine implicit definition in the actual content and layout of the press than it is to rely on the stated intentions of reporters and editors”. Also, the absence of a legitimate women’s beat and any particular policy or standing on women’s issues by the Indian national press (Joseph and Sharma, 1994) also pose limitations in studying the process of coverage of women’s news/issues through other methods, such as participant observation. Thus the generalisations regarding the organisation of women’s news in terms of its sources and authors also depend upon the analysis of actual contents. Therefore, content analysis was employed as a research tool for the present study in order to investigate the coverage of women’s news/issues in the press.

In the following section I shall discuss the strengths and weaknesses of content analysis as a research technique and justify the applicability of this tool for the present study. Within the same section I shall also focus on the selection of the newspapers, period of study, and design of the coding schedule. Through interpreting the nature of coverage and by discerning the ‘organisation’ of women’s news/issues, it will be possible to offer an analysis within the framework of Brahmanical hegemony and/or culturalist approach, social organisation of news, and agenda-setting function of media discussed in the previous chapter. However, a single tool like content analysis cannot deal with many other dimensions addressed in this study due to its various limitations which I will discuss in the following section. Therefore, semi-structured interviews with women activists and journalists were conducted to elicit information on the attitude of press towards women’s issues, to determine the patterns of interaction between women activists and journalists, to study the agenda-building role of women activists and so on. The aims of interviews and selection of respondents are discussed in section 2.
Section I. Content Analysis

Content analysis is a well-tried technique in social sciences including communication studies. It is "a multipurpose research method developed specifically for investigating any problem in which the content of communication serves as the basis of inference" (Holsti, 1969: 2). It has been used for various purposes like identifying the intentions of communicators; to study the psychological state of people; to figure out the existence of propaganda; to determine the focus of the people or institutional or societal attention; to discern the trends in communication content etc. (Berelson, 1952; Weber, 1985; Krippendorf, 1980). The oldest and most popular definition comes from Berelson (1952: 18) who writes "content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication". Holsti (1969) defines 'objectivity' in terms of stating explicit rules and procedures employed in research; 'systematic' means consistent rules or procedure in selection of contents or in defining categories; and 'quantitative' means recording the numerical data or frequencies (also see Stempel III, 1989). According to Krippendorf (1980: 21) "content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context" whose "purpose is to provide knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts, and a practical guide to action".

The major requirements of this technique, as can be deciphered from the above definitions, are an objective and systematic approach and replicability. Such requirements, according to scholars, can be met by making the rules explicit which also ensure the reliability of the method and the research conducted. It can allow others to replicate the study in order to draw the same inferences or to check the accuracy of results. According to Krippendorf (1980: 49) "explicitness about the process is required so that others may evaluate researcher's work, replicate the process, or qualify the findings". Although objectivity is a desirous feature in this technique as can be observed in Berelson's definition, some scholars like Carney (1972) and Krippendorf (1980) have also argued that objectivity cannot be absolutely ensured. Krippendorf argues that content analysis looks into the symbolic meanings of messages, and meanings are always subjective and not essentially shared. Messages do not always carry single meaning and hence can be interpreted from various perspectives. In his words "a message may convey a multitude of contents even to a single receiver. Under these circumstances, the claim to have analysed THE content of communication reflects on untenable position... Although consensus or inter-subjective agreement as to what a message means would simplify a content analysis
tremendously, it exists only regarding the most obvious or manifest aspects of communications, or only for a few people that happen to share the same cultural and sociopolitical perspective" (p. 22). Thus a meaning may be interpreted within a certain context in which it occurs countering the claims of complete objectivity.

Apart from the impracticability of complete objectivity, the technique suffers from other limitations (see Carney, 1972). Such limitations, for instance, include restricted focus; building of subjectivity into the actual procedures of content analysis; probabilistic nature of inferences; and its quantitative nature. However, argues Carney that in spite of these limitations, there are certain advantages of content analysis like the surety of facts and explicitness of the technique in gathering those facts. In this sense, content analysis is superior to an impressionistic study or intuitive study. As far as the quantitative nature and recording of partial messages is concerned, Krippendorf (1980) seems to justify that the technique may provide only facts in recording the data, however, the facts interpreted within a certain social context become meaningful and significant. For instance, quantification of television violence would become meaningful if it is interpreted within the context of other phenomena like aggressive behaviour or crime. Although accumulating numerical data is the primary purpose of content analysis, the quantitative data may also highlight the qualitative aspects of coverage (see Holsti, 1969). Similarly Weber (1985: 70) stresses that "data do not speak for themselves, but the researcher must explain their significance in light of theoretical and substantive concerns". Thus the technique is qualitative in the sense that frequencies or facts can be used as an indicator of a phenomena (Krippendorf, 1980). For instance, within this study the quantitative facts of the nature of coverage would help in analysing the attitude of the media towards women's issues within the wider sociocultural context of Indian society. In the next chapter I have analysed the coverage of women's news/issues within the framework of Brahmanical hegemony.

Content analysis was employed for this study for various reasons. First of all, content analysis is the only technique which is capable of dealing with complex and voluminous data like newspapers (Carney, 1972). Since this study deals with coverage of women's news/issues in the press, content analysis was considered to be suitable to generate data. Although content analysis is not capable of reading between the lines or digging out below the manifest content (Van Zoonen, 1994); however, in view of the dearth of the most basic empirical research in this field in India, it was decided to proceed with the preliminary questions regarding the coverage of women's news/issues in the press instead of looking in depth at coverage of any particular issue. Thirdly, in view of the aims of this study to investigate the nature and trends of
coverage of women's news/issues, to determine what themes/issues related to women are brought to the attention of public, and what could be the possible reasons of covering certain themes/issues and not covering others within the given theoretical context, content analysis was considered appropriate. The purpose of content analysis in this study is to document the general trends in coverage and analyse them within the broader sociocultural context. However, it is also suggested that after such an initial inquiry into the general investigation of the kind of coverage, further research must look into the qualitative nature of particular issues like sati, Shah Bano, and provide an in-depth analysis of coverage of such issues.

A. Selection of newspaper and period of study

As mentioned earlier in chapter three, print was chosen to investigate the coverage of women's news/issues because the English press in India plays the role of opinion-maker or agenda-setter in the elite political arena. It holds a significant status in post-colonial India as part of the legacy of imperialism. Women's organisations selected for interviews are also active within the elite political sphere. Hence the focus of the study lies on the status of women's issues within an elite political society.

There are five national English dailies in India which rank as the nation's representatives of the quality press (Merrill and Fisher, 1980). They are: The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), The Times of India (Bombay), The Hindu (Madras), The Statesman (Calcutta), and Indian Express (Bombay). As mentioned earlier, all these newspapers command wide influence on the educated urban middle-classes and the policy makers (Prasad, 1992). Further, they are owned by large publishing groups. The Hindustan Times, owned by The Hindustan Times group, was chosen as a representative newspaper to study the coverage of women's news/issues for the present study. The reasons for selecting this daily are discussed shortly.

Four different years were selected to study the contents of the selected newspaper. These years were 1981, 1985, 1989, and 1993. The major reason for selecting different years was to note down the changes in the trends of coverage over a period of time by selecting papers every four years. The year 1981 was selected as the starting year since women's question after independence came to fore in the early 1980s and many women's groups were formed around this period raising women's concerns. The reasons for selecting 1981 (instead of 1980) as a starting period was to be able to take up the latest year i.e. 1993 at the time of collecting the data in 1994. In view of the voluminous data, the scope of the study was narrowed down further
through systematic sampling. The use of systematic sampling is justified when data stem from regular publications like newspapers (Krippendorf, 1980). In systematic sampling, the starting date is selected at random and later every kth issue of the newspaper is selected. Analysts (Krippendorf, 1980; Holsti, 1969) advise that the maximum interval length of Kth unit should be five and not seven because it may create biased sample since the length K remains constant. Thus starting from January 1981, every fifth issue of the daily was selected and analysed throughout the four years. The selection of every fifth issue ensured equal representation of each day in a week in the data. The total number of newspapers analysed were 292 (73 papers each year). Only one supplement section (i.e. magazine section) of a Saturday newspaper (25 March, 1989) could not be coded since it was not available.

Coming back to the selection of 'The Hindustan Times', my considerations were many. In terms of geographic location, this study concentrates on Delhi since Delhi is the Capital of India and hub of central political power. Apart from that many national women's organisations are based in Delhi who work in close proximity within the elite political arena. Although the dominant culture of Delhi is North Indian culture, being the capital city of India, people from different parts of the country are settled here. The fact that 'The Hindustan Times' enjoys the largest circulation in Delhi thus attributes a special importance to this daily on the grounds of which I selected this newspaper as a representative newspaper. The latest daily circulation figures obtained in January 1996 from the circulation departments of various newspapers in Delhi are as follows: The Hindustan Times - 510,000; Times of India - 375,000; Indian Express - 110,000; The Hindu - 31000; Statesman - 25000.

The proximity factor plays an important role in coverage of news stories. In terms of its regional representation and prominence, 'The Hindustan Times' is also a leading daily in the North of India, and most of women's issues like dowry, bride-burning, sati, etc. are basically North Indian phenomena owing to historical upheavals (i.e. invasions by foreigners). Thus it is expected that 'The Hindustan Times' being a representative paper in North India would give priority to such news/issues.

The selected newspaper can be considered as illustrative of other newspapers in order to see the trends of coverage since no newspaper has any standard policy or standing on women's issues. Therefore, I assume that even the political leanings of different newspapers would not affect the coverage of women's news/issues i.e. it cannot be held that if a newspaper is pro-establishment, it would give less coverage to women's issues and if it is anti-establishment, it would give more coverage or vice-versa. In
their study on coverage of specific women's issues in the English press, Joseph and Sharma (1994) confirmed the proximity element mentioned above, the insignificance of women's question or gender with the press, and the results also showed that 'The Hindustan Times' gave maximum coverage to the selected issues in terms of quantity compared with other newspapers. The problem of validity in terms of selecting only one newspaper for this study was countered by interviewing journalists from various newspapers in Delhi. Most of the journalists have had the experience of working with almost all the English dailies in Delhi at one time or another in their professional lives.

Further, I did not select two different newspapers to study the coverage since I was not interested in a comparative study between two newspapers. I was more concerned with studying the nature of coverage in greater depth over a longer period of time. In case of selecting two different newspapers, I would have been forced to reduce the number of years of each paper (due to practical limitations) which would have obstructed the aim of noting the trends of coverage over the years.

B. Coding Schedule

A coding schedule was designed to look into the coverage of women's news/issues in the selected paper (see Appendix A). The schedule contained usual variables like month, date, day, page number, position of item to draw general information and trends of coverage. The major characteristics noted were type of the item, year, author of item, actors quoted/referred to, items covered in magazine supplement or mainstream paper, and theme/issue of the item. Within the type of item, a major distinction was made between news stories and other types of items like articles, column, editorials, etc. A news story was defined as a story which is event-oriented, records the facts and is objective in its reporting. It does not initiate a debate. It may be exploratory in nature but it is not analytical. This distinction forms one of the major criteria to determine the quality of coverage devoted to women's news/issues. Further, the author of the story reveals the importance attached to the story in terms of whether a story is reported/authored by a special correspondent or general reporter/correspondent.

The actors quoted/interviewed/referred to, formed an important variable. The actors noted in the stories revealed the importance attached to particular people in women's news/issues. Various women's organisations formed a part of the list of actors. Theme/issue was the most important category in the coding schedule. In chapter two,
I discussed various issues which seem to impinge upon the position of women in Indian society and which hold a significant status on the feminist agenda. The coding of various themes/issues in the coverage provided evidence as to which issues are carried by the media and which of the themes are missing in the coverage. I have discussed these trends within the context of Brahmanical hegemony operative in Indian society as far as women’s position is concerned.

A crucial feature which needs to be specified here regarding a variable i.e. theme/issue of the story is that the categories under theme/issue were not strictly predetermined as is followed in a traditional content analysis method. In other words some of the themes were developed initially for coding, however, new patterns were also allowed to emerge in order to prevent the risk of missing subtle themes (see Bailey, 1994), which also means that narrow categories of themes were framed instead of broad categories. Although the narrow distinctions may become identical with raw data (Holsti, 1969), it provided a chance to look into the depth of the nature of coverage and interpret why particular themes/issues are carried where as others ignored within a given cultural context. The narrow categories were later clustered under broad categories. For instance all narrow themes related to violence/crime like dowry, rape, bride burning, foeticide etc. were clustered under the broad category called violence/crime (see Appendix ‘A’ for all the themes coded and for the broad titles given to clusters of themes). As mentioned above, it provided a chance to look into the trends of coverage in greater depth and later analyse, for example, why do rape or suicide stories get more coverage than domestic violence or female foeticide? Such trends have been examined within the given sociocultural context. The formation of narrow categories are advantageous in the sense that in broad categories difficulties may arise in the interpretation of data (Weber, 1985), and secondly, if the initial categories are broad and crude the important distinctions are lost and it is not possible to disaggregate the categories at a later stage, where as in case of narrow categories, aggregation is possible at the time of interpretation (Holsti, 1969). Also, for the purpose of this study, it was important not to miss subtle themes in order to study the linkages between the nature of coverage and sociocultural contexts, and further to determine the organisation of women’s news/issues by the press. Further, the dimension of focus in terms of issues was too wide to be assimilated into any particular categories. In other words, the research focus was not restricted to political or economic issues alone. As per the definition of women’s news/issues described in chapter four, the research focus was very wide and diverse. Therefore, the predetermined categories would not have enabled me to take note of diverse themes. The same pattern was followed for another variable i.e. ‘actors’ in the stories. It is also
important to note here that the clustering of narrow (or micro) themes/issues under broad categories (like social, economic, violence/crime etc.) is heuristic.

While content analysis was employed mainly to investigate the nature and trends of coverage, to draw themes/issues to be analysed within a particular cultural context, to determine the organisation of women's news/issues, semi-structured interviews with journalists and women activists were also conducted for a deeper understanding of the attitude of press towards women's issues.

Section II. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions focusing on various dimensions were used to elicit information and opinions of journalists and women activists on the coverage of women's news/issues in the press. Talking about the advantages of open-ended questions, Cohen and Manion (1994) maintain that such questions allow flexibility to the interviewer; provide a chance to probe deeper into the issue to exhaust respondent's knowledge; establish rapport; give an opportunity to assess the beliefs of respondents; are capable of providing unexpected or unanticipated information which may prove to be very useful. Semi-structured interviewing is based on the use of an interview guide which includes some clear instructions on the list of questions and topics to be covered in order to elicit reliable data. According to Bernard (1994) semi-structured interviewing works best when one is dealing with managers, bureaucrats and elite members of a community that is people who are accustomed to efficient use of their time. The interviewer is fully aware of what she wants from an interview but at the same time she leaves room for herself and the informant to follow new leads, and also she is cautious not to exercise excessive control over the informant.

The pattern of interview schedule contained general to specific questions. Respondents were allowed to express their opinions at length. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed for analysis. Only one respondent (a journalist) refused tape-recording. In this case notes were taken at the time of interview. The duration of interviews varied from half an hour to one and half hour. However, most of the interviews took one hour. The respondents were contacted by telephone to fix appointment, and interviews were conducted in the offices of respondents. Two sets of actors were interviewed for this study viz., journalists and women activists, and all the interviews were conducted between April, 1994-June, 1994.
Selection of journalists

Twenty-one journalists, twelve women and nine men, were interviewed for their opinions on the attitude of the press towards women's news/issues, towards women's groups/movement, their views on the issue of discrimination towards women journalists, on gender differences in news reporting, and to observe the patterns of interaction between journalists and women activists.

At least half of the journalists belonged to the 'The Hindustan Times' since it was the sample newspaper. Other journalists were from different newspapers in Delhi. However, it is important to note that most of the journalists I interviewed have had the experience of working with different English dailies in Delhi at one time or another in their professional lives. Names of journalists who were known to be covering women's issues or social/developmental issues were gathered from women activists and journalists themselves. On the basis of this information, journalists known to be covering such issues were contacted. However, many journalists from the Hindustan Times such as the Editor in chief, executive editor, sub-editors and other correspondents were interviewed to provide general information and opinion even though they do not report themselves or write on women's issues or social issues specifically. The number of journalists interviewed along with their designations is given in Appendix B. A couple of journalists requested anonymity due to which I have not provided the names in the list. For the same reasons, I have used only initials of the names of journalists to protect their identity.

Selection of women's organisations/activists

A list of women's organisations addressing women's concerns and operating in New Delhi was prepared on the basis of information documented in the literature (see Calman, 1992; Katzenstein, 1989; Vyas and Singh, 1993; Kali for women, 1993). Different scholars have grouped the organisations differently i.e. in terms of their activities, structure, organisation or ideologies of groups. Still it is very difficult to label the organisations since all the organisations are involved in different and varied kinds of activities (see chapter 7). Therefore, to resolve the matter the key organisations known to be dealing directly with women's issues were selected and approached. Information regarding these organisations was obtained from the documented literature (see Calman, 1992; Katzenstein, 1989; Vyas and Singh, 1993), and from women activists and journalists in the field. Precaution was taken to cover all kinds of groups to make the sample representative. The sample consisted of
autonomous groups, party affiliated groups, empowerment groups, trade unions, research units, and publishing houses. One person/activist from each organisation was interviewed. A list of selected organisations is presented in Appendix C.

The interview schedule for women activists addressed four major topics. The first part of the schedule concentrated on general information of organisation, structure, ideology, activities, funding sources etc. Part two pertained to women and media relationship. It aimed at knowing the opinions of activists on the coverage of women’s news/issues in the press; determining the patterns of interaction between activists and journalists; knowing the opinions of activists regarding the role of women journalists towards women’s cause; determining the efforts put by activists to approach the media. It was intended to study the agenda-building role of women activists in promoting women’s news/issues in the press. Part three focused on alternative media, and part fourth determined the relationship between women activists and policy makers. They were questioned about their patterns of interaction with policy makers, attitude of policy makers towards women’s issues, response of policy makers towards women activists, and role of women politicians towards women’s issues. The major purpose of these set of questions was to determine who do women activists feel comfortable with i.e. policy makers or media, in terms of interacting and raising issues and who provides a sympathetic ear to women activists between the two sets of actors.

Reliability, validity, and quality control

Before moving to the next chapter, it seems appropriate to add a few words on the validity and reliability of this study. Since Ph.D. project in the UK is an individual project, a researcher is encouraged to gather and code the data on her/his own. Thus I coded all the data on my own which ensures consistency to the coding process. Three arguments may be put forward regarding the quality control and analysis in this study. Firstly, while coding the data I confined myself to the definition of women’s news/issues as defined in chapter four. The selection of issues were based on the existing knowledge, for example, feminist literature and agenda, and my own experience and subjectivity within the Indian society. According to the set definition I coded all those ‘issues’ which according to the feminist literature and my own experience seem to be affecting women on basis of their gendered roles in society. The categories were not pre-determined as explained earlier because the feminist research requires flexibility to record and understand the subtle nature of the data and provide a deeper analysis.
My analysis and interpretation of media coverage on women's issues (see chapter 6) is subjective and presented according to my own understanding of Indian society. But at the same time, it may be noted that the interpretation or analysis is conducted in view of a social phenomenon discussed in chapter 2 which extends authenticity to the analysis and ensures the face validity of the study. Thirdly, I shall also argue that it is not possible to produce a 'replica' of any study despite the claims of objectivity and systematisation. However, other studies producing 'similar' results in the future may provide authenticity to this study. A study conducted by Joseph and Sharma (1994) in India is closest to this study and echoes similar results.

As far as the interpretation of interviews is concerned, it may be noted that the themes were generated from within the interviews. However, the selection of most themes were based on interview guidelines. It is important to clarify here that the names of some of the respondents appear more frequently in analysis of interviews (see chapters 7 and 8) which is justified on three grounds: Firstly, some of the respondents were more vocal than others; secondly, some of the respondents have more practical experiences (e.g. dealings with media or with policy makers) and hence they can provide further insight into the subject; thirdly in the present kind of study the perception, quality, and different perspectives of respondents are more important to gain an insight into the issue rather than the quantity of responses. All these problems are familiar to the in-depth studies in the reception tradition.

The following chapter looks into the coverage of women's news/issues and the women's movement in the selected newspaper and analyses this within the theoretical framework(s) discussed in chapter two and chapter four.
Chapter 6
Analysis of the coverage of women’s news/issues

This chapter presents analysis of the coverage of women’s news/issues and the Indian women’s movement in a sample newspaper - The Hindustan Times. The purpose of this analysis is to determine the nature and status of women’s news/issues including the movement on the media agenda, and to examine the dominant media ideology towards women. It aims to answer many issues raised in the previous chapters. While emphasising that democracy is gendered in theory and practice (see chapter 1), Western feminists questioned the role of media within the same context as media are an intrinsic part of a democratic society representing interests of citizens. Therefore, an inquiry into the role of media towards women demands attention in order to examine whether and how media cover women’s concerns.

A historical and cultural analysis of Indian society in chapter 2 revealed that the higher-caste patriarchal culture - a Brahmanical hegemony - is still in process as far as women’s position is concerned. Although an explicit model of democracy guarantees legal and political rights to women, the state largely adheres to the traditional order in practice. Political liberalism has responded to reforms as a part of national heritage of the social reform movement but complies when the traditional social order is threatened. Thus, the private Brahmanical culture of the past has turned into a public patriarchal culture in modern India.

The Indian press although based on a Western democratic model, is an integral part of this Brahmanical culture and hence its role needs to be analysed within this wider cultural context. While the Indian state, despite its progressive laws and ideals like democracy, secularism, equality and justice remains undemocratic and patriarchal towards women, the burgeoning questions are: how far is the press attentive towards women’s issues and women activists? Which issues are brought to the attention of readers and policy makers? What issues are deemed sufficiently salient to be disseminated by the elite media?

Within this wider framework, this chapter analysis the coverage of women's news/issues and the women's movement in the media. It is divided into two sections. Section one looks into the nature of coverage of women’s news/issues, and section two provides a discussion on the media ideology towards women’s issues.
Section I : Nature of coverage of women's news/issues

The stories in the sample newspaper were selected according to the criteria defined in chapter four. A total of 592 stories were coded and analysed. The various types of stories/items identified in the data are presented below in Table 1.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of story</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News stories</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>66.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readers' letters</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columns</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviews</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview/profile</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagements*</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorials</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public concern messages</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead stories</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures/cartoons</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Analysis^</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others^</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Column Total</strong></td>
<td>592</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

News stories formed a major percentage (66.6%) of the data. A news story within the context of this study is defined as a story which reports the events factually and objectively and is mainly event-oriented (Tuchman, 1978). An 'event' is a discrete happening which is limited by time and space. On the other hand, an 'issue' contains subjectivity, debate and analysis. A series of events can lead to an issue. For instance, a series of drug-related 'events' bring up the 'issue' of drug abuse (see Rogers and Dearing, 1994) or for example, a series of dowry-related 'events' may bring up the 'issue' of violence against women or social oppression of women.

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1 The Hindustan Times carries a regular column called 'what's on' to inform about daily engagements. The items coded from 'what's on' have been referred to as 'engagement' in the study. According to one of the definitions of women's news/issues, any item where the name of a woman's organisation appears would be coded. 'What's on' carried the names of women's organisations.

2 Certain important stories were found to be analysed under this label in the newspaper. However, within the context of women's issues, only one story was found in this category.

3 The type of stories which did not fit into the given constructs have been defined as 'others'. The remaining categories in this table are defined as the chapter proceeds.
The data suggest that women's news is mainly event-oriented. The event-orientation of women's issues indicates their insignificance on media's agenda: since events are covered within media's routinisation, they require less expertise and less resources (kielbock and Schrer, 1986). This is in tune with an observation made by Joseph and Sharma (1994) that event-orientation in the Indian English press has not significantly changed over the years. Which events make news and why? How do the contents seem to define women's news? Who are the actors in the news stories? Who seems to cover women's news/issues? How can the coverage be rated in terms of its placement in the newspaper? And which 'events' are turned into 'issues'? These are some of the important concerns addressed in this section. They are discussed under four subheadings which are:

A) News coverage of women’s issues;
B) Non-news coverage of women’s issues;
C) Trends of coverage over different years; and
D) Coverage of women’s organisations or the women’s movement.

The following section provides a detailed analysis of news stories.

A. News coverage of women’s issues

Many themes⁴ were identified in the news stories like economic, social, political, legal, educational, etc. but violence/crime stories (57.1%) seem to be the staple diet of media (see table 2). In light of the observation that violence/crime against women has been a major issue on the feminist agenda for more than a decade (see chapter 2), violence as a dominant theme is not surprising.

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⁴ The broad themes have been framed for analytical purposes and for convenience of presenting them in tabular form. From within the narrow categories, the themes were picked up and clustered under broad categories. Refer to Appendix A to see the clustering of themes.
Table 2.1: Number and Percentage of primary issues/themes in news stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary theme/issue</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violence/crime</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous themes(^5)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrations</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminars/inaugurations</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointments</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence/crime by women/as guilty</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim women's status</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign women's status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others(^6)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But to say that media are equally concerned about this issue and therefore cover it widely would be an oversimplification. The nature of these event-oriented stories and the supposed reasons of carrying them are discussed below. The analysis will also highlight the organisation of women’s news in terms of its sources and news-gathering.

Violence/crime related news stories

Various categories of violence/crime related themes which appeared in the news stories are highlighted in the following table. The categories in the following table are clarified when they appear in the discussion.

\(^5\) Many important themes/issues which did not fit into other categories like social, political, economic etc. were clustered under the category of miscellaneous themes.

\(^6\) In such stories the primary issue/theme was not related to women. The secondary or tertiary theme may relate to women in that instance.
Table 2.2: Violence/crime related issues/themes in news stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary theme</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Punishment^</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bride burning/murder</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysterious/unnatural death</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eve-teasing/sexual harassment</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowry/dowry death</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rescued/freed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidnapping/abduction</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics of violence</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police atrocities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infanticide/foeticide</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex tests/ratio imbalance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prostitution/trafficking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2 reveals that within the category of violence/crime stories, a few like punishment, suicide, bride burning/murder, rape, mysterious/unnatural death are the prominent themes. Many others like domestic violence, female foeticide, dowry harassment, police atrocities are relatively less in percentage. However, the issue I am addressing here is not just related to the quantity of stories, but also the reasons behind the presence or absence of some issues and treatment meted to them. First of all it must be noticed that the above themes/issues were picked up from event-oriented stories and such stories were not analytical in nature. Thus the events carried were reported as simple occurrences and not discussed as "issues". Secondly, most of these event-oriented stories related to punishment, suicide, bride burning/murder, rape etc. are gathered from police officials/bulletins, hospitals, and courts. This can be evidenced on two grounds. Firstly such events are mainly noticed when they are registered, as in cases of rape, suicide, bride burning, or when they are caught in bureaucratic processes like in courts as in the case of punishment stories. Secondly, it

^ Punishment stories deal with punishing the person in the court for crime/violence against women.
The category of rescued/freed is also used in a similar context.
was confirmed by the journalists themselves that most of the violence/crime related stories are picked from police bulletins and carried with by-line of HTC (Hindustan Times Correspondent). Thus it can be argued that little effort is invested in obtaining these stories, and that they are part of media's routine work.

Although various themes under gender violence were explored and discussed at length in chapter two, it is pertinent to highlight some of the issues/themes to understand their seriousness and how media treat these issues. It was in the late 1970s and early 1980s when women's groups found out that many women were harassed by their in-laws for dowry and that they would even indulge in bride-burning in order to get a new bride and more dowry. Such incidents remained hidden in the private sphere until they were highlighted by women's groups. Thus it was with their initiative that the true nature of these 'accidents' were brought to the attention of people, government, and media. After the initial moves and pressures by women's groups, media picked up this issue and subsequently violence against women attained the status of 'news'. Joseph and Sharma (1994) have also pointed out a relationship between the women's movement's campaigns on dowry deaths, rape and press coverage of these issues. It may be argued that since the incidents like dowry, bride burning, etc. were novel in the early 1980s, they immediately caught the attention of media. Out of the four years selected for this study, the coverage of violence/crime stories was particularly higher in 1981 (see part C, table 4.2). The problem of dowry has, however, continued in Indian society. Although laws have been framed to stop the giving and taking of dowry, the implementation of laws is totally missing. Those who frame laws are also actively involved in promoting this custom in their daily lives. It was mentioned earlier in chapter two that dowry deaths increased from 4,836 in 1990 to 5,582 in 1993. Further, 1000 dowry deaths are registered every year in the state of Gujrat alone. 'Dowry/dowry deaths' as a theme/issues was noted in only three per cent of news stories (see table 2, Appendix D) and 2.6 per cent of articles (see table 3, Appendix D). Surprisingly, only two editorials were carried (see table 3.5 part B) on the issue of dowry in a total of 292 newspapers carrying nearly 600 editorials.

The issue of rape took a serious turn after the lifting of the Internal Emergency in 1977 (for details see chapter 2). During the emergency period, mass rapes characterising state repression were noticed by human rights groups and women's groups. Rape was picked up by human rights organisations as a part of civil rights or human rights. At least 30 women are reported to be raped in India everyday. The issue of rape appeared in 6.6 per cent of news stories (see table 2, Appendix D) and
3.2 per cent of articles (see table 3, Appendix D). There was not a single editorial carried on this issue.

Although the class status of victimised women in rape stories could not be determined in the data, scholars (see Gandhi and Shah, 1991; Sharma, 1992) indicate that it is poor and disadvantaged women (mainly lower class) who become the targets of rape. Since it is lower class women who, by and large, become the victims of rape (as suggested by the above authors), a detailed analysis of media's attitude towards this issue is worth investigating in further research. Such research may reveal the class dynamics of the press since press is in the hands of upper class barons who may not be concerned with the problems of lower class people.

Committing suicide is not unique to women. In fact any human being can end her/his life compelled by circumstances or failing to cope. The selection of this theme is logical within the Indian context because in a traditional set-up women are largely dependent on their husbands, and in circumstances of harassment by the family a woman would usually opt to commit suicide. As discussed in chapter two, suicide by women is one of the issues on the feminist agenda. It has been found that suicide is usually committed by young women within the domestic sphere owing to suppressive sociocultural context. Or for example, widows are not highly respected and therefore they may choose to end their lives. The practice of sati was born out of the low status of widows in old times. An incident of sati in Rajasthan in 1987 (discussed in chapter two) is indicative of the status of widows in a traditional society. Similarly, young girls from poor families may end their lives when they find themselves as burden on their parents or when their parents cannot marry them off because of dowry demands. Many such incidents took place over the last years (see Gandhi and Shah, 1991). An incident of suicide by three teenage sisters from a well-off and educated family at the birth of their brother is very symbolic of daughters' non-significance and worthlessness in the family. This incident was also recorded in the sample of this study. The issue of suicide appeared in 34 news stories. It was not recorded in any article or editorial.

Another theme in the category of violence was unnatural/mysterious death. To be specific, these cases did not include deaths in terrorist attacks or mugging or accidents etc. Only those incidents were coded which took place within residential areas and where no other reason of death was indicated. The usual context of this kind of news was that 'a woman was found burnt or dead in mysterious circumstances' or 'a woman's burnt body was found'. In the same sociocultural context as in the cases of
suicides it is highly likely that these women might have been killed by the family itself or they might have committed suicide. This issue also appeared in news stories alone and was not found in the articles or editorials.

A few examples of suicides, burning/murder, unnatural death, and nature of their coverage in the sample are cited below. At least ten per cent of news stories carried under 'city briefs' and 'state briefs' were of this nature. Many such items were noticed even otherwise, particularly in 1981 when 'city briefs' column was not a part of the newspaper structure.

Neeta, 23, of Rama Road, Moti Nagar succumbed to her burn injuries which she reportedly sustained while cooking on a stove in her house yesterday (4 January, 1989).

Veena, 25 of Vikaspuri, allegedly committed suicide after pouring kerosene and setting herself on fire in her house yesterday (July 18, 1989).

A 43 year old woman, Mrs Kamla Sharma allegedly committed suicide in her house yesterday by hanging herself from a ceiling fan (27 March, 1985).

Mrs Jagjit Kaur, 35 of Karol Bagh, swallowed some poisonous substance in an alleged bid to commit suicide and was taken to Dr Lohia hospital on Monday (21 January, 1981).

Annapurna, 27, of Sundernagri, succumbed to her burn injuries in JPN hospital which she reportedly sustained while preparing food on a kerosene stove in her house yesterday (Oct, 26, 1989).

Ved Kumari, 25 of Budhivihar was reportedly burnt to death when her clothes caught fire while she was cooking on a stove in her house yesterday (21 October, 1989).

Many times two different events were also put together because of a common factor in them. For example:
One Anarkali, 32 was allegedly burnt to death by her husband Harilal in Vikas nagar here yesterday night. In another case one Kamlesh was found burnt to death in Mansarovar park area here today (28 February, 1989).

Aruna 28, who had been married to Atma Ram three months ago, died of severe burns at LNJP hospital here yesterday. In another case, Geeta, 19, ate some poison yesterday (2 March, 1985).

Such incidents on the surface may appear to be simple suicides or accidents but they are mostly hidden in an intricate web of domestic violence and cultural oppression. It is where the question of freedom, equality, justice can be defined from a different angle for both women and men. It raises questions like do women really enjoy freedom granted by the democracy? Are they treated equally? And this is where the role of media serving 'public interest' is highly questionable. One cannot expect media to play the role of crusaders but one may, for example legitimately ask, are media giving wide coverage to such issues in order to evoke public concern? Or is there any pressure put on the government to find out ways to deal with these problems?

Unfortunately, the scene is not very optimistic. For example, as mentioned earlier, suicide did not appear as an 'issue' in the data, which can be verified from the fact that out of the total 35 stories with suicide as primary theme, thirty four were event-oriented news stories and one was a reader's letter. At times an underlying sarcasm, humour, and insensitivity is rather visible in headings like: 'An expensive way to die' (20 September, 1985), a story about a woman who burnt herself and in the process many other things caught fire.

It may be argued that in India's sociocultural context, people are quite accustomed to an 'anti-women' attitude in the form of rapes, dowry deaths, suicides, female foeticide or infanticide that reporters hardly make efforts to investigate these stories. A lack of interest and an insensitivity towards women's issues was noted among journalists in interviews (see chapter 8). According to two women journalists (FSM, FGP8) interviewed for this study, such cases are investigated only when a victim is related to some politician or an affluent family or the news has some political or religious angle into it or as a result of the personal initiatives of the journalists. In tune with this

8I have used initials of the names of journalists to protect their identity. In this scheme, the first letter 'F' or 'M' indicates the sex of a person. 'F' stands for female and 'M' stands for male.
argument, it was observed by Joseph and Sharma (1994) that sati and Shah Bano cases received tremendous coverage from media because of their political, religious, and legal overtones, however, the issue of gender was largely missing in those stories. Joseph and Sharma (1994: 19) also argue that "many aspects of women's oppression are so commonplace and widely accepted that they are not considered sufficiently extra-ordinary to merit coverage".

Sexual harassment/ eve-teasing (7.6%) discussed in chapter two was recorded as one of the categories under violence. As mentioned earlier in chapter 2, sexual harassment in the form of eve-teasing, molestation and assault is a common practice in Indian society. This crime is not even recognised as a crime by the police and by people at large (see chapter 2). In a society where the mixing of the sexes is a cultural taboo and segregation between the sexes is enforced at various levels, male sexual desire remain curbed and come out in the form of eve-teasing or molestation. It reflects the nature of a sexually repressed society, and specifically the domination of men over women. Since this crime is not taken seriously by the police or society in general, it remains hidden but it is a continuos torture for women that restricts their movement and activities. At the social level also, girls are trained to ignore the eve-teasers and bear this humiliation. Like other issues, this issue also appeared in just seventeen news stories, in 1.1 per cent of articles and in only one editorial.

Punishment (22.2%) was a prominent theme in the category of violence. This theme largely pertained to punishing the perpetrator by the court for indulging in violence/crime against women. The major difference between the category of 'punishment' and other categories like rape, suicide, dowry etc. was that in the former stories 'punishment' of a 'criminal' involved in violence against women was the primary theme and in latter cases, the violent happening in itself is a primary theme. Correspondingly, the stories with punishment as primary theme did not have 'victimised woman' as primary actors predominantly. The main actors were judiciary/courts (15.4%), women perpetrators (15.4%), police officials (13.5%), men perpetrators (13.5%), In-laws (13.5 %) and so on. Victimised women appeared as primary actor only in 9.6 per cent of such stories.

Before proceeding further, the category of 'victimised women' used in the study needs to be explained. This category has been used in a broad sense. Basically, a woman projected in the news story was shown in a lowly position seeking help or justice or demanding attention. This 'woman' could be an individual woman being victimised as in the cases of dowry, rape, murder, sexual harassment etc., or it could be a
woman/women seeking shelter or rehabilitation or an aggregate of women symbolised as disadvantaged human being/s, who appeared as 'sufferers' in the given context. Though women from other categories like weaker women, Muslim women, widows, may also have appeared as disadvantaged people/groups in stories, they were coded under separate heads in order to determine which section of women are singled out by the press. Unfortunately, the other categories of women mentioned above appeared very rarely in the stories (see table 2.4). It also implies that class status or background of most of 'victimised woman' as an actor is difficult to discern since it is not specified in the news stories.

Though 'victimised woman' was the primary actor in many (29.4%) news stories (see table 2.4), these women mostly appeared as passive victims particularly in violence/crime stories being quoted by the police officials. Their opinions were not asked and mainly police officials and journalists spoke on their behalf. The observation that women appeared as passive victims can be established on various grounds. Firstly, in cases of suicides, unnatural deaths, dowry murders, the victim woman is not even alive to speak. Secondly, newspapers do not have any beat system to cover the domestic sphere, hence they do not approach the families. Further, it was noticed that when victimised women were the primary (passive) actors, the secondary actors were mainly police officials, in-laws, and men perpetrators or there were no secondary actors (28.4%) as also noticed in earlier examples (see table 2.3). This means the absence of even a usual source i.e., the police officials. For these reasons, victim women may not be defined as 'sources' providing news or as speakers. This reinforces the argument of Joseph and Sharma (1994) that gender perspective has not been incorporated into the process of news gathering and women's views are rarely sought even if an incident touches their lives.
It also indicates that these news stories come from police records or police officials who may provide an 'account of an account of an account...' (Fishman, 1980: 87). As mentioned earlier it was gathered from the journalists in their interviews that most of the violence/crime related stories are obtained from police officials or bulletins and published with the by-line of HTC (FGP, FSM, FBDS). The decreasing number of stories by HTC in the year 1993 seem to correspond with the decreasing coverage on violence/crime stories (see part C, table 4.2 and 4.4).

How sincere or concerned is the police in selecting violence related events? And further, if violence related stories are fed by the police, then who keeps account of those crimes which are committed by the police officials themselves against women? Women’s accounts with police in India have suggested that many times when women have approached the police to report domestic violence or harassment for dowry, the 'protectors' sometimes even refuse to register their complaints labelling it as private matter or giving the patriarchal advise to co-operate and try to sort matters out at a personal level (FMP; also see Gandhi and Shah, 1991). Thus police may not register incidents such as harassment in the domestic sphere as crime. It may be noted that 'domestic violence' appeared in only nine news stories. It may be argued, as Fishman (1980: 27) does that within the selection of crime events by police, "crimes selected out are those which the police think are of interest to journalists and the public. Thus domestic violence and 'common' crimes against women are omitted". Further, police torture on women, rape in police custody etc. are serious issues on the feminist
agenda. A report by the People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) brought to attention that not even in one of the 12 cases of custodial rape reported in Delhi in past four years had there been any convictions (see The Hindustan Times, 19 June, 1994). Within their selection of crime events, there is a greater possibility of the police department's ignoring or hiding crimes which are committed by the police itself against women. It was disclosed by one of the male chief-editors in an interview that in one of the police stations in Delhi, four girls are brought from slum areas everyday, who are raped by the police men and then sent back. Police excesses were also recorded in cases of Maya Tyagi and Rameeza Bee (see chapter 2). Even if journalists are aware of police atrocities against women (as this chief editor indicated), they may not publish it because it can spoil their relationship with their regular sources. It might be one of the reasons that there were not very many news stories with police atrocities as a theme in the data (see table 2.2). Media's insensitivity towards this issue is reflected in its coverage of only one editorial carried on this theme in the data (see part B, table 3.3).

While the violence/crime related news stories discussed above were mainly about victimised women, many other news stories were about officials' activities. It is in tune with the observation made by Gans (1979) that news is about lowly victims in the category of unknowns and what officials say and do in the category of knowns. This is vividly illustrated when it comes to women's news in the media. An inspection of the following table makes the point clear.
Table 2.4: Number and Percentage of primary actors in news stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Actors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victimised women</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political officials/administration</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judiciary/courts/lawyers</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police officials</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign/international organisation/person</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-laws</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women perpetrator</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No main actor</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police as criminals</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample women's organisations</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men perpetrator</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim authorities</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's political wing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi women's orgs/institutes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous actors</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaker women(^9)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men as victim</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widows/single/divorcee women</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's organisations outside Delhi</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. ministries/ depts</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional women</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's organisations as symbol/aggregate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others(^10)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Column Total</strong></td>
<td>394</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that the study focused on women and in light of the earlier observation that violence/crime formed a major theme, the category of victimised women as dominant actors in the data seems logical. But at the same time other actors in the data are equally prominent. Rather, if various actors like political officials, judiciary/courts, foreign and international people/organisations, Muslim authorities, women's political wing, Ministries, and police officials are merged under one category of 'resourceful people' then this category supersedes the category of victimised women. The above

\(^9\) This refers to sections of women like Dalits (labour), self-employed, landless, rural, tribal, Harijan, etc.

\(^10\) The actors in such stories did not fit into the given constructs.
mentioned actors are defined as resourceful because of their privileged status and access to media and vice-versa.

In what kind of news stories do these resourceful people appear as primary actors? Or apart from violence, what other events seem to make news and why? What are the themes? And who are the actors?

While victimised woman is the primary actor in most of the violence/crime stories, this analysis reveals that in most other categories of themes like economic, legal, political etc., the resourceful persons/organisations were the primary actors. For instance, when the primary theme was economic, primary actors were mainly political officials/administration (58.8%), foreign or international figures (11.8%). In case of legal theme, the primary actors were mainly Muslim authorities (36.3%), judiciary/courts (27.2%), political officials/administration (18.1%) and so on. And political theme again contained political officials/administration (50%) and women’s organisations (33%) as primary actors. An underlying idea is that such news stories are about the activities of people other than victimised women, and these people happen to be the officials or resourceful actors who can reach media or whom media can approach. Similarly in case of social theme, the primary actors were political officials/administration (33.3%), judiciary/courts (11.1%), foreign and international figures/organisations (17%); in educational theme, the primary actors were political officials/administration (50%) and there was no primary actor in the rest of the stories.

The trends shown above clearly indicate that resourceful people/organisations are mainly the primary actors in various categories of themes. Needless to say, these actors would be expressing concerns or touching upon women’s problems in these stories. The presence of various micro themes/issues in table 2 (see Appendix D) suggests the nature of these stories. Some of them had political officials expressing concern about equality and status of women, declaring some self-employment schemes for weaker sections of women, condemning economic discrimination or violence against women, encouraging the rehabilitation of widows or some victim women, stressing the important role to be played by women’s organisations for empowerment or in consciousness raising, etc. Similarly other important actors like judiciaries, foreign and international people/organisations, Muslim authorities, appeared in relation to legal issues, appointments of women into male dominated arenas, Muslim women’s status, etc. Although there are variety of issues recorded in the news stories, it must be remembered that news stories largely focus on facts and figures,
and they do not carry detailed discussion on women’s problems to evoke public concern.

The category of ‘others’ included those stories where the primary themes were not directly related to women but later in the text some issue concerning women became the secondary theme. To quote an example, an official visited a camp to meet people affected by some violent incidents and talked about the measures for their resettlement. And later in the same context, the rehabilitation of women was picked up as a special issue, particularly in case of deserted women or widows. Further, while introducing or talking about the schemes for poor or implementation of Panchayat Raj at village level, the ‘speaker’ referred to women as a disadvantaged group and announced some special schemes or reserved some quota for them.

Apart from various other themes discussed above, demonstrations, seminars and inaugurations, appointments, also formed primary themes in some of the stories (see table 2.1). The primary actors in appointments were foreign and international figure/organisation (25%), professional women (16.6%), judiciary/courts (16.6%), police officials (16.6%) and so on; in demonstrations, primary actors were sample women’s organisations (27%), women’s political wing (13.3%), women’s organisations outside Delhi (13.3%) and ‘others’ (20%). Such events as demonstrations, traditions and innovations, carry news value on their own (Gans, 1979).

An important category coded separately as lead stories (see table 1) in the data can also be discussed here. Out of the total data only two lead stories related to women were recorded. Maya Tyagi’s rape case in 1981 (see chapter 2) and the kidnapping of a minister’s daughter in 1989 made the lead stories. Maya Tyagi’s case is a well known incident in the history of violence against women by the police, and how women’s organisations campaigned around this issue for justice. But Maya Tyagi as an actor and as an issue was a secondary reference in the story. The major theme was the police atrocities against the public and not against women specifically. In the whole item, beating up of the couple (i.e. Maya Tyagi and her husband) by the police and judiciary’s judgement was the main controversy but the ‘rape’ of the victim woman and ‘humiliation’ (see chapter 2) she suffered at the hands of police was a secondary issue. It is rightly observed by Joseph and Sharma (1994) that legal, political dimensions hold much more importance rather than women’s component in the media coverage.

11 It stands for political institutions at grass root level.
As mentioned earlier, violence/crime stories against women are investigated only when victim woman comes from an affluent family or has political connections or the story has political or communal angle to it. The second lead story i.e. the kidnapping of a politician's daughter provides the right example. In this case, kidnapping of the minister's daughter was the major theme and the political issue i.e. militants Vs state was the secondary concern.

Thus, the findings in the news stories indicate that mainly two kinds of stories make news. These broad categories can be defined as sensational news which is related to violence and crime, and reformatory news dealing with officials' activities touching upon women's problems or granting provisions to them. It may be noted that both kinds of stories stem from regular sources and carried in media's routinisation. While the former stories are carried because of their sensational nature which was confirmed by many journalists in their interviews (see chapter 8), the second kind of stories seem to be carried because of activities of officials since they are mainly the primary actors in such stories. Demonstrations may also be added into sensational news, whereas appointments may form a part of reforms.

Placement, authors and location of news stories

Where are women's stories carried in the newspaper and who are the authors of these stories? The particular placement of stories further indicates the relevance and significance attached to certain issues. Every newspaper has different classifications of pages/columns and stories are placed in terms of their importance and significance. In the sample newspaper also there are various classified pages/columns as shown below.
Table 2.5: Classification of news stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Classification</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified page</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>60.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State page</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City page</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City briefs</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign page</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State briefs</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nation page</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament/RS/LS</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial page</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports page</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Column Total</strong></td>
<td>394</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The city page carries local (Delhi) stories; the state page carries stories from other states; the nation page covers national stories. Similarly economy and business page, editorial page, foreign page, sports page carry stories in terms of their relevance and importance. It is evident in table 2.5 that women's news stories do not form an important classification like state page, foreign page, nation page, editorial page etc.

