

# REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PRINT MEDIA IN INDIA: A CASE STUDY OF TIMES OF INDIA

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**Abstract.** This paper seeks to analyse the portrayal and representation of women, their rights and concerns in the print media in India. Through a content analysis of a systematic-random sample of articles published in the Times of India (ToI), the largest circulated English daily, spanning over thirty years (1980 - 2010), the study shows that news related to women is not only abysmal in coverage but also gender insensitive. More importantly, this minuscule coverage is limited to issues such as crime and issues that matter to them are absent. Finally, the paper seeks to reflect upon the reasons for such a coverage by locating the nature of mainstream media into the wider coalesce of market and patriarchy.

**Keywords** - *Print media, media and women, gender studies, mainstream media, newspaper*

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## Introduction

While women's representation in the mainstream entertainment media has been receiving scholarly attention all across the world, the theme of women in the news media is somewhat less attended in academic discussions. Yet there are a few studies in the West and India specifically analysing women in the news media both as news makers as well as professionals. While in the United States (US) and Europe, there are studies discussing women in the news media (see Miller 1975, Potter 1985, Greenwald 1990, Rodger and Thorson 2000, Sreberny and Zoonen 2000, and Cartel et. al 1998) in India, the number of analyses discussing women in news are miniscule (see Sharma and Joseph 1991, Bathla 1998, Ninan and Chaterjee 2013 and Chaudhary 2010).

Indian studies on women's representation in the news media are either event specific or they are analysis of multiple news outlets for a short time period. These studies are, however, significant to show under representation of women in Indian news media, they also indicate the lack of historical evidence of diminutive representation of women in Indian news media. The present paper seeks to cover this gap in one dimension as it studies the representation of women in the most circulated English daily in India in a thirty year time span by covering over 430 issues of the Times of India.

Analysis of women's representation in the Times of India is based on political-economy and feminists approaches that suggest that due to its location in specific politico-economic and cultural context, mainstream media cannot adequately represent various sections of society nor does it challenge the status quo to promote democratic values in society. Mainstream mass media rather favours elites and marginalises already marginalised sections. Through a sample study of the Times of India, this paper argues that women in Indian mainstream media are one such marginalised section. Representation of women in Times of India is neither adequate nor unprejudiced. This study explains statistical representation of women through political-economy and feminist approaches to media. It highlights how dominance of market and patriarchy create a context where it is difficult for a profit seeking mainstream media publication, like Times of India, to give sufficient space to women issues that challenge the patriarchal status of society on which market also relies to secure its profit.

As discussed, two major streams of literature helped shaping this study namely political-economy and feminist approach to media and literature discussing convergence of the two. Scholars like Noam Chomsky (1988), Edward Herman (1997), Robert McChesney (1994, 2008) and Smythe (1981), among others, argue that economic elite of any society matters the most to the news media business for ownership of media, advertisers and consumers determine profits of both media owners and advertisers. On the other hand, feminist media analysts like Van Zoonen (1992) emphasise on cultural hierarchies to argue that prevailing patriarchy does not allow media to represent women 'fairly'. Zoonen asserts that the media, in particular, the news media has a specific claim to 'unambiguous relation with reality' therefore it would not be 'unfair to expect fair representation of women's issues and women's movement'. However representation of women in media, as Zoonen herself discusses, is far from being 'fair'. Many researches are located at the intersection of both

political-economy and feminist approaches and provide a nuanced understanding of how market and patriarchy create a wider milieu where stereotypical representation of women ensures profit to market and status quo to patriarchy. For instance, in Indian context, studies by Rachna Johri (2011) and Himani Banerjee (2016) may be put under this category.

### **Case and Methodology**

This study focuses on representation of women in the Times of India between the period of 1980 - 2010. There are various reasons why one should study particularly the print media in an intensive manner to analyse the representation of women in media. First, as Leela Rao discusses, studies on women and media in India have largely emphasised on T.V and films than radio and print'. Also she argues that the 'commitment' of print media to women's issues is 'deceptive and often insensitive' (Rao 2001). Secondly, print news media in India, unlike its western counterparts, showed remarkable growth despite growing popularity of audio-visual and social media. While American and western European democracies, after the advent of radio, T.V. and internet witnessed a decline in popularity of print, Indian print news media, for instance in 2017, records a 12 percent annual growth (ABC 2017). Ninan observes that 'TV proved to be good for the newspaper business because it fuelled a curiosity that made the viewer turn to the next day's newspaper' (2007:15). Thirdly as media studies are now increasingly shifting focus towards internet based news portals (See Jia et al. 2017, Rego 2018), a study of representation of women in print news media would provide a prelude to appreciate the portrayal of women in social media and online news portals.

