

Women in Media Discourse: A Critical Study with Feminist Perspective

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Abstract

Female bodies have been exposed to a maximum possible extent through print and visual media globally. The physical impression of women body has been used to sell several consumer products, for example, food to floors, from creams to cars, from perfume to popcorn. The standards of beauty being imposed on women by external sources are much debated and complicated process and need to be understood within the age-old socio-culturally milieu. In addition, the political economy of 'women image' and its commercial exploitation by selling and purchasing 'beauty' and consumption of it also requires serious attention. Hence, a theoretical discourse is developed based on content analysis to cross-examine the representation of women around the patriarchic cultural notion of 'beauty' and its commoditization in commercial space through media. This paper examines presentations of women in the media through feminist critical discourse analysis in order to explore dominant ideas of gender and femininity embedded within discourses that constrain the lived experiences of women. The paper further explores the social dynamics of 'female body' and reconstruction of 'femaleness' through the socio-cultural process of 'gendering' and 'popular media'. The discourse revolves around how and whether the 'reconstruction of female body' could be dissected in search of 'real image, for example 'changing the image of beauty' in real sphere of women's life and lifestyle of a woman' with a special focus on Indian society. By engaging in an interpretive analysis of the ways femininity is presented in both public and private presentations of gender. This study uses a feminist lens to critically inspect the suppressed meanings of gender and offers hope for opening up multiple meanings of femininity within the discourses of gender and media.

Key Word: Media, Women, Discourse, Feminism, Liberty, Equality.

Introduction

Women's performance, participation, and depiction in media are the three vital measurements of concentration for the contemporary social science researchers, particularly for the feminist activist. Because for the development and empowerment of the women, it is vital to give them appropriate condition where they can raise their voices against the

disparities and sexual orientation they are encountering in our male-centric society. In every aspect, improving the position of women is viewed as the best way to destroy this sexual orientation and to accomplish a better quality of life for the women. For this reason, communication can be regarded as a crucial way and mass media can assume an important role in forming norms, attitudes, social values,

behaviour and perception. It has been broadly perceived that media can play a crucial role in advancing and disseminating information among the masses and is viewed as the key player in the political, social, and economic empowerment of women. Media can concentrate on issues related to women, these can give a space for women to assert their freedoms or rights and most importantly media can provide a democratic environment where women can participate, represent their womanhood and in which they will be depicted emphatically. A positive depiction of women in media is important to keep up the genuine poise and status of women which will minimise the gap and disparities amongst men and women. But if media also play the role as a mere agent to forward this tradition then the whole situation will be against the women where their advancement and empowerment won't be conceivable.

The term media is generally utilized a little hand for 'Mass Media' and the word media is the plural form of medium. Theoretically, the media are those mechanical agencies which are occupied with the selection, processing, creation, and distribution of messages among the general population. The mass media manage the everyday issues of the country particularly of the general individuals. It contributes towards the development of mass culture and mass society. Mass media, like every modern and advanced country such as India, comprises of electronic media and print media which consist of the television, the Radio, the Press, the Film, Advertising, and Publication. Among these media, the films, TV, advertisements, animation,

photography, paintings and so forth, are viewed as the visual media.

Throughout the western history; male-centric society has kept on serving the interests of men and suppressed those of women. Female bodies have been uncovered throughout the decades to a maximum possible extent through print and visual media comprehensibly. The corporeal impression of women body has been utilized to offer all buying items, for example, from cream to cars, food to floors, from perfume to popcorn across continents. Prevalent television and film actresses are demonstrated getting to be more youthful, taller and more slender step by step as anticipated by the visual media. In Indian media the depiction of women is it films, visual advertisement, television programmes, newspaper and magazines is becoming an area of great concern to the people having interest in social research and studies. There is an on-going pattern in the present media both print and electronic, to depict women as sex objects, commodity, and sometimes as victims. It is known to everyone that Indian culture is a patriarchal culture. Patriarchy is built up in all over the place and each part of life and tragically media isn't a special case to that. Media as the contemporary corporate associations are ruled by the male and in all the higher posts men are employed. And they by controlling the whole system of media try to depict the picture of women as weak and inferior in front of the whole world. Numerous feminist activists have indicated how women are constantly stifled by the ways we come to know ourselves in connection to the manners in which we sorted out our reality. However, numerous impacts fall on relational and hierarchical level contexts without much

concern for the role of media in these issues.