Some categories like city briefs on city page and state briefs on state page were separate columns. But they hold special significance in the data as these columns carried mainly violence/crime stories discussed earlier which come from the police bulletins. Parliament page/column did not pertain to women's news alone. It contained various briefs taken up in parliament sessions. Out of these briefs, many a times some women related concerns were also found, where political officials or the government discuss issues related to women.

Sports activity remains a gendered arena. Although in recent years women have been actively involved in various sports at the national and international level, it is still largely a male dominated area (Creedon, 1994). Men play and women watch, just like men talk and women listen (Molotch, 1978). Out of three stories carried on the sports page, two of them had 'officials' as primary actors speaking on the issue of promotion of sports among women. However, the third story carried under the banner of sports is about rape of a woman and the primary actor is the judiciary. Similarly out of the total data, there was only one item on the economy and business page (see part C, table 4.7) coded as public concern message. Ironically, it does not present women in
economic or business role or not even as consumer. Rather it is appealing to the public for the protection and security of women against eve-teasing and sexual harassment. The underlying message is how certain issues and items are treated as fillers or carried depending upon the available space on each page. It clearly indicates as in words of an editor-in-chief "women's issues are treated as some kind of an appendage to the paper, and an appendage which is not of a priority" (MVN).

Another measure of importance given to an issue is reflected in its placement on the front page. Is woman's news carried on the front page? The following table (2.6) reveals that it rarely is.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position of Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inside page</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>88.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front page</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back page</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An analysis of the front page stories revealed that they mainly centred around violence/crime (39.2%) followed by demonstrations (18%) and miscellaneous themes (14.2%). Even Joseph and Sharma (1994) observe that sections of the press occasionally carry front-page report on atrocities or exploitation. Further, women may appear as victims of rape or dowry deaths or as participants in beauty contests or as women achievers in some other field or as subjects of a scandal, thus indicating that it is mainly sensational events which are carried on the front page. Madhok (1984) noted that Indira Gandhi's pronouncements on almost every issue would make front page news but when she addressed a women's rally on International Woman's day, it was given local page treatment. The stories on the front page and the back page did not show any distinct pattern in terms of themes. The main difference was that the stories on demonstrations and protests were on the front page, indicating that protests and demonstrations may catch the attention of media.

Who are the authors of news stories? It may be noted that within the professional hierarchy of newspaper organisations, there are special correspondents, political correspondents, general reporters and so on. Further, different issues/stories fall into different beats which are covered by specific correspondents. Women's news/issues are not covered under any particular beat system and most of the English newspapers in Delhi do not have any specific reporters or correspondents covering women's
news/issues since it is a low priority area (see Joseph and Sharma, 1994). How is it then covered? As indicated in the following table, women's stories are mainly covered by the Hindustan Times correspondent (HTC) followed by news agencies.

Table 2.7: Author by location in news stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author = Location</th>
<th>HTC</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Specified author</th>
<th>No by-line</th>
<th>Misc.</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Row total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>209 (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/UT/Capital</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>56 (14.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Indian City (main)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>44 (11.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other place (towns)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14 (3.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Foreign place</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>38 (9.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>32 (8.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (0.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. total</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>394 (100.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the sample newspaper, HTC is a general correspondent or a reporter. There are special correspondents who cover beats on various ministries. Similarly the political correspondents holding the status of special correspondents, cover political issues. The correspondent or reporter (HTC) covers local stories like Transport Corporation, Municipal corporation, police stations, local functions, courts, events etc. The stories with by-lines are special and exclusive. The authors of such stories may be correspondents or special correspondents.

In the present sample, not a single story is filed by a special correspondent or a political correspondent per se (see table 4, Appendix D). As noted earlier, the main authors of news stories are HTC and news agencies. There were only 2.5 per cent of stories which carried specific names suggesting that the stories were exclusive. It was
argued by a journalist-cum-activist that agencies are the backbone of even big
ewspapers in Delhi because the proprietors do not want to make the necessary
investments in human resources (FSM).

Further, majority (53%) of the stories were filed from Delhi. But it may also be noted
(see table 2.7) that while agency stories are concentrated equally in other locations in
India and abroad, HTC reporting is mainly (74.7%) Delhi-centric. This observation
also indicates that much efforts are not invested by newspaper staff to cover women's
news outside Delhi.

The charges that Indian national press does not cover development issues in a
developing country (see chapter 3) and is highly urban-centric are reflected in the
location of stories. There are just 3.6 per cent stories filed from small towns/villages.
Comparatively, stories filed from foreign locations (9.6%) are higher than this
percentage. It was pointed out by one of the women activists, (KM) in her interview
that "the press in India is hopelessly urban-centric, which is a combination of laziness,
arrogance, and ignorance. The fault does not lie with the reporters but with the entire
establishment. The press does not want to put in resources i.e. money and energy.
Secondly, the urban educated elite are terribly arrogant. We have the same attitude
towards people living in villages that, for instance, the colonial masters had towards
us. Thirdly, most of our education system does not tell us anything about our own
country".

If the press is highly urban-centric, it may be inferred that it does not cover
developmental issues or people's issues in remote or rural areas although the majority
of Indian population lives in villages. The non-coverage of developmental issues
demands a critical debate in itself which is beyond the scope of this study. However,
it cannot be ignored that women's issues in a third world society are increasingly seen
as part of development debate (see Jha, 1992). Table 2.4 indicated that weaker
sections of women (like labour, landless, harijans, tribal women) appeared as primary
actors in only five (1.3%) stories in the data which is a clear indication of how press
ignores poor people's issues.

However, there was not much variation found in the stories filed by the HTC and
Agency stories. Violence/crime related stories was a dominant theme on the agenda
of both. While sixty per cent of HTC stories concentrated on violence/crime, 51.6 per
cent of agency stories focused on the same theme (see table 2.8). Although agency
stories were equally concentrated in other locations as shown in table 2.7, surprisingly such stories did not seem to move beyond violence/crime.

Table 2.8: The primary issues/themes in HTC and Agency stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Theme</th>
<th>HTC</th>
<th>News Agencies</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violence/crime</td>
<td>135 (59.7%)</td>
<td>65 (51.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>13 (5.7%)</td>
<td>4 (3.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>10 (4.5%)</td>
<td>5 (4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>5 (2.3%)</td>
<td>6 (5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>2 (0.8%)</td>
<td>2 (1.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>5 (2.3%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrations</td>
<td>10 (4.5%)</td>
<td>3 (2.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminars/inaugurations</td>
<td>10 (4.5%)</td>
<td>3 (2.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointments</td>
<td>2 (0.8%)</td>
<td>8 (6.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim women's status</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 (1.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 (2.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vio/crime by wom/ as guilty</td>
<td>8 (3.5%)</td>
<td>3 (2.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc. themes</td>
<td>19 (8.4%)</td>
<td>17 (13.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>7 (3.0%)</td>
<td>5 (4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Column Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>226 (100.0)</strong></td>
<td><strong>126 (100.0)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main difference noted was that while news agencies provided only 20 per cent of violence/crime stories from Delhi, HTC filed 67.4 per cent of violence/crime stories from Delhi alone as indicated in the following table.

Table 2.9: Differences of locations in coverage of violence/crime stories by HTC and Agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>HTC</th>
<th>Agency stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>91 (67.4%)</td>
<td>13 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/Capital/UT</td>
<td>17 (12.6%)</td>
<td>14 (21.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Indian city</td>
<td>12 (9%)</td>
<td>21 (32.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other place</td>
<td>1 (.7%)</td>
<td>7 (10.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any foreign location</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10 (15.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>14 (10.3%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Column total</strong></td>
<td><strong>135 (100.0)</strong></td>
<td><strong>65 (100.0)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As mentioned earlier, violence/crime stories are largely gathered locally and from routine sources like police, courts, hospitals, etc. It may be argued that HTC has an easy accessibility to these news stories. Therefore, the press does not need to make much effort to cover women's news.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the findings of this section that news stories mainly a) concentrated on violence/crime and thus were sensational; b) were about women as victims of various kinds of violence, and about officials' activities in various other themes; c) were largely filed by HTC and agencies; d) were mainly Delhi centric; e) were not analytical and sometimes not even exploratory.

B. Non-news coverage of women's issues

While news stories deal with events and lack an analytical analysis, there are other types of items in the newspapers which turn the events into issues and present opinions on those issues. Fishman (1980:71) has pointed out that "certain background factors are ignored in the routine news and later on they are presented in the form of features, human interest stories, news analysis, and editorial opinion". In the present study, the opinions and the issues representing the news stories were carried mainly in the form of articles (12.7%) and editorials (1.4%) (see table 1.1). Other items to be discussed under this section are interviews, columns, reviews, readers' letters. According to Stone (1989), while news is about facts, editorials are an informed opinion which is also willingly supported by the paper. Columns and reviews also represent opinions but they are not authoritative as is the case with editorials. Lastly, readers' letters are the least authoritative since they are by and large considered as uninformed opinions of common people. Even if written by authoritative sources, letters do not carry as much weight as other items like editorials and articles etc. However, at the same time, it cannot be denied that coverage of readers' letters indicate the importance attached to the issue and the readers' opinions and it also indicates readers' interest in various issues.

An article may or may not start with a particular event, it carries analysis of issues and a thought provoking debate. Since an article may address various themes in one story, the tables and discussion on articles contain themes in totality (i.e. primary, secondary, tertiary, and fourth theme). In other words the articles are not analysed in terms of primary themes alone as in case of news stories but they are analysed in
terms of totality of all themes. Therefore the total may be more than actual number of items due to multiple coding. Following table shows the themes taken up in articles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues/themes</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% (R)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence/crime</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim women’s status</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s liberation/mvt</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign women’s status</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminars/inaugurations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointments</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vio/crime by wom/as guilty</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Column Total</strong></td>
<td>190*</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Number due to multiple coding.

In the previous section, it was noted that violence/crime was the dominant theme in news stories. However, in the articles “social theme” outnumbers the other categories, which indicates that certain social problems which women face are discussed in the articles. What specific issues are carried at micro level? Table 3 in Appendix D reveals the micro categories to show which events lead to issues or which events are turned into issues by the media.

Articles touched upon a wide variety of issues (see table 3, Appendix D) like pressures/customs, equality/status, women’s studies, legal rights, family relationships, rape, women’s liberation/movement, dowry, domestic violence, empowerment of women, and so on. Although these issues formed a very low percentage of the data, however, within the context of this study, it can be argued that articles were the only items which provided analytical perspective to women’s issues. It may also be
suggested that further research could be concentrated on the linguistic analysis of articles and the value positions carried in them in detail.

Where are the articles carried in the newspaper? The articles were mainly (70.7%) carried in the mainstream pages of the newspaper followed by 29.3 per cent in the Saturday and Sunday magazine sections/supplements. In terms of days, articles were carried largely on Sundays (34.7%) followed by Saturdays (16%). Since the news stories are less over the weekend, a finding validated by an executive editor of HT, items like articles, reviews, interviews usually find space over the weekend or in Saturday/Sunday supplement. Like news stories, articles were mostly found on unclassified pages (52%), followed by 'others' (17.3%), editorial (12%), states page (6.7%), and so on.

In terms of position, five articles were found on the front page of the newspaper. As observed in the case of news stories, front page coverage had violence and crime as the dominant theme. However, contrary to news stories, a majority (70.7%) of articles had a by-line which suggests the importance attached to these items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specified Author</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>70.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTC</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency story</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Column Total</strong></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The articles in the Saturday and Sunday magazine sections/supplements were mainly written by women, i.e. out of 22 articles (29.3%) at least 16 were written by women. The authors were identified as women academicians, women activists and women journalists. The observation that these articles were written by women came through the identification of names of authors. The identification of names was confirmed with journalists also. Articles carried in regular pages were written both by men and women and these authors were mainly 'staffers'. Castellon and Guillier (1993) in their study on Chile also observed that most writers for newspaper special supplements and magazines were women. Within the articles in Saturday and Sunday supplements, twenty articles out of twenty two were published on Sunday and two were published on Saturday. It may also be noticed that Women's Feature Service (WFS - a women's
press service based in Delhi) sells at least 40 articles every month to the English press (informed by FSM from WFS in personal interview). And these articles, as reported by the magazine sub-editor FSS, are mostly carried in the supplements.

The next category which debated women's problems in terms of issues was **editorials**. Editorials are the most important items in any newspaper. They convey the importance of an issue, bring it to the attention of the public and policy makers. However, it may be noted that only eight editorials (1.4% of total data) focused on women's issues out of an expected approximately 584 editorials which would have been carried in 292 newspapers. This meagre coverage indicates the insignificance of women's issues on the agenda of media. The following table shows the primary themes/issues carried in the editorials in different years.

**Table 3.3: Primary issues/themes in editorials in different years**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1981</th>
<th>1985</th>
<th>1989</th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>RowTotal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Harassment</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenace/Alimony</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality/Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim Women's Status</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police atrocities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Column Total</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table reveals, most editorials were carried in the year 1993. One of the women activists (MR) argued in her interview that editorialising on women's issues has changed over the years as many women's issues are now increasingly commented upon in the editorials. But it may be noticed that three out of four editorials in 1993 focused on Muslim women's status/problem. A woman journalist (FRM) pointed out that by emphasising Muslim women's issues, the press in fact plays politics. It is worthwhile to note that since the case of Shah Bano (see chapter 2) the question of Muslim women's status in India has also become an issue of the identity of Muslims.

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12 It has been noted that since the relocation of WFS in Delhi, the publication rate in India has increased 100% in the mainstream media, with all major dailies carrying women's features (see Byerly, 1995). Further, the stories covered by WFS focus on various issues like politics, economics, health, environment, war, peace, religion etc. from a gender perspective.
as a minority community. A controversy over personal laws and Uniform Civil Code also raged over Shah Bano case.

In view of the observation made by Joseph and Sharma (1994) that the national press does not miss those issues which have political or communal or legal angles to them, it may be argued that three editorials on Muslim women's problems might not have been covered entirely for women's cause but were carried because of communal and political overtones in these issues. Also the Hindu community perceives itself as more progressive than the Muslim community in terms of status of women and therefore the press sometimes overplays the backwardness of the Muslim community in its coverage since press belongs to majority community (FRM).

Quoting the case of a young Muslim girl who was married off to an old man, FRM pointed out that the story hit the headlines and was a 'hot seller', whereas in another similar incident, when a 12 year old Hindu girl 'allotted' to a 30 year old man and further raped by her husband was rushed to the hospital in a very critical condition in Delhi city, was not considered news worthy and went unnoticed. Only one Hindi newspaper carried that story. It exposes the national politics of media to some extent, which is dominated by the majority community, and fans communalism in the society. Apart from that, most of the information in the Muslim girl's story was based on police resources and the reporters had not actually investigated the story, as argued by FRM.

The category of 'reviews' (2.5%) (see table 1.1) mainly reviewed women-centred plays and books focusing on women's concerns. Half of the reviews were carried in the supplements (six in Saturday and two in Sunday supplement). In terms of days, 60 per cent reviews were published on Saturdays and Sundays. The prominent theme in reviews was also social (35.4%) as in articles followed by violence (16.1%). The other themes were below ten per cent in each category. The higher percentage of 'social theme' can again be linked up with the gender of the author since reviews were also largely written by women. Twelve authors out of 15 were identified as women writers. An increasing consciousness towards women's issues can be judged from an increasing number of women-oriented books or plays. This was reflected in the increasing coverage to reviews in 1993 (see table 4.5, part C). However, it must be borne in mind that reviews do not promote women's issues as such. Reviews have a component of entertainment particularly when they are about films or plays. Moreover, reviews did not express the concerns of the paper itself, they simply reflected the themes of the books, dramas, plays etc. But it is encouraging that the
media take note of feminist books, plays etc. Faludi (1993) has documented that when Betty Friedan's book 'The feminine mystique' was published in 1963, no paper bothered to review it. But talking about the recent years, she contends that "media at least dimly realise that they have some responsibility to cover the publication of feminist books, the release of feminist films..." (p. 52).

**Interviews/profiles (2.4%)** were also published largely in the magazine supplement (i.e. out of 14 interviews, 6 were carried in the Sunday supplement and one in Saturday supplement). The interviewees included a popular woman activist from Germany, a woman activist from Jamaica, a woman civil servant in Delhi, a professor from Delhi University, a woman manager of a cricket team, two women politicians etc. Thus the actors in interviews were mainly important figures. The primary theme in one of the interviews was not related to women, for example, in an interview conducted with Salman Rushdie in Delhi, the interviewer after discussing politics, moved on to the status of Muslim women. Interviews were a combination of various themes like violence, social, economic, health, political etc. As noticed in articles and reviews, at least seven interviews were authored by women journalists.

**Columns (3.2%),** in the context of this study, were basically the comments on happenings around the world and were mainly 'light readings'. Since columns are usually written by established journalists, they were mostly carried in the regular paper. Only one column was found in the Saturday supplement. Also eleven columns did not carry a by-line which might be because of the common knowledge among regular readers about the particular columnists and columns. Out of eight columns with by-lines, at least six were written by women journalists. Most of the columns were not analytical in nature. Some of them also contained small items within one column. In such instances, women's concern was just one of the referrals or many times the secondary referral. It can be observed from the trends in the appearance of primary actors in columns. Nearly 32 per cent of columns had no primary actor followed by 21 per cent with foreign and international figure/organisations, and 15.8 per cent with character (of a book/play/film/drama) as actors. Victimised women appeared in 15.8 per cent of columns as primary actor. Corresponding to the observation that many times primary themes were not related to women, the category of 'others' (26.3%) in the columns outnumbers other themes like economic (15.8%), appointments (15.8%), violence/crime (5.3%), social (5.3%), seminars/inaugurations (5.3%), and so on.
Readers' letters formed 6.4 per cent of the data (see table 1.1). Since the newspaper caters mainly to audience in Delhi, letters were mainly written by local residents. The dominant themes in letters were violence/crime (29%) followed by social theme (21%), miscellaneous theme (13.1%), legal (10.5%), violence/crime by women/women as guilty (10.5%), and so on. Within the category of violence, the topics were dowry, rape, suicide, prostitution, and crime by women. The issues in social category were mainly pressures/customs, family relationships, and female child discrimination. The most revealing feature about letters is their trends over the four selected years (see table 4.7, part C). While 1981 saw the publication of the most letters, 1993 did not carry a single letter pertaining to women's issues. The trend seems to be closely associated with the fatigue of readers, journalists and media with women’s issues and with violence/crime stories in particular over the last decade (see chapter 8). The trends over different years are discussed in the following section.

Summary

Apart from news stories, the other items carried in the newspaper were articles, readers' letters, columns, reviews, interview/profile, editorials etc. Articles which were the second major category after news stories raised many concerns, but social theme followed by violence were the major issues. Within the social theme, three main categories were pressures/customs, equality and status, family relationships, and within the violence theme, the prominent category was statistics of violence against women i.e. it expressed an overall concern over violence against women and did not specify any particular kind of violence. An important observation noticed was that articles were largely carried on Sundays. However, a positive indication in articles was that large number of articles carried a by-line and only a small percentage were written by HTC and agencies. Another significant difference was that the categories of 'women's liberation/movement' theme and 'miscellaneous themes' were higher in supplements. Women writers authored at least 16 articles out of 22 in the weekend supplements.

Similarly interviews and reviews were mainly carried on Saturdays and Sundays and were largely written by women journalists. Interviews contained important personalities. Columns were also a part of entertainment feature and were not entirely concerned with women's problems or issues. Therefore, the primary themes and primary actors were not women centric. Editorials concentrated on very limited range of issues like dowry, sexual harassment, equality and status, police atrocities. Apart from this three editorials were related to Muslim women's problems and all three of
them were carried in the year 1993. It is argued that the major reasons for carrying these editorials were the communal/political angle involved in them.

C: Trends over four selected Years

Four different years were selected for the content analysis to see the pattern of coverage of women's news/issues over these years. While there is not a drastic difference in the quantity of coverage in four different years, 1981 shows maximum coverage followed by a decrease in the following years. But in 1993 the coverage seems to be rising again.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As discussed in chapter two, the second phase of the women's movement was born in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Corresponding to this development, violence against women in the form of dowry deaths, bride burning, domestic violence, rape etc., was unearthed by women's groups and subsequently these stories caught the attention of media. Needless to say, violence/crime against women were a novelty for media in the early 1980s. This may be noted in the coverage of violence/crime stories in particular in different years. The following table indicates that the coverage of violence/crime stories was highest in the year 1981 but it decreased significantly in 1993.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total*</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*see table 2.1
Corresponding to this fact, the percentage of 'victimised women' as the primary actor was highest in 1981 and lowest in 1993.

Table 4.3: Victimised women as primary actor within news stories in different years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These findings also help to establish a relationship between the author and type of stories discussed earlier. It may be noted that while in 1993, the stories on violence/crime decreased (see table 4.2), corresponding to this trend of decreasing importance of violence/crime stories on the agenda of media, a decrease in the number of stories covered by HTC was also recorded in the data. Following table shows the trend of coverage by HTC in different years.

Table 4.4: Number of news stories covered by HTC in different years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the coverage of women's news/issues in 1993 seems to be rising again as table 4.1 indicates. The following table suggests that the coverage of editorials, reviews, interviews, and articles in particular increased in the year 1993.
Table 4.5: Coverage of articles, editorials, reviews, interviews, related to women’s issues in different years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1981</th>
<th>1985</th>
<th>1989</th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stories</td>
<td>N &amp; %</td>
<td>N &amp; %</td>
<td>N &amp; %</td>
<td>N &amp; %</td>
<td>N &amp; %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td>1 (12.5%)</td>
<td>1 (12.5%)</td>
<td>2 (25%)</td>
<td>4 (50.0%)</td>
<td>8 (100.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>2 (14.2%)</td>
<td>4 (28.6%)</td>
<td>2 (14.2%)</td>
<td>6 (43%)</td>
<td>14 (100.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>17 (22.7%)</td>
<td>17 (22.7%)</td>
<td>11 (14.6%)</td>
<td>30 (40%)</td>
<td>75 (100.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviews</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (26.7%)</td>
<td>2 (13.3%)</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
<td>15 (100.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This observation also corresponds with the increased number of stories/items written by specified authors from 15.4 per cent in 1981 to 37.1 per cent in 1993.

Table 4.6: Specified author/source by year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specified Authors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As noted earlier, the coverage of articles, interviews, reviews has mainly increased in the supplements. However, the increasing coverage in supplements raises strong implications in terms of ghettoisation of women’s issues. Although it does convey the concern of the press towards women’s issues - be it to keep pace with changing times in terms of fashion (SK) or under the pressure of women’s groups or personal initiatives of women journalists, an important question is: who reads magazine sections or supplements? Are these articles supposed to be for ‘all’ readers or women alone? Can they be brought into the main pages? Although further research needs to be conducted to know the readership of magazine articles, at the same time the trends in readers’ letters convey strong suspicions regarding the readability of the supplements. The highest number of letters (65.7%) were carried in 1981 and amazingly there was not a single letter carried in the year 1993 (see table 4.7). In view of the findings that coverage of women’s issues has largely moved to supplements towards 1990s, one may ask: could it be that in the early 1980s the coverage of women’s news/issues was higher in the main pages and therefore caught the attention of the readers whereas the diversion from main pages to magazine sections in 1993 allowed the readers to ignore magazine sections? Or could it be that readers also tend to respond to ‘events’ and not ‘issues’?
Another explanation for readers' letters is that since violence was a novel theme on the media agenda in 1981, it also caught the attention of public which is evident in readers' responses. But gradually violence/crime stories decreased on the agenda of media (see table 4.2) and hence it may also have affected the public's agenda. Although it is difficult to establish a causal connection, findings do suggest that both the media and readers showed a fatigue towards violence/crime stories and hence the issue lost its significance. It also implies that both the audience and the media ultimately got used to the existing social order because of the continuity of violence/crime against women in both the private and the public spheres. The fatigue of journalists with such stories is clearly visible in chapter 8.

Lastly a significant observation in the data was the placement of stories in different years. In the absence of specialised pages in 1981 and 1985, most of the stories/items appeared on the unclassified pages, but the trends changed drastically in the following years.

Table 4.7: Trends in news classification in different years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News classification</td>
<td>N &amp; %</td>
<td>N &amp; %</td>
<td>N &amp; %</td>
<td>N &amp; %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25 (20.3%)</td>
<td>10 (7.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10 (8.1%)</td>
<td>7 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td>15 (8.4%)</td>
<td>6 (4.1%)</td>
<td>2 (1.7%)</td>
<td>9 (6.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9 (7.3%)</td>
<td>14 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco &amp; business</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>3 (2.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8 (6.5%)</td>
<td>40 (28.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What's on</td>
<td>5 (2.8%)</td>
<td>4 (2.7%)</td>
<td>2 (1.7%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter to editor</td>
<td>25 (14%)</td>
<td>10 (6.7%)</td>
<td>3 (2.5%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City briefs</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24 (19.5%)</td>
<td>3 (2.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State briefs</td>
<td>3 (1.6%)</td>
<td>1 (1.6%)</td>
<td>9 (7.3%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>128 (71.1%)</td>
<td>112 (75.1%)</td>
<td>25 (20.3%)</td>
<td>45 (32.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament/LS/RS</td>
<td>1 (.5%)</td>
<td>3 (2.1%)</td>
<td>4 (3.2%)</td>
<td>2 (1.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3 (1.6%)</td>
<td>13 (8.7%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>180 (100%)</td>
<td>149 (100%)</td>
<td>123 (100%)</td>
<td>140 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table indicates that classification like economy and business, city, nation, foreign, sports page etc. did not exist before 1985. But with the introduction of such pages after 1985, the coverage seems to be getting more and more specialised. The reduced coverage of event-oriented stories in the media towards 1990s might also be attributed to this fact because such news stories do not seem to fit into these specialised pages although sometimes they are used as fillers on sports page or economy and business page as noticed in earlier section. This may also be the reason that items like articles, reviews, interviews are getting more space over the weekends or in supplements.

A significant observation which may be noted in the above table is the city briefs which include mainly crime briefs. While before 1985 the violence/crime stories were carried on regular pages of the newspaper, in the year 1989 such stories were turned into briefs and put into a separate column called city briefs. The trend needs to be analysed in terms of media's fatigue with these stories. The underlying message here is that violence/crime stories were gradually removed from the regular pages and clustered under the city briefs discussed in earlier sections. The coverage in the city briefs further reduced drastically in the year 1993, which also indicates that less and less coverage is given to such stories or that even the usual quota given to such stories has reduced. The reduced number indicates that either the atrocities against women were over in the year 1993 or the crime reporters stopped selecting the items from police bulletins or police itself became selective in reporting events or since the paper paid greater attention to women's issues in supplements, it justified itself by decreasing the coverage in the main pages.

Summary

There was no drastic difference noted in the coverage in four different years. However, 1981 carried highest percentage of stories followed by a decrease in later years. It is argued that women's issues like domestic violence, dowry, bride burning were a novelty for media in the early 1980s and hence such stories got maximum attention in 1981. This observation is closely associated with the increased number of violence/crime stories in 1981 and a tremendous decrease in 1993. Correspondingly, the percentage of victimised women as the primary actor was also maximum in 1981 and minimum in 1993. Further it is correlated with the authors of stories, that is, coverage by HTC was highest in 1981 and it reduced significantly in 1993. These observations also indicate the fatigue of media with violence/crime stories.
However, in 1993 the overall coverage of stories/items increased which can be explained through the increased number of other stories like articles, reviews, interviews and editorials. The quota of such stories (except editorials) increased in the supplements and these were largely written by women. The highest number of articles were carried in 1993 which is a positive indication on the part of media. It also corresponds with the increased number of stories written by specified authors in 1993 compared to 1981. However, the increasing coverage in the supplements raises strong suspicions regarding the readership of these stories. Particularly so, since there was not a single reader's letter carried in the year 1993. It raises an important question which is: could it be that in the early 1980s the coverage of women's news/issues was higher in mains pages and therefore caught the attention of readers whereas the diversion from the main pages to magazine sections in 1993 allowed readers to ignore magazine sections? Or could it be that readers tend to respond to events and not issues? Or could it be that in the 1980s women's stories were a novelty for both media and the readers whereas by 1993 both were fed up with the same stories?

C : Coverage of women's organisations

As discussed in chapter two, the women's movement in India is more than a decade old. Most women's groups were formed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and these groups have raised a number of issues related to women over these years. Being based in Delhi, these groups monitor all government policies related to women. They can be rightly called 'watch dogs' of women's interests. This section looks at the coverage of various women's groups in the media.

It may be recalled that coverage of women's groups and/or the movement has been analysed according to the criteria defined in chapter 4. All those items which mentioned any women's organisation in any kind of story were coded. Since there are huge number of organisations in and outside Delhi, various groups were clustered into four categories for tabulation. These four categories are: Sample organisations (the organisations which were selected for interviews); other organisations or institutes in Delhi; women's organisations outside Delhi, and last category is women's organisations used as a symbol/aggregate.

Women's groups or movement did not find any prominent coverage in the media. Rather, they were almost non-existent in the media. In terms of their appearance as primary actors, sample organisations formed 2.5 per cent of the news stories, Delhi women's organisations/institutes were 2.0 per cent, Outside women's organisations
appeared in one per cent of news stories and women's organisations as symbols/aggregate was less than one per cent (see table 2.4, Part A).

The following discussion begins with the coverage of sample organisations. Sample organisations appeared as primary actors in fifteen stories/items which included ten news stories (66.7%), four 'engagements' (26.6%), and one interview/profile (6.7%) (see table 5.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>News story</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIDWA(^{1})</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFIW</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIWC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEWA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWDS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JWP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table indicates that sample organisations appeared mainly in the news stories. The engagement column informs about the activities taking place in the town i.e. Delhi. It carries information about seminars, festivals, plays, workshops etc. AIWC and MDS appeared in the same context. Examples of 'engagements' are as follows:

"Workshop on 'Relevance of law to women: an introspection of action and future perspectives', Constitution Club; 10 am - 5 PM".

"Minister of state for Home Affairs, Yogendra Makwana, to inaugurate a seminar on "Role of voluntary organisations in free legal aid to women in relation to dowry, rape victims and atrocities on the scheduled castes and tribes and weaker sections"; Vithal Bhai Patel House; Rafi Marg, 10.30 am".

\(^{1}\)See Appendix C for acronyms.
In terms of primary themes in news stories and other items, it was found that demonstrations, inaugurations and festivals, were the dominant themes. Analysis showed that AIWC appeared three times in the engagement column and primary themes were seminar and festivals. The single news story in which it appeared was associated with ‘shelter’ to women. All India Democratic women’s Association, which is the most active and biggest Left organisation in India made news only twice as the primary actor. Both news items placed on inside pages and reported by HTC were related to demonstrations, where the secondary actors were Central government and Joint Women’s Programme, and the secondary themes were rape, and communalism and fundamentalism. The National Federation of Indian Women, another party affiliated Left organisation appeared twice in news stories, again in relation to demonstrations on an issue of bride burning/murder. Madhok (1984: 23) argues that demonstrations by women on issues like rape, dowry are not difficult to get into the media because women’s issues “are not perceived as a political threat or a threat to the class structure”. However media do not respond to working class women’s struggles around class oppression, for example, agitation of female telephone operators for regularisation of their jobs, strike by government school teachers (majority of whom were women), mass retrenchment of female workers in Bombay’s textile mills etc.

Mahila Dakshata Samiti appeared once in a news item and once in the engagement column. While the primary theme was personal law in the news story, the engagement column carried information about a seminar. Self Employed Women’s Association is the most popular organisation at the national and the international levels for working at the grass roots level. SEWA appeared twice in news stories, the main issues were economic discrimination and rehabilitation of women.

The other organisations i.e. Joint Women’s programme, Centre for Women’s Development Studies, and Women's Feature Service, each appeared only once in the data as the primary actors. JWP appeared in relation to a seminar and CWDS was associated with issue of Panchayat Raj. Women's Feature Service appeared in an interview with a woman political figure in the magazine supplement. There were no distinct patterns noticed in terms of years. Out of the total items, five were carried in 1981; three in 1985; five in 1989, and two in 1993. All the news stories were reported
by HTC. The interview was written by a specific author and the engagement column did not carry by-line.

The second category of women’s organisations does not form part of the sample of this study but these organisations/institutions are based in Delhi. They appeared as primary actors in only 13 items out of which eight were news stories and five engagements.

Table 5.2: Coverage of Delhi organisations/institutes in different types of stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stories =</th>
<th>News stories</th>
<th>Engagements</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisations</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalyani</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YWCA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nari Raksha Samiti</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War widow’s assoc</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewives’ federation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AICEWI</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table indicates, out of 13 items which mentioned women’s organisations in Delhi, apart from the sample organisations discussed above, eight news stories had women’s organisations as primary actor and five items carried the names of organisations in engagement column.

The analysis further revealed that within the news stories, Kalyani appeared once in relation to kidnapping and abduction issue; War widow’s association was associated with rehabilitation in two news stories and pressures/customs in one story; NRS and Housewives’ federation appeared in two news stories whose primary themes were not related to women’s concerns, and lastly YWCA appeared in two news stories in relation to some inauguration or festival. Out of eight news stories, six were written by HTC and two were agency news. In this group of organisations, none of the items was carried in 1993. Seminars and inaugurations (53.8%) were the focus of these items.

The other two sets of organisations i.e. organisations outside Delhi and women’s organisations as a symbol/aggregate appeared as primary actors in only six and three items, respectively. The specific organisations outside Delhi appeared twice in
relation to demonstrations, and once each with reference to violence/crime theme, social theme, seminars/inauguration, and miscellaneous theme. The items included four news stories, one review and one engagement. Three stories were filed by HTC, one by a news agency and the review was written by a specific writer. Out of four news stories, one was filed from Delhi whereas other three did not carry dateline.

Women's organisations as a symbol/aggregate appeared as primary actors in three items out of which two were news stories and one article. The primary themes were violence, legal, and political, and correspondingly in two items the secondary actors were political officials and foreign figure.

Summary

Four sets of organisations were classified to see their coverage in the sample newspaper. These categories were: sample organisations (which were interviewed); other organisations or institutes in Delhi (not included in the sample interviews); women's organisations outside Delhi; women's organisations as symbol/aggregate. It was found that women's groups did not find prominent coverage in the media. It will not be an exaggeration to say that Indian women's organisations or the movement which has been in the forefront in the political arena do not exist in the media. All the organisations appeared mainly in conjunction with demonstrations, festivals, inaugurations, engagements etc. No significant patterns were noticed in terms of years, and the news stories were filed by general correspondents.

Section II: News values and the prevailing moral order

After having investigated media coverage of women's news/issues and the women's movement, this section discusses the coverage within the political and cultural context of Indian society and examines media ideology.

As far as the organisation of women's news is concerned, it may be summarised here that the event-oriented news stories formed the major percentage of the data compared to other items. With regard to event-orientation of news, it is not difficult to gather that event-oriented stories do not require expertise, are embedded within the web of facticity, and hence are easy to cover. Further, news stories concentrated heavily on violence/crime theme which forms nearly 40 per cent of the total data. The news stories were largely Delhi based and mainly covered by HTC and agencies which indicates that much effort is not invested in covering women's issues. The news
stories are also not given much importance since majority of stories were found on
the unclassified pages. At least ten per cent of violence/crime stories were also non-
investigative and non-exploratory. Apart from news stories, other items covered were
articles and editorials. Articles touched upon various issues and towards the 1990s
articles have been pushed towards magazine sections or special supplements and they
are increasingly written by women authors. However, in terms of quantity, articles
formed merely 12.7 per cent of the data. Further out of a total of 292 newspapers
carrying at least 584 editorials, only eight editorials were devoted to women's issues.

To begin with, I shall examine why news stories form a major percentage of the data.
Two kinds of news stories categorised were sensational stories and reformatory
stories\(^4\). In the data, the sensational stories mainly pertained to violence/crime and
reformatory stories were associated with activities of officials. However, as argued by
Joseph and Sharma (1994: 23), both kind of stories "are generated in the normal,
workaday manner. They are based on news gathered either on regular beats, such as
the police, the courts, Parliament, the ministries and political parties, or at press
conferences, public meetings and conferences organised by various groups. Since
they do not suggest any special effort on the part of a paper to extend coverage, they
are clearly less significant".

It may be argued that violence/crime stories, in particular, seem to fulfil the
conditions of making news as suggested by Galtung and Ruge (1981). Such
conditions include frequency, non-ambiguity, relevance, consonance, negativity and
personification. The frequency of violence/crime stories tally with the pace of
newspaper production which is published every 24 hours. It is because such incidents
as rape, suicide, dowry deaths, are a common practice and information can be easily
collected from police records/bulletins, hospitals, and courts. Although they may
contain ambiguities, reporters do not cover domestic sphere to unravel ambiguities.
As a result, the incidents also remain personified, for instance, a woman committing
suicide is held responsible for her own actions, and the social structure is not blamed.
Such incidents are also consonant with readers' expectations and hence carry
meanings within a particular cultural context. For instance, a brief report on dowry
death or suicide of a woman is meaningful for an Indian reader who is familiar with
the custom of dowry or bride burning incidents. A news containing even four

\(^4\)It was found in a study on the coverage of women's news in the Hindustan Times, The Hindu,
Patriot, The Statesman, The Times of India and Indian Express that most of the news focussed on
two patterns. One was the stories of rape, dowry harassment, and other atrocities committed on
women, and the other category of news concentrated on the welfare of women which "included the
proposals for various aspects of women's welfare in the form of discussions held in meetings at
national level or with their agencies" (see Arya, 1990: 10).
I have argued that violence/crime incidents do not usually go unnoticed and are registered with the police. Hence they are easy to obtain and do not require much efforts. However, it may be noticed that within the violence/crime stories also, some themes are surprisingly missing or negligible in coverage. They are police atrocities, female foeticide and infanticide, domestic violence etc. It may be argued that such incidents may not have chances of being documented by the police. In case of domestic violence, firstly these incidents do not generally become public, secondly police officials may refuse to register them because of the private nature of these issues. The incidents of female foeticide also may not fall into police records because of their private nature, and also they are generally carried out by private practitioners. And even if media are aware of such malpractices, they may not cover them because of close connection between media and medical institutes (Joseph and Sharma, 1994). Female infanticide usually takes place in the poverty stricken settings in remote areas and as the patterns of coverage indicated, media are highly urban centric and hardly any efforts are put to cover remote areas. Police atrocities have less chances of being covered because police may not report such incidents and further even if journalists are aware of police excesses, they may not report it in order not to spoil the source-journalist relationship.

What kind of social order gets reflected in such coverage and what could be the ideological effects of this order? Can this coverage be explained in terms of cultural insensitivity towards women?

Gans (1979) argues that journalists cannot proceed without values and these values infused into the news reflect a picture of society or a certain social order. Also, through a particular representation of the news, a consensus is formed within which news makes meaning, gets interpreted, and conveys a common culture or a central value system (Hall et al, 1981). Within the Indian context, a major value which exists in society is a cultural insensitivity towards women, their person, individuality, and their issues. This value is imbibed by people, including women, because it is embedded in the cultural climate. Being a part of this culture, media and journalists cannot proceed without values nurtured by the society. The coverage of women's news/issues in the media conveys this insensitivity and order both in terms of...
organisation of women's news and in terms of contents. It also reflected in the opinions of journalists discussed in chapter 8.

In terms of working or journalistic practices, it can be gathered that little effort is invested to cover women's news/issues. The main authors of news stories are HTC and news agencies. Women's news/issues do not fall into any beat system and there are no special correspondents covering women's issues. Even the violence-related stories are largely non-analytical and many times not even investigated (e.g. city briefs and state briefs) which indicates the insensitivity of media towards women. Therefore, the simple reasons for covering violence related stories are their sensational nature, easy availability and accessibility. While on the one hand such coverage conveys an insensitivity of media towards women, on the other it also suggests that violence against women or their oppression within the private or public is not serious enough and does not need attention. It reflects the picture of a social order with violence/crime against women as a daily feature of life. It can be argued that the non-analytical and many times non-exploratory nature of coverage may strengthen the given culture and legitimise the social order. It may also add to the consensus and normalise the social order. How? Although a given culture in Indian society has been discussed in details in chapter 2, it is essential to present a brief account here in order to make the argument clearer.

In North India in particular, female children are largely unwelcomed. A son is a blessing and daughter is seen as a liability. As daughters grow older, their confines start getting narrower. They are denied the basic fundamental rights as human beings - the right to speak, right to movement, right to form associations, right to education, right to work and so on (Kishwar and Vanita, 1984). Girls are largely not encouraged to enter a profession which may leave them wondering about their goals and their worth. Their life is mainly confined to the private sphere and marriage is promoted as an ideal for them. Throughout those years, they may live with the fear of a world 'out there', with the fear of being harassed, being maltreated, being raped. Above all they may live with the fear of their 'second life' (i.e. married life) and the 'actors' involved in that, with the fear of being burnt or thrown out. At the same time they also get exposed to new values permeating into the society like female foeticide, infanticide, suicides, as a result of social pressures and practices etc. Most of the girls do not rebel because they are not aware of any other course of life, and others because of the fear of annoying their parents or a backlash. Although all girls may not go through these experiences personally, being a part of the system they internalise the values embedded within it.
After spending their early years in parental home, they are then transported to another set up. The protectors and defenders change but the scene remains same. This adulthood is basically an extension of childhood according to Colette (1981). But in this set-up they get the responsibility to retain the institution of family. They play good daughters-in-law, wives, mothers, as a part of their Dharma or in the name of co-operation or for the fear of criticism or to seek a protective environment. It might be because they get accustomed to a life of dependence and security in the early years of life and hence internalise it. If women do not play the given roles, the institution of family would break down. And the given social system cannot afford it because it can shake the foundations of a social order which keeps women in place.

Most women do not oppose the cultural conditionings because they do not find anything concrete 'out there' except a confusion and abstractness, for which they have not been trained and there are not enough role models to be followed. Recalling a song 'oh these women folk, their back is broad, their brain is weak...' played on All India Radio in the early 1950s, Mojumdar has written "still in school, not having coherently thought out my views on the status of women, I merely felt hurt and offended by the song". But by the time they were in their teens, as Mojumdar writes "the girls had internalised the anti-female norms and values of our traditional and patriarchal society" (Mojumdar, 1990: 6). Thus, as in the words of Gandhi and Shah (1991: 85) "the single largest factor which contributes to women's doing is her submissiveness. She totally accepts her environment because she has internalised acceptance and submission as a goal in her life".

Being a democratic society, Indian law provides for and is expected to defend every right of women. However, existing consensus is promoted and strengthened through social customs and practices. Even policy makers seem to support the cultural value system and hardly any efforts are made to implement the laws in order to improve the position or status of women. For instance, dowry seeking is a crime at a legal level but not at a community level. Many politicians who frame and pass the laws against giving and taking of dowry follow the custom and spend lavishly on the weddings of their children. Committing sati is declared a crime by the government but many politicians are known to have donated money to sati temples and they worship sati in their homes. Female foeticide is a legal crime but everyday three thousand female foetuses are aborted in India and this is treated as a personal affair by the community along with medical practitioners (see chapter 2). If a woman has been raped twice, she may be offered double compensation but the rapist may not be charged with
double crime or stricter punishment (HT, 13 May, 1994). At times court judgements have favoured rapists in view of their young age or other reasons, instead of apprehending them (see chapter 2). Suicides by women seem to have become a normal feature owing to sociocultural pressures or poverty etc. Girls are sexually harassed in public in the form of eve-teasing etc.; however, they are socialised at a young age not to move alone or go out in the evenings.

And within this given order, the press chooses to publish many stories as minor events or accidents conforming to the web of facticity without questioning or exposing the oppressive social forces as a result of which such incidents take place. The incidents, which otherwise remain beyond the purview of readers, become a daily feature for audience and ultimately, as Hall et al (1981: 358) say “the news value of novelty is eventually expended; through repetition the extraordinary eventually becomes ordinary”. The data over the different periods showed how the coverage of violence/crime stories decreased drastically towards 1993. Corresponding to this result, readers' letters were also missing. Above all, the journalists also showed their fatigue with same stories (see chapter 8). Thus, “the piling up of the reports and statistics of gruesome dowry deaths, rapes, etc. often leads to a growing desensitisation of the reader population on these issues”, (Eashwar, 1984: 6). The above argument, however, does not suggest that these events should not be carried by the media. Instead, these stories need to be analysed, investigated, debated and carried more as ‘issues’ in the mainstream pages. Media need to dig deeper into such cases and do follow-ups on the police reports or court cases. Secondly, many issues like day care, foeticide/infanticide, property rights, health/malnutrition, illiteracy among women, problems with personal laws etc. need to be debated and thirdly women's (particularly victimised women) opinions need to be brought to the public attention.

Hall et al (1981) have argued that through the stories of crime and violence, the consensual nature of society is re-affirmed. Those who commit crime are exposed to the public, are charged and punished by the judicial system. This also means that society would not accommodate anyone who disrupts social order. Some scholars (see Ericson, 1991; Hall et al, 1981; Schlesinger and Tumber, 1995) in their studies related to crime, violence, law and order have not looked into the particular nature of violence which women face in various situations. For instance, in their approach towards the crime and the criminal, the criminal is mostly personified and involved in street crime, but rarely seen in the domestic sphere and close family relations. The assumed criminal is a person who murders another individual or attacks someone's property or use violent means and disrupts the social order (see Hall et al 1981). It is
reflected in their argument that "the use of violence marks the distinction between those who are fundamentally of society and those who are outside it" (Hall et al, 1981: 353). The violator here personifies an individual who has no background, no values, and who is simply involved in violent activities. The media brings out this 'violator' in front of the public and court punishes 'him'. The judicial system protects the whole of the society from this 'criminal' and punisheshim for breaching the social order.

This concept is not fully applicable in the case of violence against women in the Indian context (and might be a too narrow portrait even in the Western context). In the cases of rape or kidnapping, of course, the 'devil' can be categorised as a violator, but in the cases of domestic beating, female foeticide, 'forced' suicides, dowry cases, the 'violator' is not an 'outsider'. No such distinction as 'those who are fundamentally of society and those who are outside it' can be made. Here, both the 'violator' and the victim are 'of the society and both are respectable citizens. In tune with Hall's argument, the theme of 'punishment' in the data may suggest that the violators of social order i.e. people involved in violence/crimes against women are punished, with the underlying message that it is against the consensus and therefore the violator needs to be punished. In these cases, the violator is 'symbolically cast out of the society by its guardians'. However, it can be argued in this context that these violators like dowry seekers, cannot be practically cast out of the domestic sphere and once their punishment is over, they come back and may indulge in the same activities. The underlying argument is that in such stories the violators are held guilty of crime but the social processes again remain unquestioned.