Further, there are two reasons for selecting the Times of India as a case-study. First, it has been the most circulated English daily throughout the time frame of the study (1980-2010). If one is to explore the perception media shapes about women through its reportage, it only makes sense that the most circulated daily be taken as a case. Though there are few regional language daily newspapers having more circulation than Times of India, yet it makes sense to select this as a case-study because of its 'disruptive' business model and its circulation among the 'elites'. Times of India in its post-liberalisation avatar, has transformed the news business and every other news daily was compelled to follow the path adopted by it (Jagannathan 2012). Secondly, English press enjoys an 'elite status' in India. Regional and English press persons have accepted the superiority of English newspapers as they are read by people 'who matter' (Stalberg 2014).

This study takes up a thirty year time spanning from 1980 to 2010. These three decades are important to study in the context of media's coverage of women's issues. After the 'Towards Equality' report in 1974 in India and UN declaration of the 'decade for women' in 1975, one would assume that initiatives taken by government and non-government set ups be reported in the media in order to spread awareness about glaring gender inequality in Indian society. Also post-emergency, women's organisations emerged at various levels all over the country. Against this backdrop, it seems conspicuous that mainstream mass media would voice women's issues. Hence, the year 1980 is taken as the beginning year of the study. Starting with 1980 the time frame covers a thirty year span till 2010.

This time period, as it spans both pre-liberalisation and post-liberalisation period, helps capture the continuity and change in women's concern with reference to larger changes in the political-economy of India. Further, it may also help to explore whether mainstream media represented the churning, issues and complexities faced and also thrown up by women's movements in India.

Within this time-period a multi-layered sampling process is adopted to pick up newspaper issues for the study. A sample of 432 issues of the Times of India is selected through systematic random sampling. At the first level, years are selected for the case-study. Through a random start, as required in a true systematic random sampling, the year of 1982 was selected for study. Thus taking 1982 as the base year, every subsequent third year is selected to pick up, in total, a sample of ten years (for instance after 1982, years of 1985, 1988 and so on were selected till the year of 2010). At second level, months and days are selected for the case study within the shortlisted years. This is done again by deploying systematic random sampling to ensure equal representation of months, weeks and days. With this method in total 48 issues of Times of India were selected from each selected year.

A code-sheet is used to capture representation of women in quantitative terms to record placement, length, theme, driving force, source (both primary and secondary), whether a news story has additional appeal in the form of photos, graphics, cartoons etc. Supplements, sports and business pages were kept out of the sample to investigate the potential of women as news makers in 'hard news'.

Since the study attempts to take an account of representation of women and see to what extent this representation corresponds with issues that are important for women in a country like India, it counted every single news where women are mentioned in any role or capacity. In total 13 themes are covered in the code-sheet in which there is an attempt to cover all major women related issues. These themes are women and health care, women and public policy, women and career, women's movement, women and crime, issues of rural women, issues of urban women, issues of tribal women, women labourers, migration, women as farmers and women & environment.

News stories, not belonging to any of these themes are classified under the category 'other'. It is fair to say that the category 'other' denotes presence of women and yet absence of women's issues. The study finds that representation of women in the Times of India is not only skewed and stereotypical but also unreflective of women's issues and concerns as a large part of news items fall under the category 'other'.

## Women's Representation in Times of India

Fig. 1. Representation of Women in the Times of India

Crime and Women	48%
Other	37%
Issues of Urban Women	1%
Issues of Rural Women	1%
Women and Healthcare	2%
Women and Career	3%
Women's Movement	2%
Women and Public Policy	5%

Following analysis is based on 438 stories from over 430 issues of Times of India spread across a thirty year time-span. Figure 1 shows that the newspaper on an average covered a little more than one story per issue on women. This minuscule coverage itself is biased as, for instance, two largest categories under which women are covered are 'crime' and 'other'. This connotes that other important categories like women's health, career, migration etc. are largely absent from the newspaper's news-scope.