The models of beauty being forced on women by outer sources are a much discussed and confusing process and should be comprehended inside the well-established socio-culturally instigated milieu. As Weedon states,

Gendered subject positions are constituted in various ways: by images of how one is expected to look and behave and by rules of behaviour to which one should conform which are reinforced by approval or punishment, through particular definitions of pleasure which are offered as natural and imply ways of being a girl or woman, and by the absence within particular discourses of any possibility of negotiating the nature of femininity and masculinity. (Weedon, 1997, p.95)

As indicated by feminists discourse, there is a complex dynamics that exist among ideology, power, language and its practice within a context of its socio-cultural milieu that could be shown in the form of performing gender or doing gender. It is recommended that gender is a property, not of peoples themselves but rather of the practices to which individuals from a society credit a gendering meaning. For instance, being a woman includes appropriating gendered practices and influencing them to some portion of the 'self' that she displays to others. The print or visual media similarly gives a stereotyped picture, an imposition which must be disguised by 'women' and show their 'beauty' that suits to the prevalent and prevailing view of the larger commune.

Many thinkers from a feminist school like structuralism or post-structuralism, they

have shared their views on this subject matter. Post-structuralism feminist thinker, Weedon (1997), has wanted to integrate social power and individual experience in a theory of subjectivity. According to Weedon, subjectivity is the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of self, and her ways of understanding to the world and this world could be also the world of popular media. Another Post-structuralist thinker, Judith Butler (1990), argues that the 'performativity' of gender offers an essential contribution to the conceptual understanding of processes of subversion. Also, she argues that subversion occurs through the performance of an identity that is repeated in a way that goes back and forth resulting in the displacement of the original goals of leading forms of power. Virginia Woolf (1929) says 'all women', deconstructing particular concepts about the ways in which identity and power have been gendered. Foucault (1990) reconceived subjectivity as subjected and docile body enmeshed in the relation of power. He says the 'effect of power' upon body results in a decrease of the social agent to passive bodies though his argument lacks a grounded theory of 'subjectivity' and is in disagreement with the basic feminist struggle to rediscover and re-experience womanhood.

According to Lacan, (2001) subject loses some intellect of autonomy upon realizing that 'she' is a visible object, this notion is bound with his theory of the 'mirror stage', in which a child encountering a mirror realizes that he or she has an outer appearance. This is not to say that the object behaves optically as a mirror; instead, it means that the reflection of any object can persuade an awareness of it as

an object. Mulvey (1975) identifies the male gaze in consonance with the Lacanian argument that 'Feminity' is a social construct and that the feminine object, the object of desire. Feminity is what male perceives about female body withholding the positive identity of the female as a fellow human. According to Mulvey, the concept of subjectivity and its meaning by which cultural norms and interpretations call women into being emphasized apparently as subjects. This image problematically portrays women as 'she', rather than an un-problematically 'we', which is indicative of the emerging politics of post-feminist inquiry (Butler 1990, 1993). Such an argument indicates that there is an unequal power relationship between gazer and gazed, male and female and therefore, leading to women 'objectification'. According to Frauke, (1997) media representation of one of the most popular singers Cher, a woman who undergo cosmetic surgeries numerous times (1987-1995) to suit to popular media and her image could be a famous example of power dynamics and the politics of female body that exhibited stigmatization, objectification, and reconstructed body image and women beauty' documented by many newspapers, media news channels in Germany and in the US during her hey-days of popularity.

Other than commercialization, in light of objectification of women 'body, image, and beauty', during 90's the feminist movement recognized frequencies of women exploitation because of such subversion made by mainstream culture in different visual print media. It prompted numerous social issues like workplace harassment, domestic violence, and equal pay. The key concern continues the same

even in the postmodern era especially, for the present discourse. 'Body, image and identity' crisis 'called into being' in popular feminism, usually leads to 'false identity' and remaking trap of 'real' into something 'in vogue' empowering patriarchic viewing, look, pleasure and acceptability.

The 'first wave modernity' offered fillip to the establishment of reasonable express comprehensive achieving generation of foundation to advance learning and reinforcing through instruction for its citizenry. This was followed by a second wave of 'modernity' concretizing 'empowerment' that is, winning one's own living through employment generation and equal opportunities for the citizens irrespective of gender, caste, race, and creed. Gender roles of women got upgraded and more included and debilitated the stereotyped 'gender roles' dug in profoundly on the social surface. This urged individuals to influence their own character to structure and end up being a piece of a changing social request especially for women. The media accepted here a mind-boggling part exhaustively, to substantiate and engage progression reaching all parts of life. Spread of advancement made separate space for women to increment capable status and character anyway was loaded up with challenges and conflicts amongst rank and stories and pictures of contemporary popular culture. It achieved 'imbalance' inside the gender-class itself: women who crossed the farthest point of modernity and individuals who floundered in social imagery.