Further, as noticed in the data, many of the violence/crime stories (suicide, bride burning, mysterious death, dowry death, rape, and domestic violence etc.) are also carried as simple accidents, and for instance in many cases even the secondary actors are missing. Many instances of suicides, dowry deaths, domestic violence, mysterious deaths, bride burning, foeticide, remain ambiguous as there are no visible violators or causes of incidents. And as mentioned earlier, these stories are usually not analysed and sometimes not even investigated. Then why are these events carried in the media? How does it serve women's interests? Why is it that women are committing suicide in the domestic sphere? Is there anything wrong with those women? Why are mostly women's bodies found burnt in mysterious circumstances within the confines of domestic spheres? Who are the violators? And what does this coverage convey? It goes back to the same argument that such coverage, carried without analysis or investigation reflects the insensitivity of media towards women and their issues, keeps
the violent nature of the private sphere hidden and ultimately helps to normalise the
given order and supports the social consensus.

The implicit value in this coverage may be the desirability of an order in which such
violence/crime against women does not take place and the message might be that this
violence against women is undesirable. But if that were the case, then these stories
would have been more analytical. They would not have been reported just as events
or accidents with no ambiguities or controversy involved in them. If they are not
analytical or lack debate, then it might be argued that media proceed with the given
values, which is, that violation of women's human rights are a norm. It is clearly
visible in the stories of suicides or mysterious deaths which were mostly carried even
without a secondary actor, and thus a total silence is observed over the issue.

There are no 'visible' criminals here who can be punished or can be directed to behave
because the criminal in such instances is the gendered system, the patriarchal social
structure and discriminatory cultural values. And unfortunately news focuses on the
troublesome persons but not the troublesome structures or social forces, and this
confounds the social roots of trouble in a society that is structurally unequal (see
Ericson, 1991). While arguing how law and media join in maintaining social order by
individualising problems, Ericson (1991: 9) has argued that "news and law rule out
systemic and structural accounts that might question the authority of cultural values,
the state, and the news and legal institutions themselves". Thus social order is
represented through a silencing of its most fundamental structural dimensions. At the
surface level, the press may seem to sympathise with victim women or may seem to
express the desirability of a social order in which women are not harassed. But it also
seems to be somewhat apathetic towards women since it does not debate these issues
much and carries these event-oriented news stories mainly because of their
compatibility with its functioning and organisation. As remarked by one of the
journalists in his interview "the one sentence of 'set on fire for dowry' is not such a
short story. Behind this, there is a whole tragedy of a woman who is gone just
because somebody did not get a refrigerator or car. You have to realise the human
dimension to a very automatic statistics" (MJW). Thus, truth, as argues Lippman
(1994) is subjective and entails more probing and explanation than the hectic pace of
news production allows.

Since violence against women is, by and large, an unproblematic feature in the Indian
society, the news stories related to these events are not presented as some sort of
social disorder. The violence against women may be an undesirable feature but as a
matter of fact it is reported as a routine activity rather than disorder of news and an activity which does not threaten the public peace. It is like the coverage of conflicts among public officials which are reported as a routine activity rather than disorder news, and which do not pose any threat to the public peace (see Gans, 1979). Therefore, these 'incidents' or 'accidents' are, by and large, treated as an integral part of the social order.

On the contrary, these news stories may be put under the category of 'moral disorder' because they do not necessarily threaten the social order but may indicate the violation of moral values. They do not endanger the social order because violence against women in the Indian traditional set-up is not viewed as indicative of the decline of family because large number of women are dependent on men (fathers, husbands) and the family is the main support system for women; therefore they have to adjust and co-operate. Even in the Western context, Sexton (quoted in Epstein, 1978a: 41) argues that "the house is often a refuge for women. Women comply because husband, children and State seem to expect it".

On the other hand, women's breaching of moral values or exceeding socially defined roles may be treated as social disorder and may be perceived as a threat to patriarchal family values and public peace. The silence of the press over the women's movement and attitude of journalists towards women activists reflects that the concerns and values of the movement are not closer to the patriarchal values of elite media and more importantly they do not also fit into the cultural value system. The silence of the press over the women's movement and attitude of journalists towards women activists in particular characterises this fear and threat. Further, it was found in interviews with women activists that journalists approach women activists mainly for their comments/reactions (see chapters 7 and 8) on stories like when John Wayne Bobbitt's sexual-organ was cut-off by his wife in the United States, the controversy over the Indian Supreme Court's judgement allowing an unmarried teenage Indian girl to carry or terminate her child, the case of Judge Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill regarding sexual harassment at the workplace in the United States, population policies, setting up of National Commission for Women, or some sensational issues.

In many of these instances women involved have threatened family values and the social order. Further, in all these instances, as argued by some activists, it was the media and not the women activists which attached profound importance to the stories. It was also disclosed by some activists that journalists attend the seminars or workshops organised by women's organisations on the basis of 'issues'. Ministers
respond to demands of women activists in a similar way. If an issue is reformatory in nature, it gets a fair listening but if it is controversial in nature, for example, population policies, then it is largely ignored (see chapter 7). However, research is required to deeply analyse those stories where women's actions may be perceived as a threat to social order.

Besides the sensational kind of stories, the other kind of stories carried in the newspaper can be termed as 'reformatory' stories. These stories primarily cover officials' activities. Secondly, as noticed in the data, these stories carry themes which are reformatory in nature like equal legal rights, political rights, granting funds to weaker sections of women, granting funds for women's studies, equal employment opportunities, equality and status for women etc. which are also the accepted values in the Indian society. What is ignored is the depth of the issues i.e. the gendered and patriarchal values and structures. Without dealing with the depth of 'who looks after the children and why' the officials seem to solve the problems of women by giving them assurances of equal legal rights, offering self-employment schemes, rehabilitation, funds for women's studies, employment opportunities etc. in such news stories. However, "reforms can also be considered as a preventive measure - one which is necessary to divert more radical demands and conflicts which could lead to a more serious split" (Gelb, 1990: 149). Needless to say, all these compensations or provisions do not offer any strategies to deal with violence against women or in improvement of their status. Also, these measures do not provide any support structures to women to walk out of an oppressed family environment in the Indian system. KB, a woman activist, argued in her interview that in the absence of support systems, victimised women have to stay at home and suffer endlessly. Women's organisations also cannot accommodate or provide shelter to victimised women and hence have to push women back to the oppressive family environment.

Although issue-oriented stories like articles focusing on pressures/customs, equality and status, family relationships etc. indicate the concern of media towards women regarding their unequal status in the society and oppression within the domestic sphere, the defining of the problem only in terms of social pressures, however, also conveys that the disadvantaged status of women has no political dimension, particularly when women enjoy all legal rights equal to men. The role of the state in promoting patriarchal values is overlooked. It is thus interpreted mainly as an attitudinal problem at the level of community and people. Many issues noted on feminist agenda (see chapter 2) like property rights, personal laws, undemocratic population policies, health, gendered economic policies, development policies, impact
of secularism, fundamentalism and its impact on women, were either missing or
minimal in the coverage. Madhok (1984: 25) also points out that the missing themes
in the Indian daily press, and particularly in editorials, are "comment on inequalities
in the wage structure, the adverse effects of selectively pro-male development
policies, the discrimination effected by mechanisation, the relative malnutrition of
women and the inadequate medical facilities which force lakhs to go to quacks for
abortion... Also missing from the coverage is the ordinary woman, the housewife
and child rearer whose industry, whose production and reproduction, keep the
economy going". In tune with this observation, Downing (1980) also pointed out that
apart from sensational and sexist women's news many other issues related to women
like segregation of women into domestic labour; their struggle and cheap labour in
both the private and public spheres; their political struggle against imperialism; their
activities in the women's movement or their existence as independent human beings
are missing in the media. Issues like suicide, bride burning, infanticide and foeticide,
patriarchal structure/values etc. were even missing in the articles.

Coming to the coverage of the women's movement in media, it was noticed that the
movement is nearly blacked out in the media. It may be argued in this regard as in the
words of Douglas (quoted in Schudson, 1991: 152) that "societies like to keep their
cultural concepts clean and neat and are troubled by anomalies that do not fit into the
pre-conceived categories of culture". The women's movement may be perceived as an
anomaly in a traditional society by the media since roles of women are culturally
confined to the domestic sphere (see chapter 8). A complete silence seems to be
observed by the media on various controversial issues mentioned above and on the
existence and activities of women's groups. This is despite the fact that these groups
are based in Delhi and are easily accessible. The total eclipsing of women's
organisations raising revolutionary ideas may be a means of social control, according
to Morris (1973). Since the movement has questioned the basic values of the society,
the patriarchal order, the control of women's sexuality and fertility, media decided to
ignore it and act as watchdog of existing order by protecting people from its
ideologies. The "symbolic annihilation" of the movement is also symptomatic of the
maintenance of status quo and existing social order. Although it may not be
conspiratory on the part of media to dismiss the women's movement, the result of lack
of coverage according to Morris (1973) is much the same as if it were a deliberate
strategy because the existence of the movement remains beyond the knowledge of the
public.
So how can the nature of coverage of women's news/issues as discussed above or media's ideology be defined in terms of maintaining Brahmanical hegemony? In other words, how can the empirical evidence be related to the theory? It may be argued, as suggested by Bailey (1994) that firstly it is through the meta-discourse of silence on women's issues and the women's movement that Brahmanical hegemony is maintained. There is no doubt that violence/crime stories were carried but in the absence of analysis and a debate on these issues, such stories may not serve any purpose in terms of mobilising public opinion or pressurising policy makers. On the contrary, such stories may serve two purposes in terms of their ideological effects. On the one hand, as discussed above, they may add to the normalisation of the social order and on the other they may have their ideological effects on middle class women themselves in terms of keeping them in place by projecting women as helpless and men as powerful. The nature of coverage appropriately represents "the powerful talking to less powerful" (MoLotch, 1978: 180). According to Dietrich (1992), the media projection of sex-crime is male-centric as in such coverage "women are not seen as autonomous, thinking, feeling, decision-making beings" (p. 46). As mentioned in chapter 2, middle class women have to bear more restrictions than lower class or caste women. Family is the main oppressive agency for these women, and their lives are mainly confined to the private sphere. In terms of readership of English newspapers also, it is mainly educated women from this strata who form the part of readership. Thus, a regular dose of events like rape, dowry, suicide, mysterious deaths, bride-burning, on the one hand may serve to keep them inside i.e. confined to the private and thus prevent these women from experiencing the outside world, and on the other it may also convey that oppression within the private sphere is a normal affair and not alarming. Also since these event-oriented stories are themselves marginalised in terms of their placement, display, and analysis, it further conveys the insignificance of these issues.

This may be one of the reasons why middle class women do not generally complain about domestic violence or demands of dowry and lack courage to walk out of oppressive family environment; rather they further develop a fear of an outside world and hence a dependency on men. Talking about the coverage of rape stories in the media, Downing (1980: 127) also argues that "the impact of these stories is both to instil fear into all women, and thus to assist in their oppression, and to encourage men to fantasise sexual conquest". In tune with this argument, KS, a woman activist, also argued that media do not help build up the morale of women, particularly young girls, by giving a negative and sensational coverage alone.

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Thus in sensational news, media do not analyse the nature of the private sphere corresponding to the attitude of the patriarchal culture and the state, and within the reformatory news, various issues without analysis merely exist as labels in the name of political liberalism and progress. The reformatory news on the one hand and the blackening out of the women's movement on the other also reflect the conflicts of a transitional society which claims to be liberal and modern but at the same time it perceives feminism as a threat to the social order (see chapter 8). The same fear among media can be observed which national leaders had at the time of independence when women raised the issue of property or inheritance rights (see chapter 2) since media are also largely silent over such controversial issues and the women's movement.

Lastly, it may also be concluded that some issues like suicides, bride-burning, rape, mysterious deaths, dowry, sexual harassment found on the feminist agenda (see chapter 2) did appear on the media agenda. However, the nature of coverage of such issues is highly contestible. Many other issues like female foeticide, infanticide, property rights, education, health, fundamentalism, Uniform Civil Code, Personal laws, police atrocities, day care/child care facilities, political representation, widowhood constraints, child marriage, malnutrition, population policies, etc. were either missing or minimal in coverage. Most of these issues appeared in less than one per cent of articles (see Table 3, Appendix D).

Summary

The findings in this chapter indicate that women's issues hold a low status on the agenda of media. It was found that women's news is pre-dominantly event-oriented and subjected to common news value i.e. it is covered within the framework of media's routinisation. Two kinds of stories identified were: sensational stories and reformatory stories. Conforming to the values of political liberalism, reformatory stories dealt with reforms and officials' activities. On the other hand, sensational stories concentrated on violence/crime projecting women as passive victims.

It is argued that being part of a particular culture, journalists cannot proceed without values that reflect a certain social order being infused into the news. The non-analytical nature of violence/crime stories in particular and many other missing themes indicate an insensitivity of media towards women. It also seems to convey that oppression within the private sphere is a normal affair and hence does not demand attention. Above all, this kind of coverage may serve to contribute towards a
normalisation of the existing order by projecting violence/crime incidents as 'simple accidents' and by making them a daily feature for the audience. It is argued that this kind of coverage in the media strengthens the given patriarchal culture and supports the social consensus, making certain issues "invisible" in a democratic polity.

A positive indication noted was the increasing number of articles, interviews, reviews in the magazine supplements which were largely contributed by women themselves. However, the increasing coverage in the magazine sections also leads to a controversy of ghettoisation of women's issues and raises suspicions regarding the readability of these stories. Further, the women's movement was nearly missing in the media which suggests that media have by and large silenced the movement. Starting from issues of violence against women, the Indian women's movement has come far since the early 1980s. Over the years, women researched the issue of violence and linked it with wider contexts. At present, violence not only includes issues like dowry, bride burning, rape, eve-teasing, it also includes issues like fundamentalism and communalism, population policies, control of women's sexuality and fertility, gendered economic policies, poor socio-economic infrastructure pushing women into the private, feminisation of poverty, impact of development models on women etc. Unfortunately the press has not progressed at the same pace as far as its reportage on women's issues is concerned. The press has limited itself mainly to sensational and event-oriented news. It can be established that by and large the press does not seem to set agenda for women's issues.

To gain a further insight into the factors which may affect the coverage of women's issues and the movement in the media, the following chapters focus on the interviews with women activists and journalists from various women's organisations and English newspapers in Delhi, respectively. They will also provide an insight into the relationship between women activists and journalists. Chapter 7 and chapter 8 are complementary to each other. While chapter 7 explores the opinions of women activists about the press, interacting patterns between activists and journalists and the role of women activists as agenda-builders, chapter 8 concentrates on opinions of journalists regarding the coverage of women's issues and the movement along with verifying activists' claims or complaints recorded in chapter 7.
Chapter 7
Dissident voices:
women activists' opinions on the press and policy makers

It was apparent in the previous chapter that women's issues in the media hold a low status and the women's movement is given only tokenistic space. The chapter also revealed that coverage of women's issues was predominantly event-oriented and subjected to common news values i.e. they were covered within the framework of media's routinisation. The news stories focused mainly on violence/crime or activities of officials. The issue oriented items were carried in the form of articles which formed a very low percentage of the data. Women's organisations were largely dismissed by the media. The symbolic annihilation of the movement raises concerns regarding the association and interaction between women activists and the media. Therefore, this chapter and the following chapter focus on interviews with activists and journalists to paint a picture of the relationship between women activists and journalists, determine agenda-setting trends, explore opinions of journalists regarding the coverage of women's issues and the movement, study the role of women journalists, and identify factors which are at work in this relationship. Drawing on these interviews, the study will further endeavour to find a cogent explanation of the dismissal of the women's movement and marginalisation of women's issues in the media.

It was highlighted in chapter 3 that the English press and the political administration in India function at an elite level of society. The urban educated middle class women activists belong to the same strata of society to which the national press caters. Most of them can be defined as the non-governmental political elite in a democratic society owing to their aims, activities, and strategies in raising issues, representing women's interests and interacting with the policy makers for their fulfilment. Women activists do not necessarily form a part of the system of political power but they are representatives of new social and political interests and are active in the elite political arena.

It may also be pointed out here that since hegemony is a flexible and contested process, there is a provision for alternative perspectives and opinions. For instance, Brahmanism in India's history has provided space for anti-Brahmanical movements; it has allowed other religions like Buddhism and Jainism to develop and exist along with Hinduism. Similarly as pointed out in chapter 2, women's concerns and issues have been incorporated onto the political agenda along with the development of the
reform movement, the national liberation movement, and in the post-independent regimes. In a similar vein hegemony has allowed women's groups to develop, to question the patriarchal structures, and to make claims from democracy. As a part of this rhetoric, women's groups have been in the forefront since early 1980s lobbying for women's issues within the public sphere of media and polity, whether successfully or unsuccessfully. But undoubtedly, they have made their presence felt in the government cadre, and "in the 1990s, women activists are a force to reckon with" (India Today: 1995:78). Women's agenda has made a widespread impact on policy makers. A number of demands have been translated into policies and laws strengthened in the last decade under the constant pressure of women's movement in India. The National Commission for Women was set up in 1992 after prolonged demands of women's groups to look into various interests of women. Butalia (1993: 59) notes that "at the national level in India today, it is no longer possible to ignore women. Whether it is in regard to planning documents, policy decisions, electoral politics and so forth, the question of the specific needs of women has to be addressed". But as noticed in chapter 2, the implementation or enforcement of laws has been virtually lacking as a result of which much progress cannot be witnessed. "None the less, even a lip service provides activists with pressure points they can refer themselves to" (Butalia, 1993: 59).

Coming to the relationship between movements and media, scholars have emphasised the salience of media for the survival and prosperity of social movements (see Molotch, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Van Zoonen, 1992, 1996; Keilbowicz and Scherer, 1986). Briefly, media play a significant role in the functioning and success of any movement according to these scholars. They are considered central to the life and death of social movements since they confer status to a movement and have the power to legitimise or delegitimise its efforts. Media may serve manifold purposes of a social movement whose aims are to reach a diverse and uninformed audience and the policy makers. It is mainly through the media that the agenda of a social movement can reach onto the agenda of public and policy makers. As also summarised by Van Zoonen (1992), media may help a movement in mobilising public support, recruiting members, linking it up with other movements, trade unions, parties, and lastly imparting psychological support to a movement i.e. the appearance of the movement in the media may convey to the movement members that they do matter in the world. The coverage enlivens the spirit of a movement even if it is unsympathetic (see Molotch, 1979).

1The National Commission for Women monitors the functioning of the government and other agencies and acts as a watchdog of women's interests.
However, scholars (Tuchman, 1978a,b; Molotch, 1979; Van Zoonen, 1992, 1996; Kielbowicz and Scherer, 1986; Gitlin, 1980) have also pointed out a conflictual relationship between the media and social movements. This conflict owes largely to media's preference for bureaucratisation, its dependence on authoritative sources, and visible events, which form an important criteria in determining the status of news. Unfortunately, the movements lie at the periphery of society and largely do not fall into media's routinisation. Further, the decentralised nature of some movements like the women's movement does not fit into the mould of news making and hence does not coincide with media's routines and values. Apart from economic and organisational factors which go into deciding the newsworthiness, there are ideological factors, the individual preferences of activists and journalists which also count in making of news (see Van Zoonen, 1992). Also, as pointed out by Gitlin (1980), the movements whose concerns and ideas are closer to the concerns of elite of media and politics have better chances of getting onto the media agenda whereas the movements which are anti-establishment are largely dismissed.

In such situation, the resource poor groups may have to look for advocate-journalists (see Tuchman, 1978a,b) and build up rapport with them for the attainment of their goals. At times, certain journalists may also develop bonds with activists as a result of shared concerns (see Molotch, 1979) and thus the movement may get coverage in the media. However, as a result of media's dismissal of the movement and its concerns, the activists may become frustrated or indifferent to media and find other ways to achieve their objectives.

The relationship between women activists and journalists has been examined within this conceptualisation. Some of the core questions addressed in this chapter are: how do women view and address the media? how do media respond to them? what are the occasions of interaction between them? how do women try to influence the media agenda themselves? do women journalists play any significant role towards feminist objectives? The first section of this chapter provides a background to the structure and ideology of the Indian women's movement. Section two collects the accounts from women activists on various issues like: the opinion of women activists on the coverage of women's issues in the media, the trends in journalists' approaching women activists, and the role of women journalists towards feminist cause. Section three looks into the efforts put by women activists themselves in reaching media, and the strategies adopted by women activists in terms of both mainstream and alternative
media. It is argued that women activists need to influence media to reach policy makers and other middle class women to gain support.

Mostly coming from elite strata, and many of them having political affiliations themselves, who do women activists find more comfortable to deal with in the public arena, i.e., media or government? In other words, are media or the policy makers a better proposition in this trichotomous relationship? In order to examine the deeper trends in agenda-setting between the three actors, that is, women activists, media, and policy makers, section four provides a picture of an interaction between women activists and policy makers/government. How do women address the political system? How do policy makers respond to them and their demands? The opinions of activists on the role of women politicians is also a part of this discussion.

It must be noted here that this chapter mainly focuses on the accounts of women activists and provides an insight into the informal trends of interaction between activists and media, and activists and policy-makers for the reasons mentioned above. Apart from examining the patterns of interaction, other themes like development of alternative media/communication, responses of policy makers towards women activists, and role of women politicians towards the women's cause etc. are also addressed. Such concerns may not be directly linked with an on-going discussion but they form an important part of feminist agenda, and may provide a better understanding of the entire issue. Further, it is also important to note that due to diversity in opinions of women activists, it is not possible to elaborate on each theme emerging in the interviews.

Drawing on women's opinions and accounts in this chapter, and after having an insight into the opinions of journalists in the following chapter, the discussion will be presented at the end of chapter 8. In other words, no academic conclusions will be drawn at the end of this chapter. However, each section has been summarised. In the following section, I shall provide some information on the structure and ideology of the Indian women's movement and then highlight the organisations selected for this study.

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2 Data matrix based on the responses of women activists and journalists has been presented in Appendix D. It must be noted that data matrix contains major themes only. It cannot chart the controversial responses.
Section I: The structure and ideology of the Indian women's movement

The Indian women's movement has a loose network, many voices, and several aims and strategies (Caiman, 1989, 1992; Gandhi and Shah, 1991; Katzenstein, 1989; Singh, 1990; Sharma, 1992; Kumar, 1989; Phadnis, 1989). However, one cannot negate the identifiable tendencies within the movement where the activities of various groups are complementary to each other and not conflicting and "there are many individuals and groups whose loyalties appear to cross cut the differences in emphasis" (Caiman, 1992:12). Katzenstein (1989) finds the Indian women's movement closer to the European movement than the American one in its structure and ideology because of its heterogeneous nature. It has "no centralised organisation, no commonly acknowledged leadership, no univocal programme... Groups do not share a commitment to any one analysis of women's oppression, or its relationship with other forms of oppression/exploitation, or the strategies necessary for action or change. In fact even an intra-group consensus is often not assumed or demanded" (Tharu, quoted in Katzenstein, 1989: 54).

Several writers (Gandhi and Shah, 1991; Calman, 1989, 1992; Phadnis, 1989; Katzenstein, 1989) have attempted to categorise women's organisations according to their ideologies, organisation, functioning, strategies etc. But the character of the organisations is such that it is difficult to label them. Also, women activists or organisations avoid using labels for themselves (Gandhi and Shah, 1991). In their study on the women's movement, Gandhi and Shah (ibid.) made an attempt to categorise the organisations on the basis of their functions, issues, demands, and ideologies. But after a mind boggling exercise, they selected the organisations on the basis of their basic belief in change in society, issues taken up, geographical location and nature of organisations. They maintained that women and women's organisations who consider themselves a part of the Indian women's movement share certain beliefs which are: women are an oppressed section in society though they may differ in their understanding of class and gender, the origins of women's oppression, and its perpetuation; women's oppression is not inevitable, nor a part of the 'natural' order in society and can be eliminated; thirdly, women believe that there exists a sexual division of labour in society, both in the family and at the work place, which is weighted against them.

Katzenstein (1989) has categorised women's organisations into several groupings. They are: party-connected women's organisations; autonomous women's groups; grass roots organisations; women's research institutes; and women's development
organisations. The *party connected organisations* are: the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) associated with Congress and formed in 1927; Mahila Dakshata Samiti (MDS) formed in 1978 as women's wing of Janata Party; the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) formed in 1954 affiliated with CPI (Communist party of India); the All-India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) formed in the 1970s under the pressure from newer women's movement and affiliated with CPM (Communist party Marxist). All organisations, except MDS, are national in scale, hierarchically organised with national leadership based in Delhi. They are better able to organise and mobilise huge demonstrations. However, many women leaders from these organisations refuse to acknowledge their affiliation with political parties (see Calman, 1992).

*Autonomous groups* include organisations like Saheli, Manushi, Kali for women, Jagori, Ankoor etc. They are 'apolitical' in the sense that they are not connected with parties although individual members might have party links. They are largely urban based and run by educated middle class women in urban areas. Membership of these groups is small. Their strength is based on their agitational activities, theorising and publicising issues. They have connections with media professionals and government circles for lobbying their issues. *Grass roots organisations* are mainly rural based. They have been active in issues like deforestation, alcoholism, wife-beating, increased wages etc. *Women's research institutes* are ones like Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS) in Delhi, and Research Centre for Women's Studies in Bombay. The research staff of these institutes do little teaching and are mainly involved in research on poor and rural women. According to Katzenstein (1989: 58), "their role in creating feminist consciousness occurs not through the classroom but through the dual links that many feminist researchers in these institutes have, both to those in policy making positions in government and to activists in different sectors of the movement itself". *Women's development organisations* are non-governmental and largely urban but they work with poor class women. Their basic motive is to empower women in their everyday dealings. The most popular organisation in this area is Self Employed Women's Organisation (SEWA). Even the development groups have a broad base in terms of membership.

Calman (1992: 11) observed in the context of IWM that "the movement is composed of unaccountable organisations in both cities and rural areas; it claims participants who are wealthy, who are middle class, who are poor; who are communist, socialist, or resolutely non-ideological; who are members of parties or who hold political parties in contempt as elitist, opportunist or corrupt". Calman (ibid.) divides the
organisations on the basis of two ideological and organisational 'tendencies' or 'emphasis'. They are: urban based organisations which focus on issues of rights and equality; and the other is both urban and rural emphasising empowerment and liberation. The former one has been called the Rights wing and the latter Empowerment wing. Calman puts all party connected groups (NFIW, AIDWA, MDS), reform organisations (AIWC, YWCA) and autonomous groups into the rights wing of the movement. She admits the organisational differences between autonomous groups and party affiliated groups but she argues that all these groups share a strategy which is trying to move the government. Though the rights wing does not invest an unending faith in the government to resolve women's problems, it does however believe in the resources and power of government. Therefore, they do push the state apparatus even though they do not become a part of it. Those who are not active in opposition parties do not involve themselves in party politics but they do lobby with members of government and build public opinion through agitation and publicity. Thus, both aspire to bring the government into action.

On the other hand, the Empowerment wing also aims at gaining rights for women but its focus is more on economic and social rights - "the right to a livelihood and to determine one's own future" (Calman, 1992: 15). This segment aims at personal and community empowerment of poor women in both urban and rural areas. The backgrounds of women leaders running these organisations are somewhat similar to that of the Right wing. Their leadership has been of utmost importance to sustain the establishment of empowerment groups, as poor illiterate women lack the abilities to run organisations. The Empowerment wing strives for social and economic rights, which require political empowerment at the local level and approach to the means of economic necessities. "The search is for empowerment from below, not the conferring of rights or economic development from above" (Calman, 1992: 15). And the means desired to achieve this purpose are participation in decision making and in the implementation of decisions; making women conscious of their situation in the family and community; creating mutual interdependence and group solidarity; development of skills and self confidence etc. (see Calman, 1989, 1992).

But Calman (1992) argues that as such there is no strict barrier between the rights wing and empowerment wing of the movement in the Indian context. "The emphasis are different but not mutually exclusive as either of the organisations may involve itself in both types of activities simultaneously" (ibid. p. 16.). For instance, NFIW subscribing to communist ideology, aims at poor and working class women. But at the same time, it also participates in agitation activities on dowry, rape, sati, etc. All
India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women (AICCWW) focuses on trade union movements and strives to bring women into it, but has very close connections with AIDWA, which is also its member organisation. These organisations also mingle with autonomous groups on women-specific issues as mentioned above. AIWC is said to be an elitist organisation or a social service organisation because of its functions like running hostels for women, offering charity to children, sponsoring family planning clinics, but it has been active in lobbying government on various issues like rape, setting of family courts etc. in coalition with other organisations. Thus, in spite of its loose network and differing ideologies, IWM has been defined as a movement (see Calman, 1992) struggling for women's cause. All the organisations work independently in normal circumstances but come under one umbrella when lobbying on issues or holding demonstrations and press conferences.

For the present study, I approached 15 key women's organisations for interviews. As mentioned earlier in chapter five, women's organisations were not selected on the basis of their structure or ideology. However, an effort was made to select a representative sample i.e. organisations from various groupings mentioned above. The organisations selected were AIDWA, MDS, HMS, WFS, AIWC, CWDS, AICCWW, Saheli, Manushi, Kali for Women, Jagori, NFIW, JWP, SEWA, ISST (see Appendix C for full names and categorisation). All the organisations/women's wings, except AIWC (formed in 1926) and NFIW (formed in 1954), were founded in late 1970s or early 1980s. One person from each organisation was interviewed. Apart from these 15 organisations, a woman activist - BK, who is well-known for her activism in relation to media's portrayal of women, was interviewed as an independent respondent. She also holds membership of various organisations. In most of the organisations I contacted an official person (holding positions like secretary, director, vice-president, co-ordinator, or owner), and some organisations like Saheli and Jagori assigned a particular person to talk to me. Most women interviewed belonged to middle age group i.e. between late 30s - mid 50s. Only one respondent belonged to a younger age group.

The responses of women have not been analysed in terms of the structure, organisation or ideology of the groups. As mentioned earlier in chapter 4 also, I

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3 HMS is a trade union and not a women's organisation as such.
4 AICCWW is a women's wing of CITU (Centre of Indian Trade Unions).
5 The Director of ISST had joined the Institute only a month before I interviewed her in May 1994. Therefore, she could not contribute much on the issue. Also her entry into women's studies was recent and she had no experience of working with other women activists in Delhi. Before joining this institute, she was an academician with another institute. It may also be noted that ISST started concentrating on women's studies in 1975 although it was set up in 1964.
acknowledge the differences between the organisations but for a preliminary study I have put all the organisations under one category and called it the women's movement. Further research may be developed to study the media ideology of each organisation in light of its structure and ideology. In the following section, women activists describe the attitude of press towards women's issues.

Section II: Women activists describe the attitude of the Press towards women's issues

Not many studies have looked into the perceptions of women activists about media, and the press in particular. Research has primarily explored the attitude of media/journalists towards women's issues/women's movement, the influence of movement on the media, and the relationship between the movement and media (Tuchman, 1978; Skard, 1989; Flick, 1989; Subrahmanyam, 1991; Van Zoonen, 1992). This section views the attitude of the press towards women's issues and organisations as experienced by women activists themselves. The section is divided into sub-themes as generated from women's responses.

a) Positive attitude of the press in 1980s

Most women activists (KM, SK, BA, KB, MR, BK, VE, QS, FMS, RV) opined that the Indian press has been generally sympathetic towards women's issues and that it played a positive role in the late 1970s and early 1980s when women campaigned on issues of domestic violence, rape and dowry etc. Though the quality of coverage has been a controversial matter, they argue that from a broader parameter, press allocated space to the news and helped to make domestic violence a public issue in the early 1980s.

Although, as I noted in chapter 6, the coverage of violence/crime stories was largely event-oriented and not analytical, feminists argued that in a situation when domestic violence did not even have recognition, since Indian society had always accepted the given roles of men and women, press helped women's organisations to publicise the

To protect the identity of women activists, I have used the initials of their names. It may also be noted that the acronyms with two letters denote the respondents and more than two letters denote the name of an organisation. The only exception is 'FMS' who is a respondent. Owing to her journalistic background, she spoke both as an activist and a journalist. Since she belongs to a 'Women's press service' (and hence a women's group), her name has been listed under 'women's organisations' (see appendix B). But owing to her closer affiliation with journalism profession, the acronym for her name is in tune with that of journalists i.e. 'P' stands for female in 'FMS'. This acronym appears in chapter 8 also.
issue. MS, an activist and a journalist, argued that incidents like dowry deaths, rape, etc. were not even defined as news in the 1970s which are now routinely reported. However, the credit for this reportage does not go to the press alone.

Feminists argue that during the international decade of women i.e., between 1975-85, various governments were being pressurised by the international agencies to prepare status reports on women and to set up mechanisms to promote women's position. Apart from this, there was a wide pressure from women's organisations which led to a very conducive environment. Domestic violence was an issue that the women's movement had made extremely visible by pressing for legislation and bringing it into public notice (see chapter 2). In such a situation, media was compelled to take note of these developments. Further, as QS recalls, organisations like Manushi, Saheli, MDS were so active in holding demonstrations and raising issues that the police and journalists used to reach the spot at one call. Thus press did not respond to women's issues on its own, rather this change definitely came through women's pressure and public pressure. It may be recalled that a correlation between women's campaigns on dowry deaths, rape and media's coverage of these issues was noticed in a study by Joseph and Sharma (1994). Further, feminists believe that during the same period large number of women had also joined the profession of journalism, who were sensitive to women's cause and hence they covered this issue regularly. It was also confirmed by Joseph and Sharma (1994) that in the 1970s and early 1980s a large number of women journalists were supportive of women's cause and hence they paid greater attention to women's issues. Women journalists working in 'hard' areas of economy and politics were rarities.

Since many women activists believed that the press had been sympathetic towards women's issues in the early 1980s, what according to them changed the attitude of press after that? It was mainly argued that in the early 1980s a lot of women had entered the journalism profession due to a conducive environment and there was a tremendous interest among those women journalists in covering women's issues. Women journalists were writing regularly on the issue of violence against women at that particular time. But after 1985, a lot of rethinking was done by women journalists since they did not want to be stereotyped by covering women's issues alone, and hence they walked out of this area. Activists reason that since political and economic issues get more weight than women's issues in the news hierarchy, a feeling of discomfort led many women reporters to walk out of writing on women. This observation was found to be true when I talked to journalists (see chapter 8). Joseph and Sharma (1994) also noted that later in the 1980s women journalists moved to
hard areas of economy and politics and today they are “by and large wary of being labelled as feminists, of being associated with women’s cause and even of being categorised as women journalists” (p. 292).

QS, however, attributes a lack of interest among journalists to lack of activity among women’s groups and a sceptical attitude of journalists towards non-governmental organisations which was found to be true in interviews with some journalists (see chapter 8). The reason for lack of activity among women activists is mainly resources, according to QS. In today’s society, young people look for professional jobs whereas working with NGOs does not offer financial security as it is not an income generating activity. Thus many women are no longer interested in working with NGOs. Further, NGOs have to concentrate more on research projects in order to fulfil the conditions of funding agencies rather than spending money on activities like demonstrations.

b) Poor quality of coverage

As mentioned earlier, the quality of coverage of women’s issues remains a controversial issue. As noted in the content analysis of coverage in chapter 6, women’s concerns were presented predominantly in event-oriented news stories and there was very little coverage which was issue oriented. Feminists also observed that over the last decade, press has given a fair amount of coverage in terms of quantity of news to women and violence. Some of them also argue that Indian press unlike the Western press has not been hostile towards women’s issues. At times the press has gone out of the way to woo women activists and cover their activities. Joseph and Sharma (1994: 20) have remarked that “although the relationship between the press and the women’s movement in India has not always been entirely smooth, women’s groups here have greater access to the media as compared to their counterparts in the West. Also, English newspapers in India do not resort to the overt sexism, racism and pornography evident in the tabloid or gutter press of countries like the United Kingdom”. The authors further believe that women’s groups in India have been successful in getting their press releases and events like demonstrations and conferences carried in the press. Further, women activists also have the privilege of getting their articles published on the editorial page or elsewhere.

However, the quality of press coverage, according to women activists, has been extremely poor. The slant given to issues like rape, dowry, or domestic violence has been very sensational. Activists argue that most of the writing has no feminist
perspective. Further, at times the press is quite insensitive; for instance, 'The Hindustan Times' did not support Bhanwari case in some of its writings, instead of writing thought provoking articles on it. FRM, one of the journalists, also pointed out the bias of 'The Hindustan Times' in this case. Similarly when women activists stormed a pharmaceutical company's press conference in May 1994, in Delhi, protesting against the launching of an harmful contraceptive, the press projected women in a negative light. This issue was editorialised only by one newspaper which also heavily criticised the women's protest. Although it admitted that allegations against the contraceptive were not entirely unfounded, it wrote:

> It is a pity that by their rash action these organisations have trivialised a serious issue and lowered the image of social activists. Worse, their form of protest has willy-nilly blurred the line separating popular politics from serious activism which is a disservice to both the community at large and the numerous men and women who have dedicated their lives to ensure a better tomorrow for the economically and socially underprivileged. It is in the interest of these underprivileged people that incidents like last Thursday's should be shunned. Similar incidents have made activists the butt of jokes and even ridicule in the West, minimising the excellent work done by them (The Pioneer, 15 May, 1994).

According to women activists, they were not allowed entry to the conference in spite of repeated requests and hence the last resort was to climb the walls and interrupt the conference (see The Pioneer, 15 May, 1994). This protest action by women activists was highly condemned by some journalists in their interviews (see chapter 8). It proves the observation made by Gitlin (1980) that movements whose concerns are closer to the concerns of the establishment may receive sympathetic ear from the media whereas those which are a potential threat to the system are ostracised by the media. Activists' protest action in fact threatened the patriarchal order as a part of which women are treated as guinea pigs to achieve the targets of population control programme. The response of 'The Patriot' and journalists towards the women's action

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7 Bhanwari was a village level social worker in Women's Development Programme of Rajasthan government, which aims to empower women through information, education, and training to enable them to recognise and improve their social and economic status. Bhanwari was gang raped in her village because she had tried to prevent a child marriage (India Today, 1992). In this case, the police and judiciary tried to convert the truth of the case into a falsehood implying that rape did not take place. The state government's apathy and silence over this issue was shocking as it failed to respond to its women worker's demand for justice (see HT, 28 October, 1992)

8 I looked through the editorials of all English newspapers of ten following days of the incident and found out that only one newspaper i.e. The Pioneer had carried an editorial on women's protest action.
also confirms that certain protest actions may also jeopardise the image of a movement. It is worthwhile to mention here that 'The Pioneer' publishes a special page for women called 'gender'. Many women activists (SK, MA, VE, MR) pointed out the 'inflammatory' nature of articles carried on this page.

It was further pointed out by some activists (VE, BA, KB, CJ, QS, RV) that the newspapers in their coverage may sometimes carry 'statistical' stories to show the number of women in work force as a landmark of progress and present it in boxed items, but never does the press report on the developmental activities of organisations or documents the struggle of women for justice. This observation has been made earlier by scholars like Downing (1980), Madhok (1984), and Joseph and Sharma (1994). KB holds that if reportage of AIDWA's activities, which is an active left-organisation, is examined in the press, one would find that its activities are totally blacked out. She argues:

\[
\text{AIDWA has done a great deal of work on the impact of economic policies on women but the mainstream press believes that what they are doing is not something which needs to be reported. If they have 5000 women on the streets in Delhi demonstrating against the impact of the economic policies, one may not find a mention more than a little mention in the briefs. What's causing that demonstration, how many women come, what are their experiences, is never explored.}
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This view was also shared by RV and QS. It was noticed in the previous chapter that AIDWA appeared as primary actor only twice in the news stories in relation to demonstrations. It is quite obvious that the news stories were not analytical in nature. An example of such a news story is as follows:

\[
\text{Nearly 500 women workers of the BJP demonstrated today before the Jehangirpuri police post and at the residence of the in-laws of Kamlesh, the woman who was allegedly burnt to death by them for having brought insufficient dowry (complete item) (5 June, 1981).}
\]

Feminists further argue that there has been a degeneration in the coverage in the sense that press has not really been able to keep up with issues which the women's movement has been raising and the linkages that the movement has been able to make between issues of domestic violence, community violence, communalism, and so on. When the movement had raised the issue of domestic violence in the early 1980s, its
focus was quite narrow. However, the movement moved far ahead by making linkages between domestic violence and general economy, domestic violence and politics, role of the state, and role of criminals in politics, but the press did not take notice of it. Consequently, it happened that:

*Press became a party to the marginalisation of women as political beings and as human beings (emphasis in original) and the movement as movement (emphasis in original) which is challenging very strongly and in a very mature fashion basic government policies and direction (KB).*

Within the given coverage also, the press is sensational in its reporting. For instance, many activists (SI, FV, SK, KB, RV) complain that:

*Press likes to carry catchy news like some gang rape, big demonstration, a special meeting, some weeping, crying, tear gas etc., but if it is a deep subject like the impact of industrial policies on women, then it is ignored (SI).*

Similarly, they argue that press releases related to violence/atrocities might get space but not economic issues like equal wages, employment for women etc. It may be recalled that the coverage in the sample data was mainly event-oriented and relied heavily on violence/crime stories. Among the issues, social themes like equality and status, pressures/customs were found to be prominent. Many other deeper and controversial issues, as discussed in chapter 2 and mentioned in chapter 6, which form a part of feminist agenda were largely missing or existed as mere labels in news stories.

Unaware of the politics of news production, feminists reason that the press may not have been doing it consciously and it might depend upon its own criteria of making issues readable or newsworthy. The papers respond to what they think are the burning issues. For instance, SK said that when CWDS releases some research report, 'it does not break much ice'. Also, on the long term issues like the issue of population, 'the response of press is rather lukewarm'. It indicates that what has a news value depends very much on the press. At the routine level, 'laying of a foundation stone is considered more important than women's issues' (CJ). Similarly, a seminar organised by a women's organisation might get reported but not the actual contents. It may be recalled that seminars, inaugurations and festivals received coverage as mere events.
in the data. Also women's organisations mainly appeared in relation to seminars, inaugurations and festivals.

What do they think are the reasons behind not giving coverage or qualitative coverage to women's issues? Most of the activists could not elaborate upon the media's insensitivity. However, some did; KB for instance argued that it is the interests of the owners and leading editorial people of the press which matters in the ultimate analysis. She said:

> many of my journalist friends in press are learning to their great misfortune that their own intellectual activities are greatly circumscribed by the intellectual activity of the owners or the intellectual predilections of the owners.

She explained that the press works under the influence of the state to a great extent. For instance, when governments change, many journalists are promoted or demoted depending on their political views. Thus it is obvious that owners are influenced by those holding in power. A senior journalist who is encouraged to do a particular kind of reporting also has very close relationship with those in power. However, at the same time, she feels that the ruling class in India is very sophisticated and 'does not put all eggs in one basket'. As a part of this strategy, press also maintains good contacts with different political formations as a result of which individuals may get coverage but not the movement. However:

> it is unfortunate that women's movement in India is not seen as a political movement, and because of this insensitivity we have to be very aggressive and very hostile and have to make a tremendous amount of noise to be heard (KB).

Coming from a Left organisation, KB linked up the issue with the capitalistic orientation of media, and relationship between media and the right wing ruling power. She also seemed to suggest that non-coverage of AIDWA's activities was the result of the hostility of press towards the political ideology of the Left. Although KB's claim may hold relevance, however, in the light of my data (chapter 6) none of the organisations (from whatever ideological background) received significant coverage in the press.
SK argues that the very fact that gender issues are equated with social issues is another reason why women's issues do not get due importance in the press against other political, economic, and foreign issues. She argues:

*many a times women's issues are described as a question of attitudes, customs, religion, and imply that they need to be tackled from that aspect, whereas they are hard economic and political issues. Unless a woman is acknowledged as an independent entity, family is not going to change its attitude towards her. If the family accepts all her unpaid labour as something given, all labour for love, her contribution to the family will never be recognised. Also, the very fact that women have no choice in decision making, whether in the family or society, gives others the power and privilege upon them, making it a political issue or the issue of power.*

CJ, however, believes that the national press is in the hands of powerful houses who have their own understanding of what is important news. For instance, in the reporting of *sati*, the focus was much more on the festivities of the *chunri mahotsav* (religious ceremony related to *sati*), rather than the real issue (also observed by Joseph and Sharma, 1994 & Jha, 1992). She argues that the reasons for this indifference might be that the press did not want to take sides because they have their own bosses to contend with and the boss may be a Bhartiya Janata Party's (BJP, a right wing political party) supporter who advocates Hinduism or the paper may have close links with government in power in that particular constituency and therefore it cannot take a stand against the issue. In such situations the press only sensationalise the issues and conveniently drifts away from the real issues. Joseph and Sharma (1994) observe that coverage on the issue of *sati* did not address women's question or plight of widows in society. It was also disclosed by FMP, a woman editor, that the owners of various english dailies had contributed towards donations for 'sati mata' (goddess) temple which was one of the factors for not covering this issue critically (see chapter 8).

However, as also mentioned in chapter 6, KM takes a different stand when she argues that the nature of coverage has to do with the kind of the press. According to her, three factors i.e. laziness in terms of not wanting to put in effort and resources to cover issues, arrogance of urban educated elite, and ignorance about one's own country are the major reasons behind the poor quality of coverage in the national
press. The view that press does not invest resources in covering marginal issues like women's or development is also shared by FMS.

c) Changing trends of coverage in the 1990s

There has been a change in the trends of coverage in the 1990s, as noted in the previous chapter. For instance, issue-oriented coverage has increased in the magazine sections of the newspaper thereby becoming more analytical. Also, during the course of this study, many newspapers introduced special pages, like the gender page in 'The Pioneer' and Development page in the 'Indian Express', which allow serious discussion on women's issues (see Joseph and Sharma, 1994). How do activists view that change?

Some activists (SK, CJ, BK, MR) admitted that there has been a change in the media in terms of providing space to gender issues and the reportage has become a little more sensitive and not merely sensational. Reverting to their earlier argument, they believe that this change has occurred under pressure from women's organisations and women journalists who have influenced media both from outside and inside the news organisations. Women journalists who support the women's issues are considered a part of the women's movement by activists. 'They have been doing from inside what we were doing from outside. So it is their commitment towards this issue', says BK. It must be remembered that Women's Feature Service provides a regular quota of articles/stories to various English newspapers in Delhi, which also saves the newspapers from putting their own efforts on covering women's issues/stories. These stories are mainly carried in the supplements as informed by one of the magazine sub-editors in the Hindustan Times.

However, women activists also argue that such gender specific or analytical stories are not a regular feature and are taken up 'once in a while'. As far as daily reporting is concerned, 'it is sensationalised and misses the wood for trees' (KB). KB believes that the press seems to be in a kind of competition and is more concerned with the way it views issues as being newsworthy or non-newsworthy, for example, she quotes that when women hold demonstrations, journalists are more interested in particular poses of women to take pictures and they even intervene in the demonstrations directing women to make particular poses.

Apart from this, feminists argue that certain issues, though taken up by the press, have still not been accepted as of vital importance and hence they require due weight
age. No doubt, the issue of physical violence has remained on the agenda of the press following the women's agenda since 1970s, but reportage on other issues, for example, impact of new economic policies and the issue of population and contraception, which have been debated all this time by the women's movement and which are considered a part of violence against women, have been scarce.

Activists argue that sometimes issues are carried but in the absence of a follow-up they become meaningless. Some issues like dowry and rape cases are not episodic and hence need follow-ups and systematic long term campaigns for sustenance. They also argue that these issues should be accepted as issues in the mainstream pages and not just confined to gender page or special pages/magazine sections. In the words of SK:

> after all what is happening to more than 48 per cent of the population is linked to general socio-economic and political issues. It is not separate from them, and has to be linked to the larger context (SK).