### Coverage of news related to 'Women and Crime'

Figure 1 clearly indicates that, within whatever diminutive coverage women get in ToI, close to half of it falls under the category 'Women and Crime'. This category is important not only for occupying such a large share of the total coverage but also for its depiction reveals much more than mere representation. Further it shall be useful to classify the quantum of coverage of 'Women and Crime' in two subcategories namely 'women as victim' and 'women as perpetrators of crime'. Stories discussing women as victims amounts to 88 percent of the total coverage under this category while 11 percent stories find themselves in the second subcategory - women as perpetrators of crime. Considering the state of crime against women in India, it appears to be a fair representation. However, a deeper analysis reveals a completely different picture if the categories are also divided in terms of news space provided to these stories. In the first subcategory, 'women as victim', 56 percent of the stories are covered in single column space and in inner pages of the newspaper, while 43.8 percent stories of crime against women are covered in two or more than two columns. Interestingly, the major share, as much as 90.7 percent of the 43.8 percent of stories covered in two or more columns belong to five high profile cases- Ruchika Gihrotra Case (1990-2009), Priyadarshani Matto Case (1996-2006), Jessica Lal (1999-2006) Case, Nitish Katara Case (2002-2009) and Buddha Jayanti Park Rape Case (2003). This leaves only 9.6 percent space in the double column news for non high profile crimes against women.

Fig. 2. Portrayal of Women as Victim and Perpetrator of Crime

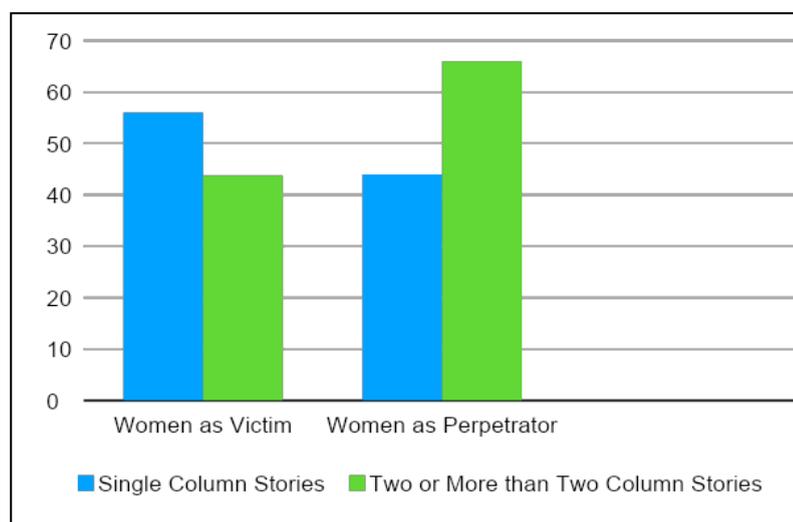


Figure 2 shows portrayal of women in the Times of India in the second subcategory 'women as perpetrators of crime. It is very interesting to see that within the 11 percent total coverage under this sub-category, as much as 66 percent reports fall under two and more than two column news while 44 percent reports are covered in single column space. This is suggestive of the view of the newspaper that women perpetrating a crime is a more sensational story. It is also noted that under this sub-category 'not so serious crimes' like pickpocketing or going on leave without information (22/4/94 news report '4 Pickpocket Women Tattooed by Police'; 21/6/2006 'Woman Army Officer Faces Action for Going on Leave Without Information) are also dealt in more than two columns. This approach may emerge from the belief that women are the bearers of morality and stories showing them going outside the purview of law would attract more eyeballs.

The sample spanning across thirty years also hints at the changing nature of reportage in terms of crime against women suggesting that the newspaper shifted its attention to more sensational or scandalous stories. For instance, during 1980s from the 68 reports falling under the sample, a total of 17 stories were reported on dowry and 10 were on rape. If we take total non high profile cases of crime against women that number 35 in total (44 stories were from above mentioned five high profile cases) 2 stories dealt with dowry and 27 with rape. Assuming an increase in incidents of crime against women to be the criteria of reporting, stories based on dowry would also have more space in the newspaper as dowry deaths alone have been increased by 74 percent.

A close look at the overall picture of crime against women in the 'Times of India' makes it clear that routine coverage of crime against women is narrow and restricted to some sensational crimes and high profile cases. Most of the coverage is specific events based and does not lead to wider discussions on editorial and opinion pages. In general the coverage of the Times of India suggests gender insensitivity.