Continuing perspectives speak to different schools of thought in recent feminists discourse like self-schema, social

comparisons, and cultivation and so on. Every point of view has helped researchers analyze systems by which the media pictures were converted into instigated body image in women mind. These considerations additionally disclose with respect to why some segment of female masses stay helpless against the inconvenient impact of the media, while others show surprising levels of flexibility. The inescapability of the media makes it extremely trying for most women to abstain from assessing themselves against the anticipated socio-social standard of excellence. These pictures fortify among most women the message that “you’re not good enough”. (Milkie, 1999) Various organizations that objective women in the media really endeavor to encourage social examination with romanticised pictures to persuade women to purchase the items that will convey them closer to the perfect, for example, hair products, food products, cosmetics, etc. If women see an error amongst themselves and the pictures they see in notices they will be more enticed to purchase the promoted items (Thompson and Coovert, 1999). Schooler et al. approve the above point as he would see it beneath:

Consistent representations on television construct a specific portrait of reality, and repeated exposure to this content leads viewers to adopt this alternative reality as valid. Accordingly, because the representations of women's bodies shown on television are so skewed, adopting this reality for young women is believed to lead to decreased satisfaction with their own bodies, a strong desire to be thinner, and disordered eating behaviour. (Schooler, 2004)

The depiction of women by the media and other significant people throughout her life impacts the origination of socially spoke to perfect body, that is social desire concerning physical appearance and beauty. Interestingly, the objective body includes a man’s own assessment of her body. A man’s satisfaction and disappointment concerning his physical appearance are contained inside this measurement. People quite often have some feeling about their physical aura. The disguised ideal body includes the level at which an individual endorses the ideal picture and tries to accomplish it. A few women can be presented to pictures of thin women and may not disguise such standards of appearances since they realize that they are improbable. Indifference, a few women internalized ideal is fundamentally the same as the socially spoke to perfect, which makes them especially defenseless against the intense impacts of the media. (Sands and Wardle, 2003). As of now talked about the ‘projection of women body and image’ is the focal point of this study, and how it has subversive effect on the women consciousness pushing them into catching of ‘performing gender’ as seen by male to a vast degree to meet visual delights and to be acknowledged in the familial social clout specifically, where women themselves are ‘leading the role of doing gender’ under an unobtrusive procedure of ‘objectification’.

Post liberalized era has encountered more intense composition of women body through the film, advertisement, and “ad captions” which essentially incites “enacting sexism” and reconfirming procedure of “objectification” and commoditization of women body and

image. 'Nakedness' of the female body as contended by feminist critics such as Weedon, Wolf, and Foucault, as part of gender misuse and power elements is instantly dismissed by many as an antidote. Furthermore, the ongoing tag "my body is my art" (Kathy, 1997, p.27) "being slim slender is being healthy" is another droning for the modern lifestyle to promote cosmetology centers, fitness centers, liposuction centers in urban townships and metros is a portrayal of misuse. The way of life which gave them umpteen extensions for utilization prompting weight and related diseases currently conjures a further request to cut off calories, ideal food habit, shape up in few hours, and therefore retaining ideal body. According to McLaren, such recently emerging demand for 'freedom of space and therefore voluntary exposition of 'body' could be termed as "female individualization". He obtained the possibility of individualization in postmodern society as a human trend. Various sociologists have seen that modernity lead individualization affirms people as self-monitor and that there have all the earmarks of being a more prominent affinity for 'female individualization (McLaren, 1997).

To meet this media activated gap between real body and body image billion dollars industry has jumped up all around. Advertisements and magazines are marketed to enable women 'to look better' by giving data and items that guessed influence them to look and feel better. Women read these magazines with the expectation that in the event that the take after the given exhortation, they will be more apparent and alluring. Tiggemann assumes that successive magazine reading

was reliably connected with larger amounts of body disappointment and bothered eating. The outcomes that women who read fashion magazines showed more elevated amounts of thin-ideal internalization, which is a great hazard factor for improvement of weight tension and disarranged eating designs. Thus, to eating pathology and weight disappointment, that women who see slides of imagined in numerous standard advertisement and magazines demonstrate expanded levels of guilt, stress, depression, shame, insecurity, and shame (Stice, Schupak-Neuberg, Shaw, and Stein, 1994). Thus media projection about beauty and ideal body image ends up instrumental in deciding impression of a large number of viewers of TV and readers of 'beauty' newspaper and magazines are guided by the media projected shapes of beauty and grace for women and internalize it as measuring stick to see women.