A controversy over the coverage of women's issues on women's page (or special pages/magazine sections in the context of this study) remains debatable. Many scholars like Sigal (1978), Merrit and Gross (1978), Tuchman (1978a), Marzolf (1993) have argued that women's page can accommodate in-depth stories, features etc. and thus women's issues can have a better display in the newspapers. These pages are also not restricted by routine beats and hence do not acutely suffer from shortage of space. In fact such a page can be a major source for the promotion of the women's movement. However, other scholars like Rakow and Kranich (1986), Epstein (1978b), Pingree and Hawkins (1978), argue that confining women's issues to special pages or a woman's page means further marginalisation of women. They argue that the placement of a story also indicates its salience. The material on women's page may suggest that it is not important and that it is meant to be read only by women since men may not be interested in those issues.

Within the Indian context also, Joseph and Sharma (1994: 298) point out that "there is a considerable debate on whether such special pages are good news or bad. Some people believe that they lead to ghettoisation and represent a step backward to the days when women's issues were invariably relegated to women's pages in magazine sections. Others argue that such regular slots provide an opportunity for journalists concerned about such issues to consistently focus public attention on them. They believe that in view of the changes in the very nature of newspapers, such subjects would otherwise be completely ignored". Having a special page or not having one is
in fact a classical dilemma. It is a question of 'to be or not to be' and 'to integrate or to keep it separate'. Criticising separatism, one of the women activists, SK, argues that when the government fails to deal with women's issues, it creates a department for women and child development; when financial or banking institutions fail to respond to women's credit needs, government creates a national credit fund for women; when government realises that the police is not sensitive to women it sets-up 'all women' police stations and women's crime cells. Is this the integration of women into the country? In her words:

by creating tiny mechanisms separately to deal with women's issues, we all marginalise. We are pushing the whole issue to the periphery because we do not want to address the whole question as a central issue - the entire debate.

The argument goes well even in the case of a gender page or special pages or supplements in the newspapers where women's issues usually find space. In my data, I had noted that 'issue-oriented' items, like articles, reviews, interviews etc. have gradually moved to supplements (see chapter 5).

However, MR argues that the transition from the cookery and fashion pages to gender page, development page, health page is in fact quite noticeable. The trends in the reporting of the 1980's and 1990's have not changed a great deal but somewhere the emphasis has shifted to looking at women's issues as a development issue, for example, health, literacy are no more women's issues alone, so there has been a slight shift. The reasons for this shift are also attributed to women writers since a lot of writing for the special pages is done by women from within the movement, which was also noticed in the previous chapter. So obviously, it has got slightly different perspective than a journalistic perspective i.e., by a reporter, according to MR. When staff-reporters write, one can find very shocking pieces, for example, on the gender page of 'The Pioneer'. According to MR, there has been a distinction in the way staff-reporters write and the way outsiders write which needs to be researched. It was noted in the data in the previous chapter that some different themes like women's liberation/movement were found mainly in the supplement and such articles were mainly written by women authors.
Journalists approaching women activists/organisations

Since social movements do not fall into a regular beat system or routinisation of media, it may be anticipated that reporters approach movements on special occasions or as a result of personal rapport with movement activists (see Molotch, 1979). When do journalists approach women activists and for what kind of information? Most of the activists said that normally they are contacted for a comment, for reactions to some issue or sensational incident. For instance, many women activists were contacted when John Bob Wayne's sexual-organ was cut off by his wife in the United States and after the incident of Anita Hill and Judge Clarence Thomas in the United States to comment on sexual harassment of workers in the work place.

KB argued that for the last ten years she has been trying to involve people on the issue of sexual harassment at work but it was not until this incident that she had a number of journalists ringing up to have her comments on the issue of sexual harassment at work place. Women activists are also approached to have quick stories, say, on the National Commission for Women, or on Depo-Provra, or 'Triple Talaq' or if someone from Washington wants to know the number of women retrenched from the public sector. Ironically, as reported by some activists (SK, BK, MA), most journalists seek the information telephonically, at home or office. Although activists understand the deadlines and pressures on the part of journalists, they argue that it is difficult to discuss many issues on the telephone, say, the issue of contraceptives/population. SK argues that this issue is not a single event or an occurrence with a beginning and an end which can be described on the phone; it holds a controversial position between women activists and policy makers. They further complained that even when journalists sometimes visit organisations on special occasions like a seminar or a conference, they do not like to discover things for themselves but rely on handouts alone (CJ). This observation was also supported by a journalist, FRM.

Feminists further argued that even when journalists or media approached them for comments on certain issues, it was not because activists had told them to cover those stories rather it was their own editors who told them to do the stories. *It is what they consider an issue, I may not consider it an issue* (KB).

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9 'Triple talaq' refers to Islamic practice of divorcing by repeating the word 'talaq' (divorce) thrice to effect an irrevocable divorce under Muslim Personal Laws. A debate on the nature of this practice was raised in one of the Allahabad High Court's cases in April, 1994.
It was disclosed by VE that they had organised a demonstration against some 'harmful contraceptives' in front of the office of the World Health Organisation, the day before I met her. The journalists reached on their own to cover the news and a small piece was carried in the HT and the Times of India. She argued that when some government institute or an international organisation is involved, the event is usually covered, but when they had a workshop on anti-dowry laws earlier and they sent press releases to various news papers, only one Hindi paper carried that item\(^\text{10}\). So 'when it doesn't suit them there is a total blanket on it'. Similarly, the press always makes sure to carry something on the International women's day i.e., 8th March, but in routine circumstances they approach women's groups only to have comments on some 'hot boiling issue'. VE quoted an issue when the Supreme Court of India passed a judgement in favour of a minor girl allowing her freedom to carry or terminate the child. After this judgement, reporters inundated them with calls to know the organisation's stand on it. Similarly other activists like CJ and MA believe that newspapers just select the popular names of few organisations and go on repeating them and ignore others. Although a woman journalist (FBDS) also remarked that newspapers like to approach one or two specific organisations repeatedly to have comments or reactions, this observation fades in view of the exclusion of women's organisations as such in my data. In other words, it was noted in the previous chapter that none of the organisations received any special treatment from the media.

Some collective groups (i.e. non-hierarchical) like 'Saheli' and 'Jagori' face a problem when journalists ask for the organisation's stand on certain issues, because the opinions of members in non-hierarchical organisations might vary from one person to another. Scholars have noted the media's preference for hierarchical organisations against the decentralised ones (see Kielbowicz and Scherer, 1986). It is because the bureaucratised organisations fit into the news-net in terms of providing spokesperson or releases and are easier to cover. However, in the present context, it is the members of collective groups who are not willing to be spokespersons or speak on behalf of the organisation. Although none of the journalists singled out this problem in their dealings with women's organisations, it may be a useful strategy on part of the collective groups to nominate or appoint one person to respond to the media.

Do journalists approach women activists in normal circumstances? Most (SK, CJ, MA, KS, SI, VE, KB, RV, FV, QS, BK, BA) of the women activists said 'no'. In the words of KB:

\(^{10}\) Government institutes or international organisations fit into media routinisation and also such stories involve officials. Further, demonstrations carry a sensational appeal and hence have a news value (Gans, 1979).
Never, never, never... there is no question of it, they are too pressed for time plus they do not get the space to write. But we have got used to it and have learnt to be not too bothered about it. Also, I really do not know what can be done because we do not own the papers....

Women activists' claim that journalists do not routinely approach them was confirmed by most of the journalists in their interviews (see chapter 8).

e) Role of women journalists viewed by women activists

There are two schools of thought popular in feminist media studies regarding the role of women journalists in media organisations, as also discussed in chapter 4. The proponents of one school (Castellon & Guillier, 1993; Ellerbee, 1993; Marzolf, 1993; Kumar, 1990; Smith, 1980; Skard, 1989; Flick, 1989) believe that women journalists can play an important role in bringing up women's issues in the media, whereas many others (Rakow, 1989; Van Zoonen, 1988; Molotch, 1978; Hunter-Gault, 1993) counter this argument on various grounds (see chapter 4).

Within the Indian context, Kumar (1990) has argued that the conditions regarding the subjugation of women are particularly bad because of the religious and cultural dynamics; for instance, a single act of sati in India might capture the media's attention but daily sufferings experienced by millions of women, inside and outside their homes, widows and abandoned wives, daughters sold by their fathers due to poverty, do not interest media. Such issues, as noticed in the content analysis, are covered as routine news stories with no analysis (see chapter 6). Kumar argues that it is only through women's involvement in journalism that women will be able to speak for themselves and for issues relevant to them. Therefore, she argues, women must become active participants in media industries.

In the context of the present study, when women activists were asked for their opinion on the role of women journalists, the responses reflected their dilemma as some of them were optimistic and others confused. Many activists (FV, SK, BA, SI) believe that women play an important role in bringing up women's issues and argued that increased number of women in newspapers would make a difference in the coverage of issues. 'Women journalists may not be able to write on something which is very contrary to the policies of paper but little things they can' (FV).
Some of these activists (FV, SK, SI, QS, RV) argued that some men might also be committed but normally young girls are more sympathetic because they themselves lead oppressed lives. Young women, however capable they might be, are not respected at home and therefore lead suffocated lives. And when they find out that there is a movement which is dealing with such issues, they tend to respond to it and to other women related issues. Women have better understanding of those subjects because it might be that women touch the subject somewhere in their lives also, and thus feel attached with the issues. SK assumes that women journalists must be interested in women's issues because being women in the Indian set-up, they are aware of constraints in their brought up which becomes a lived experience in society and thus it pushes them to probe women's issues. Similarly QS argues that women journalists themselves must have had experienced oppression in their families and in society and their option for this very masculinised profession may be the result of that feeling of marginalisation which may inspire them to cover women's issues.

On the contrary, many other activists (BK, MA, CJ, VE, KM, MR, KB) found it difficult to generalise the issue on grounds of gender. 'You also have difference of opinion with women journalists, so it is not a question of men and women. It is a question of ideology ...of what sells in the paper' (BK). Women are sometimes less co-operative as far as routine reporting is concerned (CJ). Therefore the problem is that journalists in the profession are not trained to probe and be sensitive to what they hear, for example, a reporter instead of picking up the actual issue from a conversation would ask for a handout at the end of it. Therefore one cannot say that all men journalists are bad. There are both men and women journalists who are genuinely interested and concerned about the happenings (VE).

Quoting the names of some women journalists, MR argued that they were completely 'male' in their response, whereas there are some men journalists, who were extremely sensitive to the issues. Similarly, among women journalists who are said to be sensitive to women's issues, they are not so on each issue; for example, a woman journalist in Delhi was very sympathetic on the issue of education but unsympathetic on the issue of population. However, while commenting on the newspapers in Delhi, MR quoted 'Telegraph' as a sympathetic newspaper towards women's issues since it also produces a women supplement. When asked, could it be because 'Telegraph' has more number of women journalists? MR replied that though it was an important factor, it is hard to say that it is because of women per se, and thus difficult to generalise the issue. She said even though the credit of bringing up the issues goes to
women journalists and other writers within the movement, there were other women journalists who couldn't give a damn', so the distinction has to be made in this regard.

A distinction could only be made between good and bad journalists according to KM. There are substantial number of men journalists who are also sensitive to the issue. Supporting the observation MA pointed out that there are men journalists who have been writing on the issue of Depo-Provare also and there are some women journalists who have no understanding of feminist issues. Therefore, according to her, the issue cannot be resolved by just increasing the number of women journalists. Rather a change is required in the structure of journalism profession which does not attach much importance to women's issues.

At one stage i.e., in the early 1980s, KB found that women journalists were more sensitive to women's issues while they were working on the issue of domestic violence. But she does not believe in it anymore (also observed by Joseph and Sharma, 1994). There are many male journalists, according to her, who are quite sensitive to issues and are prepared to follow it up. Though she has a lot of interaction with women journalists, she believes that it is because that most of the papers have put women journalists to cover women's stories/issues. It was also confirmed by journalists that most of the times women journalists are assigned women's stories (see chapter 8).

KB finds that women journalists themselves are in the 'syndrome of marginalisation', and they feel 'God, if I opt for the women's thing, then .I am marginalised .get confined to soft things'. Now-a-days women journalists are not asserting themselves, says KB. Many senior women journalists who made it by reporting on the women's movement and women's stories, getting by-lines, now use handouts to do development stories or do not assert themselves on insuring that women's stories are covered. There are only a few women left who try to assert themselves. Thus an increased number of women journalists might make a difference provided they were the right women (BA). Such women journalists would take more interest in women's issues, write serious articles instead of occasional stories, and there could be a serious analysis of women's issues.

Although the opinions of activists varied from person to person, all of them reported that it is usually women journalists who visit their conferences/workshops or to seek information, and that there were very few male reporters approaching their organisations. Even when men do stories on women's issues, it is usually to get some
kind of sensational story or something to chew on' (VE, QS). Similarly, KM commented that women journalists were relatively more gender sensitive than men. Considering women journalists as part of movement, BK believes that women journalists have played an important role in bringing women's issues to public notice. When women activists were asked to name men journalists and women journalists covering women's issues in Delhi, most of the activists could recall only the names of women journalists in this regard. It is worth noting that even women journalists in their interviews could not name men journalists covering or interested in women's issues specifically.

Summary

Most of the women activists opined that press showed a sympathetic attitude towards women's issues in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It played a major role in making the issue of domestic violence public by carrying such 'incidents' in the press. But they were unanimous in their approach that press did not play this role on its own rather it was pressurised by the women's movement. It must be recalled that women's groups had publicised the issue of violence against women to its maximum during that period. MDS had looked into the dowry deaths and had prepared a report on it. Also, after the lifting of emergency in 1977, press was greatly influenced by the civil liberties and human rights issues. In such situation, violence against women had also gained momentum under the banner of new wave of the women's movement. A correlation between movement's campaigns on dowry deaths, rape and coverage on these issues was noticed by Joseph and Sharma (1994). The coverage of such violence related incidents has not decreased over these years as observed by activists, although as noticed in chapter 6, this kind of coverage is significantly less as compared with 1981. However quality of coverage of such stories remains poor and does not carry in-depth analysis of issues. The slant is mostly sensational as observed in the previous chapter, and also noted by Joseph and Sharma (1994) even in the cases of sari and Shah Bano.

Although there has been a change in the trends of coverage in the 1990s, as noticed in the content analysis chapter, women activists argued that issues need to be brought into the mainstream rather than confining them to special pages. Further, analysis of issues/problems is carried once in a while which should be made regular. The credit for writing up analytical issues goes to women advocate journalists, whom the activists consider a part of the movement. FMS, described it 'women talking to
women'. It was also shown in the data that stories in the Saturday and Sunday sections were mainly written by women journalists and activists.

However, the responses on the role of women journalists were divided among women activists. Some of them emphasised the special role which women journalists were playing or were expected to play in highlighting women's issues but others thought that it was a question of personal approach and ideology of papers rather than a question of gender. They believed that some men journalists were more sensitive to women's issues compared to some women journalists. Therefore, a distinction needs to be made in this regard rather than on basis of sex. Also, many activists gathered that women journalists, in spite of their interest in women's issues as evidenced in the early 1980s, left writing in this area because of reasons of upward mobility in the profession of journalism (see Joseph and Sharma, 1994). It was also argued that many women journalists must have had changed their area of focus, from women's issues to political or economic issues, after experiencing marginalisation in the profession. However, the fact remains, as indicated by women activists, that it is usually women journalists who visit them to collect information. It was found out from journalists also that usually women journalists are assigned women's stories.

Women's issues might get into the media as a result of activists' pressures or with the efforts of some (mainly women) advocate-journalists, but women's movement or their developmental activities remain missing from media's agenda. Women activists reported that journalists usually approach women when they need a comment or a reaction on a particular issue, which women may not even consider an issue. Even at such times they contact through telephone and many women find it difficult to discuss important matters on telephone. It can be established that women's groups are not a regular source of information for journalists, and women's issues do not form a legitimate beat. Journalists do not contact women's organisations routinely. The next section will examine women's efforts at reaching media.

Section III: Media strategies of women activists

While it is clear that the women's movement is not covered as a part of regular beat system, it also means that much effort is required by movement activists to garner the attention of media. Movement activists need to escalate their rhetoric and actions to percolate the messages through the mass media to influence policy-makers and to reach prospective audiences. Since journalists approach women only for comments or reactions on issues which media think are important, when and how do women
approach the media is the next important query. How serious are women's organisations themselves in reaching media? How often do they send press releases? How often do they call press conferences? What tactics or strategies are deployed to galvanise media's attention? This section examines the efforts on the part of women's organisations to approach the media; their relationships with journalists; and strategies followed by them as an alternative.

1. Women activists approaching media

a) Personal interaction/relationships with journalists

Most women activists believe that on the whole they have a consistent and continuous relationship, particularly with the English press. The relationship according to them is not frozen since both the press and women's organisations need each other, for instance, Women's Feature Service seeks relationship with the press to sell articles, and press needs those articles. Therefore, this relationship between women's groups and press is always in the making and it is hard to freeze it into a particular characteristic relationship as being antagonistic or supportive or inimical or unsympathetic. It keeps changing according to women activists (MR, BK, MA, CJ, FV, SK).

However, feminists argue that there cannot be a consistent media strategy in terms of sending press releases or holding conferences or engaging into other activities. It actually depends upon the issues. If they want coverage on a particular campaign or issue, they lobby much more actively on that issue. Thus sometimes 'they simply hold back and many other times they go full steam' (BK). Similarly, press conferences are organised depending upon the issues. For instance, if there is an issue, there could be four conferences in a week but if there is no issue there may not be a single conference in the whole year.

Recalling the cases of Mathura, sati, Bhanwari etc., BK argued:

  whenever an actual happening took place there was a lot of hue and cry. If we have an issue for which media is necessary, then we go to media and if media wants us for reactions then they come to us.

She further pointed out that the reason for this activism was not to garner the attention of media. Women were simply expressing their concern on those particular issues.
However, it was the result of this activism that both media and women approached each other. Further, if media picked up the Bhanwari case it was not simply because the issue was sensational but also because the press was aware of its worthiness. And also since no newspaper wants to lag behind in its coverage, therefore if one newspaper picks up an issue others follow automatically.

Similarly, the press releases are also dispatched depending upon the issues. Many activists said that every time they organise a meeting and if a certain policy decision has been taken which women feel needs to be brought to public attention, they send a press release. Such concerns included, for example, contraceptives, Triple Talaq etc. Similarly, on the international women’s day, they prepare a press release in advance and send it to all newspapers to highlight that day’s agenda.

Being a research based organisation, SK said that whenever CWDS completes a research project, they make sure to send a press release. Although most activists said that they send press releases depending upon issues and occasions, there were others (KB, FV, BA) who claim to be frequent in sending press releases, holding conferences and inviting journalists. KB revealed that AIDWA sends a press release at least once a week, but it is carried once or twice in six weeks (AIDWA’s activism was also pointed out by some journalists). KB further disclosed that ordinarily they would send a press release but if the issue is important they would also give a call along with press release telling them to specifically watch out for the event. At third stage if issue is extremely important then they would call a press conference. Press conference is organised once in four months on an average. Similarly BA and FV reported that they send press releases on their activities on a regular basis i.e., 2-3 times a month and also hold press conferences at least once in six months.

Whom do women contact in newspapers? All women activists emphasised the importance of personal links and revealed that they prefer to use personal links where ever possible because of the surety that the story would be carried. ‘We know that personal links will be more sympathetic and will try to write as far as possible, but we cannot depend upon others’ (FV). FV revealed that when one of the members of their organisation was working with a newspaper called ‘The Patriot’, they had an advantage of getting their reports published in the paper. But after she (personal link) retired, the coverage automatically stopped. Personal links are preferred both at the time of sending press releases or extending invitations to journalists. Even if they do not have links with every paper, press releases are sent to all. In case the personal
Women activists said that newspapers do not carry all press releases sent to them. As mentioned earlier, KB reported that AIDWA sends press release at least once a week, but it is carried once or twice in six weeks. Similarly, at the occasion of press conferences, many women informed that if they send invitations to all national English newspapers and regional language newspapers, the turn up is very low. Hardly 2-3 newspapers send their reporters to cover the occasion. Regional language newspapers are sometimes more sympathetic than English press. Many activists also argue that press is selective in carrying press releases. Press people respond depending upon the issue, for example, ‘if it is a hot burning issue, they might turn up but otherwise they won’t’ (FV, VE, BA, SI). For instance, FV thinks that between the two kinds of issues i.e., social atrocities and economic issues, the former are favoured by the press. Similarly, BA has observed that issues like dowry or bride burning find large coverage but not the ‘constructive and solid activities of organisation’.

Women activists spoke about some practical problems which they face in their efforts to reach the media. Emphasising the importance of networking among organisations, SK observed that ‘if you talk as a single institution, it does not make much difference but if a group of organisations talk about a specific issue, it makes a difference’. Implied the significance of collectivity, SK argues that all women’s organisations need to come together while dealing with media since ‘union has strength’. Although women’s organisations in Delhi join hands whenever the occasion demands, a fragmentation in routine may hinder journalists in approaching women’s groups.

Conflicts of opinion between women activists and journalists was another hurdle. Not on every point is there total agreement between women’s movement and the journalists, for example, on the issues of family planning and contraceptive (SK). According to SK, the general impression among the media people or journalists is that women activists or the movement is against family planning which does not hold truth. Women activists are not against population control but they are against the usage of those contraceptives which may harm women’s health. She argues:
it is hard to put it in black and white that press is pro-family planning and women are anti-family planning. We are only against that untried contraceptive which for years together was banned in developed countries and because the IMF and World Bank told us that our number one problem is population, the untried contraceptives are given to women and they are treated like guinea pigs. So it is a very controversial issue and people are divided over it.

It was disclosed by MR that women from different organisations also have pronounced differences over the issue of contraceptives. However, a deep schism between journalists and activists was clearly evident in interviews with journalists over the issue of contraceptives (see chapter 8). The reasons for these conflicts are discussed in the next chapter.

On the list of practical difficulties was also the issue of continuity of relationship between activists and journalists covering particular beats. KB argues that it has become practically impossible to continue relationships with journalists because

the turnover of journalists is so fast that before you know there is somebody who is quite sympathetic to the movement, the person is gone to another beat. Press has become so compartmentalised, and so specialised and there are such clear beats, that people who you know may be working on women's issues 20 years ago are no longer working on it.

In such a situation, they have to send the press release or just call a chief reporter and request him to send someone, which usually evokes no response. KB further argued that the personal contacts are also important at one particular level, that is, when there is no other alternative. For example, she would contact a personal link only in a very crucial, emergent situation, say, when they had a very big rally against communalism in one of the states. At that time they met all the editors because it was an extremely important issue. According to KB, there are some issues for which she would certainly use her personal contacts. But in the normal way of working with the press it does not work because people do not appreciate it. She anticipated that they would say 'oh god, there go these people again'. Thus she would avoid it definitely. Not only are women activists reluctant in approaching press people fearing ridicule as reported by KB, even a woman journalist like Mills (1993: 29) believe that if she suggested
her editor to write a story on child care, her suggestion would be considered with a jovial 'here-she-comes-again' attitude.

Thus contacting the right journalist who would be sensitive to women's issues may be a major problem for women activists. It was pointed out by Joseph and Sharma (1994) that there is no legitimate women's beat under which women's issues can be covered. Although reportage on women's issues involve as much complexity and specialisation as in other areas like politics and economy since it requires to keep track of women's studies/research, government policies and their impact etc., journalists are not much interested in women's issues because this is a low priority specialisation and thus a hindrance in professional success.

**b Women activists' indifference to media**

Movement activists face a serious challenge in dealing with the media as media may not pay attention to various issues raised by the activists (see Molotch, 1979) or they may project the movement as threatening to the system or as dangerous or as in case of the women's movement they may portray women as ugly, hysterical, lesbians etc. (see Van Zoonen, 1992; Hollingsworth, 1986; Tuchman, 1978).

The Indian women's movement although does not face ridicule in the coverage (Joseph and Sharma, 1994), it is largely silenced by the media (see chapter 6). Such reactions from media may lead activists to frustration or an indifference towards media (see Molotch, 1979). And this indifference towards media was noticed among women activists in the interviews. However, the reasons of their disinterest in the media will be critically analysed after looking into opinions of journalists regarding the coverage of women's issues and the movement (see chapter 8).

While all women claimed to have been efficient in interacting and maintaining contacts with journalists or newspapers, I noticed certain inadequacies on their part while I talked to them. During my conversation with many women activists, I felt and observed that they have not been as serious and efficient in maintaining contacts as they claim to be. For instance, FV, while reporting the activities of NFIW said that the organisation also acts as a counselling centre and deals with cases of individual women in distress. But the cases are not reported to the press directly and investigations are conducted at the level of organisation because, 'we do not know what type of stand would the press take, so it is at the time of demonstration that we invite the press, depending if we have enough time' (FV).
When I asked CJ the reasons for non-coverage of JWP or its activities in the media, she replied:

we are not interested in that kind of link because very often too much of publicity spoils the work. Also, we are not the front of any party and do not need to strengthen the image of party and have no axe to grind. Those people (other organisations) insist on publicity and establish contacts with press, but for us there is no card holder.

CJ argued that the excellent work done by women's organisations at grass root level does not get reported because these organisations (like JWP) do not have political connections. She also said that JWP does not have very strong personal links with journalists as other politically affiliated organisations have and that they do not hold conferences very often.

SI openly admitted that HMS is very weak at sending press releases because time was a big constraint. SI also does not have close links with journalists in the English press. Blaming herself for being poor at writing, she would like to believe that if they send the releases regularly, they would be carried. Even SK, pointing out the 'provocative' nature of articles carried on the gender page of 'The Pioneer' confessed that women activists do not contribute actively to these pages because of their own work pressures. Thus she feels that the question is not only of creating the space in the newspapers but also of utilising this space.

MA named some journalists with whom she claimed to have personal links but did not recall many names. She also illustrated FMP's observation (see chapter 8) that some groups are unaware of how media operate, when she told how she, along with another member of Jagori, had reached one press organisation and approached a personal contact without a press release. She said, 'it was really stupid but we had forgotten'. The referred person (i.e. the journalist) then prepared the press release herself while 'they went out to do another job'. Similarly, another reporter from UNI prepared a press release for them and sent to all the papers on their behalf. While I was talking to this respondent, she showed me another press release (related to Bhanwari case) which was a joint statement by all organisations they had prepared to send to the papers. But it was still sitting on the respondent's desk a month after the incident had happened to which they were reacting. In another instance, a reporter from a magazine had called on Jagori for an interview. This respondent, as she told,
gave an interview to the reporter but was constantly complaining about wastage of her time in the event. And when I wanted to know whether that magazine published her interview or not, the respondent replied that she never checked on that.

KM clarified that Manushi pays no heed to national press at all, and that it was their policy not to ask for attention. She said that she would give her opinions if someone approaches her but they have never held a press conference or sent press releases. She argues that ‘we over emphasise the role of media and too much energy goes into capturing the eye of media and very little comes out of it’. When argued that national press was the only way to reach policy makers, KM replied that ‘I want to reach people other than policy makers and to me that is more important’. Does she ever write articles for the national press? - ‘if they ask me for it, sometimes I say yes, often I say no... it depends’ (KM). But KM claimed that Manushi itself has influenced the media because for journalists it has become a source of material to write their stories and press also steals articles from the magazine with or without owner’s permission.

2 Alternative media/strategies

Many fringe groups who are denied a voice by the mainstream media think of developing their own means of communication to spread their ideas and to reach the target audience. Needless to say, dissident groups hold ideas which differ from the mainstream. But they do need to effect social change. Media are essential for the survival of social movements. Media legitimise the social movements in the public arena. But in response to an exclusion by the mainstream media, dissident groups turn towards producing their own media or think of devising coherent communication strategies. For instance, the women’s movement in the United States, Black Americans, immigrants in America, Resisters of Vietnam war produced their own media and started marketplaces of their own (see Kessler, 1984). Kessler (1984) observed that the conventional press of the United States ignored women’s movement even during the height of activism in the late 1960s. In such situation women had to depend upon their own publications to promote their cause. Alternative publications/media have developed in the Third World as well in the recent years. Some publications include ‘Sister’, from Namibia, ‘Speak’, from South Africa, ‘Taminia Mars’, from Morocco, and so on. Similarly, there are women’s press services like ‘Depth News’ in Asia, the Women’s Feature Service (WFS) in Delhi. Further, alternative media like broadcasting, video, films, are now used widely by

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11 Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi (1994) provide an interesting and useful critique on the role of established (or big) media while exploring the role of small media (like audio-cassettes, leaflets) in disseminating the information in the Iranian revolution.
women’s organisations, for example, SEWA in India uses video to promote awareness among women workers, radio is used effectively for development projects in Zimbabwe and some parts of Latin America. Apart from this, a feminist publishing house like ‘Kali for Women’ in Delhi, holds an important status within feminist alternative media (see Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1994b, 1995). All these media have provided a space to women to voice their opinions and struggle, and address various issues from women’s perspective.

Since many activists interviewed in this study felt that mainstream press does not respond actively to their activities or issues then what is their line of thought as far as alternatives are concerned? Women activists discussed the alternatives mainly in terms of approaching mainstream media since alternative media involves huge finances and poses the problem of audience as well. But the definition of ‘alternative’ in relation to media or communication or ‘alternative media’ in itself is problematic according to Butalia (1993). On the one hand, street theatre, songs, posters, puppets may be called alternative media, whereas on the other hand alternative communication may take place within the mainstream media also in the form of progressive writings by women journalists or advocate-journalists supporting women’s cause. However, ‘alternative’ certainly means different voices than the mainstream, for example voice of women, gays, blacks etc.

Within these terms, BK defined alternative media as: having an alternative point of view within the mainstream media, or being outside the mainstream media. In the latter case, there are two alternatives: to have mainstream publishing houses with same standard, same market, (see Butalia, 1993) or to produce small newsletters. To forge close links between journalists and women’s groups is also considered an alternative course by women activists (see Chhachi, 1984).

BK argued that in India women have intervened at all levels. They have women advocate-journalists and activists writing for the mainstream media, they have a publishing house in Delhi called ‘Kali for women’ which publishes feminist literature. Also, they have influenced the state television as the government media invites women for talks and for other programmes particularly around the International women’s day. Thus, they have used everything from songs to slogans to posters to television to films to writings for neo-literates etc. BK argues that women’s movement has created an atmosphere in the country as a result of which young girls are attracted towards women’s issues and the movement, and film producers make movies with feminist orientations and television people are ready to run programmes
on issues related to women. Doordarshan (the state controlled Indian television) is said to have incorporated many of the recommendations made by women activists regarding the portrayal of women on Indian television (see Bhasin and Agarwal, 1984). Similarly, Butalia (1993: 59) argues that "painstaking and detailed campaign work by women's groups has resulted, for example, in television spots on girls and women focusing on the need for education, the provision of health services and so on. Every year on 8 March - International Women's Day - newspapers, television and radio all carry articles and programmes on women".

**a Alternatives in terms of mainstream media**

Coming to the specificities, what measures and alternatives can be followed according to women activists in the absence of media's sensitivity towards women's issues and towards the movement? Most activists (CJ, FV, SK, KB, MA, SI, VE, MS, RV) were unsure as to what should be done. No clear policy or agenda could be extracted from their responses. Many women (FV, SK, MA, CJ, SI) opine that they should put serious efforts to develop close relations with journalists and pay more attention to media coverage. For instance, FV argues that perhaps they should themselves focus more on conducting studies, writing articles and send them to the press. It is also important to intervene more by writing letters to editor, by giving concrete suggestions on the issues which concern the entire nation and not only women, and develop personal contacts with media. Realising their own attitude of indifference, she said that generally the attitude of organisation members is that 'we don't work for the press, we work for our women'. Particularly many grass root workers feel that it is not more important to go to press. Bhasin (1984: 8) also found out that many individuals and organisations did not join their group on 'women and media' because "they felt that media was not an important issue (as compared with, say, work, basic needs etc.) - it affected only urban middle class women and had little relevance for rural women".

CJ seemed lost when she said 'we all are concerned about the alternative news in the mainstream media, but I don't how can this be done'. Perhaps at the level of her organisation (JWP), she feels that the organisation should have some kind of media policy which it has not been able to develop as yet. Apart from that, the occasions for interaction with newspapers can be encouraged and workshops on concerned journalism can be held.
Further women need better mobilisation of the movement, resources and more efforts to gain access to press (SI, MS) or perhaps both women and press people should discuss the strategies to accommodate women's issues (VE). And still further probably women need to shed their rigidity in the sense that if some journalist wants information telephonically, they should understand the constraints on the part of journalists and provide information on telephone. Apart from that, women should build up more consistent relations with journalists (MA, MS).

Apart from their own inadequacies or weaknesses, there were a few other suggestions. Women feel that mainstream media can play a very important role provided journalists take that duty seriously. In order to sensitise journalists towards women's issues, gender needs to be introduced in the education system. They believe that it is important to produce new journalists who are gender sensitised, and the introduction of gender education in journalism courses should be done on a war footing. Also, media people should be given some training to cover developmental issues - the issues which may not be catchy to make news but which are useful or spread awareness even among a small section of population\(^{12}\) (CJ, VE, BA, SI).

SK, however, offered to resolve differences between women activists and journalists and believes that the problem is on both sides i.e., between press and women activists. The problem with press is that it has its own definition of 'who reports', 'the way it is reported', the 'way press thinks what is worth reporting' and 'how do they decide' about it. And on the part of women, they lack networking as far as reporting issues to the press is concerned. For instance, after attending an international conference, women should make a collective report or call a press conference collectively to discuss the issues, since press is interested in an overview of things and not in individual points of view.

At the same time, it is important that journalists contact women activists on certain occasions. But SK also believes that press is owned by private sector and it is not a simple question of equation between the women's movement and the press. She also maintains that the language press should take up the debates so that people get to know the issues. In order to have a change in the policies and perspective, the pressure needs to come from the majority, whereas the english press in India is as such confined to educated urban middle class readers, and its role in itself is very limited.

\(^{12}\) A debate on the coverage of development issues and journalists' opinions towards such issues is carried in chapter 8.
b Alternatives in terms of personal media

The issues raised by women activists and their ideas are rarely covered and promoted by the mainstream press. Further, as argued by Calman (1992), in view of a decentralised movement where co-operation among various organisations on particular issues is entirely ad hoc, communication becomes very significant. Therefore, each organisation brings out a bulletin/magazine/newsletter/journal etc. For instance, 'Saheli' used to publish a newsletter called 'Saheli' which stopped recently as one of its members informed me. AICCWV brings out 'The voice of the working woman', NFIW prints 'NFIW Bulletin', AIWC takes out 'Roshni', and so on. 'Manushi', a journal for women and society has earned international fame. This journal "was among the earliest of the political magazines to appear soon after the Emergency, and the only one to choose women's issues as its primary focus" (see Bhasin, 1984: 69). Research institutions like CWDS publishes a journal called 'Samya Shakti' and also takes out 'Bulletin of the Centre for Women's Development Studies'. Similarly, the organisations outside Delhi are known to be producing journals/newsletters (see Calman, 1992; Gandhi and Shah, 1991). However, most of these publications are confined to private circulation i.e., within the members/organisations and hence their reach is limited. Many of these publications simply publish the activities of organisations, briefs of demonstrations, events, conferences, meetings, and their annual progress. Some of them are not even published on regular basis.

Apart from taking out this printed material, women's organisations have been active in oral communication. In the second phase of the women's movement i.e., in the early 1980s, women were producing street plays, yatras, audio cassettes, songs, poems, exhibitions etc. The street plays mainly focusing on dowry, domestic violence, used to be presented on road sides in Delhi (see Butalia, 1993; Chhachhi, 1984; Patel, 1984). People's theatre is still a practice with many women's groups. JWP organised street plays on the issue of sati and communalism. Similarly, activists visit rural areas, slums, and indulge in face to face communication on various issues. Jagori works as a documentation centre and produces its own posters, pamphlets, booklets, photo films, and videos on issues like communalism, violence, economic policies, population etc. This material reaches 70-100 groups in the Hindi belt i.e. in the Northern India. To make videos, members work and discuss problems with women in the field. Apart from that the organisation documents all the material related to women from newspapers, magazines and conferences with in South Asia. It also holds training workshops on various issues in various parts of country.
Although many of the women activists interviewed believed that having their own media was a good idea, they (FV, CJ, KB, QS) also argue that printing is extremely expensive and clientele limited.

We bring our bulletin, we have some dramas, street plays, songs, posters, booklets, we do whatever possible but we cannot compete with mainstream media. Songs, dramas, are very powerful media, but again it is not something which we can look at again and again (CJ).

Many also feel that alternative media cannot reach millions, and printed material is particularly irrelevant in India due to the problem of illiteracy. In the words of SK:

I see the role of audio-visual media much more important (view also shared by QS, MS) rather than coverage in the English press. I am not belittling the importance of English press because it is an opinion maker. On current or contemporary issues it has a vital role to play. But the press usually presents only one point of view and puts an end to the issue whereas in case of controversial issues, like population, there are many perspectives which need to be reflected as an alternative.

However, on the question of alternative media, SK finds it a dilemma of integration Vs separation:

Separate is not equal, but integration is always fraught with danger that ...you are integrating within a framework without pushing the main frame. If you work within accepted framework you are limiting your expressions, but if you are making an alternative media it is limited in terms of outreach and resources...both human and material. I think alternative media is very strong means of sensitising people that what is wrong with mainstream media. But it cannot replace mainstream media.

'Saheli' used to bring out a newsletter but then had to stop it because of shortage of resources. For the same reasons, it also has no regular employees. Most of women members associated with Saheli work on voluntary basis. KB, from AIDWA, also realises the need for alternative media, particularly the electronic media like videos, audio-visual, and definitely a magazine. But the organisation does not have the resources required for it. KB says:
we are not foreign funded, we don't get money from the government and also there are no kind of donations we can get from people. We are running a quarterly magazine 'women's equality'. It's not regular as we would like it to be because it's run by activists only who are doing so many other things. We don't have a group of professionals who are just running the magazine.

AIWC brings out a house journal called 'Roshni', which is basically for its own members and carries information about the activities of organisation. But it is very expensive to produce alternative media, argues BA.

'Resources is the least of the problem' counters MR. All the organisations use alternative media - whether it is theatre or song or books or films or videos because they think it is important. But the biggest problem, MR argues, about alternative media is its reach. It has to have an alternative distribution, it has to be able to reach the people. There is no point producing alternatives and not having them circulated. And the problem is partly content, according to MR:

you have to produce something that people are willing to see or read. You can't be dialectic and hammer them on their head all the time. Why should people bother about what women write? If a producer makes a film, it has to be worth seen as a film. Similarly, if a publisher publishes books, they need to be worth reading, and if they are not, then why should anyone read them?

MR, while stressing the importance of content, distribution, and marketing, argued that the movement does not put effort and energy into these factors and thinks that it has a moral right to produce an alternative and everyone else has the moral responsibility to consume it and 'I feel that that's asking for too much'. She further added that most of the alternatives produced are not good enough. A film has to work as a film and not as a message, and a song has to have lyrics. The need for alternative is very much there, but there is an even greater need to make sure that it is well made.

So what is the alternative? KM, satisfied with contributions on her part towards society and women through continuing publication of an English journal, showed her insensitivity towards any common media ideology or strategies on part of other groups. She closed the issue with her words:
others should decide what they want to do. I really have never any
prescription for anybody else. I only know what I should or shouldn't do.
We do what we think is best and there is no one road to truth or god.
There are many roads...

Summary

As mentioned in the beginning of this section, the relationship between Indian women
activists and journalists is in the making and is difficult to categorise into a particular
characteristic relationship. Women approach the press when they have to raise some
issue or when they call a press conference or when sending some press release.
Sending press releases or holding press conferences also depend upon the occurrence
of issues/incidents or the intensity of issues in case of a conference. There might be
two press conferences depending upon an issue or there may not be a single
conference in the whole year because of no issue. Although there are a couple of
centralised organisations which claim to send regular press releases, however, women
activists from these organisations complained that the releases are not usually carried
by the press. At times, the press is also selective in carrying press releases, for
example, atrocity based stories are preferred over economic issues or any other in-
depth issues. The developmental activities of organisations are totally dismissed.

In terms of contacts, most activists/organisations have personal contacts in newspaper
organisations and they prefer to go through the personal contacts, fearing ridicule or
rejection from other journalists. Also, the personal contacts make sure that the news is
carried. Even if they do not have links with all the newspapers, the press releases and
invitations are sent to all the regional and english newspapers. The usual turn up at
the conferences remains low. Conflicts between activists and journalists, and lack of
co-ordination among women's organisations themselves are also the hindering factors
in the building up of relationships with the press. Compartamentalisation within the
profession of journalism and the fact that newspapers do not have legitimate women's
beat or any specific person covering women's issues contribute towards women
activists' practical difficulties in approaching media.

Apart from some practical problems which women face in building up relationships
with the press/journalists or maintaining contacts, certain inadequacies were also
observed on the part of women activists which may also be interpreted as being
indifferent to media. Most of activists/organisations do not seem to attach importance
to media coverage particularly when they are working at the grass root levels. They seem to be fully absorbed in their organisational activities or their field work. None of the organisations has any specific media strategy to follow or any specific person taking care of media coverage. This was particularly observed in the working of autonomous groups. Even the centralised, formally structured organisations have not formulated any strategies. They argued that there cannot be a consistent media strategy as their activism depends entirely on issues. Many women also do not contribute towards mainstream media by writing articles etc.

All the organisations produce their own journals/newsletters/bulletins/magazines etc. But their circulation is private and reach is very limited. Finances were said to be a major problem in producing printed material. Apart from this, oral communication in the form of plays, yatras, face to face communication or holding workshops, dramas, songs, are a common practice with organisations. It must be recalled that two of women's organisations, Kali for women and Women's Feature Service have provided an excellent platform to promote women's issues. Kali for women is a women's publishing house mainly publishing third world women's literature, and WFS supplies wide variety of articles focusing on women's issues to various english newspapers in Delhi. Many women activists I interviewed, however, realised a need to improve relations with the mainstream press and emphasised that they need to contribute more and evolve some strategy towards this end.

Section IV: Women activists describe the attitude of government/ministers

It is easy to gather from the above section, and as also noticed in chapter 6, issues raised by activists and/or the movement itself do not get fair hearing from the press. Journalists approach women mainly for their comments on issues considered important by the media itself. Women's organisations, as such, are not treated as an important source for information. Realising this exclusion or rejection by the media, women activists also refrain from approaching media in routine.

While it is evident that media do not generally set agenda for women activists or act as a mediator between women activists and policy-makers, it also implies that women reach this legitimised public sphere without seeking help from media. For a deeper understanding of women activists' not giving much importance to media, it is important to make an inquiry into the patterns of interaction between women activists and political leaders. For instance, how and when do women contact the policy makers? How do leaders respond to them? Such an inquiry would give further insight...
into whether women feel more comfortable while interacting with leaders than media, which may be inferred from their responses. The following section explores the patterns of interaction between women activists and government/political leaders, and examines how women view this relationship and government's responses.

**a Personal links/relationships with policy makers**

Some women activists (BK, MR, VE, MA) describe the relationship between the movement and the government in a similar vein as they described their relationship with media, which may be defined here as 'interactive relationship', that is, a relationship which feeds on needs of each other. According to women activists, both the government and women's organisations need each other, for example, the Department of Women and Child Development requires the women's movement to provide it political leverage, that is, it uses the women's movement to push for the issues which it wants to initiate within the government. For instance, although the National Commission for Women was set up largely in response to the pressure put up by the women's movement, the commission in turn strengthened the Department of Women and Child Development. Since this department also has limited room to manoeuvre within the bureaucracy, its policies are strengthened by the women's movement. However, if women activists are not happy with any policies or decisions of government, they openly criticise them. Therefore, it is a relationship in the making and is very need-based. According to them the government also deals with them in a similar way. The leaders are accessible and listen to their demands and grievances but their suggestions are not necessarily implemented.

How do women approach politicians? Is there any particular procedure followed for that? It was informed by all women activists that there is no standardised procedure followed to approach the leaders. In fact the procedure is very ad hoc. While many autonomous groups utilise personal contacts to reach the concerned ministers, many party affiliated organisations have direct approach to the government. Such organisations include AIDWA, MDS, NFIW, AIWC and AIWWCC. Women from these organisations have regular contacts with the ministers.

Although the movement is segmented and decentralised, the organisations choose to work in collaboration while dealing with the government or lobbying for issues. They stand by each other on various other occasions like holding demonstrations, celebrating International Women's Day, holding press conferences etc. If one organisation does not have direct access to a concerned political department, it may
seek help of another organisation who is known to have links with that particular department. For instance, although HMS (a trade union) maintains informal contacts with the government either through Parliament Petition Committees or members of parliament, it also works very closely with MDS which is a party affiliated organisation and would seek help of MDS in approaching a particular department. Working in a reciprocal relationship MDS also approaches HMS in case of labour problems since HMS is a trade union.

Similarly, CWDS also has contacts with members of parliament and on certain issues they lobby with politicians and hold workshops at various occasions. If women do not have personal contacts with a particular ministry they want to reach then they follow the common principle as VE puts it:

*we do like common people do it. We start with talking and if they don't listen, try again talking in a different office with someone different, and when everything fails then we go and do hai-hai (ho ho) outside their offices. Most often they don't listen to us, and if they do, it will be like - yes, yes, we will do it...let's keep these damn women quiet.*

Is government responsive? Women activists said that usually ministers do respond. But it is again an interactive relationship, argues MR, for instance, *‘a particular minister would see them today because he might need them tomorrow to have the women’s movement put pressure on some issue’*. So this interaction or relationship does not necessarily have to be cordial or comfortable. Ministers are usually very open to meeting women and women’s suggestions on various issues are mostly approved at the formal level. However, it is because the policy makers want to be seen to be accessible because of their rhetoric that they are sympathetic, open and are available. But this attitude also varies from issue to issue and it is not possible to lobby on every issue with the ministers even though they are accessible, for instance, lobbying cannot be used as a strategy for population policies because government seems to be bent upon it.

Further, when women wanted to talk about the Kunan-Poshpara rape case, ministers refused to meet them because they were aware that there was no quarter to be given

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13 In a village called Kunan-Poshpara in Kashmir, 23 to 100 women were reported to have been raped by the Indian Army personnel during a search and cordon operation in February 1991. However, a three-member committee appointed by the Press Council declared that the charge of rape was fake and untrue (see Manchanda, 1991). It further said that “the women of Kunan-Poshpara had been tutored or coerced into the making statements derogatory to their own honour and dignity” (Government of India, 1995)
and so would not be bothered to have a dialogue. But if one goes to see the same minister after the Ayodhya\textsuperscript{14} incident, he would be very sympathetic because it would be in his political interests. Further, the central government would be very sympathetic on the issue of sati if the opposition is in rule in the state where sati takes place. And in such kind of situation, it would not be surprising if a minister from the ruling party calls up women activists to report about this kind of incident. Therefore, women are sometimes used as a political constituency in this game.