### Women's Representation under the Category 'Other'

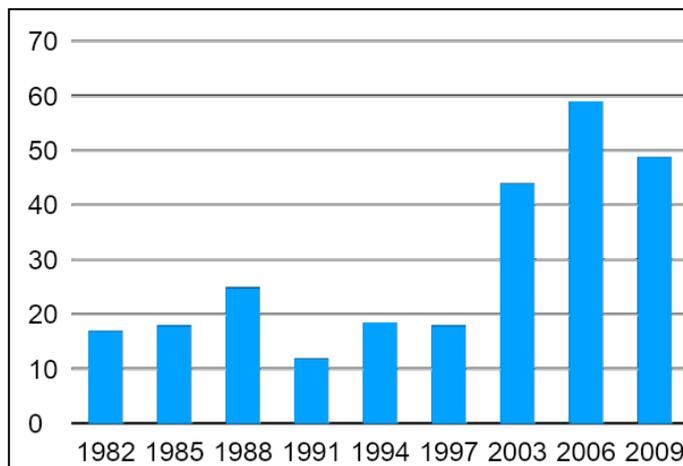


Fig. 3. Percentage of Stories From Category 'Other'

Taking three years each from decades of 1980, 1990 and 2000, Fig. 3 describes the shift in covering stories where presence of women can be marked but their issues are missing. Women's issues in India have been taken up by women's movements and they range from socio-economic inequalities women face due to discrimination based on gender. The figure shows that in the 1980s and 90s the number of 'other' category stories rarely exceeded 25 percent while in the decade of 2000, it never came below 40 percent.

Such stories include reports like 'This Chinese Girl Croons Like Lata' (6th February 2006); Karishma Kapoor's wedding (28th September 2003, covered on two pages). Range of studies discussing sexual relationship, shopping patterns of women i.e. 'Now You Can Eat Your Way' (16/8/2009), 'Want a Smooch? Get Rid of that Moochh' (24/11/2009) etc. find a place under this category. Augmentation in such stories under this category can be explained through Smythe's concept of 'audience commodity' (1981).

Since major profit of newspapers comes not from the readership but from advertisements, advertisers take the role of consumer while readers become the commodity that newspaper sells to its consumers, i.e. advertisers. Interests of consumers (advertisers) are served only when they get a good product (reader/audience) - in this case reader/audience inclined to buy the product of the advertiser. Thus to provide its primary consumer's (advertiser) its profit, it is important that not only advertisers' product but an attitude is pushed through the newspaper medium to orient readers towards consumption. With growing liberalisation, the newspaper has changed its own aptitude in order to assist the advertiser and therefore stories that strengthen the consumption have increased in number. The CEO of 'Bennett and Coleman' Company, Bhaskar Das, makes it very clear that because 'the advertiser becomes the primary customer of the print media... my target audience becomes those whom the advertiser wants to reach out to' (Chaudhuri 2000). Clearly, the newspaper, by its owners, are now taken as an instrument of ensuring profit rather than providing news which results in fading away of women's concerns and rising

number of stories which can mildly and covertly direct them towards the attitude required by the 'primary consumer' of the paper.

### **Coverage of news related to 'Women and Policy'**

From the sample of 438 news, the Times of India published 28 stories dealing with 'women and policies'. However even in this scant coverage of 'women and policy', stories are generally covered when the driving force is some prominent personality, i.e. ministers or bureaucrats rather than the policy itself. For instance a story becomes news if 'Inclusion of Women as Scientist' (3/2/1985) is declared by a union minister or when 'PM Declares Free Education to Girls' (22/8/1991). During 1980s and 1990s, despite prime driver being such prominent personality rather the subject of the story, newspaper covered a range of issues from women education to inclusion in policy-making, to reports demanding policy and lack of will power of the government on issues like custodial rape.

In contrast in the decade of 2000 the public policy issues regarding women were largely limited to themes that by and large denote stereotypical roles of women. For instance stories like '15 or 16? Government nulls? The age of consent for girls' (7/2/2006) or 'At 18, Girls Can Pick Hubby' (19/5/2009) show that women are treated only in their stereotypical role by the newspaper. Even 'empowerment' takes place well within the traditional roles i.e legal freedom from parents' pressure in selecting husbands. There are however stories stating problems of single women in getting employment under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) (14/7/2009) focusing on illegality in the implementation of a government scheme. Another news states that the Ministry of Rural Development, Haryana declared the necessity of toilets for a man to get married (22/3/2009). Yet such news stories are rare in the newspaper's reportage.