\textit{b Gender insensitivity/patriarchal attitude of ministers}

How do women activists view the attitude of government/ministers towards women's issues? All women revealed their experiences/encounters with ministers on various issues. Most of them argued that 'if one looks at the paper, one might conclude that the attitude of the government was wonderful with saying right things and making right probes extensively' (BK). Undoubtedly, the government has been greatly influenced by the women's movement and has positively responded to their demands according to them. For instance, there have been development plans for women in all the five year plans of government, there have been gender workshops taking place, the National commission for Women was set up, changes have been brought in the laws and all of this has happened in response to women's demands. The government documents show a great deal of sensitivity and concern towards women, for instance, the policies on education for women, empowerment schemes like credits to rural women, literacy schemes, appointing committees etc. It also indicates that the government largely responds to women’s agenda.

However, as also discussed in chapter 2, the government only fills the letter of law. In practice it is different. In the words of MR:

\begin{quote}
\textit{state is very patriarchal and very male chauvinist institution. It is neither gender sensitive and nor gender neutral in its legislation. It gives a little and takes back a lot more. But it does respond to certain issues because that is the way it carries itself forward. It has a perception of itself as secular, welfarist, socialist democratic, which necessitates certain rhetoric. And therefore, it can't afford not to make some concessions.}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} Ayodhya (a place in India) incident refers to demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992. It may be noticed that opposition party (BJP) was in power in this State when the incident took place. Therefore, a minister from the ruling party (Congress) would be willing to talk about an incident for party’s political interests. It may be recalled that the issue of fundamentalism impinges upon women’s rights, and also communalism born out of fundamentalism leads to violence against women in gender specific ways.
which it believes it is doing because it is an enlightened state. But if one
analysis in practice what is withheld, what is not implemented, one can
see the ambivalence clearly.

Thus on one hand there seems to be a lot of enlightenment but on the other hand
patriarchy dominates. Government in India is not a monolith. It consists of some
finest human beings who are sensitive to gender issues and at the same time there are
many others who are corrupt and 'monstrous' (KM). However, the problem according
to KM is not what they think or say, but implementation. Mishra, a feminist, (quoted
in India Today, 1995: 80) puts it correctly that "the state has been very clever. It has
appropriated feminist terminology in plans and documents, but how serious it really is
about women's issues is questionable". Similarly, Butalia (quoted in India Today,
1995: 80) argues that "only the laws have been changed. Their implementation is
lacking, the instruments for their implementation are not in place".

BA would like to believe that the reason for the failure in implementation is too much
bureaucratization and not enough decentralisation. Further many think (BA, MS, QS,
KS, RV) that the need is to generate the consciousness of people from below. Gender
sensitisation among judiciary, bureaucrats, educationists, and teachers is required in
order to change the attitudes towards girl children and women - 'unless this is done,
all the legislation and all paper work won't get us anywhere' (BA). However, MR also
clarifies that:

the attitude of government towards women is same as with other
disadvantaged groups, with poverty, with redistribution of resources. It is
very much pre-occupied with maintaining its self and status quo.

Recalling their accounts with government, FV revealed that the reactions of ministers
vary from issue to issue, for instance, in a general social atrocity case, they would be
very sympathetic but sometimes if the rapist or culprit is being apprehended by some
powerful person from the ruling party itself, then ministers also show their
helplessness. FV said that after the incident of sati in Rajasthan, they had approached
the home minister in Jaipur in that regard. The minister agreed that sati was bad and
needed to be banned but also clarified that they can not stop worshipping sati in their
homes implying that sati was cruel in itself but not the glorification of sati. It was
pointed out earlier that owners of various english newspapers and many politicians
donated money for 'sati-mata' (goddess) temple (see Singh, 1990).
Similarly CJ argues that the government is not even aware of the question of gender and most of the times when they frame policies it is done in the name of human rights and justice. She revealed that when they had met Vasant Sathe (a minister) in relation to female foeticide, he replied - 'what harm is there if under the scheme of two children for a happy family, a family decides that they want to have two sons only'. CJ thinks that these are certain values that have not been removed from the minds of policy makers so far. On the question of population, they hold women responsible for producing more children and leave the man free to have more children from another woman. Quoting cases she came across in one of her research projects in Bengal, CJ revealed that in certain households, where women underwent sterilisation and could not produce more children, their husbands refused to accept them on the grounds that they were not women anymore and started living with other women and had children from them. Therefore, the actual target for population control should be men and not women. She argues that:

> after all the state or the government consists of those bureaucrats and policy makers who are shaped under the same socio-cultural-religious ideology, as everybody else, and therefore they are unable to get out of the mould even though they mean well.

Mira Shiva from the Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI) also argues that "the government is putting the burden of contraception on women and then has the cheek to say it's good for their health. Isn't vasectomy good for their (men's) health?" she asks (India Today, 1995: 81). It may be noted that the percentage figures for men undergoing vasectomy and women tubectomy have reversed from 90 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively, in the 1960's. Bringing up the issue of population policy, VE also argued that government was not very happy with women's agitation against the contraceptives. In fact, firstly, the government was mixing up two different issues i.e., the population policy and the harmful contraceptives. Clarifying women's stand, she said women's groups are not against population control but were against those contraceptives which had harmful effects on women's health. Secondly, she also argued that women do not produce children alone and hence should not be the only targets. 'Women are expendable things ..doesn't matter, yes, we can't do without them unfortunately, but they are not really all that important', is the kind of attitude government has according to VE. It does only the 'cosmetic surgery' and fulfill the letter of the law.
SI argues that government is not at all serious about women's issues as they are about male issues. For example, in the 1993 budget there were cuts in the social schemes which obviously harm women because these social schemes mainly cater to women in provision of services like primary health care schemes, aanganwadis (day care centres in villages) etc. Further, vocational training programmes are mainly designed for men and women are not able to join these programmes, for instance, carpentry in the villages. SI argues that 'you have to see the social system of that particular place. Veiled women cannot come to work with men'. Further, for certain programmes meant for female children, government can indeed encourage parents to send their daughters by increasing the stipends for girls because otherwise female children are usually kept at home to help in the household or their training or education is treated as insignificant owing to the cultural context. In words of an official:

*expenditure on girls' training is like giving a dowry. There is no point in training girls as they get married and go to other places after acquiring the skill so the investment in them is lost* (see Bhasin, 1984: 8).

Apart from that the policy makers need to design programmes according to the requirements of women, for example, one can teach them electronic assembling, wiring, etc. In order to deal with women's employment problems, HMS introduced some indigenous projects for women in the face of their marginalisation in jobs as a result of modernisation. Similar ideas could also be picked up by the government to help women when they are simply thrown out of jobs. But 'it is just that they are not concerned' (SI).

Commenting on the non-seriousness of the government towards women's issues, SK argues that women activists have been pressurising the government to introduce a bill banning sex determination tests. However, only one state i.e. Maharashtra passed a bill banning the amniocentesis test (see India Today, 1995), whereas the central legislation has been pending for years and the government did not take any measures. SK said that they had sent a questionnaire to all women's organisations asking their opinions on the bill to be introduced in the parliament and sent the report to the government but nothing much happened because government has other priorities. Similarly on the issue of population control she criticised the actions of government and argued:
let women choose for themselves, and if we are talking in democracy of choices, then let not the poor women be guinea pigs. It is all happening because IMF and world bank told us that our major problem is population (also see India Today, 1995).

Most of the women's organisations have raised their voice against the Maternity Benefit Act recently introduced by the government. Under the act, a woman in the government offices would not be given maternity benefits for the third child. SK argues that by withdrawing such benefits, we are going against our constitution which claims equality for both men and women. 'It is not women alone who produce kids, so why only women and child should again lost'? (SK). Further, the bill on People's Representation Act certifies that any person with more than two children cannot seek elections at the local level in villages. SK argues that in the Indian cultural set up, it is not usually women who decide about the size of the family, and secondly if a family has more than two children, husband can easily give up his wife and can seek elections whereas a woman left with more than two children would not remain eligible and hence suffer from it.

Further many of the macro policies of government according to KB are very insensitive and, in fact, blind to the female aspect i.e. impact of those policies on women. 'We are really critiquing macro policies of the government in relationship to women', says KB, for example, what is the impact of price rise on women? What is the impact of less access of food on women? How would communalism affect women? How would casteism affect women? While talking about the cases of domestic violence, she argued that the state does not provide any infra-structural support systems for women in distress particularly in the rural areas. According to her:

women face real economic and financial problems with no support at all.... themselves may be landless or with very small plots of land in the working class families or probably facing the retrenchment stuff like that.... So it is not just a question of attitudinal change, that's just one aspect of it. You got to have a multi-dimensional approach on this. You got to see the responsibility of State on this, you got to make demands on the State also.

KB argues that since they are a very active organisation, they have faced the brunt of State repression to an absolutely enormous extent. They have had cases of their
women being raped in police custody, they have had movements which were sought to be cowed down or terrorised by police repression. In her words - 'my arm was broken by the police in a police station in the capital of this country, if that's a kind of thing that people like us face in the capital of this country and still the guy gets away without being punished, you can imagine what our activists and our movements face in the rural areas'. In Tripura they have had 189 cases of tribal women being raped in three years, and rape was being used as an instrument of political vendetta and political repression. By the state, they have had paramilitary forces raping them and even cases not being registered. KB argues that they had to face it because they are basically challenging the hierarchical structures and hence have to be prepared for the consequences. The fact is that it's a process...a long process. Sometimes we fight, sometimes we retreat, sometimes we fail...but you know that's the way it goes' (KB).

c Role of women politicians as viewed by women activists

Randall (1982) stresses that feminists need to know more about the behaviour of women politicians before they decide whether the number of women politicians need to be increased or not. The most important question in this regard is: do women politicians play any important role to promote women's rights?

Women politicians are not necessarily a category, believe women activists, since it is the question of commitment and ideology and not of men and women. Both the feminists and policy planners find the contribution of women politicians highly unsatisfactory. Unfortunately less than 20 per cent of women MPs are interested in women's issues. Katyar and Rai (see India Today, 1995: 85) noted that "the room of Subhasini Ali, the once firebrand politician who was made one of the five members of the National Commission for Women, has been gathering dust, even as feminists charge the NCW with being ineffectual". It is not difficult to see that not all women are equally sensitive to women's cause, and to say that no man is sensitive is entirely wrong. Sometimes men are far more sensitive to women's cause than women themselves because they are more exposed to other points of views, argues CJ. Therefore, this whole issue has to do with the political ideology and not with the gender of a person because not all women are feminists. Indira Gandhi was a woman but she did not contribute towards women's cause, argue MA, QS, FV, RV. Similarly, Rajmata Scindia\textsuperscript{15} had openly supported 1987 sati case. KM openly argues against assigning any specific role to women politicians. In her words:

\textsuperscript{15} Rajmata Scindia is former Maharani (queen) of Gwalior and is still known to people by this designation. Her son Madhav Rao Scindia is a Congress party member.
every human being has a special role to play and not just women. But if
women's role is emphasised, it implies that you are letting the men off the
hook and asking them to be even more irresponsible.

While BK maintained that left wing women are much more interested in women's
issues and that their ideology and understanding on these issues is better, many others
(MR, BA, SK, MA, CJ, QS, RV) counter that although there are many women
politicians, particularly from the Left wing, who are sensitive to women's issues, but

the fact is that even for those women who may be personally committed
to it, politics comes first and not gender. The left women might pretend to
be more sensitive to women's issues but if one looks at the particular
cases, for example, JMS women were told to shut up when they raised
their voice against Bengal rapes, and MDS women were totally unable to
influence their body politics in case of Roop Kanwar sati. Women
politicians have to be seen as linked to their politics because politics
comes first and that's their business, their business is not women (MR).

CJ supported that left women are also ruled by their political stand. If a party man is
the cause of rape and molestation...women do not get justice and the party man is
protected, says CJ. SK argues that this is true for most of women in politics and not
only left women. In fact, she thinks, there are many women who are very articulate
on gender issues, but when it comes to crunch, 'I think many women toe their party
lines'. Believing in the capabilities of majority of rural population in India, she asserts
'let the grass roots leadership develop and I am sure they will find their way to the
parliament also'.

Some women activists like SK, SI, believe that women politicians should play much
more important role than they are playing. For instance, SK thinks that on certain
issues it is important to have women's lobby in the parliament. However, just putting
any women would not make a difference. Activists maintain that women are required
in power but they should be the 'right type' or 'correctly chosen women' (BA, SI). If
the right type of women are elected to parliament and assemblies only then they can
work for their cause. Unfortunately, people do not choose such women or many times
they do not get tickets from their party for election. 'It's a tug of war .. a power game
between male and female', according to SI. BA and QS argue that parties in India
usually select women who are either wives or widows or daughters or mothers of
politicians. Women have hardly gone into politics in their own right and such women have not really been vocal on women's issues. According to QS, some women may hold powerful positions but within the domestic sphere are controlled and influenced by their fathers and husbands and thus gradually they become 'male' in their attitude.

Making a distinction between the different kinds of women politicians, Randall (1982) has also argued that the 'male equivalents' i.e., the women who acquire political office through their relationship to politically prominent men, could be expected to have traditional assumptions about women's political role. However, even when 'right type' of women get elected i.e., women who enter politics on their own merit, does not help women's cause argues BA. Quoting the case of some women elected to the municipal corporation of Bombay, who jointly stated that they had not been elected to take up women's issues and were there only as political figures, BA reasoned that once women get into politics, they think of themselves not just women but an equal like men. They would be much more concerned with the political and economic issues or other issues rather than women's issues. So they do not really contribute towards women's cause even if they are powerful.

Nevertheless, such 'women politicians know for their own good health that they have to say the things about women and women's issues, otherwise they would have to answer a few very awful question. But how far are they really convinced?' asks VE. She further argues:

I doubt if women in various political positions have any idea what women on the ground have to face? They don't have to go and queue up in a ration depot or be denied a ration card, or a woman who has to go to work worrying about six babies at home or need medical attention and don't have the money to pay for it or to ask for maternity leave. I don't think women politicians have a real practical hands on these experiences. Yes, they know about it like I know about a lot of things by just reading but I don't really know.

Research, (see Randall, 1982) looking into the behaviour of women politicians16, has indicated that women politicians primarily toe their party lines. For instance, a typical British woman MP sees herself as an MP first and a woman second; Women legislators in the United States were found to be generally reluctant to campaign for

16 See Wolkowitz (1987) for a discussion on the status and role of women politicians in Andhra Pradesh, India; see Flammang (1984) for a discussion on role of political women in state and local governments.
women's rights because they risked losing their political career; Women in India's state assemblies were found to be particularly timid, which might be due to their male colleagues' unrestrained chauvinism. Randall (1982) observed that there is little evidence of women politicians' strong commitment to women's cause anywhere. They do not behave in a different manner than men. She argues that it might be because of their lack of power which is evident from their participation mainly in feminine areas of policy-making in the male-dominated institutions. She concluded that women politicians might get more sympathetic towards women's cause under the influence of women's liberation but they would not put their career at stake for them.

Conclusion

Working in a reciprocal relationship, women activists seem to have easy access to government ministers/policy makers. Most women activists who have political affiliations or are members of politically affiliated women's wings have no difficulties in raising issues or holding discussions. Even if some organisation does not have personal access to a particular department/ministry, another organisation mediates the process, for example, HMS and MDS as noticed above, help each other in their dealings with the government. Since the setting up of National Commission for Women as an apex organisation, it has become rather easier for women to network and convey their demands to the government. The ministers are open and accessible. Many of women's suggestions are approved with no opposition. Plans for women are incorporated at formal levels, workshops are held, reports are prepared, changes are made in the laws under women's pressures which clearly indicates that government mainly responds to women's agenda. In the words of an eminent scientist and former planning commission member, Swaminathan, "unless women activists raise their voices, women's issues are likely to be ignored" (India Today, 1995: 80).

However, it is a different matter that in spite of this cordiality or accessibility, the state remains patriarchal and chauvinistic for the reasons contextualised in chapter 2. As KM puts it: the problem is not what they say or think, but implementation. Gender sensitivity is lacking at all levels of administration i.e., bureaucracy, judiciary, education etc. Ministers are welcoming when the issues do not involve political/communal complexities. For instance, in a general atrocity case, they would be very sympathetic but in cases of rapes by army in Kashmir, on the issue of population, and many other instances mentioned above, there was no scope for compromises. The government is extraordinarily sensitive on the paper because of the ideals/values it espouses and because it is a modern democratic state which requires a
welfarist rhetoric. Although some women politicians might be sensitive to women’s issues, when it comes to the crunch they toe their party lines whether it is right wing women or left wing women. Politics overpowers gender.

A significant observation made in this section was that although women activists defined the relationship between themselves and government the same way as they defined it with media i.e., the relationship is in the making and cannot be easily categorised. An important aspect which surfaced in the relationship between government and activists was women’s easy accessibility to the ministers and latter’s reciprocation. It is not difficult to gather from women’s responses that women’s relationships with policy makers are conflictual. But at the same time this relationship seems to be much more interactive than with the media people (also see chapter 8).

It may be noted that while discussing media, women did not contribute substantially towards the entire issue. Except for two-three women activists, many others did not contribute extensively to this problematic. They did not have many arguments or incidents to quote and they have not devised any policy or strategies in terms of media activities. On the other hand, all women activists were extremely vocal and articulate on the issue of their relationship with policy makers and particularly their views on and encounters with ministers. The very nature of their responses itself reflected a proximity with policy makers and a distancing from media or an attitude of indifference towards media. Also, undeniably many women activists belong to party affiliated organisations. It may be argued that within the elite arena of politics, women activists have an easy access to policy makers and hence they do not seem to require media to reach onto the agenda of policy makers. Further, since most of women activists’ audience/target population is illiterate people, the press may not even serve any purpose of reaching the uninitiated public. It particularly holds true in view of women’s changed focus from women specific issues to development issues towards the 1990s which has also affected the nature of their activities.

Wittingly or unwittingly, women seem to have become an important constituency in the political arena. Government utilises this constituency/force against opposition in some situations as shown in the above section. Although women’s defeat in Shah Bano and Roopkanwar (sati) cases indicates that women do not pose a serious political threat to the government, it cannot be denied that women have become an important force to reckon within the 1990s.
Chapter 3
Journalists’ perspectives on women’s issues and the women’s movement

Continuing with an exploration of relationships between women activists and journalists, this chapter completes the picture by presenting the viewpoints of journalists. It looks into the opinions of journalists regarding the coverage of women’s issues and the women’s movement in the press, and strives to further determine the factors that may affect the coverage of women’s issues and the movement. It also investigates women activists’ complaints recorded in the previous chapter, examines the differences and/or similarities between the opinions of women and men journalists towards women’s issues, assesses the role of women journalists in covering or promoting women’s issues, and analyses the position of women journalists within the profession. The findings in this chapter provide linkages to issues left unanswered in the previous chapters.

I shall also provide here a profile of the journalists interviewed for this study. Twenty one journalists were interviewed, of whom twelve were women and nine men. They worked with various English newspapers in Delhi and had experience of working with different newspapers in their professional lives. Only one woman editor i.e. FMP, belonged to Hindi-language newspaper. She was interviewed because of her prominence in covering women’s issues. Out of twelve women journalists eight were older and well established in the profession, some of them had been in the profession for the last 20-25 years. Seven of these women began their career with covering women’s issues in the late 1970s and early 1980s and five of them later moved to covering other areas like politics, economy, human rights, and development issues. Four out of twelve women journalists belonged to younger age-groups. Among men journalists, none of them was covering women’s issues per se. However, two men journalists (MDM and MJW) showed interest in development and social issues and claimed to have been covering these areas.

This chapter has been divided into various sections. These sections were framed on the basis of themes emerging from interviews. Some of the sections are further divided into sub-themes. Each section is followed by a summary, and a detailed discussion in view of results of interviews is taken up at the end of the chapter.

It is necessary to mention at the outset that verbatim text from the interviews forms

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1 As mentioned earlier, I have used initials of names of journalists in the study. In this schema, first letter in all initials indicate the sex of a person. F stands for female and M for male.
the bulk of this chapter. This has been done in order to provide a realistic account of responses, to avoid sweeping generalisations, and to draw themes and conclusions from within the discourse and opinions of journalists. To begin with, I have examined the general preference of the Delhi newspapers in terms of stories as viewed by journalists themselves. As discussed in chapter 3, the press in developing countries needs to focus more on the development issues but unfortunately they are found to be obsessed mainly with politics. The opening part of the chapter starts with ‘why is the political news prioritised over the development news’? It must be noticed that the present study did not look into the status of development news in the coverage, however, the issue of the importance of development issues was raised with journalists since women’s issues in the Indian context are treated as a part of social and/or development issues. When I began conducting interviews with journalists, I gathered that women’s issues did not have an independent status in the terminology of journalists. Therefore, in most of my interviews I began the conversation with ‘the status of social or developmental issues in the press’. For these reasons, it seems relevant to examine the status of development issues on the media agenda and reasons behind their insignificance. It will also highlight the typical characteristics of an elite press in a developing country, as discussed in chapter 3.

1) Preference to political news over development issues

It was argued by some scholars (see chapter 3) that since India is a developing country, the emphasis of the press should be more on the development issues like health, education, literacy, agriculture, ecology, population etc. However, the daily press is largely fixated on politics. The newspapers do not devote even one-fifth of their total column space to topics other than politics (Mojumdar, 1990), and within the political coverage also, the focus is more on the narrow party-politics (FSM). All the journalists interviewed for this study were unanimous in their opinion that the staple diet of the English press was mainly politics. Another major interest apart from politics was violence. This is in tune with the observation made by Joseph and Sharma (1994: 27) that “themes which fall within the conventional definition of hard news, such as politics, economics and the law, are almost automatically commented upon. News relating to these as well as to events with a component of violence is routinely carried because this is seen as the real business of newspapers”.

Some journalists (MDM, MSM1, FUR, FMP, MMS) argue that there is no inclination among the people who decide the policy of the newspapers to give adequate coverage to development issues, and hence such issues are assigned a backseat even though
readers may be interested in them. An example is the response of readers to ‘development page’ introduced in the ‘Indian Express’ at the initiative of a woman journalist, FUR. FUR, who is the pioneer in the field of development issues in India, said that her page on development issues in the Indian Express received a positive response from the readers as well as from journalists themselves. FUR further said that there was a certain amount of resentment (which still exists) among various editors of the daily because it leaves less space for hard news ‘like speeches by politicians’. But gradually the editors have conceded to it because the paper has performed better in its circulation. Also it has given journalists an opportunity to write on development issues with a full understanding that their stories will be well displayed. Following this trend in the Express, many other newspapers have also incorporated special pages like gender, science and technology, and agriculture etc. Earlier all these development issues were peripheral. FUR feels that a lack of sensitivity still exists in newspaper organisations towards the whole set of development issues including women’s issues and believes that there is still a long way to go. But as a development editor of the Indian Express, she commands a team of journalists to cover a wide range of development issues including women’s issues.

What are the reasons for giving preference to political news? Journalists put forward various reasons for giving priority to political news and marginalising development news/issues. MJW argues that press has a mind set on what should be the news. He says “we have developed certain thinking and we do not see beyond what we have already set down in our minds that this is news. For example, if the Prime Minister sneezes it becomes a news. Basically this lopsided view of looking at news and of what we think as news and what not probably gets fixed what news should be”. FRS, FSS, and FKC, justify the event-oriented nature of news. In words of FSS, “for development issues one has to wait for them to get to a stage and then wait for them to reach a certain landmark to review it. It is not possible to write about a development project day after day and week after week because events do not move fast and news is related to events. Development news is not the news of the day. It is an ongoing process, whereas in politics things are happening and one has to write”. Besides, “political news sells, and people are also not very fond of developmental issues because they find it boring. If a paper reports about some development issue from another state, only local people would be interested in it but not the people in Delhi because it does not affect their lives, whereas if it is a political issue, it would interest everyone” (FGP).
Many journalists (MSM1, MMS, MCM, FKC, FRS, FGP, FNC) also support the viewpoint that newspapers prefer politics because readers want politics. The reasons might be that "political news is sensational in terms of where the polity is going, whether there would be stability or not, what would be the future trends etc., and people are interested in knowing this because politics affect their lives" (FNC). Similarly, FRS argues that politics dominates social life in India and people read a lot of politics. According to her, readers react to politics and crime because "they can identify themselves with it but not with issues like Norplant. The idea is to make the people read what you write. You may write the Bible and if nobody reads it, it doesn't serve the purpose".

Many of these journalists also argue that the Indian reader is politically aware and therefore it is the duty of the newspapers to disseminate political information. MMS says "readers love that kind of stuff otherwise the newspapers might not have been selling". Similarly, MSM1 argues "if it is a political or crime story it is discussed everywhere whereas if it is a development story only a few intellectuals would be interested in it. General masses are interested in juicy and sensational news which they can read quickly and that is journalism whether it is right or wrong...". Justifying the obsession of the press with politics, MCM, the executive editor of 'The Hindustan Times', stresses: "people obviously have an appetite for political news. The newspapers which have tried to give precedence to non-political news have not done well where as we have continued to do well in terms of circulation. So it is a tried and tested formula and it will remain so until people actually start getting completely free news on the electronic media and which we do not expect to happen in the foreseeable future. 'The Hindustan Times' caters to the bureaucratic and political class. We have chosen to be a conventional and conservative paper and it is the reason it has been successful compared to other papers... Every newspaper has a certain political slot and this is where the market comes in. If we find that our circulation is dipping or we are getting an adverse reaction from our readership to what we are doing, then of course we have to take that into account. But till such time that happens, why should we change?"

However, countering this argument 'we give the readers what they want', there are other journalists (MAMS, MASG, FMJ, MSM2) who feel that such an argument runs parallel to producing the 'hot and violent' Hindi movies on the Indian screen for the commercial interests in the name of audience's interest. 'Neat and clean' movies are equally appreciated by the audience. MDM argues that "some strange reasoned people in newspapers seem to think that readers want to read politics which need not be
true, whereas it might be that "newspapers have not kept up with times, with their public changing and public expectation" (MJW).

Arguing particularly against people who justify the obsession of papers with political news in the name of political awareness among Indian readers, MSM2, the Arts editor, Economic Times, argues, "newspapers are not spreading political awareness, rather it is political obscurantism. Political awareness has to do with certain kind of self-consciousness, self-awareness, with education, political action, notions of your identity and who you are within a democratic structure. If newspapers are making the reader politically aware then this awareness must lead to action. But the newspaper is not telling us what to do against the injustices and where to go? The biggest action, if at all, will be writing a letter to the editor and that is considered to be action enough. So these are all nice things to talk about and claim that we have a free press which informs everybody and everybody is politically aware, but it is a wonderful mythology also".

MVN, the chief-editor of 'The Hindustan Times', associates this prioritisation of political news with the vanishing moral values of society and increasing prominence of materialistic values. He believes that "the Indian press has lost its essential role, its moral and it is not equipped to handle people's issues at all. The press is very close to politics and politicians are not committed to the nation, so the press also follows the politician and that is why we see no commitment. Newspaper today is seen as a product rather than as an institution, as a fourth estate. We have moved away from an institution to a corporation and commerce has superseded other purposes". Thus the economic interests of newspapers seem to be an important reason for giving priority to political news. Supporting the argument, MAMS adds "politics and economy go together. The big proprietors have political connections and they scratch politicians and business men's backs, and no body is interested in common man's problems unless it becomes a national problem". In this connection, FUR also argued that "newspaper proprietors are always looking for ways to get closer to the government because it helps them get the information fast. And most importantly, they use these contacts for their own business interests in terms of, say, getting a license from the government to start another industry".

Apart from the above reasons and arguments, some journalists (MVN, MSM2, MDM, FRM, FUR) also believe that it is an urge among the journalists themselves to cover politics because such stories give them by-lines and thus boosts their ego. For instance FUR argues that "politicians make news and have always made news. They
determine policies and journalists move so closely with them. So the politicians are able to sell themselves to journalists to write about them and journalists get a kick out of it. There ego also gets boosted when they are seen around with politicians”. Justifying journalists’ urge to feel powerful, FRM asks "suppose you are a journalist, wouldn't you like to be close to the Prime Minister of the country”? She argues that "it is a seduction of being close to people who are in power. If an editor has been invited over by the PM for breakfast, he would naturally write about him”. According to her the whole orientation of media, whether in the East or the West is towards politics. Although in a developing country like India the stress should be more on development issues, she argues:

*India after all is two Indias. At one level it is a highly developed country, and if you stick to certain areas, you won't even see the other side. The other India enters into the mind set only when there is an atrocity. Even a starvation death takes a while to get covered but not on the front page. Journalists also like to be a part of this developed India by being closer to the positions of power (FRM).*

**Summary**

It can be gathered from the above responses that english press in India has a major interest in political news for various reasons. According to journalists those reasons include the economic interests of newspapers, readers' interests in political news, proximity between newspapers and politicians, slow nature of development news/issues, readers' disinterest in development issues, journalists personal interest in political news.

As mentioned earlier in chapter 3, the english press is an elite press and is read only by five per cent of adult population in India, which implies that it does not cater to the mass of Indian population most of whom are also illiterates. As FRM has pointed out that within India there are two India's i.e., a highly developed India and an underdeveloped India. The upper echelon of people who are the readers of the english press belong to highly developed India and do not experience the problems or inequalities which people from underdeveloped sections face in routine. Assuming that people would not be interested in development issues because 'it does not affect their lives' where as 'political issues would interest everyone', the journalists seem to convey that readers of the english press are least affected by everyday issues of ordinary people, and even if the press starts paying attention to the development
issues it will not interest them and the newspapers would lose their readership. Hence, FNC points out that press has a particular constituency and it caters to that group because it has to sell and make profit.

Within this highly developed society, the assumed reader of the English press is also an elite male. This is evident in certain remarks of journalists highlighted in above section. The fact that women are rarely present in power positions, therefore, everyday politics may not affect women who are 'happily' confined to domestic or private sphere. For instance, 'readers react to politics and crime because they can identify themselves with it but not with issues like Norplant'. Here the assumed readers are men who can identify themselves with politics and crime which are masculine areas since men sitting in their offices discuss public/political issues and being in the public sphere are also prone to committing and being the victims of crimes, whereas women are mostly confined to private and hence would not be interested in politics and crime and therefore cannot identify themselves with these issues. 'Norplant' is supposedly a women's issue and since 'men' cannot identify themselves with this issue, it does not make a news value.

What can be inferred from the above discussion is that the English elite press caters mainly to the 'highly developed India' comprising (male) bureaucrats, political elite, educated middle and upper class people, who remain untouched by the routine problems of people from lower strata and women. Joseph and Sharma (1994: 18) comment that "the activities of the wealthy and powerful rate more highly than those of the poor and marginalised, including women. The opinions of the dominant sections of society are also given more weight and, therefore, more coverage. The unquestioning acceptance of such definitions by the majority of journalists affect the coverage of women and their concerns directly and adversely. Most issues of special concern to women do not fit into the traditional concepts of what constitutes news". It is because, as the authors argue, most women in Indian society do not hold the position of authority and dominance and are not affluent and influential.

2 Van Dijk (1996) also argues that readers of news media are generally presupposed to be male. He forwards this argument in view of media's marginalisation or denial of issues like sexism as a structural problem; contributions of women in areas like politics or science; women's presence in areas like war and crime. The news content and style seem to support the stereotypical attitudes about women.

3 It may be noted that even majority of men in a poor country do not hold privileged positions. However, within the middle class and at the level of administration, men certainly enjoy more authority and dominance. For instance, the total number of women in the Indian Administrative services (the highest class of civil service employees) was documented by Liddle and Joshi (1986) up to only 350.
Realising a need to stress on development issues more in a developing society like India, FNC thinks that much effort is required to push development issues into the mainstream media. It needs debate and action from the government and from society. But unfortunately development issues are usually dismissed and "may be people also do not want to read about them because there is a certain helplessness and cynicism in people that nothing can be done about it" (FNC). It may be argued that there is a tendency of "resignation, passiveness and fatalism" among people (Hardgrave and Kochanek, 1993: 6) in a society which is based on moral and religious values embedded in the theories of Dharma and Karma. Millions of people, deprived of basic necessities of life, live in the margins, however, no effective struggle has been initiated by them against the injustices and unequal social structures. Where do women's issues stand within this (masculinised) elite arena of media? What, according to journalists, is the attitude of the press towards women's issues and the women's groups/movement? The following section illuminates the opinions of journalists regarding the attitude of the press towards women's issues.

2) Journalists describe the attitude of the press towards women's issues

Women's issues are treated as some kind of an appendage to the paper, and an appendage (emphasis in original) which is not of a priority. I do not see a consistent pattern of behaviour working either for or against women's issues... because even against is a certain ideological frame (MVN).

As far as women's issues are concerned, women occur in the newspapers either in some scandal or in some rape case or in demonstrations but not really as an intelligent section of the society (MJW).

Women's issues do not hold a significant status in Indian society. The oppression of urban middle class women is directly associated with hegemonic patriarchal structures (see chapter 2), but it receives no recognition in a traditional set-up because it is a naturalised part of the social order. On the other hand, issues facing poor women like poverty, literacy, sanitation, health, environment, etc. are considered a part of broader issue of development in India's poor socio-economic conditions. Thus at an elite level, gender remains hidden beneath an intricate web of patriarchy whereas at the grass root level, it intermingles with the issue of development. It was noted in the above section that development issues as such occupy a low status in media coverage. FMP revealed that "most mainstream newspapers put politics on
number one, then come the regional issues like land, police, forest and water resources. Development issues come last and still taken as soft subjects for which write-ups will be given only if the space is left after dispersing.... and women's issues unless it is a very-very major issue like triple talaq⁴. Similarly MMS remarked that social and development issues or women's issues are used only as filler materials when the papers are short of political and economic news. A journalist might be personally interested in such an issue and may also write a good story "but it is just treated as a filler material by the people at desk".

It was found out that in the name of women's issues "still primitive issues like bride burning, dowry, rape, harassment are given priority" (MAMS and FMP). However, within this coverage also "the focus has been slightly lop sided. For instance, in a rape case press will not focus on the trauma that a woman has gone through or it is not looked upon as a misuse of some power by men... So the idea is only to sell the story" (MDM). It may be recalled that within the sample data, the coverage largely concentrated on violence/crime stories and lacked analytical perspective (see chapter 6). The kind of coverage indicated no ambiguity in terms of oppressive social forces or patriarchal oppression. It might be because, as a chief sub-editor puts it:

"The upper echelon of journalism is generally sympathetic to the cause but not in terms of what is just. It is a general sympathy, which also exists only at the superficial level among editors, journalists etc. Basically, people do no even think about this issue. It is okay for an editor to sit down over a glass of beer and discuss it because there are some women around. But that is all. There are no strong feelings or attitudes about this subject (MAMS)."

It clearly indicates that women's news on violence/crime is mainly carried because of its sensational nature and easy availability and not because of any emotional, democratic reasons or commitment of press towards women's cause (as noticed in chapter 6). Journalists put forward various reasons, discussed as follows, which could be attributed to the marginalisation of women's issues in the media. It must be specified here that the categories/themes developed below are not concordant as they may overlap with each other. They have been framed in order to point out some specific factors which seem to impinge upon the coverage of women's news/issues. It is very difficult to isolate one theme completely from another due to the complexity of issues and their interlocking nature, for instance, many themes like patriarchal

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⁴ This issue refers to the process of divorce among Muslims.
values/beliefs, lack of interest in women's question, the conflicts of an unequal and stratified society, a pessimism and hopelessness in the society, a sensitivity towards human rights and other development issues, feminism having bad connotation, economic interests of the press etc. can be sensed in many different categories. Following themes have been generated from journalists' responses. The responses of women and men journalists are discussed together, however, a distinction will be made where ever required.

a) Male domination and lack of women in power positions

Male domination within the media industries and lack of women in power positions were pointed out as important determinants in the coverage of women's news/issues by many scholars (see chapter 4). It is argued that an increased number of women in the profession or in dominant positions would help promote women's issues. Many journalists (FBDS, MJW, MSM2, MDM, FMJ, FRM, FUR) seem to support this when they argue that journalism is a male dominated profession and that there are not many women in powerful positions. Although some women journalists hold senior positions like political editors, development editor, principal correspondent, etc. in the English press, the authoritative editorial posts are held by men. Not a single woman journalist in Delhi was in the post of the news editor or chief-editor or chief reporter at the time of conducting the interviews. Thus within the hierarchy, they lack powerful positions. In such circumstances, argues FBDS, "sex scandals and beauty contests would obviously get more space than anything else. The editors take it for granted that readers will not be interested in anything related to women and thus consider it a drab".

However, some journalists (MDM, MSM2, FBDS, FMP) also extended the argument of male domination beyond the confines of media industries and seemed to suggest a relationship between media practice and social practice. They argue that it is a male dominated world, therefore, "everything i.e., the press, the bureaucracy, the government is male centric whether it is conscious or sub-conscious. And most of the times journalists tend to betray these inherent biases and prejudices that s/he has into story" (MDM; see also Joseph and Sharma, 1994). This argument coincides with Gans' (1979) argument that ultimately journalists cannot proceed without values. It indicates that media work within the larger stereotypes and are influenced by society's definition of what is significant or insignificant (see Robinson, 1978; Pingree and Hawkins, 1978). Journalists call for an awareness within the press itself. MDM argues that "if more and more journalists are committed to this cause and keep on writing
stories, keep on correcting colleagues, it would play an important role in changing attitudes”. However, the possibility of this commitment in a hostile environment poses another problem as discussed next.

b) No encouragement to cover women’s issues

Joseph and Sharma (1993) observed that the Indian daily press does not follow any particular policy on women's issues. For instance, a particular newspaper (for instance, Indian Express) criticised sati in one of its articles but at the same time it carried another story in the same issue promoting pro-sati views. Thus, most of the times writers/editors are left to their individual opinions on women's issues. MVN, the chief-editor of HT confirmed the observation made by Joseph and Sharma when he stated that there is no consistent pattern of behaviour working either for or against women's issues. It can be argued that an absence of a policy on particular issue suggests non-seriousness of an issue. It may also be inferred that such issues then lack encouragement and their coverage largely depends upon journalists' personal initiatives. The social and cultural areas and/or 'soft areas', according to Joseph and Sharma (1994) are covered "if and when journalists on the staff are able and willing to write on them" (p. 27).

It was found that development issues, including women's issues, are largely covered on the personal initiatives of journalists (MJW, MDM, FGP, FNC, FSP, FMI, FBDS). Although no one is discouraged from covering development issues and women's issues, there is no active encouragement. Joseph and Sharma (1994) also confirm that those who are concerned about the deprived sections of society are given little encouragement. For instance, the development stories are not rejected out rightly, however, there is no encouragement to cover those stories as well. MDM argues that it will take a lot of commitment from journalists themselves to take an interest in these issues (also see Joseph and Sharma, 1994). Although a change in the treatment of women's issues may be noticed, according to FNC, in the form of editorials and discussions on specific issues, much depends on the personal initiatives of the journalists and the orientation of editors. For instance, she recalled that the editor of the 'Statesman' used to encourage the stories on human rights including women and children while she was attached with this paper in Delhi. But after they both left, the paper discontinued such stories.

Similarly, FGP has been doing women’s stories for long and calls herself a 'compulsive follower'. Quoting her two stories when she herself had rescued one girl
from a 'den' and another from trafficking (both of whom are now leading a normal life), FGP argues that "follow-ups of these stories require personal commitment and personal presence at a particular spot". But usually the news editors do not encourage journalists to do follow-ups because of the shortage of space. Also, the journalists are conditioned not to do follow-ups because "we are dealing with news day in and day out and if you are stuck with follow-ups you cannot deal with the news next day". Thus it is up to the individual journalists to spare time and cover these issues. Confirming this observation, FSP, who also worked with the Hindustan Times and now works with the Telegraph, said that it was FGP's initiative to follow her stories and not the newspaper's interest in those stories. Similarly, recalling the incident of sati, FBDS revealed that a woman reporter from the Times of India, Jaipur, had to persuade the chief reporter on her own initiative to cover this story and later the story was picked up by all other newspapers.

It was found out that journalists who are personally interested in development issues/social issues or women's issues work on such stories in their off-hours. Their stories, as mentioned by MDM, are not denied space by the editors but the attitudes also vary from one newspaper to another. For instance, 'Telegraph' takes out a supplement on women every week because its editor encourages such stories and even pushes men to work on these issues. Although this newspaper also does not have any women's beat, there are a number of women journalists on roll who make sure to cover issues and it was on their initiative that the newspaper started a women's supplement. But again it largely depends on the attitude of the editors. For instance, FSP revealed that the previous editor of 'Telegraph' was very supportive whereas when he left, the chief-editor announced a change in the angle of women's supplement i.e., he insisted on giving more importance to feminine stories and features like cookery and beauty. Even though all the women staff members put up a fight against it, some changes had to be incorporated in the paper according to the chief-editor's desires.

c) General lack of interest in women's issues

It was mentioned in chapter 2 that inherent moral, religious, and cultural values fed by the principles of Dharma and Karma are largely internalised by the people in a traditional set-up. It is not surprising if these values infuse fatalism or passivity or a helplessness among people and they accept the system and social forces as natural. Also, many practical problems like poverty, illiteracy, education, ill-health etc. bred by an unequal structure, when remain unchallenged, it may lead to a tendency of
resignation. A general hopelessness seems to prevail in India's stratified society which
seem to affect the perspectives of journalists as well. For instance, a chief sub-editor
argues that there is no conviction among the journalists to take an initiative. He
related this absence of convictions to the general milieu of the entire nation, when he
argued:

living under the shadows of insecurity, poverty, poor conditions on every
front, a common man is more worried about his living than about the
ideals. No one has any hope in the future and we, newspaper men, are
also people of this country and we also do not have hopes. Everyday
water goes, electricity goes and we do not make an issue out of it, so why
on a vague issue like women? (emphasis in original) (MAMS).

Although some journalists may contemplate various issues prevailing in the unequal
set-up of a third world society, they find this spark missing at the general level.
Describing it as an attitudinal problem particularly when it comes to women, MMS
argues that "the attitudes have been formed over years and these attitudes cannot
change overnight, and there is very little effort from the people who really have the
time to think about it". And at the level of the press, Indian press is not much of a
catalyst according to MSM2. In his words, "there is absolutely minimal discussion on
important issues like Depo-Provar or nuclear policies or legalisation policies etc.
There is very little that is challenged, studied, or questioned, and that has been the
case all the time". However, argues MASG "the press is certainly not anti-people or
anti-poor. By and large, it is also not anti-female or anti-women because we are
working within a liberal framework and within this framework women have not only
proved their capabilities but also their sense of equality and independent identity. But
again it is done at a very superficial level and within a duality of liberalism, where, on
the one hand you allow women to succeed and on the other you want to keep women
as ornaments or for fashion, cooking, glamour or cinematic kind of a stereotype in the
colour supplements of papers".

An aspiration to change the institutions/structures in a transitional society can slowly
die among people and young women journalists in particular after a realisation of its
rigidity. For instance, argues a young woman journalist in a highly pessimistic tone:
no journalist whatever he or she writes can change Indian society. When I had started my career, I was very idealistic, emotional, and charged but later realised that it does not help the society in the long run. I did one story on rape victims and another story on why people rape, but has that really helped? how many people would read it? do people stop burning women after reading articles? We will only feel sad and say 'O poor thing'? It even becomes boring for the paper to carry it and, thus, these issues are just reduced to fillers (FV).

Similarly, another young woman argues that for journalists it is only a routine job. She remarked:

A journalist criticising dowry in his article might go home and accept two millions in his son's wedding. Or another journalist might even do a story on a woman's organisation sitting in his air-conditioned office...
Minister's son, even after raping, gets free with his influence. So who cares what I write? You cannot have any ideals of changing the set-up.
You have to think about your living and basic needs first. If possible, we do stories on women... (FG).

FNC recalled that an aspiration was alive among women activists and women journalists in particular in the early 1980s and that she herself started her career with covering women's issues. At that time women’s issues were clearly dowry, rape, sati, women prisoners, and other women-specific problems mainly focusing on atrocities against women. As pointed out by many activists in the previous chapter, and also noted by Joseph and Sharma (1994), FNC said that during this period there were many women journalists working in tandem with women's organisations and on the whole it was a very fertile period. But after that:

people got tired of atrocity based stories. There was a certain amount of fatigue among writers also, which gradually brought a slump in the coverage. Basically the same issues are being addressed... today it may be Sarla, tomorrow somebody else and so on. And the basic story remains that so and so is burnt by her in-laws (FNC) (This view is also shared by a woman activist cum journalist - FMS).

At this stage even some serious incidents are ignored because these are repeats of a particular pattern (FRM, FNC, FMP). A de-sensitisation was reflected in FKC's
argument when she said 'sati does not have news value.. These are routine customs which keep happening..'. It indicates how a continuing phenomena of violence against women in the society leads to de-sensitisation and the values are then internalised by people. This internalisation adds to the normalisation of order and strengthens the social consensus. The nature of violence/crime stories carried without much analysis in the media can be explained through these taken-for-granted values. The further decreasing coverage of such event-oriented stories (see chapter 6) also shows the fatigue of media with these issues.

d) Economic reasons for not covering women's issues

The economic interests of a newspaper primarily determine the news value in terms of 'what is news' and 'who makes news'. According to one of its criteria, the events make news and not issues or processes (Tuchman, 1978b; Joseph and Sharma, 1994). It is because the pace of events fit into the organisation and production of newspaper and fulfil its economic needs. Events in women's case, as I noted in chapter 6, mainly involved sensational news stories like dowry, suicide, rape, punishment etc. It may be argued that preference for such event-oriented sensational stories is closely linked with the economic needs of the newspaper. For instance, as put out by a journalist:

"The story which gets instant attention would be sensational like 'cops raped woman' etc., because it sells the paper and therefore is the priority. This kind of story might even go to page one in a box... And even if there is some important issue, a reporter would be more interested in getting a by-line and there is no more interest beyond that. In the end, most of the papers are conservative and they need to survive and sell" (FG).

It clearly demonstrates that the interest of a newspaper in coverage of stories like rape lies in its economic needs or the 'professionalism' of journalists, and gender perspective to the story is denied. It was pointed out by Joseph and Sharma (1994) that event-oriented news with an element of violence is commonly carried because this is seen as the real business of newspapers. FMP further confirmed that widely covered and most frequently covered issues related to women in the press are physical violence against them. Wondering on the trends, MSM2 argues "women's issues figure in a reverse fashion like there is an enormous coverage on things like rape and you wonder why? But you do not see anything about it in the editorial pages or more serious discussion about it in the more serious pages. Since it is never remarked upon, reacted, so obviously it makes sensation, titillation, good copy etc.". FMP believes:
this is done not because of any emotional reasons but because they are staple journalistic scoop items, and that is the biggest kind of women-centric news (FMP).

The newspapers prefer sensational stories of all kinds but there is hardly an in-depth analysis of these stories. Talking about Kashmir and Punjab militancy, FRM argues that in everyday reporting one would not find any kind of analysis of either women taking up arms in these States or even as victims. Similarly, she pointed out that the press has not been very sympathetic to women's agitation against 'harmful contraceptives' and the coverage on this issue has been quite limited. But as a part of sensationalism even the limited number of stories focused more on the nature of women's protest (because women activists had stormed a press conference of a pharmaceutical company in Delhi) or conflicts amongst themselves rather than on the drug. The press likes to talk more about its sensational aspect i.e., two women's groups taking different stands on a contraceptive will interest the papers more than actual problems and forces (FBDS).

While admitting that the incidents or events are always covered but not the developmental aspects, FRS emphasised the news angle of stories. She justified that rape and molestation made news ten years ago and the trend continues today also because of a very strong news angle in it. She puts out "you cannot forget the professional part. You have to make it a good journalistic report. Whatever you write cannot sound like a lecture coming from a good Samaritan, because you are not going to find readers for it, and if you do not find readers, the purpose is not solved". Gender insensitivity and importance of news value clearly comes through in the following quote by MCM, the executive editor of Hindustan Times:

We do not have any other approach to women's issues except to highlight and also condemn the atrocities that are perpetrated on women whether urban society or rural. There is no single paper in the country which has defended sati or bride burning or dowry. Whenever there are any kind of ghastly rape cases we, as with other papers have highlighted this and drawn public attention, written editorials. So I think we have discharged our duties fairly on the side of social change and on the side of oppressed women. News wise I do not think we have ever suppressed or played down anything of this kind (MCM).
When questioned about not providing in-depth analysis or gender perspective to such issues, he replied that there are some papers which position themselves as kind of campaign papers and catalyst for social change. But, "I brand the Hindustan Times as a conservative paper. It is not that we are the defenders of status quo but we at the same time are not active campaigners for social change. We do not want to take a strong position on the news side through say news analysis or highlighting of certain stories day after day. There are other papers in the country which are fulfilling that role and we do not want to compete with them in that area. We are therefore not an activist paper. Whether you like it or not, that's the way it is. Speaking candidly, we have left this to a paper like 'Pioneer', which has a separate page to carry women's issues. We do not have the kind of space as we have only one editorial page. But whenever there has been kind of major atrocities our reporting has been as good if not better than most others. Our paper is basically a news-oriented. People read it primarily for news rather than for opinion. So to that extent I think we are doing our job". FRS displayed a similar attitude when she made clear:

*Journalists are not crusaders and we cannot say let us go and change this. We are in a market where you have to sell. There is no point in bringing out a paper which no one is going to read. Even for development issues you have to have topicality otherwise why would somebody want to read about something which is not happening in HIS life? (FRS)*

Emphasising the news angle, the economic factors, and a component of male domination in media profession, FUR argues that by and large when a newspaper is put together, no one thinks of whether it is being done from a woman's perspective or youth perspective or rural people's perspective. News, according to her, is generated from incidents and for most of papers it is a money spinning business irrespective of anything else. For instance, she recalled her story on the coverage of a meeting of women parliamentarians and film industry people on 'sex and violence in the cinema'. It was widely covered by the newspapers along with the pictures of the participants. 'Indian Express' carried a 'good' picture showing an actress and an actor from Hindi film industry, both of whom were MP's as well, whereas other newspapers in the city carried pictures of other glamorous actresses. Consequently, the feeling in the Express's editorial meeting next day, according to FUR, was "O, we did not have a good picture where as other papers had lovely women". Reflecting this male bias, FUR said "it is there in every man. They consider a good picture has a good looking
woman. But the fact that this picture, which the Express carried, represented all the relevant components of the film industry did not strike them".

Similarly, FRM recalled her early days in the profession as a junior reporter when she was first assigned to cover parliament and told 'to give a colour story, tell what women were wearing etc'. She feels that this attitude has to do with the overall society. Women are either seen as exceptionally good or just as women. In this kind of set up one cannot work in isolation because overall societal awareness and activism is lacking. But FUR seems to justify this trend from economic perspective when she said, "one basic thing is that we are in the business to sell, and particularly when there is a lot of competition from television and other papers. And people are now looking for light and chatty pieces, so there is a tendency to write such stories".

e) Patriarchy as a cause for marginalisation of women's issues

Media do not conspire to exclude women's issues. Rather it is the cultural environment and values which determine what is important and what is not. Indian culture, as I described in chapter 2, has been largely insensitive towards women's issues. Media/journalists are part of this particular culture and environment and therefore they may imbibe those values prevalent in society. It was argued in chapter 6 that violence/crime stories on women may be covered because they fit well into media's routinisation. However a lack of analysis on these stories can be attributed to cultural insensitivity and acceptance of a patriarchal social order. Although this observation, that is, the patriarchal and cultural insensitivity towards women's issues runs through many other themes also, it is specifically categorised here because some journalists linked up the trends in coverage within this wider context. A significant observation in this theme is that it was offered by women journalists alone.

So far it is quite clear that gender perspective from women's issues is lacking in the media coverage. Even within the sensational stories the news is generally event-oriented and is marginalised in terms of placement in the press (see chapter 6). FMP links up the peripheral status of women's issues in the media with their general status in the Indian society. She recalled one of the male editors saying "our readers are fed up with soft stories about women. It is very tragic that women are being mistreated but what can we do if fathers do not want to love their daughters, and if women are women's worst enemy". FMP revealed that when her weekly magazine carried a story on suicide of three sisters, many readers wrote letters and expressed their sorrow and anger. However, some of them also argued that "if the family is not crying, if society
is not crying, then why you journalists are creating a fuss? And who is going to listen to that?" According to FMP, "had one son died, it would have been very different scenario... But if parents are not guilty or sad about it then we must say ...what do we do?"

Quoting another example, she revealed that in the 1980s she had launched a Hindi magazine called 'Vama' for Times of India group. The magazine raised a number of issues related to women and performed very well in the beginning but later its circulation dropped. The market surveys conducted by circulation department found out that in the 1980s the periodicals for the family were largely bought by men in the families and most of men interviewed said that they would prefer to buy standard magazines for women instead of 'vama' because it would put 'family racking ideas in women's head'. The magazine was finally closed down.

Similarly, FBDS reasons that insignificance of issues like health or contraceptives was closely linked with secondary status of women in Indian society. She argues:

Women in society have been pushed aside. They do not have a say in the family and in occupation, and that is what gets reflected in the papers. After all people with this kind of mentality are the readers and also the writers, and stick to old traditions and attitudes (FBDS).

An excellent analysis of this situation comes from an eminent journalist - FUR, who quoted an example from her experience in order for me to understand the whole framework in which they work. She did a story on a woman, who was fighting a case in the court against her husband, who she said had molested their five year old daughter. This woman had come from America because she was losing the case there and had registered the case with Women's Crime Cell in Delhi. This was probably the youngest girl who was registered with the Women's Cell as a victim of molestation. FUR was very confident that the story would be published. But to her surprise, in an editorial meeting with only men that evening, the story was refused to be carried because men felt that the father had been wrongly accused and they would not accept that a man could molest his own daughter. They asked FUR to get father's version as well but the latter along with his lawyer refused to meet her. FUR and a woman colleague incidentally missed that editorial meeting and therefore the story was never used. FUR believes that if she or her other woman colleague were present in that meeting, they could have influenced the editors. However, she argued that on this particular issue:
Men behaved as if all of them had been raping or molesting their daughters or something like that. They were willing to accept that the woman was lying but not that a man will do this to his own daughter (FUR).

That cultural factors determine news value is clear from this example. It also indicates that societies prefer to refrain from anomalies and keep their cultural concepts clean (see Schudson, 1991). It is a concrete example of how even a sensational/crime news can be ignored because it does not fit into the pre-conceived notions or resonate with the cultural value system. However, rape or molestation by 'outsiders' can find space because they are a part of the social order. Although oppression in 'private' is a common practice, the atrocities in the 'private' must not be exposed and family values must be honoured even if they are harmful to women. Rape/sexual harassment by outsiders can serve the purpose of keeping or pushing women into the private but sexual harassment within the private must not be exposed because it might provoke women against the family values. Commenting on the issue of sati which took place in 1987, FMP also revealed that she had sent a correspondent to Rajasthan who did an excellent story on sati but it could not be published because the correspondent had Xeroxed the donor's register in the sati mata (goddess) temple which revealed that all major newspaper business houses i.e., the Hindustan Times, Times of India, Indian Express, and Statesman, had made regular contributions and offerings at the temple of sati mata. Also, the owners of all these newspapers have their roots in Rajasthan and their families worship sati mata. It was one of the reasons that the story was not printed in the papers.

All the national newspapers (as claimed by MCM earlier) had supported women activists and took a stand against the government in the case of sati. But the above example shows how genuine were the concerns of newspapers on the one hand and secondly it indicates that however liberal or modern the press might pretend to be, it functions within a patriarchal culture and beliefs. It is also a fine example of the conflicts of a transitional society. It must be recalled that the national press did provide a fair amount of space to sati but the focus was much more on the political, religious, and legal aspects rather than its gender perspective, and on the festivities of the occasion (see Joseph and Sharma, 1994). Joseph and Sharma (1994: 73) noted in their study that "several reports on the chunri mahotsav (sati-related religious

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5 It was argued in chapter 6 that police may not select the cases of domestic violence within its selection of crime events. In tune with that argument, it is evident in this case that even male editors can choose to remain silent regarding the oppression of women with in the private sphere.
ceremony) described it in glowing terms; the writers were obviously awe-struck by the picturesque, emotion-charged and widely attended ceremony even while clearly disapproving of the unnecessary and cruel death of the young widow".6

Summary

It was gathered during the interviews that the lack of coverage of women's issues is not even an issue among journalists. Only a few journalists (mainly women) showed concern on this issue, others (mainly men) spoke at a very superficial level. Women’s issues are mainly treated as filler material by the national press as suggested by many journalists. Generally people within the media organisations do not even think about this issue seriously. Certain people might be sympathetic towards women and women’s issues but it is only in terms of sympathy and not in terms of what is just. The primitive issues like violence against women, rape, dowry deaths, suicides are given priority because of their sensational appeal and economic value. These stories are not covered because of any emotional reasons rather they are staple journalistic scoop items and are not difficult to obtain. Fulfilling various conditions of news like negativity, frequency, unambiguity, personification etc., as discussed in chapter 6, they form the major women centric news.

Various factors pointed out by journalists which affect coverage of women’s issues were male domination in the media profession, lack of women in power positions, economic interests of newspapers, lack of interest among journalists, cultural insensitivity including patriarchal beliefs in general. Many journalists argued that media profession is a male dominated area. Although many women journalists hold senior positions, they do not occupy editorial positions. They advocated women in decision making positions which might improve the coverage of women’s issues.

It was further found that the newspapers do not have any particular policy on the coverage of women's issues. As commented by the chief-editor of HT, there is no ideological framework working for or against women's issues. If some journalist likes to cover such issues on her/his own initiative, the stories are not refused. But there is no encouragement to do these stories. Therefore, the issues are taken up only on the

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6 The opening sentence of one of the sati-related stories noted in the data i.e. 'sati mela in Jhunjhun' (1 Sept, 1989), reflects an emotionally charged perspective on the ceremony, as follows: "More than 50,000 devotees today participated in the annual 'sati-mela' at the 69 year old Rani sati temple in Jhunjhun, and offered the usual 'puja' in the early hours of the morning to mark the culmination of the three day affair, according to reports reaching the state government head quarters today".

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personal initiatives of journalists. According to journalists, it requires a lot of commitment to cover women's issues.

Some journalists also associated the lack of conviction among journalists with a general milieu of society. After getting exposed to a whole set of developmental issues, including mass illiteracy, poverty, sanitation problems, women's issues, particularly pertaining to its gender component, do not seem as grave and intense as other issues. At the socio-economic level, there is an uneven distribution of resources and people seem to have accepted their position. They do not raise voice against this inequality and injustice. Press, existing at an elite level and pretending to be unaware of these issues, does not work as a catalyst. It has been obsessed with political issues and does not have time to contemplate other issues. Journalists, therefore, also feel detached with people's issues. They may start their career with an inspiration and an idealism, but gradually this hope dies when things remain same. It seems to be the reason that they stop bothering about these issues gradually.

However, on the other hand, several journalists associated a lack of interest in women's question with general position of women in society. It can be argued that journalists, as a part of the same culture, imbibe those values prevalent in society. Since society is generally insensitive towards women, as shown in chapter 2, it is not surprising that same values are at work in media profession also. The marginalisation of women's issues in media reflects the priorities of society. Those who are marginalised by the society are marginalised by the media also. It may be for these reasons that analysis of women's issues like violence/crime were largely ignored and many other issues were missing (see chapter 6).

3) Journalists describe the attitude of the press towards women's groups/movement

The attitude of media towards women's groups or the movement could not be discerned through the coverage in the newspapers because the women's movement did not find substantial coverage in the press (see chapter 6). It was highlighted in chapter 6 that the women's movement is largely silenced by the Indian press, if not ridiculed. At the same time, most of the women activists in their interviews also said that the newspapers do not pay much attention to them and even their press releases are not carried most of the times (see chapter 7). The following section endeavours to explore the silence of press over women's groups through journalists' opinions. The discussion in itself reflects upon a rapport or a relationship between journalists and women's
groups. It may be noticed that journalists were also asked about their personal opinions about the movement in the interviews. The following discussion focuses on both the attitude of the press as described by them and their own opinions towards women activists/groups or movement.

When journalists were asked about the attitude of the press towards women's organisations, the claims of women activists were found to be true since most of the journalists confirmed women's complaints. They (MVN, MSM2, MAMS, MASG, MDM, MMS, FMJ, FBDS) revealed that most newspapers generally dismiss women's organisations, although some journalists (FUR, MASG, FGP) also think that there is no such thing as an attitude of press towards women's organisations. There are some people who are 'sympathetic' towards them and there are many others who are quite allergic to 'these women' and other NGO's, and feel that 'these women' make noise all the time. This argument still suggests that women activists do not hold respectable status among many journalists. Why are those journalists allergic to women activists?

A few specific reasons/themes identified in the interviews were as follows.

a) Feminism carries bad connotation

The term 'feminism' itself carries a bad connotation in Indian society (FMP) "although many women activists of today have no qualms about reclaiming that identity" (India Today, 1995: 80). In a traditional society where family values are sacred and women's roles are clearly confined to the domestic sphere, people in general can be highly critical of feminists questioning the gendered structures or patriarchal forces. They may even become sceptical about the functioning of organisations and their motives as is projected in this section. Earlier a woman activist (BA) wondered that although feminists in India do not hold anti-family values, feminism is still perceived as a threat in the society. Although a ridicule and a disrespect towards activists was missing in the coverage (see chapter 6 and also Joseph and Sharma, 1994), it was rather obvious in the interviews. FBDS, a young woman reporter, revealed that:

7 Creedon (1993: 69) has argued that if one's frame (image, perception, thought) for a 'feminist' is negative, it allows one to stick out her/his tongue and deny credibility to the rest of a 'feminist's' words. Some of the quotes by journalists against feminism/feminists in this chapter reflect a similar psyche.
Papers are very anti-women's organisations. My boss, for instance, does not appreciate my association with women activists. He says these people are all publicity conscious and like themselves being photographed. Most editors and other senior people look at the activists as shrill women who keep screaming, and call them devious. Whatever coverage goes to women's groups or the issues raised by them entirely depends on journalists like us, who believe in their cause and who are sensitive towards them. If KB (a woman activist) sends five releases, two of them would be carried simply because of advocate journalists, otherwise the releases or invitations would go into the bins straightway. On getting an invitation also, chief reporters do not make sure to send some one to cover the conference or meet. On a lean day, they might send someone. But otherwise women journalists who are themselves keen to cover it, would go on their own. Apart from those journalists who believe in their cause, the editors or the news editors do not even have the time to give a thought to them. One of our editors hates these feminists (FBDS).

Further, a popular impression among journalists about feminists, according to FNC, is that:

_Feminists are rabble-rousing, dogmatic, West oriented, not rooted in the reality of India, not open mind, anti-family, and pro-divorce. Though there has not been radical feminism in India in the Western sense, in the early 1980s some of the middle class women bordered on this type of feminism to gain media attention and therefore left this impression at the social level. Even though many so called radical groups have now evolved in their thinking and even when their focus now has been much more on the broader social issues than women's issues alone, damage to their image in the media has already been done and that might be the reason of media's aversion (FNC)._ 

Although appreciative of the work of women's organisations, FGP argued that women activists get influenced by the West without getting to the root of the problem. Another woman sub-editor (FSS) showed her extreme bitterness towards women's groups/ feminists in her interview. While making it clear that she was not a feminist and commenting on the activities of women's groups, in particular their storming a pharmaceutical company's conference on contraceptives in Delhi, she argued:
Those women behaved very badly and it was undignified and unnecessary. One should go by a certain dignity and grace and not by shouting and screaming and jumping over gates. They can make a point without making enemies but this is what feminist movement seems to be doing. Putting the men on defence will serve no purpose. They misbehaved on Depo-Provera issue and they should remember that after all no man wants his wife or sister or anyone to be given a drug which is not safe. You lose husbands and brothers when you become aggressive. So you have to take them along (FSS).

Some younger women journalists were also highly suspicious of the credibility of women's groups. For instance, FV said, "I found all these society women wearing very good saris, all collected together, smoking cigarettes and discussing women's issues and holding rallies to get some publicity, that's all... One thing is good about some of them, that is, they hold rallies on certain occasions like dowry deaths...but mostly after the person is dead or is raped. They are real society cats, whose husbands are rich, holding higher offices. Since they have lot of money and they live in big houses in South Delhi and mostly free in the afternoons, they go and make organisations by converting their houses into offices" (FV).

One younger woman journalist even thinks that women's groups are corrupt in their dealings, that is, that they have a fixed amount to raise 'hullabaloo'. They are hired to put pressure on the law enforcement agencies and in turn one might donate them a ceiling fan or something else. Otherwise, she argues, "would you be willing to go and stand in the sun for some woman who is dead long by now?.. Even their rallying time is fixed for the rally and during that time they make sure that the press is around to take pictures. They do not shout for poor people and do it only for middle class women to get publicity... How many times have you seen them outside a labourer's house and hold rallies?" (FJ).

Beyond this image of feminism as a Western phenomena, some journalists (FGP, FRS, MSM1, MASG) also revealed that journalists as a community are very sceptical about women's groups. Therefore, a good interaction between women's groups and media does not exist in India. A journalist like FRS, who herself believes that women activists have their own interests in raising issues, forwarded some reasons which have put women's credibility in doubt. Firstly, many of women's groups are extensions of political parties and some of the groups are also funded by foreign
organisations. Secondly, women’s groups according to her are ‘more for effect than actual work’ since they fail to impart required information to journalists when they are approached. She explicitly stated:

_The moment I hear overseas funds_8 I get very suspicious because I do not know whether this is part of a CIA racket or some other racket... _I mean... suddenly there is an organisation which in the last two years has done nothing but agitate to stop a certain contraceptive coming into the market. There is no way I can cross check it, so why should I just take them at their face value? (FRS)._

MASG, a young journalist also disclosed that usually journalists think women activists ‘make issues for nothing’ and hence doubt their credibility. For instance, on the issue of contraceptives, a journalist would prefer to approach a scientific source rather than a women’s organisation. However, MSM2 argues that the problem with the press is that "when any NGO working on women’s issues or environment issue or human rights issue raises an issue, it is seen as having vested interest but when a political party does the same it is ignored. Another thing is that almost entire women’s initiative began with foreign funding - the entire spectrum of activities, because there was no funding available here, so it is linked to the interest of foreign powers". On the other hand, FMP links up this backlash to feminism with the patriarchal nature of the Indian society which is frightened of women’s power. She argues:

_I think what is happening is sub-consciously a kind of a danger alarm is ringing in our society with women becoming actual ‘shakti’9 they used to be. One can gather from the matrimonial advertisements the operative definition of a woman which is simple, home loving, homely, sweet tempered, knows how to make cakes and goes to embroidery classes. But if these myths are shed by any reason or any kind of gesture, then naturally the half that has been prospering will be the first to raise suspicions (FMP)._

b) Conflicts in opinions between activists and journalists

Many journalists (MJW, MASG, FNC, FRM, FBDS, FSP) stressed the need for an active relationship between media and women activists. Some (FMP, FSS, MSM1, Overseas funds refer to funds which NGOs (non-governmental organisations) in developing countries usually receive from foreign or international organisations

8 Overseas funds refer to funds which NGOs (non-governmental organisations) in developing countries usually recieve from foreign or international organisations

9 Within Hinduism, ‘Shakti’ denotes the feminine energy

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MASG) of them also pointed out that women activists do not have appropriate strategies to reach media/journalists. Although some journalists appreciated the efforts of women activists in raising issues, they also pointed out their weaknesses in terms of their media strategies as well as activism. For instance, FMP thinks:

> A lot of activist groups do not know how the media operates. When ever they have some conference or meet, they will send the information. But sometimes it is not well written, for example, if they send a ten page report, no sub-editor will have the patience to read it and cut it down...

> Also, some of the feminist groups are well meaning but they cannot see other's view point because of their own (FMP).

Similarly, FNC claims that women activists have not been as active in terms of sending releases, raising issues, or holding functions involving press as they used to be in the 1980s. Recalling women's activism on cases like Maya Tyagi and Roop Kanwar sati (see chapter 2), FNC thinks that there has been a decline in women's activism. She argues:

> No one has done even a serious compilation of dowry deaths, say, in Delhi. No one has tried to look into why this has been happening? what does it show at the ground level in terms of changes that have taken place towards women? Or no one has ever chased a legal process which would highlight the attitude towards women in distress to be able to give greater insights or make the story slightly different. They have not gone beyond a point and are just repeating the issues and therefore, the interest of media may have been flagged (FNC).

But in recent years women's groups have taken up a wide variety of issues like contraceptives, economic policies, fundamentalism, health etc. How does FNC view this change? While FNC agreed that some of the women's groups have taken up these issues much more vigorously now, she admitted that these issues are not getting sufficient space in the media except in very small corners as they were earlier. So why does not press cover these issues? FNC argues:

> One needs a certain empathy to write and follow up these issues but because of the structuring of profession in a particular way, there are fewer journalists who are interested in them (FNC).
From the above argument, it is evident that any weakness on the part of women activists can become a good excuse to justify their exclusion from the press. The indifference of women activists towards media might be attributed to the insensitivity of journalists/media towards them. For instance, MASG, who worked on the gender page in the 'Pioneer' for some time complained that it was more an effort from his side to approach women activists rather than from women's side because he always needed material for his weekly page. But at the same time he was also aware that journalists as a community do not respect women activists which explains women's reluctance in approaching media. In his words:

You have to gather all your inner resources and strength to enter a bloody newspaper office, where as it should be the other way round because a newspaper is a public place (MASG).

FSS, the magazine sub-editor, pointed out that women activists need to work better in terms of sending articles because sometimes they do not send a picture with it or take time in sending the pictures etc. Also, the younger organisations are not very organised in terms of sending press releases. Similarly, MSM1 said that organisations are not much active in building contacts and sending press releases regularly. But when I asked MSM1 how often does he contact or visit women's organisations and whether he knew any women activists/organisations in Delhi, he could name only 'The National Commission for Women', which is an apex organisation.

A little disappointed with the activities of women's groups, FRM argues that sometimes women activists do not take stand on various issues. For instance, when the Press Council in India, commissioned to investigate Kunan-Poshpara rape case in Kashmir (see chapter 7) declared that such an incident did not take place, FRM, at her personal level, looked into the case and found out that the press council had done a white washed job and willingly accepted the army version for the reasons of national security interest. Not going into the details over the controversial report, she argued that this was an issue which should have been taken up immediately by women's groups but to her disappointment very few of them were willing to take it up. It took them months to look into it. However, FRM said that women journalists regard women activists as a major source of information and many of the journalists are also members of organisations and consider themselves as activists. But unfortunately many of women's organisations, according to her, do not appreciate it because their expectations from women journalists are very high. However, "a distinction has to be maintained sometimes in the interest of professionalism but activists feel that they
have been betrayed. A journalist cannot spend a lot of time with them and sometimes cannot even carry a copy in the paper until she has a sympathetic news editor”. FRS also argued that activists fail to understand the distinction between professionalism and being crusaders, and this is where the conflict starts between activists and women journalists. And newspapers, according to her, cannot become an advertisement bureau for anyone.

Similarly, MJW, while appreciating women's efforts in raising issues, was highly critical of their ways. He argues:

*You cannot tackle many issues by litigation or by giving it some press release or by demonstration or by jumping over walls to protest against faulty contraceptives, which is very stupid. You jump over the walls, protest, and what you get is front page news. Are you satisfied? How is it going to solve the problem, I do not understand it. What purpose does it serve by blocking the roads? (MJW).*

Quoting a case when women activists called a press conference for a poor girl forcefully married to a Saudi Sheikh, he said:

*Very stupidly, unnecessarily, they (women activists) ruined her life by exposing it to public in such a blatant manner and no body did what actually should have been done. The issue behind Saudi Sheikh’s coming to India to marry poor girls is not ordinary. the issue is poverty... Similarly, courts are full of cases of dowry deaths. Everyday the culprits are freed because the judges are so callous and because the accused can hire top lawyers to get bails, and it is very unfortunate that no single women's organisation has ever tried to stop it or do something about it. ...These contraceptives are very minor issues compared to the issue of death (MJW).*

Highly critical of their work and activities, FRS argues that she has been writing a column on women for the last two years and not a single organisation in the city is even aware of it. She also wrote a story on family planning which got a cover story in the magazine but again no organisation helped in getting statistics or contacted her after the article appeared. Implicating even the Women’s Feature Service from whom she admitted receiving articles, she argues that she has never been able to receive required information from them whenever she has approached them because:
They know what they want to project and that is it. They do not look beyond it. My great complaint against all these organisations is that they take up the issues just to get publicity for their own selves. They do not bother to find out how it has really affected the women concerned...

There is no point in picking up hundred women from the slums and taking them to the march to Parliament and saying we will not accept Norplant. Go and see what is happening in their homes. How can you better their lives? and that is the most important thing (FRS).

She further complained that she has never come across any organisation approaching her with, say, a six month study on child abuse to get it published in the paper or magazine although they might carry out agitation and seminars on child abuse. She added "I may go to a seminar for my own knowledge or to cover it for the paper but how does it help women's issues? how does it really help women reader? I feel their approach is very superficial... When the sati incident took place, journalists were dependent on other people for information. Why did no women's organisations ever think of bringing it to the notice of the press? Are they interested in contraceptives alone?" She argued that no organisation went to that village to find out why sati was still prevalent and what the social and economic conditions were that caused it. According to her:

Women should be doing such studies but they do not do and that is why journalists treat them with a little sort of contempt and in a frivolous manner.... It is not that they are very holy. In fact as a journalist I am quite sick of them, trying to educate me on what my duties are? I know jolly well what I have to do. I am as open as they are, as concerned as they are. We just have different approaches but I am doing a service in my own little way (FRS).

While FRS complained against women activists' not working on issue of sati, Joseph and Sharma (1994: 71) have documented that "by the time sati once again reared its ugly head in the shape of Roop Kanwar, at least two major research studies by Indian feminists were available which could provide background information and analysis about different aspects of the practice". They further point out that women's protest actions were not only confined to Bombay and Delhi but women's groups in Jaipur, where this incident took place, were very active in anti-sati activities. Women played
an important role in this instance "ranging from legal action through marches and demonstrations to articulation of their views in the media" (p. 71).

What do journalists want women activists to do apart from conducting studies/researches and reporting them to the press? Some journalists (MDM, MJW, MASG, FBDS, FSP) suggest that there should be more interaction between journalists and women activists because there are various perspectives on different issues and a consensus can be arrived at if both parties discuss them together. MDM argues that women's organisations have not taken a major role in involving the press in terms of invitations, press conferences, or workshops where issues can be debated and discussed. According to him:

It is one thing to invite the press for a conference on a particular issue and it is quite another to involve the press really i.e., to have people from the press actually participating in seminars. It will get reflected in the papers over a period of time. We need to create an awareness even among the journalists because they are largely ill informed. Women can actually involve journalists in field projects or in conducting studies (MDM).

Women's groups and journalists both need to adopt a co-operative attitude towards each other, and further media should invite people to speak on various issues. MASG argues that "we may agree or disagree on a particular issue but we would know how peoples' minds work". Another possibility could be to have a separate women's beat, so that there is more focus on women's issues, according to MASG. Apart from this, women need to develop women's studies departments at university levels in particular (MDM). MJW suggested that women activists should organise seminars, television shows, write articles themselves, and spread public awareness, and instead of demonstrations and protests should contact journalists and arrange informal get-togethers to convey their perspectives. He argues "people understand what is issue, so you do not really need a silly demonstration". When argued that not all journalists respond positively to women activists, MJW replied:

We have in the city thousands of women's issues, everybody walking in and saying that we have a demonstration. You cannot go to every demonstration. That is humanly impossible. You pick and choose. It is always there, you cannot cover everything (MJW).
Herself sympathetic towards women’s cause and towards activists, FBDS, a young woman reporter, understands the limitations on the part of women activists. She argues that women cannot sort out the problems and can only raise the issues. They hold demonstrations on issues like atrocities on women because they know that media like to cover such stories. Media do not bother about their developmental activities which they carry out in slum areas or remote areas. It would be on a very lean day that she would be able to include a story like that. Further, women journalists have to be careful with issues like fundamentalism, communalism raised by women’s groups because editors are wary of such issues. However, FBDS and FSP think that women activists should cultivate relations with the press and if need be, woo the press like political parties do. Even if it is against the principles of certain organisations it is good for the larger goal.

Arguing against those journalists who pointed out shortcomings on part of women activists, MSM2, the Arts Editor, believe that women’s groups in Delhi are probably the most vocal in raising issues. Some of the groups have conducted good studies on coverage of communalism or caste politics by the press. Admitting that women’s organisations are severely neglected and ignored by the press, he argued that "editors have their own patriarchal beliefs, and therefore it is a waste of time for women's groups to cry over it" because that is the way the press structure is. Stressing the need for an alternative media, he argued:

I am not saying that you accept the structure but there should be ways of countering, which is, to make your own networks very strongly that you cannot be ignored and secondly to make some channel of communications, some media which is your own, which no one else can dominate and determine what you are doing.... Although, magazines like Manushi cannot replace the mainstream media, it does help in conveying a political struggle, fighting the dominant ideology and the money bags and male structures (MSM2).

MSM2 also argued that if there has been a perceptible decline of activism by women’s organisations or women in general or women in the parties, media should see its own responsibility as well in this decline. It should determine its own role and contribution towards it.
c) Lack of sensitivity towards women's groups

Although a lack of sensitivity towards the women's movement is obvious in the foregoing discussion, it was pointed out specifically by some journalists (MAMS, MMS, FBDS, MVN). MAMS revealed, "it is usually the news editor or the chief reporter who receives the press releases in 'The Hindustan Times'. The news editor avoids making waves and wants everything smooth... Further, most of these people treat women's issues very light. I would call it passive male chauvinism". On the other hand, MMS believes that the press has no particular attitude towards any organisation. He argues that "press is more busy with political and economic stuff, so, I would say that they are least bothered about women's organisations". Commercial factor is an important reason, argues MVN, but:

another reason is the attitudinal insensitivity of most people in the newsroom. They are cynical, they do not consider this news. They think that a politician making speech is news but not women because the politician can invite them to dinner in a five star hotel but women will not. We are dehumanised and depersonalised in our profession but extremely personalised in the use of our position (MVN).

A passive male chauvinism, as mentioned by MAMS above, can be witnessed in MSMI's satirical remark when he said:

Covering the activities of women's organisations is up to the individual journalists and if the individual reporter does not feel like doing a woman's story he won't, and it is how we approach it (MSMI).

d. Factionalism within the women's movement

While a conflict of opinion between journalists and activists was evident in the above sections, factionalism within the women's movement is also seen as a factor by a couple of journalists which hinders the development of a smooth relationship between activists and journalists. Pointing at the factionalism within the women's movement, FRM argues that it is another reason why the press is sceptical towards women activists. She feels "If you are friendly with one group, you cannot be friendly with another. It creates a lot of problems".
In tune with FRM's argument, FBDS also argued that women's groups are themselves splintered and weak in many ways, and it hinders the coverage. Further, it is not a very strong movement and is largely urban based. Similarly, FSP argued that women's groups cannot and should not work in isolation and need to create an atmosphere for a better working relationship with the media.

e) Women's groups/activities have no news value

Many journalists (MCM, FUR, FKC, FRS) believe that women's developmental or organisational activities do not have news value and therefore cannot be covered by the media. For instance, MCM argued that "very often they (women activists) send out press handouts which are self glorificatory and they have very little to do with actual cases. They will talk about their activities which is just a routine publicity. The newspaper has the discretion to judge what constitutes news and what does not... If you make a comparative study anything relating to a major case of atrocity, of crime against women, they are all reported. But some sort of items glorifying the activities of individual organisations...probably we have not used" (MCM). FKC also argued that women are interested only in publicity when holding demonstrations and not real work which also explains their exclusion in media coverage.

Similarly, FUR, while admitting that women's groups are active in sending press releases, holding press conferences and seminars, argued that such events are not covered because they have no news value. However, "if women's groups come together on a dowry issue or a judgement which is anti-women, then that is picked up". And, in the words of FRS:

> You cannot just write reams of paper on what they say. One cannot forget that newsprint and space are very expensive, and there are other things which are as important and have to be taken up.

Regarding the trends in the press, MSM2 argued "it is hundred per cent true that women's press conferences or handouts are largely ignored and it is due to the space that is organised in the paper. The newspaper structure is such that the content is determined by a particular kind of hierarchical measure. It is a legacy of the world and an uphill struggle. If one looks at the front page, it has what politics is doing and what big businesses are doing and that is perceived as what readers want. It is hard to find a story on health on front page...". Earlier FNC also remarked that because of the
structuring of profession in a particular way, journalists are seldom interested in women's issues.

4) Who approaches whom: patterns of interaction

It was noted in the previous chapter that journalists approach women's groups mainly for comments or reactions. They do not have much routine interaction with activists. Continuing with the agenda-setting exploration, this section aims to probe further the patterns of interaction between journalists and women activists. It is evident from the above opinions/views that the relationship between journalists and women activists is not smooth. There are conflicts in opinions, there are different perspectives on how issues should be approached, there is difference in opinion regarding the strategies to resolve or take up issues or in reaching media.

However, it was confirmed by all journalists that not a single English newspaper in Delhi has a women's beat. It is also clear in this chapter that women's organisational activities and their development activities/work do not carry news value, and feminism in itself carries a bad connotation in India's traditional set-up. Although many journalists in the above sections revealed that women's groups, their press releases, invitations are largely ignored by the media, I shall testify women activists' claims made in the previous chapter and examine the trends of interaction from journalists' angle.

Many journalists (MCM, FBDS, FSP, FRM, FGP, FMJ, FG, FJ, FV) reported that usually women activists approach the press for reportage. Those like MSM1, FNC, who claimed that women activists have not been active with their press activities were either found themselves not to be covering women's issues at all or found to have moved to other areas of focus like politics, economy and human rights, and therefore were not in touch with women activists in the recent years. They contact them only at the time of writing some particular story related to gender and development as confessed by FRM and FNC. They also revealed that younger women journalists interacted much more with women's organisations. FRM and FNC also think that women's groups interact very well with the press but their activities are not sympathetically reported. Some of the older women journalists have maintained good contacts only with National Commission for Women, which is an apex organisation. As mentioned earlier none of the men journalists was found to be covering women's issues in Delhi and hence their contacts with women activists/organisations are highly
questionable. At the same time, 2-3 men journalists covering development issues had contacted women's organisations at certain occasions.

FGP confirmed that women's groups send press releases and call press conferences whenever they take up an issue. However, they are approached by journalists mainly for reactions. Although highly critical of women's groups, FRS also said that there are very few people in the newspapers who have the time to go and do in-depth studies, therefore they are totally dependent on what women's organisations feed them. FMJ, being a young and junior reporter works in the field and has maintained links with various women's organisations and seek their help whenever she is doing a story. She also said that women's groups have a network with journalists and they contact them whenever there is an issue. Some organisations like CPM's, JWP, Saheli, Jagori are very active in bringing issues to the notice of the press and conducting studies. But there are others who do not have active networking with the press.

On the part of the press, reporters visit the organisations mainly to get reactions or when called for a press conference. Even press releases are carried on the initiatives of advocate-journalists. Advocate-reporters like FBDS, FSP, FMJ, keep active relations with most of the organisations and think that many organisations are very active in maintaining the relations with the press. Such groups are AIDWA, Saheli, NFIW. They also hold joint press conferences and keep sending press releases whether carried or not. But many other groups are not very organised and seldom send press releases. This is the reason why the press approaches the knowns, usually AIDWA, for reactions.

Journalists also disclosed that women activists usually approach those newspapers which are sensitive to women's issues and call up people they know or people who are known to be committed. The reporters hardly approach these organisations and when they do, it is just to get a good 'flowery quote' because they know they can easily get it even on the phone (FG). KB, the general secretary of the AIDWA, was pointed out by many women journalists as the most active person in maintaining relations with the press people. According to FBDS, she would even call to give clues about stories or incidents to be written about. Other smaller groups are, however, always accessible on the phone. She argues that women's groups are in fact conscious of the press coverage and because they realise its importance they make sure that journalists are around when required.
MCM, the executive editor of HT, spoke highly of women's activities and revealed that women's organisations get in touch with the press whenever something happens. They hold press conferences and send press releases and expose many crimes against women and this is a very positive role they are playing. According to him, even the victim women find it easier to go to a women's organisation rather than going to a police station or even press. When women's organisations want to publicise a case, they would get in touch with the press. Contrary to the opinion of many other journalists (FSS, FRS, MJW, MSM1) who think that women approach press to only get publicity, MCM opined that usually women's organisations prefer to work quietly rather than bring the matter to the knowledge of the press. But if the victim is interested they bring the issue to the attention of the press. When asked how often HT sends reporters to women's organisations to get information, MCM replied:

It is usually women's organisations who inform us about the incidents and it is very rarely that we go to search out unless we get a tip off from a completely unrelated source... To go to a woman's organisation and search for news is not really necessary because we know that whenever there is anything which is worth drawing our attention too, they will do that.

Knowing that women activists prefer to approach people they personally know or people who cover women's issues, I asked the executive editor, MCM, and the chief editor, MVN, to name one person from HT who was covering women's issues. MCM named a woman journalist who he claimed was covering women's issues from HT. When I had earlier approached this woman journalist for interview, she told me that she was not the right person to be contacted as she was neither interested and nor believed in women's issues. Her major area of reporting was politics and her designation was political correspondent. When I disclosed it to MCM that this woman journalist was a political correspondent and was not interested in women's issues, he was speechless. I further argued that women activists find it difficult to approach HT because HT does not have anyone covering women's issues to which MCM replied "all newspapers have different styles of functioning. How we function should be our business, not women's business". Similarly, the chief-editor of the HT was unable to name anyone from HT known to be covering women's issues or whom women activists could approach.

Earlier MSM2 told me that women's groups have learnt that their press releases would not be carried if they simply send them to anyone in the press. Therefore "now they
do not send general invitations to a newspaper as is normally done or send to a news editor and hope and believe that he will assign somebody to task of covering that particular occasion. Now women's groups address people specifically who are interested in that particular issue. And that particular person or the advocate-journalist does it out of her personal interest and not because the paper wants it. And there has not been a newspaper venture in the main line press which tries to reverse this course. But if newspapers do not have specific journalists known to be covering or be sensitive to women's issues, as also pointed out by KB in the previous chapter, then there is no possibility of a good rapport between activists and journalists. In such situations women activists simply depend upon advocate (mainly women) journalists.

Summary

While the Western media have ridiculed the women's movement in the West projecting feminists as bra-burners and man-haters, it is claimed by Indian activists that Indian press is not anti-feminist like the Western press. Although a general ridicule of feminism is missing from the Indian press, it was reflected clearly in the opinions of journalists interviewed. As disclosed by various journalists, media people do not appreciate women activists. Editors do not pay much attention to them. Their press releases or invitations, as noticed by younger women journalists, are thrown into the bins. I observed during the interviews that even a mention of women's groups brought smirk on the faces of most of men journalists. Older women journalists have, by and large, moved to other areas of focus within the profession. Thus, activists lack sympathy even from this section. Some men journalists were only superficially sympathetic towards women's groups while talking to me. I observed that while activists were polite (and rather indifferent) when they talked about media people in their interviews, most of the journalists were highly critical and bitter about women's groups.

Several reasons which seem to hinder the coverage of the women's groups/movement are a negative connotation associated with feminism, lack of sensitivity towards women's groups, conflicts between journalists and activists on various issues and strategies. Further, a couple of journalists (only women) find it difficult to maintain contacts with organisations because of fragmentation of groups. Many others feel that women's developmental activities do not carry news value and hence cannot be covered. As noticed in the previous chapter, it was confirmed after talking to the journalists that it is usually women activists who approach the media rather than media approaching women. Only younger women journalists seem to have
maintained regular contacts with women’s groups. Men journalists are least bothered. Generally women journalists are sent to cover such ‘soft issues’. Older women journalists contact women’s groups only at the time of writing some important story. As such, it is not difficult for journalists to get comments from women’s groups on the telephone. It was established from journalists’ responses that they do not visit the organisations on their own. Hence, it may be argued that media do not make efforts to set agenda for women activists. Both women and men journalists, by and large, showed disinterest in women’s issues. The following section probes specifically into gender differences in news reporting and women’s issues in particular to determine the disinterest of both men and women journalists towards women’s issues.

5) Gender differences in news reporting and coverage of women’s issues

A controversy over gender differences can be gathered from a very simple argument put forward by one of the male editors when he said:

you do not have to be a politician to cover politics, you do not have to be a cook to assess the cooking, you do not have to be a musician to criticise the music, but on feminist issues you have to be a woman (MVN).

A debate regarding the role of women journalists in covering women’s issues remains unresolved. There are some scholars who believe that media output can be changed with an enrolment of women in media industries implying that there is a causal connection between media output and presence/absence of women in media industries. However, there are others who strongly oppose this argument and believe that autonomy of journalists is limited by many factors like organisational, ideological, external factors etc. Also, an essentialism in terms of biological reductionism is considered fallacious by these proponents.

When journalists were asked about the differences in attitudes of women and men journalists towards news reporting and women’s issues in particular, most (MAMS, MDM, MVN, MSM1, MCM, FUR, FNC, FGP, FSS, FRS, FMJ) of them argued that the difference does not lie in the gender of a person, rather it lies in the individual approach. They argue that as far as routine reporting is concerned, both men and women become dehumanised and are dominated by those in power. A professional is a professional and it depends upon the individual how he or she reacts to a certain
issue. Sometimes one might find a man softer on women's issues than a woman herself. For instance, MMS argues:

_A sensitive person is a sensitive person. It does not depend on the gender that you are more sensitive or less sensitive. It depends on your attitude, on your background or your attitude towards life and your world view (MMS)._ 

Similarly, FNC finds that as such there is no difference while journalists are reporting the routine affairs, and that it mostly depends on their own consciousness when they choose to write on certain issues. She argues:

_As a journalist, you are very much conditioned by what is expected and how political reporting is done, and to that extent all journalists become desensitized. You tend to become a victim of the present system and structure and you feel that you have to not only make good, you have to be better than others (FNC)._ 

Supporting the argument, FGP argues, "everybody is a professional. If you are assigned to do any story, then as a professional you will cover it to the best of your ability and understanding". Therefore, news is news and it cannot be seen from a man's perspective or a woman's perspective (FSS, FKC). Warning women journalists against their biased opinions, FSS argued, "if you are a journalist you are above gender and you cannot make any gender differences". Quoting a male journalist, she argued how disturbed he was after reading a news about a father raping his daughter. She said "he got the news and he came and sat here, holding his head. He was so upset and said I also have a sister, a daughter, a wife, how can any man do it? It took him 2-3 days to stick on to terms with it. He was upset and angry, so there is no question of male and female perspective. He probably wrote a better story than I would have done". Similarly FRS pointed out that it was a male reporter who broke the story about how women were sold in a certain part of the country, which was a combination of hard news and women's issue. Denying any women's perspective to issues, she argues that news is news, even if it is on maternity benefits. It is not something that needs approach, and the "rule is to present both sides of the picture in a professional way".

Having a particular approach also depends on a person's upbringing and perspective, argues FMJ. There are some men journalists who do excellent reporting on riots
bringing feeling into the subject and there are women reporters who are harder and cynical. According to FMJ:

the system is so bad that even if you have a woman at the decision making level, she is too much of a professional and doesn’t think the way you think... or may be we are not so much part of the rat race. But if you want to rise in the profession, you have to adopt the system, and when you adopt the system, you start thinking like everybody else (FMJ).

A few journalists (FSP, FMP, FBDS, MJW) on the other hand feel that women and men journalists have different perspectives towards routine affairs and surely towards women’s issues. FSP, although believed that like the whole media, journalists also get sucked into the system in terms of giving coverage to politicians and politics and ignoring other development issues, argues that women journalists in such situation have made conscious decisions not to get sucked because they are different and have different perspective. She argues "not that women are not ambitious, but they are ambitious in a different sense than men. Women have values whereas men are crudely hungry for the issues and so they just get sucked by the system. Most of the women are struggling and are sensitive because we experience it day and day".

FMP seemed to support that women unconsciously bring in a lot from their personal experience into journalism, whereas men, whether they are covering fashion shows or riots, never really look at off-beat and feminine angles. Particularly the language press in India, where practically 99.9 per cent of the media is financed, run, sold, and advertised in by men, though pays a lot of lip service to women, its analysis is generally very poor. Quoting issues like ‘triple talaq’ or ‘maintenance’, she argued that both for women and men these issues are political but for men it has its roots in the party politics and the caste system in North India and thus they will start their story from there, whereas for women it has its roots in the politics of gender and not in the politics of intra-party communal ideas. The reason might be as MJW says that women journalists are more deep, sensitive, humane and serious in their routine assignments, whereas men look at the incident only as an assignment. The reason behind this may be that men get friendly with the establishment sooner whereas women build a reservoir around them. It particularly holds relevance in a traditional society. For instance, FBDS explains that while covering crime, women will not go and pat a policeman and ask ‘OK, tell me, what’s happening’, because they are not friendly and maintain a distance and resultantly would probe more, and would not give any excuse
to police. Whereas men break this barrier and get friendly with most of the people on all the beats and therefore tend to be pro-establishment.

Some other journalists (MDM, FUR, MCM) believe that the news angle of both men and women journalists remains same but as far as subjective stories are concerned i.e., the social issues, features etc., women journalists, by and large, have a different perception. For instance, MCM argues that a woman reporter is perhaps more sensitive to personal issues than men. Men may make it a little more bland, women try to look at a little more personality orientation which makes a better reading sometimes. Women take to social issues more easily than men as there is resistance from men to do stories on education, culture etc. But as noted by MDM, in the recent past women have also shown considerable interest in political issues. So it is difficult to stereotype the situation. Some editors do think that women would be able to cover women's issues better but it is not necessary. Some of the women are not at all interested in women's issues.