Women and public policy category scores little better than many other categories that are absent from the news scope of the Times of India. It is interesting to see that most stories have the prime driver and prime source of the story as a high profile public figure, usually from the government i.e. prime minister or minister. Such stories are easy to get as they are either available in form of press release or press briefings by the government or events where a public figure discusses such themes. Rarely a reader comes across a critical engagement with a theme dealt with in a news item.

Nor the newspaper attempts to incorporate various themes that are generally dealt with in other alternative news platforms or academia regarding women and public policy. Times of India however seems to be giving place only to official sources of news in this regard. A gradual shift can be noticed in sources of public policy related stories. During the 1980s and 1990s though the major news items came from government sources, still some coverage was given to sources other than the government. For instance, NGO's reports and academic activities like seminars were given space in the newspaper. This has changed in the decade of 2000. However, the percentage of coverage under this category has gone up yet the diversity of sources is negligible as most news come from official sources only. Due to this, issues that challenge fundamentals of patriarchy and by affect policy making are not dealt with by the newspaper. Nor the newspaper discusses, what Bandopadhyay calls, the

'schizophrenic response of government' (2000) towards the gender aspect of policy making and implementation. Thus the newspaper puts a 'double-blinder' with regard to women and policy making. At one level it only gives space to stories coming from official sources and at the other level the stories coming from official sources go unchallenged as they are not critically engaged with or cross checked with other sources or ground reportage.

### **Coverage of news related to 'Women and Employment'**

Three percent of the overall coverage on women in the Times of India goes to the theme 'women and career'. Any career related news is accounted for in this category in order to analyse which career options interests the newspaper and whether such options serve a larger purpose of informing women about career choices. The data collected from the sample suggests that a major shift has taken place in reporting of women and career in the newspaper. Though the number of stories covered under this theme do not differ starkly amongst the three decades but the coverage becomes increasingly homogenous in terms of the subject-matter and career choices of stories.

During the 1980s and 1990s the newspaper covered quite a wide range with reference to women employment and career. Also stories related to problems faced by working women found frequent recurrence during this time period. For instance, 'Women Plan Stir for Job Opportunities' (31/7/1982) discusses both impediments women encounter in taking up a job as well as creating a network of organisations and trade unions to help women getting employment. Year 1985 mentioned two stories, first covering a seminar held on the status of women scientists (3/2/1985) and second deals with problems women face in opting for hotel jobs, while they can learn the skills very easily and the industry provides huge opportunities (28/8/1985). Coverage of 1988 showed a diversity in terms of career and employment scenario for women. A story explains why women remain 'unheard and unseen' in the construction and agriculture sector despite being a large chunk of the total workforce (3/3/1988). Another story discusses a week-long workshop held for women entrepreneurs to enhance their skills (23/2/1988). Apart from this a news story reporting the Prime Minister's emphasis on women's scientists' greater role in society (28/4/1988) is also covered where the PM encourages women to study science and join the scientist brigade.

1990s saw a more concentrated coverage on successful women entrepreneurs. For instance 'Women Dairy Change Face of U.P' (6/3/1994), 'Women too are Successful Entrepreneurs' (21/9/1994) and 'Women and MicroCredit' (26/2/1997) show a shift from concerns of working women to women doing well in small and medium businesses and how state is supporting them in getting the desired success. All three stories do discuss the role of state in providing a support system in the form of its women oriented policies.

The decade of 2000 marks a stark shift from state to market even in themes like 'women and career'. Out of 5 stories covered in the decade of 2000, 4 discuss modern upmarket career options for women. Three stories are titled as 'Why Fewer Women go to Business School' (16/6/2003), 'Why Most Women Give Business School a go by' (6/7/2003) and 'The She-EOs, India's Fortune Makers' (10/10/2003). Fourth story 'Ready for Late Nights in Shimla' (6/7/2003) discusses flourishing career opportunities for women in the field of

modelling. Fifth story, 'More Women Opt for Rural Job Schemes in Rajasthan' (12/6/2006), deals with rural women employment and their dependence on the state for solving their employment problems.