Although some of the journalists believed that women and men journalists had different attitudes owing to their different life experiences, objectivity remains a priority on their minds. For instance, while quoting the coverage of a conference on contraceptives, FGP argued that there were a few men reporters in the conference but they did not participate at all in the discussion in terms of providing an insight into the problem or taking some stand since this issue affects both men and women. But interestingly, FGP did not complain about the way men journalists reported on the matter because, according to her, they presented a very professional view i.e., giving views of both sides and leaving it open to the public to decide. She said:

I have no complaints about the way my male colleagues wrote about it because they gave a very professional view and took the same stand that I took (FGP).

Similarly, FUR argues that although on subjective issues, like family planning and contraceptives, a woman's bias is bound to arise but "they try to be objective by presenting both sides".

As far as the attitude towards women's issues was concerned, it was observed during the interviews that both men and women journalists avoided covering women's issues. Journalists could not name a single male journalist in the city who was known to be covering women's issues. Although some men journalists like MDM, MJW, were
interested in development issues, they were not covering women's issues per se. Young women journalists were found to be more interested in women's issues as compared to older women journalists. But it was also observed that gradually their idealism dies as they grow in the profession. It may be attributed to professional socialisation i.e. when (women) journalists accept the standard norms of journalism as also noted by Van Zoonen (1989), and to the internalisation of cultural values. In the following section, I have identified the reasons behind the disinterest of both men and women journalists in women's issues.

a) Lack of interest and sensitivity among men journalists (patriarchal values/upward mobility)

It was gathered that men journalists usually avoid women's issues or even social and developmental stories. Coming to women's issues specifically, it can be argued that men, particularly in a traditional set-up, bring their patriarchal beliefs into the profession. MAMS, for instance, questions the status of wives of owners and editors in their personal lives. He asked:

What do you know about their wives? To them wives are very secondary people in their lives. They have given them children, a bit of sexual romance in their newly married life, and after that they are just looking after the household, and in turn they get jewellery, clothes, and are assets in their social circles. So how do you expect that these people want any change in the social order? (MAMS).

He said that some men journalists are open and others may not be open but emphatically most of them are chauvinists. A fine example of male chauvinism was MSM1 from HT. The moment I mentioned women's issues, he was almost hysterical and sarcastic. He argued:
Women's liberation is a very minuscule population of intellectuals and it does not matter to the masses of human beings living throughout the world. Throughout the world the power relation between men and women has been there and will remain so. Men and women are two different species. A person has been known for centuries doing good in one sphere let's say looking after the family, household and all. A woman's job primarily is looking after the family. And if you find it silly, the future generation can go to dogs as far as you are concerned... (MSM1).

However, MASG believes that "men are not, by and large, anti-women as a solid mentality. But in a subtle sense they are not bothered and are desensitised in a certain way... Even women can be anti-feminists but obviously if a woman is covering women's issues, she has more access because there are lot of deep realities which women face and men do not. So it is easier for her to interact with women but one should not be constituted as only women can do women's beat". Supporting the argument that women have different experiences, FRS feels that women journalists are more conscious of women's issues and like to write about them, but she justified men journalists' insensitivity on the grounds that they are not in touch with these problems because it does not affect them directly. A woman can identify herself with another woman but it is difficult for a man and that is why he fails to be sensitive to that problem.

On the other hand, there are men journalists, like MDM, who are interested in development and social issues, but are advised by their colleagues not to spoil their career. MDM revealed that when he expressed his desire to do stories on women and children, most of his colleagues thought it was a strange idea. FG confirmed having seen this attitude of colleagues in her organisation. She argued that men writing on women's issues, as such, are considered 'soft' and there would be other colleagues advising them not to spoil their career by doing soft stories. Similarly FBDS disclosed that men do not want to write on women's issues and get uncomfortable if they are told to cover them. Further if they cover women's issues, they are considered freaks in the journalistic world. Telegraph's women supplement was started on the initiative of women journalists only, and women journalists in the paper insist on men contributing to the supplement. They encourage their male colleagues to write but unfortunately the latter did not put efforts despite taking up the challenge that they would write.
Despite that, FSP argues that men start understanding women's perspective to some extent, if women lobby for it and "that is what we do in the Telegraph and it is a development that many young boys have become a little sensitive to women's issues". However, FG argues even if men talk about women's issues, there are very few who actually cover women's stories. They are more bothered about career and it is politics and business which can offer career advancements. Flick (1989) in her interviews with women journalists also found that even though male reporters were interested in women's issues, they left it to women to cover them.

Although many journalists suggested that men were not interested in women's issues because of their insensitivity and lack of interest as noted above, FRM offered another angle to the issue. She believed that men journalists do not treat women's issues seriously, but argued that women in public life have reinforced this attitude to a large extent. More and more women have turned their back towards women's issues, development issues, and consider it soft journalism. When women themselves do not regard these issues as important, men would obviously neglect them. Why have women turned their back towards women's issues? What factors contribute towards this change of mind?

b) Lack of interest among women journalists (upward mobility/individual aspirations)

Women also become chauvinists because gradually most of them start believing the system before it hurts them too much. Now-a-days, they are more keen to do political stories than women's issues. It helps the person jump fast in her career. So it is the career rather than the idealistic profession... Women's issues are now taken by women only when there is some incident like contraceptive issue. As such there are no serious and in-depth stories on women either by women or men journalists (MAMS).

FMP revealed that there are a lot of good women journalists who are hostile to feminism or to the feminist label and are clear that they do not want to be counted as feminists. According to her "it is the same mind set which lots of Indians have when they do not want to be identified with other Indians but with whites. In the same sense, women who are successful in the media want to be identified with their colleagues and comrades... But if your mind-set and your writing is substantially different but good, I do not think you should be really ashamed or self conscious about it". However she finds that there are very few women who consciously write as
women on development issues and have a sustained and clear overview of issues. They would rather write on foreign affairs than on women’s issues or development issues. She said:

*I think a lot of good women journalists are lost out to very good feminist areas primarily because of this pull away from feminism as a source of weakness or source of soft journalism which is not true. I find that male colleagues are far less conscious about writing on equality, on development, on family planning, on the art, culture, and theatre. But if you give a woman this beat, she will immediately confront that this is a soft area, give me political interviews, give me international affairs. I think women also have to some extent snap off the things (FMP).*

What does she think is the reason behind this attitude of women? She argues that those women who have been in the field for long can somehow see through the game and know that nothing is a barrier to your career except bad writing. But a lot of young women journalists have the reverse attitude.

*When you are younger, you are very influenced by your peers in the office i.e., male journalists and male editors, at home your fathers and brothers, then you do feel that whatever men are doing is more viable. They consider the news the same way as men do. It gets automatic because the whole atmosphere is like that (FMP).*

Skard (1993) also argued that when women join journalism, there are few models for women journalists, and then gradually they are also marked by men’s way of thinking. To be skilful the way men are, women have to prove that they are as good as men. Marzolf (1993: 41) noted in the United State’s context, “when women were told, you write as well as a man, they knew they were a success”. And women have been quite successful in journalism profession in Delhi according to FNC. She argues:

*Women are doing well because somewhere in their sub-conscious, they are conscious of the fact that they have to prove themselves. So they work harder... Yes, to rise above this system and to break new grounds should be a competition but it is not happening yet (FNC).*

As FRM argues, most women journalists feel typecast if they are confined to women’s issues because such issues are not considered serious. Many women journalists
dropped out partly because they were frustrated. And others who were ambitious and who stayed on have moved to other areas of focus like economy and politics. FRM's primary interest lies in human rights issues but occasionally she also covers women's issues. Although no news editor has ever discouraged her to do such stories, however, 'they are just seen as a fringe' according to her. Similarly, FRS argues:

For a woman journalist, it is very important to prove that she can do whatever men can do. She cannot say that she will not write on politics or crime because there is no publishing house which will hire her just to write on women's issues. Also, people feel that if you write about women's subjects you are moving away from mainstream journalism. So you have to put your feet in both boats. Writing on other issues has more credibility because readers and editors both feel that you are not a faith flagging feminist or a hysterical activist and that you are judging it purely on the merit of the subject (FRS).

Her own perception is reflected when she says:

You cannot go on writing on development activities of women. Something which is agitating them may not be of much concern to us because we have to see at a macro level i.e., how many people have been affected by it, and would it catch the interest of reader? To hear that every second-third woman gets raped is no point because people already know it (FRS).

Although younger women might get influenced by peers or colleagues in the office, as suggested by FMP, the forces of professionalism and an urge to prove themselves force many younger women journalists to divert from women's issues. FBDS feels that women consciously cover this beat but they also do not want to be branded as just covering women's issues and cultural issues because these are low priority areas. In her words:

You have to fight for a bit of space all the time, whereas if I do a political story, it gets page one or gets a better display, so people lose interest and would cover women's story only if something major happens (FBDS).
Similarly another young woman reporter, FMJ, feels frustrated sometimes as she says "you think that the issue is important but they don't think. For instance, I did a story on National Commission for Women hoping that it would be published but it was killed and was never carried". Mills (1993) argues in this regard that women's issues are left undone because male editors or occasionally female editors do not respect women's news judgement. FBDS highlighted another problem in this context. She revealed that once after a long argument with the editor, she was able to do a story of her interest and after it was published in the paper, lot of male friends teased her by calling her feminist. Similarly, on the coverage of beauty contests male colleagues would tease by saying "why do you get upset just because one good looking girl gets up to the media"? Mills (1993: 29) argues that, "it's one thing to prove yourself journalistically, which is not only appropriate but also required". But "constantly colliding with that myopic and monovisional stone wall on stories that affect more than half of the population is arrogant, stupid and journalistically suicidal".

Summary

It was quite clear when I talked to men journalists that they were not interested in women's issues. Although many women journalists have moved to other areas of journalistic focus, it was mainly women journalists who were vocal and provided an insight into the issue. As far as routine news is concerned, the general opinion among journalists was that professionalism or news value, not gender, determines quality of news. Coverage of developmental issues or women's issues was a matter of interest, sensitivity and personal approach. As a professional, every journalist, whether woman or man, would bring the same facts although women might be slightly more personal in their approach according to some journalists. Nevertheless, 'objectivity' remains an ideal among all.

As far as coverage of women's issues is concerned, it was observed that men lack interest in women's issues because of the values they have imbibed. They do not treat women as an important subject to be analysed or explored. A couple of men journalists brought their chauvinistic attitude even at the mention of women's issues during the course of interviews. In spite of lobbying by women colleagues, men have not shown interest in women's issues. Also men covering 'soft issues' are considered as 'sissy' in the field and they find it a hindrance in their career. Older women journalists, who were known to be covering women's issues at one stage have moved to other areas of focus like politics, economy, human rights. Most women journalists do not want to be dubbed as covering women's issues alone and also do not wish to be
defined as feminists because of its bad connotation. So gradually they move into other areas.

I would suggest that apart from the reasons of upward mobility, individual aspirations among women journalists also determine their attitude. Breaking the boundaries of an oppressive culture, journalism provides them a platform to prove their identity and individuality. An urge to prove themselves in a male dominated and patriarchal society, women journalists are attracted towards male dominated areas like politics and economy. Gradually, after long years of professional socialisation, they become insensitive to women's issues. An inclination towards human rights and development issues is understandable after being exposed to myriad of basic issues in a poor country. Women's issues then sound like a luxury issue or even non-issue. Apart from this, a subtle discrimination hindering their career prospects within the profession is also a key factor in deciding their course. Probably this provides another impetus to leave 'soft areas' and move to hard areas of journalistic focus. However, it cannot be denied that whatever attention is being paid to women's issues, it is mostly done by women journalists who are subconsciously sensitive to the cause.

6) Discrimination towards women journalists

Many scholars have documented cases of discrimination against women in the field of journalism - in terms of salaries, assignments, promotions, etc. Castellon and Guillier (1993) noted in Chile's context that about one-third of mid-level executives were women, but they earned as much as 25 per cent less than their male counterparts. Similarly, Marzolf (1993) has documented that until 1988, women journalists were paid less in the United States. Skard (1989) found in the context of Norway that in the daily press, there were very few women in responsible positions, and in terms of salary, men earned more than women and men have more opportunity to specialise in high news priority areas. Skard (1989) argued that women's contributions are affected by the distribution of tasks. Women journalists interviewed by Skard also admitted having faced sex-determined distribution of tasks. Women are assigned women's topics which are considered less interesting and soft, and hard areas like economy and business are assigned to men. This kind of discrimination, argues Skard, forces women to make a choice between being a woman or a proper journalist. Many of them reject 'being women' and choose to become proper journalists. But in the process, women's topics get neglected because men do not take up those subjects. So women, realising that if they do not cover women's issues, they would not be covered, also do those stories and thereby confirm the sex-determined distribution of tasks.
Marzolf (1993: 41) documents this as a choice between being "a woman and therefore less an achieving individual - or an achieving individual and therefore less a woman". Lunenborg (1993) in her study on women journalists in Germany, found that even though the field of journalism was dominated by women in Germany, decision making positions seemed to be reserved for men and the hard fields were still male.

In my interviews, I gathered that most men journalists did not generally think that there was any kind of discrimination existing against women journalists in the newspaper organisations. Only a few of them could perceive this problem. On the other hand, only one or two of the older women journalists denied discrimination in the present scene, whereas most other women journalists argued that although the situation has changed since the 1970s, discrimination against women still existed in a subtle sense. However, it was made clear by women journalists that there was no discrimination in terms of salaries as far as working with the English press was concerned.

Many women journalists (FUR, FGP, FRS, FBDS, FSP) recalled earlier times - the 1970s- when women were not encouraged to enter journalism profession. But times have changed now and discrimination does not exist at those levels according to them. Over the years more and more women have come into this profession. FGP recalled that there were times when the 'Hindu' did not take a woman reporter at all but they have changed their attitude in the last few years. Even in HT, one of their women colleagues had to barge into the editors room to get a job since they had a policy not to enrol women journalists. Even after that there were times when women were overlooked for promotion but that is all changing, says FGP.

FRS, who also started her career working with the Hindustan Times in the 1970s, recalled that women correspondents were a new concept at that time. They used to be assigned soft stories like fashion, cookery, flower arrangements etc. Therefore, their first battle was to prove that they could do all kinds of reporting. She argues "it was that time you had to prove that not only you were good but were better than the men otherwise there was no reason why they should employ you". She argues that initially there was no way that she could have insisted on doing only women's issues. Later in the 1980s, talk about women's issues had started and in the 1990s "comparatively we have moved ahead because people at the top i.e., news editors, editors, have become at least attentive and are willing to listen to things which you feel you could write
about”. FUR remembered that when she herself had joined the ‘Times of India’, its editor called her one day and said:

What are you doing young lady in a newspaper? I do not think newspapers are a place for women, and you will be better doing something else (FUR).

But subsequently he changed a lot and his own daughter is in journalism now. Thus perceptions keep changing argues FUR, and in the 1990s most of the editors think that their best writers and reporters are women. Although 1970s was an old period, FBDS recalled when she was working with the PTI (Press Trust of India) seven years ago i.e. in 1988, all women journalists were assigned desk jobs. If they wanted to join the reporting unit, they were told:

No, there would be riots, violence, we cannot send women reporters, we are responsible for people. It was a paternal attitude that we must protect our women colleagues. But it was detrimental to our careers. The young boys who joined with us became reporters and women remained at the desk (FBDS).

Many journalists (FUR, MSM1, MCM, FRS, FGP) do not think that any kind of discrimination exists against women even in terms of assigning stories. They believe that it might have been a norm at one time but it no longer exists. They argue that women are now in positions of power and they are into every field, and are tend to be more objective than men. They feel that if a woman is good she is not denied any promotions on the basis of sex. Denial of tough beats or crime stories or night duties to women also used to exist earlier but the situation has changed now and both men and women are considered at par. Denying any discrimination taking place against women journalists, MCM quoted many women in the Hindustan Times holding senior positions both at the desk and in the reporting area. He argues that although HT does not have many women, the ones who are in the office are occupying key positions in those very areas where normally men dominate, for instance, politics.

However, there are others (MDM, MJW, FMP, FRM, FMJ) who have witnessed discrimination against women in a subtle form. They argue that there are large number of women journalists in the profession and some of them have been there for the last 15-20 years but surprisingly there is not a single woman editor or news editor or chief reporter. FRM argues “the very fact that you do not have women in editorial
positions conveys something. There are women as assistant editors but not in editorial positions”. Similarly MDM said:

*Directly there may not be any discrimination but indirectly it does exist.*

If you ask me to prove it, I may not be able to prove it but I do not understand why not a single major newspaper has a woman editor. Even though there are lots of successful senior women in journalism, why is it that they do not occupy positions of power in the newspaper hierarchy. If a male and a female journalist join together and have the same seniority, same salary, it is easier for a man to get the key positions, like the news editor, faster than women... *Although attitudes are changing now, as some years ago the chief reporters would not send women on night duties and now they do, but again it is with the initiative of women reporters themselves (MDM).*

MJW also believes that discrimination against women journalists exists in a subtle form, when he argued:

*I do not know whether discrimination is deliberate or it is a misconception but I suppose there is a discrimination. Women are sent to cover soft stories, seminars, and are not usually assigned tough beats and crime stories or riots even though there are women crime reporters available. But it is not women journalists’ fault. The fault is with those who assign the duties. As such women are keen to do these stories (MJW).*

Although FGP had previously denied any kind of discrimination taking place against women, at another instance she also admitted that the news editors and chief reporters usually send women journalists to cover women’s issues. However, she thinks that there are two reasons for doing this. The first reason is that women’s issues are not considered hard news and other is they (chief reporter and news editor) feel that women can understand women’s issues better than men. FGP does not support this essentialism and argues that "unless we expose men to women’s issues, they won’t be sensitised to it”.

In terms of assigning stories, FMJ and FG also supported that soft issues are generally assigned to women particularly in the early days of their career. However, FSP does not blame the person who assigns stories because she thinks that women like her find
development beat more satisfying than political beat. She does not deny women's interest in political beats and their ambitions in those terms, and argues that women are doing better even in the hard areas of journalism and that editors do not discriminate against them. But FBDS thinks that even though the situation has changed quite a lot compared to the past in the sense that women cover 'hot spots' but still editors think of sending men at first instance. A woman journalist has to prove herself by covering hot spots 3-4 times before they become regular, whereas men do not have to prove and are taken for granted. Further, it takes a long time for a woman to hold a senior position like a chief reporter or news editor. Why is it that women do not reach the top of their career? MCM, does not consider it discrimination rather he presented women as handicapped in practical sense, when he argued:

*Women are extremely conscientious, hard working, free from prejudices but I must confess that only at one point we do have a bit of difficulty and that also because our family back up system is not good enough. Joint family has broken up and in the nuclear family men do not share work and therefore women find it difficult to retain the same degree of productivity after they become mothers. This is a problem which definitely hampers their work and tends to affect the newspaper and also the editor's attitude. Once a woman becomes a mother there is a drop in her activity, her concerns get divided, and at that point one is unable to get the best professionally from women. But barring that I think women journalists are better than men in many respects (MCM).*

Calling it a disadvantage and not discrimination, FSP argues that women always have been disadvantaged in the sense that if they have children, they have to attend them and therefore cannot take up many assignments. FSP's career has also started stagnating at this point because she has two young children and she is not able to invest as much time as others do. Lunenborg (1993) came across some women journalists in her study, who also had similar problems. One of them, having a very young child was able to reduce her daily working hours after a strong struggle. But the result was that she got a job where she could not write anymore. FSP does not see the fault of management in it even if she loses; she argues that many editors now prefer to have women on their rolls because they think women have greater zeal and want to prove themselves. But she implies that women's personal problems like children and family hinder their progress. On the other hand, FRS seems to support the employers and justify their stand, when she argues:
Why would he take a person who does not deliver as much as other person? ...Also, women are a security problem. These are practical problems and there is no point in women saying that we are as good as men because we are not. Let's say if an incident takes place in the middle of the night and if I have staff of both men and women, I would send a man not because I have less faith in woman's professional capabilities but I am doing it purely from a security point of view. I do not want her to be killed or raped. But if a woman says that she wants to go, no one will refuse (FRS).

Calling this attitude as discrimination in a subtle sense, FMP believes that if a woman is outstandingly good, then there is no discrimination. However, the problem starts much earlier. Not denying practical problems on part of women, she links up this whole issue with women's status in society and their gendered roles. She puts out:

Women's basic problem is their own family particularly when they are newly married or about to marry, they have the problem of doing night duties or travelling alone. If they are strong willed and powerful enough within the family to get their way and do this, then they do well and there is no way to be discriminated against. But in most cases, families insist that their girls should be given day beats. If I give her a very good beat then the mother rings up or she herself would say that my father won't let. Now tell me which editor in the world would cover up women? He really cannot protect weaknesses. He can give them good breaks but after that they have to prove themselves. That's where I feel the Indian family lets the girl down very well. I have come across dozens of girls whose husbands become jealous or their mothers-in-law become aggressive and stop taking care of their young children. Such subtler discriminating tendencies keep on hindering girl's confidence and professionalism all through, so that by the time she is in her thirties and to be considered for editorial level assignments, most of the times she does not have the requisite qualifications. You really have to be an old bold horse to survive this.. The Hindu society and the family has been structured in such a way that men are getting the creams of their land. Most Indian men, if you interview, will say that our family system is the best in the world, and that do not disturb our families. Since they are in the control of family, they have a vested interest in getting the status quo
going, and after all they are the ones who realise what is it to be different? (FMP).

While FMP finds the family and social structure a hindrance in the career of women in the Indian context, Smith (1980), in the British context, found that the encouragement given to women journalists in covering certain kinds of stories like mothers and babies stories, or getting a human angle on major news stories, detracts them from the development of skills in the reporting of more central political and economic issues. He argues that a lack of wide journalistic experience can be held accountable for the incredibly small proportion of women in news sub-editing, experience of which is an almost mandatory qualification for promotion to senior editorial position. But in the Indian context, women's secondary status within the family impinges upon their career. A similar attitude which women face in the family can also be found within the media profession according to MSM2. He argues:

Some of the best contributions to Indian media in the last 5-10 years have come from women journalists. They have the capacity for conceptualising, skills in writing, and sheer bravery in going out, and it has created waves of insecurity among male colleagues. So they ignored their success by not reacting to it seriously, and continuously trying to marginalise them with the result that women journalists who were absolutely bright ten years ago are all into some form of neurosis and it is very distressing to see that because they were absolute cream talent. It is unfortunate that many of them have also moved to so called political affairs out of frustration (MSM2).

Men's jealousy and insecurity is evident when they do not seem to come to terms with the fact that journalism is a profession for women also. FBDS reported that male colleagues in Telegraph's office keep saying "it is a pin money for you and you can enjoy with it. Or why do you need a salary"? The feeling among them is that women would get married and leave. Younger men are certainly better than the older in their thinking and they are also conscious that "if they do not think like us, they cannot become a part of our circle" (FBDS). She argues that the attitude that women get positions or promotion on the basis of their close affinity with male editors and not because of work, still exists at a broad level but getting wiped out gradually because "we have refused to take any kind of shit from anyone of male colleagues". Smith (1980) also found from one of her women respondents that while she was doing a story with a male photographer, it came to her notice that he had been spreading the
story around that she had got the assignment by sleeping with the editor of the paper concerned. When this woman reporter challenged her colleague, he was defenceless.

**Conclusion and discussion**

The present chapter provides a link to many questions raised in previous chapters. The analysis in chapter six had revealed that women’s issues are largely marginalised and the women’s movement is nearly missing in the press. It was observed that violence/crime stories formed a major percentage of the data and it was argued that such stories remain the staple food of media because of their sensational appeal and easy availability which was also confirmed by most of the journalists in the current chapter. By and large women’s issues mean rape, bride-burning, dowry deaths, suicides, etc. but they also remain non-analytical and at times even non-exploratory. For instance, MCM, the executive editor emphasised repeatedly that "whenever there are any kind of ghastly rape cases" or "whenever there has been any kind of major atrocities", the Hindustan Times has never lagged behind in its coverage. Since violence/crime stories are non-analytical, they mainly serve the purpose of providing sensation, titillation, and fulfil the economic needs of the press.

It was also derived from chapter 6 that media invest little effort in covering women’s issues. Most of the stories come from regular sources and the coverage is subjected to common news value. In tune with this observation, it was found in the current chapter that newspapers do not have any legitimate women’s beat and journalists lack interest in women’s issues. It has been argued by many scholars that journalists do not have autonomy in news organisations (see chapter 4), and the particular ideologies are said to be produced as a result of bureaucratisation, organisational factors, and social structure. Any conscious or deliberate efforts on the part of journalists in selection or processing of events is ruled out. However, it was observed in the present study that journalists enjoy autonomy as far as coverage of women’s issues is concerned since this area is not restricted by beats, and most importantly newspapers have no specific policy on women’s issues implying that the coverage is left to the discretion and individual opinions of journalists. In light of this observation, it may be argued that most of the journalists, inspite of having autonomy, do not deliberately cover women's issues. Many of them who are interested in women's issues or social or development issues cover them because of their personal interest and it is important to note that their stories are not denied space since the press also lives up to the rhetoric of being a democratic institution.
Various reasons which seem to impinge upon the coverage of women's issues were generated from the responses of journalists. Some of the prominent reasons identified were non-news worthiness of women's issues, male domination, lack of encouragement, upward mobility in the profession, and so on. However, it is not difficult to observe that apart from these factors, there is a general lack of interest and sensitivity among journalists towards women's issues. The statements recorded to this effect were: 'there are no strong feelings or attitudes about this subject' or 'press is least bothered about women's organisations'. In fact many journalists themselves suffer from a fatigue towards the issues which reflected clearly in their comments like: 'it even becomes boring for the paper to carry them' or 'basically the same issues are being addressed... today it may be Sarla, tomorrow somebody else and so on' or 'to hear that every second-third woman gets raped is no point because people already know it' or 'routine rapes are not given serious attention and the general attitude would be - it's useless, put it in an inside page'. Ultimately, such stories are turned into commodities and their human dimension is largely ignored. Journalists also seem to justify their own fatigue with these stories on the grounds of the supposed fatigue of readers which is reflected in comments like: 'our readers are fed up with soft stories about women. It is very tragic that women are being mistreated but what can we do if fathers do not want to love their daughters...? or 'do people stop burning women after reading such articles'? As a result of this fatigue and the acceptance of an existing order, it can be observed that the 'novelty' of women's issues visible in the 1980s has lost its significance among the media. It can also be argued that a commitment towards women's cause is lacking among journalists due to continuing women's oppression in society and an overall cultural insensitivity towards women in a traditional set-up. This has been argued in view of increasing incidents of violence like female foeticide, dowry deaths, etc. which have become naturalised. Further, not covering women's issues as a part of upward mobility or professional career in itself indicates that women or their issues do not hold a significant status in the news hierarchy in tune with social hierarchy.

Focusing on interviews with women activists, chapter seven provided an account of women activists' opinions on the press coverage and gave an insight into patterns of interaction between women activists and media. Apart from women-media relationship, it also looked into the relationship between women activists and policy makers. It was found that women activists were largely dissatisfied with the coverage of women's news/issues in the media and with the attitude of the press. Journalists approach women activists mainly for comments or reactions to issues which they think are important. The indifference of activists towards media observed in chapter...
seven was explained in view of their close relationship with policy makers. Although women activists defined their relationship as conflictual with both media and policy makers, a significant observation noted was women's easy access to and regular encounters with policy makers in spite of high potential of tension between them. The relations of women activists with policy makers were found to be much more interactive than with media people. It is particularly so because many of the activists are themselves affiliated with political parties. Thus it was argued that women have become an important constituency in the elite political arena and moreover government uses this constituency in many situations for its own interests as well. Although women's movement does not pose a serious political threat to the government, at the same time policy makers cannot ignore women. In such circumstances, women activists in fact do not seem to require media to act as mediators between them and the policy makers. However, this does not imply that women's movement can function without media or that media are insignificant. Rather it can be argued that on various issues when policy makers play unfair or pass biased decisions, media are the major means through which alternative ideas or government's biases can be made visible. Further media are important to reach other middle class women to gain their support towards women's cause, to make issues widely known, and for the growth of the movement. Therefore, it is essential that women activists build a rapport with media.

Further an extremely negative and critical attitude of most of the journalists towards women activists as observed in the current chapter also explains the indifference and reluctance of women activists in approaching media. The reasons of this neglect by journalists are discussed later on. Although women activists displayed an attitude of indifference towards media for the reasons mentioned above, it was found from the journalists that, by and large, it is still women activists who approach media or journalists when they required. In the words of MCM, the executive editor of HT:

> It is usually women's organisations who inform us about the incidents and it is very rarely that we go to search out unless we get a tip off from a completely unrelated source... To go to a women's organisations and search for news is not really necessary because we know that whenever there is anything which is worth drawing our attention too, they will do that.

In view of certain observations made in the previous chapters and in the current chapter it may be inferred that media do not possibly set agenda for women. Such
observations include: various missing themes on media's agenda as noticed in analysis of coverage of women's issues in chapter six; dismissal of the women's movement in the media; lack of efforts on the part of journalists to approach women activists; a very bitter and negative approach of journalists towards feminism and/or women activists. Joseph and Sharma's (1994) study has rather suggested that for some issues and in some cases media react to agenda of others. This observation was made on grounds of a relationship between media's coverage of issues like dowry deaths, rape, foeticide and women activists' campaigns on these issues.

While the inadequacies noted on the part of women activists in approaching media may be explained through two factors i.e. their accessibility to policy makers, and a highly critical attitude of journalists towards women activists as noticed in the current chapter, an important query which emerges from the current chapter is: why do journalists hold extremely negative opinions about feminism and/or women activists? Some journalists seemed to suggest that feminists are not rooted in the reality of India. It raises an important question, which is, what reality? And what is the implication of this statement? To me, this statement has the following implications as I perceived in the responses of journalists. They are:

1. Feminists are not rooted in the sociocultural reality of India
2. Feminists are not rooted in the socioeconomic reality of India and/or lack broader perspectives

1. Looking into the first implication, it can be argued that in a traditional set-up, feminism carries a bad connotation particularly as the concept is assumed to be borrowed from the West. According to one woman activist, "people do not care borrowing Western models of development but when it comes to feminism it is rejected as a Western phenomenon" (SK). Why is feminism bad in the Indian context?

The concept of feminism is antithetical to the existing patriarchal values and family structure in India. India is a traditional society where individuality of a woman, as stressed by feminism, does not carry significance. According to Hindu Dharma, as

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10 It can be argued that the concept of 'feminism' is assumed to be borrowed from the West in the absence of evidences of women's struggle (like Mira, see chapter 2) within the Indian context. It was also argued by Majumdar (see chapter 2) that Indian society has prevented the critical examination of women's participation in the radical movements of the past. However, the development of research in such areas may be able to prove the indigenous nature of women's struggle against social inequalities in the Indian society.
discussed in chapter 2, women have specific duties towards husband, in-laws, and children, and they are expected to fulfill these as part of their sacred duty. For a Hindu woman in particular, husband is a lord and her duty is to stand by him in the fulfillment of his duties towards his ancestors. Sitahood continues to be promoted as an ideal for Hindu women. Thus, the role of woman as a housewife and mother is not particularly based on her own interests or individuality rather it is based on interests of family and community since a strong family is the basis of social order.

Quite contrarily feminism questions the power relationships in the private sphere i.e. the domestic, the sexual division of labour, the control of their sexuality and fertility etc. Thus feminist theory does not fit into the philosophy of Dharma which is the foundation of Indian culture and provides a sharp contrast to the values of sacrifice, motherhood, joint interests, moral values etc. Although feminism in India has not explicitly questioned the family structure, it is still perceived as a threat which would disturb the family values. As noted by FBDS “most editors and senior people look at the activists as shrill women, who keep screaming, and call them devious. One of our editors even hates these feminists”. Another journalist revealed that “journalists treat women activists with a little sort of contempt and in a frivolous manner”. Further, a popular impression among journalists about feminists is:

_Feminists are rabble-rousing dogmatic, West-oriented, not rooted in the reality of India, not open minded, anti-family, and pro-divorce... Even though many so called radical groups have now evolved in their thinking and even when their focus has been much more on the broader social issues than women’s issues alone, damage to their image in the media has already been done._ (FNC).

The above quote clearly indicates that feminism is perceived as a threat to the patriarchal culture and despite its changed course towards 1990s i.e. its shifting focus on development issues, it is still seen as hostile to India’s cultural values. The argument that feminism is perceived as anti-family and anti-men may be witnessed in the following quote “putting the men on defence will serve no purpose... You lose husbands and brothers when you become aggressive. So you have to take them along” (FSS). Men are most affected by a threat to family values because they are in complete control of their families. As one of the men journalists puts it:
Men and women are two different species. A person has been known for centuries doing good in one sphere let’s say looking after the family, household and all. A woman's job primarily is looking after the family. And if you find it silly, the future generation can go to dogs as far as you are concerned.\(^{11}\) (MSM1).

When this journalist was asked which organisations are active in sending press releases, his contempt was further evident when he said:

*Those who are active are the other type who have more of rallies, demonstrations. But people who are doing genuine work at the grass roots level, their work does not seem to come to us more (MSM1).*

It is further implied in this statement that those organisations which are active are basically the ones led by middle class women, who have questioned the patriarchal structures and thus who may be a threat to the social order. Such organisations have raised a series of issues like property rights, violence against women, population policies etc., whereas the grass root organisations are more concerned with development issues and basic needs, and work for the betterment of unprivileged sections in society. It further depicts that Indian culture does not allow women to nurture individual values or interests whereas community interests, common social goals and other espoused values are supportively embraced. The particular cultural values are fully internalised by both men and women in the society and gender loses its significance in that situation. A contempt towards feminism or feminists does not come as a surprise from men journalists since men are most threatened by women's giving up their traditional roles or losing femininity (Molotch, 1978), however, even women journalists internalise masculine ideology and become critical of feminists. For instance, a young woman journalist remarked:

*They (feminists) are real society cats, whose husbands are rich, holding higher offices. Since they have lots of money and they live in big houses in South Delhi and mostly free in the afternoons, they go and make organisations by converting their houses into offices (FV).*

\(^{11}\) This quote also indicates how a hegemonic patriarchal ideology is not even open to alternative ways of thinking; how it perceives feminism, as in the words of Hackett (1991: 57), "dangerous, unrealistic, unreasonable, and even renders it unthinkable from within the established maps of social reality".
As is evident from this remark, middle class feminists receive criticism on the basis of their privileged class background as well, although, as argues Banks (1981: 5) that it is mainly middle-class women activists who "have the education and political skills necessary for rebellion and, indeed, the leisure time that makes it possible for rebellious ideas to be translated into political action. Moreover, for them, much more than for working-class women, it is clear that their discontent is linked to their position as women, rather than to their class”.

However, on the other hand some women's organisations face many hardships in their survival and sustaining their activism, and some of them do not even have proper offices to conduct their work due to the shortage of funds. Unfortunately, journalists like FV are perhaps not even aware of this other side of the reality.

2 While some journalists seemed to disapprove of feminism as a Western phenomenon or perceived it as a threat to cultural values, many others seemed to suggest that women activists have a narrow approach towards issues, which also leads to conflicts in opinions between journalists and activists. Nine out of twenty-one journalists explicitly emphasised development perspective and/or human rights perspective. A strong factor which overshadows feminist issues particularly when they are raised by middle class women who are privileged in terms of financial resources in a poor country is the issue of development. It comprises issues like basic needs, poverty, illiteracy, health, malnutrition, shelter, sanitation, etc. India provides a contrast of have and have-nots. There is uneven distribution of resources among people. On the one hand there are a few privileged people who live in luxury and on the other hand, a large number of population grapples with the problem of fulfilling basic needs. Most Indian women also fall into the category of unprivileged people and do not have same demands or problems as urban middle class women face. It also implies that patriarchal oppression, which may also be the reality of poor women's lives, is not the priority on their agenda.

Gender is not the only leg on which feminism can stand in third world countries. It is because the broader issues mentioned above are the priority issues faced by both women and men. And in the light of these problems, gender may sound like a luxury issue or even a non-issue and hence loses its significance. This message, along with an antagonism towards middle class feminism, echoes loudly in the opinions of many journalists. For instance:
Living under the shadows of insecurity, poverty, poor conditions on every front, a common man is more worried about his living than about the ideals. No one has any hope in the future and we, newspaper men, are also people of this country and we also do not have hopes. Everyday water goes, electricity goes and we do not make an issue out of it. So why on a vague issue like women? (MAMS).

There is no point in picking up hundred women from the slums and taking them to the march to Parliament and saying we will not accept Norplant. Go and see what is happening in their homes. How can you better their lives? and that is the most important thing (FRS).

Women are not facing any specific problems. I will say issues facing India are health, education, water, electricity, and these are everyone's concern. I do not think these are women's issues and sooner you remove the gender basis... the better. Population is not just a women's issue, men are equally involved and sooner you realise that ... the better (FSS).

Very stupidly, unnecessarily, they (women activists) ruined her (a poor minor girl) life by exposing it to public in such a blatant manner and no body did what actually should have been done. The issue behind Saudi Sheikh's coming to India to marry poor girls is not ordinary... the issue is poverty (MJW).

Journalists seem to argue that issues of poverty, hunger, basic necessities etc., which millions of people in India face are more important than issues raised by middle-class feminists, which of course, holds relevance. However, a major critique can be offered against media or journalists themselves in the sense that how far are media or journalists interested in covering development issues or people's issues or questioning the unequal structures in the society? How genuine are their concerns about the basic necessities of poor people? Scholars (see chapter 3) have already pointed out that the english press is obsessed with narrow political news and development issues are relegated to a back seat which was also noticed in the opening debate of the current chapter.

It may be argued that the english press, which is an elite press, remains insensitive to development issues like poverty, illiteracy, health, malnutrition, since such issues do not affect the elite strata of population. As noticed in section one, many journalists
openly argued that large number of people are not interested in development issues because such issues do not affect their lives and hence they would not be interested in those stories. The upper echelon of people who run the media and who are the readers of the english press belong to highly developed India and do not experience the inequalities which people from underdeveloped sections face. Therefore, poverty, illiteracy, fulfilment of basic needs, are also not their concerns. Their concerns are limited mainly to politics. By this definition, the english press is basically a class press, and an urge among journalists to remain closer to power is also part of the same game.

The reasons behind media's neglect of development issues merit a book on its own. But it is not hard to establish that the coverage of development issues or the issues affecting the unprivileged sections of society may directly clash with political and economic interests of an elite press. Since journalists are not able to focus on problems of disadvantaged sections, intentionally or unintentionally, a certain helplessness resulting out of the unchanged realities in the society was too obvious in their responses, and women activists simply seem to become 'scapegoats' in the process. Journalists fail to appreciate that women activists can only raise issues to bring awareness and cannot change the society overnight. The expectations of journalists from women activists are at times too high as reflected in the following quotes:

I do not know what to think about them (women's movement)? They might have greater commitment than most of us but I do not see any movement as a movement. You are talking of women's rights but if you go to the Ashok Vihar's police station in Delhi itself, the policemen rape four girls everyday. They bring them to the police station, have a good time, and send them away (MVN).

...Courts are full of cases of dowry deaths. Everyday the culprits are freed because judges are so callous and because the accused can hire top lawyers to get bails, and it is very unfortunate that no single women's organisation has ever tried to stop it or do something about it. (MJW).

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12 Pandey argues that "feminists are treated more or less as fire tenders in our country. Whenever there is a fire, make a phone call and expect them to rush to the spot" (see Jha, 1992: 43).
I may go to a seminar for my own knowledge or to cover it for the paper but how does it help women's issues? how does it really help women reader? I feel their approach is very superficial... When the sati incident took place, journalists were dependent on other people for information. Why did no women's organisations ever think of bringing it to the notice of the press..? (FRS).

You cannot tackle many issues by litigation or by giving it some press release or by demonstration or by jumping over walls to protest against faulty contraceptives, which is very stupid. You jump over the walls, protest, and what you get is front page news. Are you satisfied? How is it going to solve the problem? I do not understand it. What purpose does it serve by blocking the roads? (MJW).

Citing many examples of victim women's stories, FRM, who has moved away from women's issues to human rights issues argued that everyone including the journalists, media, and women's organisations use the victim women. According to her, victim women simply become objects in women activists' campaigns. Though she agreed that the motive of women's groups is to bring the issues to people's attention, she thinks that it is one way of exploitation because it does not help poor women, and "at the end some of them like Shah Bano died as object and all of us let her die". Similarly, she revealed that one of women's organisations had held a press conference in which it produced a minor girl raped firstly by non-uniformed people and later in police custody. Although this organisation was trying to orchestrate the conference itself so that there were no crude questions posed, journalists asked questions like "how many times did they reach you? did it hurt? were you beaten? where did they beat you?. and so on to the victim girl". FRM agreed that the organisation's intention was to mobilise public opinion against police torture and media are supposed to report such atrocities on women, but these cases, according to her, are followed for a few weeks and in the end all these victims get lost.

Herself in a fix at the state of affairs, and pointing towards a nexus between media and women activists towards the plight of victim women, FRM calls it a callousness masquerading as professionalism. She further argues that "the fine balance between sensitivity and professionalism necessary when investigating social atrocities is all too often lost by our sense of collective guilt as members of a privileged class". But can women's groups be blamed for exposing culprits and bringing issues to public attention? FRM agreed "no, we still have to do it because it is important. But let us
not fool ourselves, that is all I am saying. Let us by no means have illusions that we actually helped the girl in question. Let us also see that media to some extent are an exploitative medium”.

From the above responses, it can be understood that after being exposed to endless issues in a poverty stricken country journalists do not seem to approve the gender perspective of women activists; and after a realisation that ‘nothing can be done’ in an unequal and stratified society, women activists also become easy targets. According to journalists, the issue of development and ‘humanity’ are much more serious than specifically women’s question. For instance, advocating an humanitarian approach where there is respect for a child, for a woman, for a poor man, for a servant, the Editor of the HT expressed a desire to introduce an issue based page in the paper which would cover issues like population, poverty, etc. which according to him affect the diverse sections of society. He argues:

*I am more keen on how people have been treated by law and society as human beings and not as men and women. Whereas gender page only deals with women, which means they are apart. It’s an apartheid in a way which I don’t like. I don’t feel that it’s right. All my life I have not seen people in terms of men and women. So..I can’t understand this... In fact society does not need feminism as much as the inter-relation of both men and women into humanism (MVN).*

Unfortunately, the women’s question (whether elite or poor) gets diffused within the issue of development and wonderful mythology of humanity or humanism. This approach again seems to stress on common interests and goals, and denies individuality to women. This may be the reason that some journalists appreciate grass root activism and are highly critical of women’s activism on issues like contraceptives. This is not to deny the importance of development issues or human rights issues in a poor country, but a crucial inquiry is: is the coverage of development issues and/or human rights issues sensitive to gender perspective? As noted by Eashwar (1984: 4) within the Indian context “the majority of women journalists have taken women’s issues as integral to the crusade for human rights and basic civil liberties for all citizens. Denial of constitutional rights to women is treated as a part of denial of basic rights to other deprived people - dalits, landless labour, unemployed, those below the starvation line in urban and rural areas, tribals and
consumers. The discrimination and oppression of women as a sex\textsuperscript{13}, irrespective of
their caste or class, is not singled out for special attention". In tune with this
observation, a woman journalist as noted by Jha (1992: 47) commented that the issues
like sati or Shah Bano "are social issues of great importance. You undervalue them by
calling them women's issues. These are human rights issues. When you say these are
women's issues, they just sound like gynaecological problems". This journalist further
added that if other women journalists do not approach women's problems the way she
does, it is "because the rest of them (other women journalists) suffer from the
propaganda of the 1960s in the West... I think there are other women's issues which
need to be taken up - like drinking water, fuel etc." (see Jha, 1992: 47).

This statement clearly depicts how gender is overlooked within the broader definition
of social issues/development issues and human rights issue. As argued by Broadbent
(1993: 10) "the increasingly popular slogan 'women's rights are human rights' is
simply stating the obvious. Yet it requires a concerted effort, both political and
intellectual, to make this statement a reality". For instance, sati is no doubt a human
rights issue, but it cannot be overlooked that it is 'only' 'women' as a 'social' category
who commit sati due to widowhood constraints. Further the human rights issues have
been confined mainly to political situations. Women's issues like domestic violence
and subordination of women by religious doctrines and traditions, according to Cook
(1993) need to be integrated into the human rights model since this model is confined
to public life and does not reach the private. Further, drinking water, fuel, etc. are no
doubt broader issues of development, but within this model also 'women' as a 'gendered' category are most affected by development policies or aid policies and
their interests get marginalised. It might be a useful approach for women activists to
work within the broader framework of development issues and human rights to gain
respect from media, however, they need to be wary of gender perspective within these
models.

It may be concluded from this debate that while marginalisation of women's issues in
the media is partly a result of individual preferences of journalists for reasons like
upward mobility in professional career and lack of interest in the women's question,
dismissal of the women's movement may also be attributed to patriarchal beliefs of a
traditional society and ideological differences between journalists and activists in a
developing country. Although in the recent past women activists have taken up

\textsuperscript{13} It was noted in the interviews with most of the journalists also that hardly a distinction is made
between sex and gender. Both are used to refer to 'females'.

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broader issues on their agenda, middle class feminism as such does not yet hold a respectable status among the community of journalists.

However, it is important to note here that in the absence of research on the relationship between media and movements in India, it may not be relevant to claim that it is purely the gendered and patriarchal elements which determine media's attitude towards the women's movement. Research is required to study the attitude of media towards other movements in India before making such claims.

As regards the debate on the role of women journalists towards the feminist cause, the findings coincide with Van Zoonen's (1988) observation that gender differences among journalists also lose their significance within the process of professional socialisation, and further through the internalisation of cultural values. Most of the journalists denied any differences in the approach of women and men journalists towards women's issues. According to them, the difference lies in the personal approach and not in the gender of a person. These journalists emphasised values like professionalism and objectivity. Only a small number of journalists argued that women bring in a lot from their personal experience into journalism. However, it was observed in the interviews that both men and most of women journalists avoid covering women's issues. The major reasons identified were lack of interest and sensitivity among men journalists, and upward mobility and fulfilment of individual aspirations among women journalists.

All men journalists were unanimous in their opinion that there was a lack of interest and sensitivity towards women's issues and the women's movement. Only two out of nine men journalists provided a gender perspective to the issue and contributed towards the discussion whereas others were not very articulate. On the other hand, most of women journalists were very articulate and provided a deep insight into the topic although they may not be covering women's issues per se. For instance, it was mostly women journalists (and two men journalists covering development issues) who pointed out that coverage of women's issues depend entirely on personal initiatives of journalists and that there was no encouragement given by the management. Further, the links like marginalisation of women's issues in the press and women's secondary position in the society were also offered by women journalists. However, at the same time they also emphasised values like professionalism, economic interests of press, and objectivity.
Out of twelve women journalists interviewed for this study, eight were older and/or established in their profession. Seven of these journalists began their career with covering women's issues and five of them later moved to other areas of focus like politics, development, human rights. Another woman journalist covers mainly social issues including women's issues by choice. However in her interview she also emphasised objectivity and professionalism. Only one woman editor has remained devoted to women's cause and furthered arguments towards this end. Four out of twelve women journalists belonged to younger age-group. Three of them showed greater interest in women's issues. In the Indian context Jha (1992: 56) also noticed that "women journalists in the younger age group with uncoiled enthusiasm, however, feel strongly about the neglect of women's issues". However, at the same time, these journalists are quite aware of the professionalism and the fact that 'you get sucked by the system gradually'. But it is mainly young women journalists who keep regular contacts with women's groups or activists also.

It can be argued that after being exposed to endless issues in a poor country and after being socialised professionally for long years in journalism, gender seems to have lost its significance for established women journalists also. They usually find the approach of women activists narrow, and hence there are conflicts in opinions. Most of these women had started their career covering women's issues but after 20-25 years in journalism profession they have become equally cynical about women activists. Not that they lost interest in women's issues, rather it is due to the 'syndrome of marginalisation', that these women journalists gradually moved to other areas of journalistic focus like politics, development issues, human rights etc. An important reason of this shift is the upward mobility in the profession. Mojumdar (1990: 8) justifies that "all of us are ambitious. And so are women journalists who must work twice as hard and be twice as efficient as the men colleagues in order to rise in their profession. And they cannot do if they stick to issues pertaining to women and children which are regarded as soft issues by their bosses". Apart from the reasons of upward mobility, for women journalists this is also an individual battle in an oppressed society to fulfill their aspirations and prove themselves. But despite this, the fact remains that by and large women's issues are still covered by women journalists in Delhi since there are no men journalists known to be covering women's issues. Although some younger women journalists cover women's issues by choice, established women journalists cover them sporadically i.e. when an issue is major and controversial.
In this final chapter I shall summarise the main findings and present the conclusions of this study. Apart from that I also describe the limitations of the study, the difficulties I faced in conducting this work, and its contributions to the field and to social action.

Origin of research and theoretical paradigms

The impetus for this research lies in feminist political theory which argues that democratic political foundations have been gender-biased and suffer from various discrepancies that prevent the participation of women in the political public sphere and limit their role as political citizens. In its endeavour to find an explanation for the subordinate status of women within the political public sphere, Western feminism has critically analysed democratic theory which claims to have given all rights to women. Dissecting every layer of the foundations of democracy since its origin in ancient Greece and later in 17th Century Europe, feminism asserts that democratic foundations are intensely masculinist and gender-biased. Democracy has not recognised women as political citizens in the fullest sense, due to which women’s participation in public life has remained low. A major lacuna in democratic political thought according to feminists lies in its rigid establishment and gendering of private and public spheres. Women’s lives have been mainly confined to the private sphere and inequality in the private has been largely ignored by democratic theory. It also means that structure of social relations and the relation between sexes do not hold importance in democratic thought and are beyond the purview of notions like political equality, freedom and citizenship. The subordination of women within the private sphere and inequality at home is not acknowledged by the democratic theory.

I have described that while the concept of the public sphere in 17th and 18th Centuries was confined to the assemblage of private citizens to discuss matters of public concern, with the advent of media the idea of public sphere has been broadened. Owing to the proliferation of modern technological societies, media have become imperative for the functioning of a democratic society. In the contemporary era no discussion on the public sphere is complete unless it takes into account the role of media in representing concerns of citizens. Democracy and media are two sides of the same coin. Media are an extremely powerful institution of the public sphere in today’s society. They shape public consciousness, initiate debates, facilitate dialogue and are a major means of communication. By one definition (Dahlgren, 1991) media themselves are the public...
sphere. While in the 17th and 18th Centuries only privileged people had the right to participate in the public sphere, in today’s society the pre-condition for citizenship also lies in the right to convey information and be heard. Theoretically, every citizen today has the right to receive information on political and public issues and to convey opinions to policy makers. The issues on the media’s agenda have a fair chance to get onto the agenda of policy makers. Apart from building up this relationship between policy makers and citizens, in a pluralistic society media are the major means for political and social groups to reach their audiences and build rapport. It is only through discussions between varied interest groups that agreements and compromises can be reached as regards the direction of society.

Feminism has proliferated in almost every part of the world raising women’s concerns specific to each culture and society. In more and more countries, women today enjoy the status of political citizenship and have acquired many rights equal to men in the legal, economic and political spheres. This right in democratic societies brings to attention the role of media in representing women’s concerns. While feminist theory has effectively exposed the gendered foundations of democratic political thought, much remains to be done in exploring the relationship between political theory and media practice. The important issues which need to be addressed are: To what extent do media represent women’s concerns and to what extent can women participate within this public sphere? Do media in democratic societies treat women as political citizens? These questions form the basis of this study which was carried out in India.

India is the biggest democracy in the world. Indian democracy and an autonomous press in India are modelled after the Western political system. The Indian constitution guarantees freedom and equality to all citizens irrespective of caste, class, sex, religion etc. Similarly the Indian national press is also based on the democratic values of freedom of speech and expression and representation of citizens’ interests. However, within the context of a Third World traditional society, the relationship between theory and practice in relation to women’s rights is not the simple equation that Western feminist political theory suggests. This is because although India acquired a democratic model after independence in 1947, its society could not simply wish with its traditional order and structures like patriarchy and caste etc. which are deeply rooted. The position of women remains powerless within this democratic society even after nearly 50 years of independence. There has been an alarming increase in crimes against women in the form of dowry, female foeticide, eve-teasing, etc. Although the state strongly supports democratic values, it negates these ideals in practice and remains intensely patriarchal. Many instances like the Shah Bano case, sati, population policies,
loopholes in laws like dowry, sati, and discriminatory judgements in cases of rape etc. have proved that the state submits easily when the traditional social order is threatened. I have argued that the private patriarchal culture of the past has turned into a public patriarchal culture in modern India. At the level of community, culture remains a decisive force in shaping women’s lives. Middle class women largely lead their lives within the confines of the domestic sphere and are denied basic fundamental rights like right to movement, expression, property, freedom in education and employment etc. It is important to note here that women are not constitutionally deprived of such rights, however, the social structure and the cultural forces put major constraints on women’s lives of which family is the foremost institution. Such constraints mostly remain beyond the purview of the state.

Since the existing culture has its genesis in the higher caste culture (see chapter 2), specifically Brahmins, I have defined it Brahmanical hegemony in process. The culture of higher castes is visibly the dominant culture since the administration of the country is in the hands of higher caste (mainly) men. As a legacy of casteist-patriarchal ideology, women are denied civil, political, and human rights in the world’s biggest democracy. However, I contend that discriminatory practices against women or subordination of women may not be conspiratory; rather it has become a naturalised way of life and thought. Further, although Brahmanical culture is mainly prevalent among the middle class, who are largely drawn from the higher castes, various discriminatory practices are widely followed by all castes and communities.

The English press in India follows the liberal model which was retained after the independence of the country. Like the democratic political system, the press too espouses democratic values and claims to be liberal representing the interests of the citizenry. The national press exerts a great influence on policy makers and is an opinion maker in the country although its readership is limited to only five per cent of Indian adults. However, it is a major and significant medium within the elite sphere. Caught in the tension between modern democratic values and traditional culture, how far has the press represented women’s concerns within the political public sphere? And how can that coverage be analysed within the wider cultural paradigm? In the following section, I shall highlight the findings of this study.
Major findings of the study

An analysis of the coverage of women’s news/issues in the press showed that women’s issues were predominantly event-oriented and subjected to common news values. It is largely gathered from regular sources like Parliament, courts, hospitals, police officials etc. A major percentage of news stories centred on violence/crime, followed by the stories focusing on the activities of officials touching upon women’s problems. I have defined the first kind of stories as sensational stories since they mainly dealt with themes of crime and violence, and the second type of stories as reformatory stories since they dealt with ‘reforms’ on women’s status. I have called them reformatory because women’s issues in such stories just exist as ‘labels’ in the absence of analysis of their lives and social structures. It may not be wrong to argue that these stories are carried simply because they mostly focus on the activities of officials. However, both kinds of stories stem from regular sources and do not require special efforts on the part of media to extend coverage.

Within the violence/crime news stories, certain themes like ‘punishment’, suicide, bride-burning, rape, were prominent, many other themes like domestic violence, female foeticide, police atrocities, dowry etc. were meagerly covered. The stories were largely covered by general correspondents/reporters (with by-line of HTC) and news agencies and were Delhi-based. None of the stories was covered by a special correspondent or political correspondent per se. Issue-oriented items like articles touched upon a wide variety of issues, but they formed a very low percentage of the data. In four years of period, only eight editorials on women’s issues were carried. Many issues found on the agenda of women activists like property rights, personal laws, health, development policies, fundamentalism and its impact on women, gendered economic policies, population policies, unequal wages, problem of abortions, etc. were either missing or minimal in coverage. Further, issues which are extremely private in nature and which are the daily reality of women’s lives like suicides, foeticide, dowry harassment, oppression within the patriarchal structures/values, denial of fundamental rights to women by society etc. were negligible in the articles or editorials. A significant observation as regards the women’s movement was that it was by and large ignored by the media. The women’s movement which is more than a decade old and which is a major force in raising women’s concerns within the elite political arena was non-existent in media coverage. This is despite the fact that women’s groups function in close geographic and class proximity with media, that is, they are based in Delhi and most women activists come from educated middle class background.
The event-oriented violence/crime news stories, which were dominant in coverage, were higher in 1981 and they drastically decreased towards 1990s. I have pointed out that violence/crime events were a novelty in the early 1980s since such incidents were unveiled by women’s groups and brought to the attention of media and government, therefore, they immediately received the definition of news. Further, these incidents fitted very well into the organisation of media practices since they fulfilled various conditions like frequency, negativity, personification etc., and were easy to obtain from the routine sources. However, the decreasing stories over the period shows an insensitivity towards issues and it also suggests the acceptance of these practices as a part of normalcy in the social order.

I have explained that media and media people are part of a particular culture and they cannot proceed without values which are a part of society. Within India’s cultural value system, a cultural insensitivity towards women, their person, their individuality, and their issues is a part of the social order. This insensitivity was reflected in media’s organisation of women’s news, in media contents, and in the opinions and attitudes of journalists. Within the organisation of news, media concentrate more on routine practices and obtain news from sources like parliament, conferences, police, courts, hospitals etc. and thus invest little effort in covering women’s news. In terms of media content, the focus is much more on violence/crime stories and most importantly these issues are not analysed and many times not even investigated and explored like in the case of city briefs and state briefs. I have argued that events like suicides, dowry deaths, mysterious deaths etc. are not simple accidents as they are hidden in the intricate web of an oppressive social structure. And unless this social structure is exposed, women’s voices would not be heard in social and political life. Lastly, it was observed that gender is a non-issue within the community of journalists. In their interviews, many journalists showed considerable insensitivity towards women’s issues and a cynical attitude in particular towards women’s groups and activists. I shall come to this point shortly.

In light of the above findings, I have expressed that violence/crime news stories carried mostly without analysis or even investigations, may serve two purposes in terms of their ideological effects. Firstly, such stories when carried as simple accidents or events without critical analysis may serve to add to the social consensus suggesting that such violence/crime against women are a part of the normal order or culture. The media bring to the readers’ attention the information and events which exist beyond their personal experience and purview. A daily dose of events like suicides, bride-burning, rape, mysterious deaths etc. may serve to make these practices/crimes a normal feature
for the audience. This is not to deny the importance of reporting of such stories, however, the point is that such stories need to be analysed and the processes and structures which produce such conditions need to be exposed. Without unveiling the structures, such stories do not serve women's interests. Further, such coverage may also seem to indicate that oppression within the private sphere (or public) is a normal affair and hence does not demand attention. Thus it may serve to contribute towards strengthening a given patriarchal culture and support the social consensus, making certain issues invisible in a democratic polity. Secondly, such coverage may also help to expropriate urban educated middle class women who form part of the readership. It is because such incidents may instil fear in these women and thus help to keep them in the private, particularly in a society where most women's lives are not exposed to an external world and they are largely dependent upon men. Scholars (see Schlesinger et al. 1992; Gallagher, 1995; Downing, 1980) have indicated towards the impact of media coverage of violence on women. The marginalisation of such stories in terms of their placement, display, and analysis, in the coverage further indicate the insignificance of such issues.

A total silence over the existence of women's groups and the omission of many issues on their agenda in the media coverage clearly indicate that media have silenced the movement. Through the exclusion of the women's movement and issues raised by feminists, media have contributed towards the maintenance of the existing social order. The movement remains unknown to the public and particularly urban middle class women who can be potential supporters of the women's movement. I have suggested that the women's movement must have been perceived as an anomaly by the media since it has questioned the social structure and subordination of women and it is the only counter-hegemonic force in the existing order. The women's movement has come far since the 1980s in terms of expansion of its agenda and theorising the issues. However, most of those issues were missing on the agenda of media. On the grounds of media's confinement mainly to event-oriented stories, various missing themes, and a silence over the women's movement, it may be concluded that media by and large do not set the agenda for women. Rather as a study conducted by Joseph and Sharma (1994) suggests, media in certain circumstances and for some issues respond to the agenda of others. The above study established a correlation between women activist's campaigns on dowry deaths, rape, sex tests and media coverage.

Through the analysis of coverage of women's news/issues and the women's movement in the media, I have demonstrated a relation between political practice, media practice and cultural practice. The democratic state has not recognised women as political
citizens in the fullest sense which is observable through its discriminatory and patriarchal practices (see chapter 2). In tune with political practice, media are also not playing a democratic role towards women and not representing their interests adequately. It may be argued that when issues do not hold importance on the agenda of policy makers, they lack importance on the media agenda as well. Further, in tune with the cultural prejudices against women, that is, at people's level, media seem to be adding to the social consensus by strengthening the patriarchal culture. Thus it may be concluded that media are a part of the same culture and culture exerts influence on media practices and attitudes of journalists.

To further determine whether media play the role of agenda-setters for women's issues and women activists, the patterns of interaction between women activists and journalists were pursued through interviews. It was discovered through the interviews that women's groups do not form a regular source of information for media. In other words journalists do not routinely contact women activists. They approach women activists mainly for reactions and comments on issues which they find are important. Such issues, for instance, included Hill-Thomas case and Bobbit story, both from the United States. It was also confirmed by journalists that it is by and large women activists who approach the media to report about events or their activities. It was further found that even when journalists need comments from women's groups, women are mostly approached telephonically and women find it difficult to discuss controversial issues on telephone. None of the journalists in this study complained that women's groups or women activists were not accessible. Further, apart from two journalists, none of the other journalists argued that women's issues involve processes and that is why they are not covered. Many journalists however argued that women's activities carry no news value.

As regards the role of women journalists towards feminist cause, the responses of women activists were divided. Some of them emphasised the special role of women journalists but others argued that it was a question of personal approach and ideology of the press rather than gender. Thus a distinction needs to be made on the basis of the sensitivity of a person and not on the basis of gender. However, the interviews both from activists and journalists revealed that it is mainly women journalists who visit women's groups to collect information or attend workshops and conferences. In tune with this observation, journalists also revealed that mainly women journalists are assigned women's stories or sent to cover feminist activities.
While it was clear that women's groups do not form a part of a beat system, I tried to look into the efforts put by women activists in reaching media and their relationship with journalists. I observed that women activists approach media whenever they require to raise some issue or they call press conferences which are also held on the basis of issues. For instance there might be two press conferences in two months and there might be no press conference for six months. Except for two or three organisations, no other organisations send regular press releases. In terms of contacts, most women activists have personal contacts and they work mainly through personal relationships since it ensures the coverage of news. The absence of women's beat and specific journalists covering women's issues makes it difficult for women activists to approach the right people. Further, many women's organisations do not seem to attach importance to the media, particularly when they are working at grassroots levels. None of the organisations, including centralised and formally structured ones, seem to have any specific media strategies to follow. Women activists argue that they cannot be consistent in media strategies because their activism depends upon issues.

I observed that by and large women activists were indifferent to the issue of media. I have argued that there could be many reasons for this indifference. Firstly, I observed that elite women activists have a close relationship with policy makers. Many women's organisations are affiliated to political parties and many women activists from other organisations are also active within the elite political arena. Even if an organisation has no links with policy makers, it can reach the government through other organisations. In view of this affinity, it can be argued that middle class women activists in India do not require media to reach policy makers since they have access to ministers. Although the government is intensely patriarchal, it lives up to the rhetoric of being a liberal government by being accessible. At times the women's movement is even used by the government as a political constituency.

The second reason for women activists' indifference could be that the women's movement has changed its course from activism of the early 1980s to grass root work in 1990s which means that much of their target population is illiterate and English press may not serve any purpose in reaching this public. Further, the negative opinions and attitude of journalists towards women's movement or feminism may obstruct many groups in their efforts to reach media.

However, it can still be argued that the salience of media for the growth, functioning, and success of a movement cannot be denied. As maintained by scholars (see chapter 7), media are important for the life of a social movement since they confer status to a
movement, make its issues public, as a part of which movement is able to grow and gain support and recognition. Even the negative coverage of a movement helps to enliven the spirits of activists and keeps them going. In view of this thesis, it is important that women activists build up close rapport with media practitioners since it is mainly through media that they can gain public acceptance and reach urban educated middle class women. Further, media coverage of certain issues may help to influence and persuade the policy makers to take effective measures regarding women's problems. There is no doubt that women's movement has created its own public sphere which serves as a platform for many people to voice their opinions, to debate and theorise women's issues, and to raise the consciousness of people at the grassroots level. In fact many women's problems/issues pass through this quasi-feminist public sphere before reaching the political public sphere of polity and media. However, women’s movement would be naive if it does not recognise the power of the mainstream media.

At the same time, this study provides a different insight into the relationship between media and social movements. Media have been identified as significant for the success and development of social movements within the Western literature. This study provides evidence that media may not play the role of facilitator between women's groups and the political system in view of former's direct and easy access to the political system. However, it is also important to note that women’s privileges may be attributed to their class background and privileged status, their affiliation with political parties and geographical proximity to the policy makers. Whether other social movements with different concerns and different backgrounds have the similar advantages remains to be researched.

The argument that journalists proceed with cultural values and internalise them as a part of the social order seems to hold relevance in this study. The press in India has no policy on the women’s question. Hence it may be argued that journalists have freedom and autonomy to cover women’s issues. However, in spite of this autonomy, journalists did not show interest in the issue. Further, journalists were bitter and critical in their attitude towards women’s groups and activists; although media may not have ridiculed women activists or the movement in its coverage, a cynicism and ridicule towards the movement and the activists was rather obvious in journalists’ opinions.

I have argued that middle class feminism does not yet have a respectable status among the community of journalists in India, and I have deduced two broad reasons from the interviews for this: firstly, feminism is not rooted in the cultural reality of India, and
secondly feminism is not rooted in the socioeconomic reality of India and has a narrow approach. Within the cultural reality, feminism is antithetical to the patriarchal values and family structure of Indian society. Hindu Dharma has not attributed the status of individuality to a woman. According to Hindu philosophy, a woman’s duty is to serve the husband and stand by him in the accomplishment of his duties. The image of Sita still remains an ideal in Indian society. Thus the role of a woman is not based on her own interests but on larger interests of family, whereas feminism seems to question the power relations within the family structure. Further, a poor country grappling with the problems of poverty, basic needs, illiteracy, malnutrition etc. finds it difficult to accommodate the question of gender since it is not seen as a priority issue. A majority of the population does not have the same demands as middle class feminism would have. In light of broader issues mentioned above, gender may sound like a luxury issue and thus I have stressed that gender is not the only leg on which feminism can stand in a poor country. Thus it can be concluded that dismissal of the women’s movement is the result of patriarchal beliefs of a traditional society and ideological differences between journalists and activists in a developing country. Many journalists while not valuing women’s issues emphasised the importance of development issues which cannot be disputed. However, in this situation, first of all there is a need to empirically examine the coverage of development issues in the media. Further, the gender perspective within development issues needs to be studied since women’s issues are now considered a part of the development debate in developing societies.

I also noticed that marginalisation of women’s issues is the result of lack of general interest in such issues and individual preferences of journalists. Men journalists by and large lack interest in women’s issues as a part of patriarchal values, and women journalists avoid them due to the reasons of upward mobility and individual aspirations. As far as gender differences are concerned, it was found that although women journalists were articulate and provided a deep insight into the issue, many of them who are established in the profession have by and large moved to other areas of journalistic focus like politics, economy, development issues and human rights issues. These women journalists mainly started their career with covering women’s issues. However after long years in the profession and suffering from the syndrome of marginalisation themselves these women changed their focus. Although discrimination against women journalists is not too obvious, it exists in very subtle ways. Young women journalists still showed interest in women’s stories, but they were wary of the fact that journalists get sucked by the system gradually. However, the fact remains that

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it is still women journalists who are largely sensitive to the coverage of women’s issues in the media.

**Difficulties and limitations**

I wish to acknowledge here that this study suffers from some limitations. I also wish to specify the difficulties I faced in the course of this research work. To start with limitations, as I mentioned earlier, the genesis of this research lies in Western feminist scholarship. My first chapter explored the Western democratic foundations on the basis of which it develops a theoretical connection between three components i.e. women, democracy, and media. I used Western feminist framework to theorise this triangular relationship because Southern feminism lacks such theoretical developments and research. Thus it provided me a platform to pursue this project raising similar concerns within the Indian context. I must clarify that I have not aspired to draw similarities between the Western situation and Indian situation in this endeavour. However, I start from a globally agreed terrain that women have a subordinate status within the male dominated social structures. I justify my adopting the Western feminist political framework on this ground and further on the grounds that India’s democratic model and press are based on Western model and they espouse the same values as their counterparts. However, from a post-colonialist perspective, it may be argued that with the development of indigenous research and theorising in particular areas, the need to use Western scholarship will might lessen.

Exploration within the Indian historical situation also posed problems in view of the paucity of literature and lack of research. For instance, the literature available (although limited) concentrates only on the position and lives of higher caste women, and even then not in great detail. However, within the context of this study I have confined myself mainly to elite politics since it is a higher caste administration which runs the country and it is higher caste culture which dictates women’s position. My three constituencies i.e. polity, media and women activists function at an elite level of society in a geographically defined location, Delhi, which is the capital of the country.

I have faced great problems in building a single theoretical framework for this study. Hence it was necessary to use multi-theoretical approaches. Also feminist research is still young and hence cannot offer a consistent or precisely defined theoretical perspectives to conduct women’s studies. And secondly, this project touched various dimensions which could not be compressed under an umbrella approach and further could not be explained smoothly through any single approach. For instance, culturalist
approach helps to explain the coverage in the media and to some extent the attitude of journalists. But this approach is not suitable to describe women activists' perspectives towards media and their patterns of interaction with journalists. However, the multi-theoretical approach provided a rich understanding of various issues involved. Further, the agenda-setting model was not used in its traditional convention due to its functional problems in the present study (see chapter 4).

In order to study the organisation of women’s news/issues, this study did not employ participant observation as one of the methods. It is because this study was confined only to women’s news/issues and I realised that none of the newspapers has had a legitimate women’s beat. Thus it was not possible to follow the news processes to gather information. Further, the study selected only one newspaper as an illustrative newspaper due to the problems explained in the methodology chapter, and also it confined itself only to quantitative analysis in the absence of basic research in this field in India. For ethical reasons, I have not revealed the identity of respondents of this study. Instead, I have used the initials of their names.

Contributions of the study

Despite the above limitations, the study makes some important contributions to the debate. This study is the first attempt to analyse the coverage of women’s news/issues within the wider cultural context of Indian society. Based on primary research, it is the first study which has established a connection between political practice, cultural practice, media practice and gender in a traditional society.

Utilisation of key concepts and theoretical approaches in the study

This study has used various key concepts (private/public dichotomy, Brahmanical hegemony) and theoretical approaches (culturalist approach, social organisation of news, feminist media debate, agenda-setting) to analyse the role of media towards women’s issues and the women’s movement within the Indian context. Although none of these models sufficiently explains the media attitude, each approach has contributed in its own way in understanding and theorising the women-media relationship.

Using the feminist critique on women and democracy, I have exposed the masculinist and patriarchal nature of the Indian democracy and have shown that women are not fully recognised as political citizens. Various patriarchal and political interests impinge upon women’s democratic rights. A higher-caste hegemony defines women’s roles and
position and largely keeps them at the margins or in the private sphere. By the same token, media, which are a dominant part of the public sphere, have left many issues facing women in their private lives invisible.

The culturalist school is not an established school within media studies, but I found this approach most compelling in explaining the attitude of media and journalists towards women's issues and the movement within the Indian context. Introduction of an indigenous model (i.e. Brahmanical hegemony), and analysis of the attitude of media and journalists towards women's issues and the women's movement within the said paradigm, is a major contribution of this study. Through the historical and cultural background of the Indian society, I demonstrated the continuing hegemony of a higher-caste culture in defining women's position in a democratic society. The hegemonic forces impinge upon the media and journalists since they are a part of the same culture and cannot proceed without values. Even women journalists tend to become insensitive to issues like rape, dowry deaths, foeticide, suicides, etc. which may be attributed to both professional socialisation and internalisation of patriarchal precepts within a particular social order. I had argued in chapter four that at a broader level, the economy of media may be the most important factor in determining the newsworthiness of events and issues. However, at a more specific level, a culturalist approach explains the insignificance of women's issues in the media corresponding to their marginal status at the level of the state and society (i.e. people). This study has provided a new insight into feminist debate on women-media relationship. It would be useful to employ culturalist approach in traditional settings of various Third World societies in order to study the role of media towards women's issues.

The second approach i.e. the social organisation of news helped to understand the processes and organisation of women's news/issues and the women's movement as followed by a media institution. It helped to know which events associated with women make news the reasons of which were elaborated in chapter 6. Most importantly, the insignificance attached to women's news/issues within the journalistic practices could be linked back to the cultural and political trends in the society. The hegemonic forces do not even allow recognition to the issue of gender and the women's movement in particular due to which little effort is made by the media to cover women's issues or to maintain regular relations with women activists.

The agenda-setting approach was used differently in the study. I used a triangulated method to conceptualise this approach. This method includes - content analysis, interviews with women activists, and interviews with journalists. I examined the
agenda-setting role of the media through content analysis and interviews with journalists. The content analysis also revealed journalistic practices on women's news/issues. By highlighting the missing themes on media agenda against the feminist agenda, by examining the trends and nature of the coverage of women's news/issues, and patterns of journalists' approaching women activists, I demonstrated that media, by and large, do not set agenda for women. At the same time, by exploring the attitude of women activists towards media, their patterns of interaction with journalists, and the efforts made by them in approaching media, I also showed that women activists do not play active agenda-builders (for whatever reasons). As regards the employment of this approach, it may not highlight precise causal relationships, however, it has provided an insight into the role of both sets of actors i.e. women activists and journalists. The approach can be used in a broader sense within feminist studies.

Lastly, the study has profoundly added to the feminist media debate. Reverting to the discussion on 'women and news' carried in chapter 4, it may be argued that in a traditional set-up, cultural trends determine the status of women's news/issues to a great extent. Needless to say that patriarchal social structures and male domination are part of such trends. Women journalists may achieve higher positions and autonomy within a media institution, their role in covering women's issues cannot be exaggerated. An important observation in the study is that the basic issues like poverty, fuel, and water, facing a vast majority of the population are perceived to be more important than the issue of gender. And this is where the Third World feminism stands apart from the Western feminism.

Suggestions for further research

This study provides a wide base in terms of its theoretical dimensions and the issues it has raised. There is much scope for further research arising out of this study. For instance, this study is limited to only one English newspaper for analysis of the coverage of women's issues. It is recommended that other English newspapers should be examined to match with the results of this study. Further, in the absence of the basic empirical work, this study concentrated only on the quantitative analysis of media content. It is suggested that a linguistic analysis of specific women's issues like sati, Shah Bano, population issue, etc. and the women's movement would be very useful to determine the precise standing of media on women's issues.

Another area that deserves attention is the examination of media ideology of different kinds of women's groups in the background of their structure and organisation to
ascertain whether and which kinds of organisations are sensitive to and capable of putting efforts in cultivating friendly relations with media. It may be achieved through participant observations in women’s groups. This study focussed on key organisations in Delhi. Further research is necessary to examine the opinions and attitudes of other women’s groups outside Delhi towards media. This would illuminate their relations with media organisations and help to know whether and what different approaches/strategies are employed by them in their media activities.

Some other concerns which have emerged out of this study and which need to be researched include: analysing gender perspective within development and human rights news/issues within the national press; examining the attitude of media towards other social movements in India; studying women’s alternative media, its concerns, implications, and effectiveness; conducting audience research to determine the influence of media coverage of crime stories on middle class women; conducting audience research to study the expectations of women readers from media and attitude of general audience towards the women’s movement which may be matched with the attitude of journalists; conducting research to determine the readership of supplements/magazine sections and special pages like gender and development, and so on.

Lastly, I must acknowledge that I do not offer practical remedies and reforms in this study. The only remedy, in the words of Hall (1978), is to change the ‘present conditions’, and I hope that my analysis will help to inform and deepen the understanding and strength of those (i.e. feminists/women activists) who are engaged in this struggle to change the conditions of women and structures that oppress them in Indian society.
## Appendix A

### Coding Schedule to study the coverage of women's news/issues in the Indian Press

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Item No.</th>
<th>[ ] 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Year</td>
<td>[ ] 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Month (code one)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Date (code one)</td>
<td>[ ] 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Day (code one)</td>
<td>[ ] 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Position of the Item (regular/mainstream paper)</td>
<td>[ ] 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Page No.</td>
<td>[ ] 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Position of the item (sat/sun. mag. section/supplement)</td>
<td>[ ] 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Page No.(sat/sun. mag.sec./supplement)</td>
<td>[ ] 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 News Classification (code one)</td>
<td>[ ] 10</td>
</tr>
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<td>01 City</td>
<td>[ ] 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 Nation</td>
<td>[ ] 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>03 Editorial Page</td>
<td>[ ] 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>04 Foreign</td>
<td>[ ] 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 Economy &amp; Business</td>
<td>[ ] 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>06 Sports</td>
<td>[ ] 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>07 States</td>
<td>[ ] 17</td>
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<tr>
<td>08 What's On</td>
<td>[ ] 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>09 Letter to Editor</td>
<td>[ ] 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 City Briefs</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 State Briefs</td>
<td>[ ] 21</td>
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329
12 Unclassified/not specified
13 Parliament news/RS/LS
14 Others

11 Type of the Item (code one)

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<td>03</td>
<td>Editorial</td>
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<td>04</td>
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<td>05</td>
<td>Interview/Profile</td>
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<td>06</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
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<td>07</td>
<td>Article</td>
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<td>08</td>
<td>Column</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Review</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>News Analysis</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Public concern messages</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Pictures/cartoon</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Others</td>
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12 Source of Item (code one)

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<td>06</td>
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<td>07</td>
<td>Reuter</td>
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<td>08</td>
<td>AP</td>
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<td>09</td>
<td>UPI</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>AFP</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Joint News Agencies</td>
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<td>UNI</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>PTI</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Joint Correspondent &amp; Agencies</td>
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<td>Newspaper Reader</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>HT</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>Specified name of author/reporter</td>
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<td>By arrangement with a foreign paper</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Photographer/cartoonist</td>
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13 Location of the Story (code one)

<table>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>An Indian State/Capital/UT</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Any Indian City (main)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Any other Place in India (towns/villages)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>More than one place/places</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Any Foreign Country/City/Place</td>
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330
14 Actors quoted, interviewed or referred to (main actors)

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<tr>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Tertiary</th>
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<td>01 Indian Prime Minister/President</td>
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<td>03 Central govt</td>
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<tr>
<td>04 State govt.</td>
<td>05 Any Indian official</td>
<td>06 Police officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07 Police criminals</td>
<td>08 Parliament/RS/LS</td>
<td>09 Constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Judiciary/courts/lawyer</td>
<td>11 Any Left party</td>
<td>12 Woman political figure</td>
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<td>13 Women police officials</td>
<td>14 Dept. of Women and Child Development</td>
<td>15 Central Social Welfare Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Council for Advancement of People's Actions &amp; Rural Technology</td>
<td>17 Ministry of Rural Development/ICAB/Ministry of Agriculture/National Institute of Rural Development</td>
<td>18 Indian Council of Medical Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Indian Council of Social Science Research</td>
<td>20 Ministry of Health &amp; Family Welfare/Ministry of Welfare/Social &amp; Womens' Welfare/State's family welfare dept.</td>
<td>21 Ministry of Labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Ministry of Science &amp; Technology</td>
<td>23 National Commission for Women/National Status of Women Committee</td>
<td>24 University Grants Commission/Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA)</td>
<td>26 Women's feature service</td>
<td>27 CITU Working Women's Association/AICCWW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 National Federation of Indian Women</td>
<td>29 Mahila Dakshata Samiti</td>
<td>30 All India Women's Conference (AIWC)</td>
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<td>31 All India Mahila Cong.</td>
<td>32 BJP women workers/wing</td>
<td>33 Jagori</td>
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<tr>
<td>34 Manushi</td>
<td>35 Saheli</td>
<td>36 Ankoo</td>
</tr>
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<td>37 Kali for Women</td>
<td>38 Karmika</td>
<td>39 Shakti-Shalini</td>
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<td>40 Action India</td>
<td>41 Sahibla Sangha</td>
<td>42 Kalyani</td>
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<td>43 Lekhika Sangha</td>
<td>44 Nishant</td>
<td>45 Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>46 Mobile Creches for Working Mother's Children</td>
<td>47 Centre for Women's Development Studies (NGO)</td>
<td>48 Institute of Social Studies Trust (NGO)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
49 Centre for Social Research (NGO)
50 All India Association for Christian Higher Education (NGO)
51 Department of Women's Studies/NCERT (Govt.)
52 Hind Mazdoor Sabha (Trade union)
53 Indian Social Institute (NGO)
54 Women's Development Division/NIPCCD (Auto.)
55 Women's Studies and Development Centre (Delhi)
56 Committee on the Portrayal of Women in the Media
57 Joint Women's Programme (JWP)
58 Asian Network of Women in Communication (ANWIC)
59 Young Women's Christian Association of India
60 Indian Association for Women's Studies
61 Indian Federation of Women Lawyers
62 Legal Aid Centre for Women
63 Bhartiya Gramin Mahila Sangha
64 Bhartiya Mahila Jatiyak Parishad
65 Nari Raksha Samiti
66 Janwadi Mahila Sabha
67 National Council of Women in India
68 War widows assoc./guild
69 Indian housewives' federation
70 Women's orgs. as symbols/aggregate
71 Landless women/women labourers/self employed women/
Rural women/dalits/tribals/slam women/
Harijan women/adivasis (weaker sections)
72 Devadasis
73 Upper class women
74 Muslim women
75 Widows/divorcees/deserted women/single women
76 Women professionals (lawyers/doctors/judge/
entrepreneurs/academicians etc)
77 Housewives/non-working middle class women
78 Any mythical/historical characters
79 An educational Institution/s
80 Spiritual woman/sanyasini' etc
81 Victimised woman
82 Women's in-laws (husband,BIL/SIL/MIL/FIL)
83 Women perpetrators (initiating violence/crime/bungling/
bandits/snatchers/robbers/adam teasers)
84 Women prisoners/or in custody
85 Prostitute women
86 Professional men/academicians/doctors/lawyers)
87 Men perpetrator (kidnapper/rapist/eveteaser etc)
88 Victimised men or victim men in question
89 People (man and women;crowed)
90 Muslim leaders/community/organisation party
91 Any foreign personality/institution/agency
92 Any international organisation/body
(UN/WHO/UNICEF etc)
93 No main actor (primary actor)
94 specified organisation outside Delhi
95 Dancer/singer/actor/writer
96 Hindu community/leaders
97 All India committee for eradication of
women's illiteracy
98 others
99 others

332
### 15 Issue/Theme of the Item

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Dowry/dowry death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Rape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Bride Burning/burnt to death/murder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Suicide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Unnatural/mysterious death/burns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Female Infanticide/foeticide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Beating/domestic violence/ harrassment/maltreatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>Sex determination tests/sex ratio/imbalance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>Sati/Roopjanswar case/sati festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Eve Teasing/Sexual Harassment/molestation/assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Prostitution/flesh trade/trafficking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mental distress/Depression/emotional problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Kidnapping/abduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Alcoholism and violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Statistics of violence/crime/unspecified violence/ crime/or crime against women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Crime/violence by women/(smuggling,chain snatching,buying guns,murder etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Women's employment/job opportunities/equal oppor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Equal wages/retrenchment/or any such discrimination at work place (eíc. discrimination/problems)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Provision of Creches/day care/child support/Aanganvadi/Balwadi/child care problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Self Employment Schemes/integrated schemes/ small scale industry/dairy dev./bank loans/ credit bodies/rural development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Housing/Shelter/hostels/accomodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Technology/mechanisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Rising Prices/fair prices/commodities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Funds/funding problems/govt. grants/loans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Economic dependence/independence/ economic position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Property Rights/land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Welfare and development/family welfare scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Educ./elementary/school/college education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Literacy/illiteracy among women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Adult education</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Vocational education/training/skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Womens' studies/projects/books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Equal Legal Rights/legal issues/legislation/judgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Legal Aid/family courts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Changes in Law/amendments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Personal laws/religious laws</td>
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<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Womens' special Cells (crime/dowry etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Bills on women/related to womens' issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Maintenance allowance/alimony</td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Corruption</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>Arrest/imprisonment/punishment</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>Shahbano case</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>Uniform Civil Code</td>
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<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Women in Politics/Political Participation/representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Equal Political Rights/political issue</td>
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<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Freedom Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Fundamental Rights/Constitutional rts.</td>
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</table>
48 Panchayti Raj and women
49 Reservations for women
50 pressures/practices/customs/traditions
51 family relationships/marriage/divorce
52 Rehabilitation
53 Religion/ fundamentalism/communalism
54 Gender/genderization/sociolization
55 Women's rights/emancipation/equality/status/ women's issues/causes/
56 Dignity/honour/prestige/degradation/
humiliation/reputation
57 Women's liberation/movement/feminism
58 Patriarchy/male domination/chaunvinism
59 Myths and legends/'Shastras' /
60 Devdasi system/problem
61 Purdah/Talaq/Right in Islam/status of muslim women
62 Biological anatomy/naturalness
63 Health/Food and nutrition/malnutrition
64 Family planning/contraception
65 Women and media/representation in media (TV/press/radio/lit./ads/)
66 Women's publications/writings/alternative media
67 Counselling/counselling centres/aid
68 Sports/participation/women and sports
69 Women & Environment/ecology
70 Demonstration/protest/procession/dharna/rally/yatra
71 Street Plays/Songs/cultural programme
72 Participation of Men/Role of Men
73 Seminars/conferences/workshops/group discussions/meets
74 International womens' day/decade
75 Consciousness raising/empowerment/awareness
76 Women's status in a country other than India
77 Woman as guilty/home breakers
78 Criticism/condemnation
79 Nomination/seletion/appointment to a high post/ or entering male dominated fields
80 Role of women / women's organisations
81 Function/celebration/inauguration/festival/ reception/exhibition
82 Campaigning/convassing
83 Women's professional career
84 Rescued/freed
85 Female child/abandonment/discrimination
86 Infidelity/adultery/chastity/illicit relations etc
87 Man's lust/passion/depravity
88 Protection/security/safety
89 Sex (dress/exposure/sex appeal,sex and/
morality, vulgar display/obscenity etc)
90 National Perspective Plan
91 Human interest
92 Sacrifice/love/cooperation
93 Police atrocities
94 Men's issues/husband's rights etc
95 Abortion
96 Sex change
97 Militarism/terrorism
99 others
Clustering of actors

1 Victimised woman/women

2 Political officials/administration
   Indian PM/President
   Any right party
   Central govt.
   State govt.
   Any Indian official
   Any left party
   Constitution
   Parliament
   Women political figure
   Women police official

3 Police officials

4 Judiciary/courts/lawyers

5 Police as criminals

6 No main actor

7 Foreign person/institution/agency
   International person/institution/agency

8 Muslim leaders/organisation/party/community (authorities)

9 Men perpetrator

10 Women’s in-laws (any member)

11 Women perpetrator

12 Weaker women

13 Muslim women

14 Widows/single women/divorcees

15 Professional women

16 Women’s orgs. as symbol/aggregate

17 Specific women’s organisations outside Delhi

18 Character of play/drama/film/books etc.

19 Women’s political wing
   Bhartiya Janata Party
   All India Mahila Congress
20 Sample organisations

AIDWA
WPS
AICCCWW
NFTW
MDS
AIWC
Jagori
Manushi
Saheli
Kali for women
SEWA
CWDS
ISST
HMS
JWP

21 Women's orgs/institutes in Delhi

Ancoor
Karmika
Shakti shalini
Action India
Sahbhag Sangh
Kalyani
Lekhika Sangh
Nishant
Mobile Creches for Working Mother's Children
Centre for social research
AIACHE
India Social Institute
Women's Studies and Development Centre
Committee on the portrayal of women in the media
Asian Network of Women in Communication
YWCA
Indian Association for Women's Studies
Indian Federation of Women Lawyers
Legal Aid Centre for Women
Bhartiya Grameen Mahila Sangh
Bhartiya Mahila Jagriti Parishad
Nari Raksha Samiti
Janwadi Mahila Sabha
National Council of Women in India
War Widows Association Guild
India Housewives' Federation

22 Govt. ministries/depts/agencies

Dept of Women and Child Development
Central Social Welfare Board
Council for Advancement of People's Actions and Rural Technology
Ministry of Rural Dev./ICAR/Ministry of Agril/National Institute of Rural Development
Indian Council of Medical Research
Indian Council of Social Science Research
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare/Ministry of Welfare/state's family welfare dept
Ministry of Labour
Ministry of Science and Technology
23 Victimised men

24 Miscellaneous actors

Devadasis
Upper class women
Housewives/middle class women
Any mythical/historical character
Any educational institute
Spiritual woman/sanyasini etc
Women prisoner/or in custody
Prostitute women
Professional men
People (men and women)
Hindu community/leaders

25 Others
Clustering of themes

1 Violence/crime
- Dowry/dowry death
- Rape
- Bride burning/burnt to death/murder
- Suicide
- Female foeticide/infanticide
- Domestic violence
- Unnatural/mysterious death
- Sati/Roopkanwar case
- Eve-teasing/sexual harrassment
- Prostitution/Flesh trade/trafficking
- Kidnapping/abduction
- Statistics of violence
- Police atrocities
- Militarism/terrorism
- Punishment
- Rescued/freed
- Alcoholism and violence
- Sex tests/ratio imbalance

2 Social
- pressures/customs/traditions
- Family relations/divorce/marriage
- religion/fundamentalism
- socialisation/genderisation
- Women's rights/equality/status
- Dignity/honour/reputation
- Patriarchy/male domination
- Myths/legends/shastras
- Devdasi system/problem
- Women's professional career
- Sacrifice/love/cooperation
- Depression/mental harrassment
- Female child discrimination
- Infidelity/chastity/adultery
- Protection/security/safety

3 Economic
- Women's employment/equal opportunities
- Equal wages/eco discrimination/retrenchment
- Day care/child care
- Self-employment schemes
- Technology/mechanisation
- Funds/grants/loans
- Economic dependence/position
- Property rights/land

4 Legal
- Equal legal rights/legislation
- Legal aid/family courts
- Changes in law/amendments
Personal laws/religious laws
Special cells for women
Bills on women/women’s issues
Maintenance/alimony
Shah Bano case
Uniform Civil Code

5 Educational
Education (elementary, primary, college)
Literacy/literacy
Adult education
Vocational education/training/skills
Women's studies/projects/books

6 Political
Women in politics/representation
Equal political rights
Women in freedom movement
Fundamental rights/constitutional rights
Panchayti Raj and women
Reservations

7 Demonstrations
8 Seminars, Inaugurations

9 Appointments

10 Muslim women's status

11 Health

12 Foreign women's status (other than India)

13 Crime violence by women/ women as guilty

14 Women's liberation/movement

15 Miscellaneous themes
Shelter/hostel/accomodation
Rehabilitation
Welfare/development
Role of women/women's organisations
Consciousness/empowerment
Counselling/counselling centres/aid
Participation/role of men
Criticism/condemnation
Rising prices/commodities
Corruption
Representation in media
Sex/exposure/display/obscenity
Abortion
Sex change
Naturalness/biological anatomy
Women's publications
Sports
Women and environment/ecology
Street plays/theatre/songs
International women's decade/day
Campaigning/convassing
Man's lust/passion
National perspective plan for women
Human interest story
Men's issues/husband's rights

216 Others
Clustering of sources

1 HTC (correspondent/reporter)

2 Agencies

Reuter
AP
UPI
AFP
Joint news Agency
UNI
PTI

3 Specified name of author

4 Not specified

5 Newspaper reader

6 Miscellaneous

special correspondent
political correspondent
diplomatic corres/editor
foreign editor/staff
joint correspondents
joint correspondent and agencies
HT
Photographer/cartoonist
By arrangement with foreign paper

7 Others
Appendix B

List of journalists

The Hindustan Times (sample paper)
1 Chief editor - MVN
2 Executive editor - MCM
3 Chief sub-editor (magazine section) - FSS
4 Political correspondent - FKC
5 Special correspondent - MSM1
6 Chief sub - editor - MAMS
7 Special correspondent - MMS
8 Correspondent - MJW
9 3 Sub - editors - FV; F3; FG
10 Editor (magazine section) (Hindi edition) - FMP

Economic Times
11 Political editor - FNC
12 Senior feature writer - MASG
13 Arts editor - MSM2

Telegraph
14 Reporter - FBDS
15 Reporter - FSP

The Hindu
16 Principal correspondent - FGP

Times of India
17 Special correspondent - MDM

Indian Express
18 Development editor - FUR

The Week (magazine)
19 Principal Correspondent - FRS

Sunday (magazine)
20 Reporter - FMJ

21 freelancer - FRM
Appendix C
List of women’s organisations selected for interviews

Empowerment groups
1 Joint Women’s Programme (JWP) - CJ
2 Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) - QS

Party affiliated groups
3 Mahila Dakshata Samiti (MDS) - KS
4 National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) - FV
5 All India Democratic Women’s Association (AIDWA) - KB
6 All India Women’s Conference (AIWC) - BA

Autonomous groups
7 Saheli - VE
8 Jagori - MA
9 Kali for Women - MR
10 Women’s Feature Service (WFS) - FMS
11 Manushi - KM

Trade unions
12 Hind Majdoor Sabha (HMS) - SI
13 All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women (AICCCWW) - RV

Research Units
14 Centre for Women’s Development Studies (CWDS) - SK
15 Indian Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST) - MS

Independent interviewee
16 BK (Member jagori, Ankur..)
Appendix D

Table 1

Number and percentage of primary (micro) actors in news stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary actor/source</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tr>
<td>Victimised woman</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judiciary/courts/lawyers</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Police officials</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-laws</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>State govt.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Woman perpetrator</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No main actor</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central govt.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign person/institution</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman political figure</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Police as criminal</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men perpetrator</td>
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### Table 5

**Data Matrix on the responses of women activists**

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<th>vve attitude of the press in 1980s</th>
<th>poor quality of coverage</th>
<th>changing trends in 1990s</th>
<th>juts app. for comments/special occasions</th>
<th>women juts play important role</th>
<th>no generalisation on on wom juts</th>
<th>activists' indiff. to mainstream media</th>
<th>unclarity abt media strat.</th>
<th>personal prob.</th>
<th>personal links/relations with gov</th>
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<th>no generalisation on women politicians</th>
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