It is interesting how reporting in the Times of India, gradually took two major shifts in terms of women and career choices. First, in the post 1990s, the emphasis of reporting increasingly moved away from state to market. From dependence on state in the 1980s, the reportage shifted to small and medium women entrepreneurs and cooperatives in the 1990s and in the next decade the focus was overwhelmingly on upmarket high-profile opportunities. Only one story relates to the state which is about rural women. It appears that there is a confluence in the coverage between the urban and the market. The reportage is visibly exclusionary as the majority of women in India are involved in occupations in rural areas. For instance, of India's total agricultural population, 80 percent contribution comes from women. Yet it does not find any mention in the Times of India. Second shift marks a change from a variety of career stories to high profile urban career stories. Trade unions and women's organisations of the 1980s and small entrepreneurs of the 1990s took a slow exit from the newspaper to give space to career options in the increasingly globalised and liberalised market economy. Both shifts are interlinked and appear to appeal to the people from primarily urban middle and upper middle classes, the 'consumers' of ToI.

### **Coverage of Women on Editorial Page**

Editorial page is a reflection of the newspaper's position on various issues. Ideally, it is also a space for representation of different perspectives that reflects democratic spirit of a newspaper. However coverage of women's issues certainly shows a lack of diversity in the issues covered. Not only the diversity is absent but the space given to women's issues is also minuscule. Further, with growing liberalisation, the Times of India in its editorial page coverage too moves away from the issues being raised by women scholarship and women's movement in India in general. It increasingly concentrates more on themes that would fall in the category 'other', a category where women are present but their issues are absent.

In total the sample for the study could trace 18 pieces on the Times of India's editorial page related to women. While the decade of the 1980s did give lesser coverage to women's issues, it did have a variety in its dealing with themes and issues related to women. 1990s could not count any piece on editorial pages related to women. The decade of 2000 though gives more space to women but not to their issues.

Sample from the 1980s traced one article 'People Start Thinking Differently When a Girl Turns 18' (17/5/1982) discusses how people start thinking of a girl's marriage when she turns 18. Parents have no other aspiration but finding their girl a good match in matrimony. An opinion piece, 'Women on the March' (21/1/1985) appreciates women's march organised by *Stree Mukti Morcha*, a women organisation, stressing on the common grounds of struggle for rural and urban women. Another editorial 'Free Education for Girls' (3/2/1985) explores the potential of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's promise for providing free education to girls. The editorial expresses that only the policy of free education will not increase the enrolment of girls in schools until other long standing societal problems are taken care of.

The sample taken from the decade of 2000 however shows coverage of women's issues related to question of muslim personal law, women's reservation bill, a woman getting a ministerial portfolio and interviews of women celebrities in fields of dancing and film-making etc. Out of total 18 pieces on the editorial page, four deal with women in politics in the backdrop of women's reservation bill, two articles discuss need to reform muslim personal law, three articles discuss safety and gender justice, two pieces are in the form of interviews with women celebrities and one with positive performance of north east states in sex ratio statistics. Thus the subject-matter of women's issues for the newspaper on the editorial page remained largely limited to few mainstream political issues and sensational crimes in big cities.

### **Coverage of Women's Movement**

Figure 1 displays that the Times of India gives only two percent space to women's movement. In total there are nine news stories including spontaneous women's protests. Women's movement in India, as everywhere else, not only represents issues of half of the country's population but is also quite rich and diverse in its ideas and methods to achieve a gender just society. Two percent coverage of the total coverage of women's issues rather ensures that such diversity of issues and ideas do not reach readers of the Times of India. The present two percent coverage is also limited in its imagination and reach of women's issues. During the 1980s, dowry was the overwhelming concern in Times of India's coverage of women's movement. Stories like 'Saheli Allowed to Examine Papers of a Bride's Death Case' (6/10/1982); 'Women's Dharna at Dowry Seeker's House in South Delhi' (5/12/1982) and chief convenor of All India Anti Dowry Movement expressing anguish over 'Rise in Death of Newly Wed Women' (30/7/1985) clearly reflect significance of this issue.

During the decade of 2000, reporting of women's movement in the newspaper took a turn to issues of Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and single women. Only two stories, speaking of women's movement, 'Women's Organisations Oppose Uniform Civil Code' (26/7/2003) and 'Single Women Band Together to Fight for Their Rights' (7/10/2009), could find a place in the sample. Not only has the frequency of coverage in the decade of 2000 has dipped in comparison with the 1980s, the issues raised by women's organisations also seem to be catering to sections of women that are largely financially independent and themes related to politics and religion. The extent to which the Times of India excluded issues of women coming from the women's movement is quite noteworthy.

It is well known that the questions of gender justice were raised during this time in various forms including protests against state, scholarly activities and many other constructive activities that do not find space in the news media.

Women's movement in India has grown hand in hand with intense academic endeavours on the part of scholars, activists and institutions. From time to time the movement gave impetus to and also got shaped by academic and scholarly studies. During the 1980s saving girl children emerged as the dominant theme around which scholarly studies were reported. Three reports discussed such studies in the 1980s. In the 1990s, with one news article mentioning an academic study on domestic violence, while in the decade of

2000 two academic studies were reported by ToI. One of these discusses that women are less prone to heart attacks and second discussed the value of property in women's life by showing that women with property are less prone to violence. At the time when women's studies had reached a certain maturity in India and women from all ideological orientations were grappling with the challenge of creating a gender democracy, it is clear that the newspaper rarely reflected these issues in their complexities.

### **Concluding Observations**

This paper has mapped major themes under which women are covered the most in Times of India. One generalisation which emerges from the analysis is a persistent gender insensitivity in the coverage of the newspaper. It also emerges that ToI doesn't represent the diversity of women and their issues in India in terms of class, caste, region and rural-urban. The coverage is primarily focused on urban, educated middle and upper classes. The questionnaire also had themes pertaining 'women and migration', 'tribal women', 'women and environment', 'working class women', 'women farmers', 'women and sanitation' etc. However the coverage in the newspaper does not provide much chance to fill these categories. Further, a comparative study of the women issues covered in ToI reveals that over time there are some important visible shifts.

With liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, one sees an increasing tendency where the logics of market and profit are becoming the governing principles which decide the frame of the coverage of women's issues. Even in the given coverage, it is evident that the diversity of issues has marked a decline in post year 2000.

Further the study confirms that overall coverage of women in the Times of India could not do away with its patriarchal and soft patriarchal undertones even while discussing women's empowerment. The shift of stories to themes less relevant for women's politicisation or empowerment leading to an enormous increase in the number of stories under the category 'other'. Such coverage goes contrary to the claims of being an actor in increasing democratisation of political processes rather it contributes to stereotypical portrayal of women - an obstacle to gender equality.

At this juncture it is interesting to ask what can be a plausible explanation of such a gender insensitive approach of mainstream media in general and ToI in particular? To a large extent the answer lies in the structure of the mainstream media being a profit making organisation. Like any other business, media also depends on the market, advertisers and consumers. In a patriarchal society, consumers are primarily men and the market is shaped in accordance with the needs and demands of its consumers. Mainstream media's representation of women - both in number and approach - is a reflection of a prevailing patriarchy where traditional gender roles are reinforced to favour the market which in turn strengthens status-quo. It is also evident here that with increased liberalisation, reporting of issues matter most to most women in Indian context has come down drastically. Significant increase in the category 'other' shows that presence of women is required but their issues constantly articulated from civil society platforms - ranging from big social movements to small local initiatives - remain outside the ambit of mainstream media.

Empowerment of women in the mainstream media is very specifically defined in accordance with the 'aspirational class' of India. The approach of presenting a post-political middle class is important for the paper not only because this class is not only the reader base of Times of India but also the main consumer of products it advertises and thus it is imperative that coverage establishes this class as a significant part of society. 'In this scheme of things, the advertiser is the king, and TOI believes its mission is to promote the advertiser's interests by facilitating "consumption." (Jagannathan 2012). In this case both the categories – advertisers and consumers – are dominated by men, economically and culturally.

Thus compulsions of the market and pulls of patriarchy shape such coverage of mainstream media. Both 'sexy and dreary' stories (Ninan 2010) help market and patriarchy by conforming and limiting women to their traditional roles at one end and defining their empowerment from market perspective on the other. Readers are pushed to be consumers. Women sections which are not potential consumers such as women from the working class, women farmers, migrant women etc. do not get space in the news media.

Analysis of reportage in the mainstream media exposes cultural hegemony of patriarchy extending itself to the fourth estate. Rather it should be argued that market and society work hand in hand to reproduce gendered spaces in their respective sphere furthering similar reflection in the mainstream media. Representation and reassertion of reproduced gendered roles in media also explains why women are unable to exercise their agency despite having freedom of being equal citizens of the state and equal participants in the market. While women's movements and feminist analysis keeps creating discursive ripples through range of alternative media, mainstream mass media clearly aligns with market to preserve cultural hegemony of patriarchy by creating consumers than citizens who believe in 'free choice' without questioning the fundamentals of market and society.

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