In the media outlets, women are objectified, rarely we see a standard music video without a few females, wearing basically nothing, hung crosswise over small time who is depicted as their 'all and be all'. Indeed, even the greater part of renowned women entertainers are not known for their ability, but rather their body. Well, known performing artists and musical artists that are an example of this are Katrina Kaif, Priyanka Chopra, Anushka Shetty, Dipika Padukone, and so on. There are numerous individuals who contend that it simply matters of fact. Indeed women in the media are unreasonably depicted and hyper-sexualized, yet this has no genuine bearing on standard women's confidence. However, this has been proven false. In a

recent report, it was discovered that 68% of women firmly concur that the media and publicizing set a farfetched standard of excellence, which most women can't ever the media horribly translates what is wonderful. It's terrible; however, the mass media has a negative effect on women's self-esteem and certainly (Sands and Wardle, 2003).

Observation, projection, and acceptability of women are significantly more mind-boggling wonders in India than in the west. In Indian media, the projection of women as a 'persona' or as a good example has fluctuated to a great extent between two boundaries of continuum case is from 'devil' to 'cursed'. In 70's the genuine development of feminism begun with women's activist researchers discussing rights, the identity of women and role status in Indian patriarchy, and is yet attempting to pick up lucidity and acknowledgment of society. Indian culture has not changed its state of mind towards women since the previous 1500 years (Jain, 2011). He compactly clarified how the ethical establishment of Indian patriarchic structure has limited the part of women's between two outrageous 'blessed' and 'domed'. Indian women particularly speaking to urban class have been anticipated as empowered, self-independent, liberated and looking great regarding 'thin and sexy', 'fair and lovely', 'smart and fashionable' and furthermore financially empowered as anticipated by the media over the most recent two decades. These pictures have achieved biggest no of families in India through TV channels and impacted the societal states of attitudes en-mass and women in particular.

From one perspective women are as yet being abused, utilized, misled seen as an object of desire and second-grade citizen in the family and society in India. These pictures when as often as possible appeared on TV make cacophony among the women as the hole amongst the genuine and anticipated beauty, body image, and personality looks broadening and baffling. Media projection is far expelled from reality has exceptionally impacted women mind, be it bring down pay center or 'rich n famous' class; or urban bunches, harming the conventional regulating structure and establishment of our society and particularly making women folks vulnerable to questionable products and demeanor towards chiselled physiques as requested by mainstreams western culture portraying women as charming, glamorous, sensual. TV, Films, and advertisements all have been recreating women picture by visual and print organizing stylishness and beauty. This anticipating of women by the media is in outrageous appear differently in relation to the generally referred to part of women as a home producer, mother, caregiver, and messenger of adoration and love. Women picture has been pigeonholed with items like soap, oil, detergent powder, cooking spices, rice-grain etc., and anticipating utter truthfulness towards family in this way affirming abuse of her 'role' in genuine social structure. Then again women are anticipated as urbane, brilliant and engaged symbolising women control and, accordingly, prompting wilful article of body and objectification encroaching their space, and privacy over the body. Uberoi who contends that

The conspicuously globalised popular culture of the upper middle classes though

a minority one is less authentic than the conservative culture of the lower middle classes or the mass culture manufactured for the urban working classes, the rural consumer and the socially dispossessed. (Uberoi, 2006)

The media has made social conflicts and classes.

In globalized and the post liberalized era in Indian social media has played usefully and additionally a questionable part in anticipating women image, body, and beauty. These universal pictures urge individuals to consider sex and women as a product, and these may add to brutally against women. For instance, there is an advertisement of a premium whiskey that shows one man is taking the primary taste of that specific whiskey and the woman sitting before him has all the earmarks of being losing a few crawls of her dress, after each drink the procedure is going ahead up three drinks. After three tastes of drink, he finds that the bosoms of the past over clad woman have turned out to be snappy noticeable and half-clad and his own particular shirt has slipped from his shoulders. And the voice smur kuch bhi ho sakta hai that implies anything can happen. The delineation of women in this and different advertisements are really offended by the women as a rule which is pulverizing the genuine status and poise of women. It gives the idea that culture and value exposition to society has endured a shot and financial or business contemplations have to a great extent guided in such manner. The media's commitment to advancing women causes and symbolism can be separated into four classifications as I talk about,

Firstly, media is advancing the commoditization and marketization of women beauty and image. For instance, the media in the mid 90's utilized to be a method for revealing and broadcasting to great extent news and songs, music, films, and fewer product advertisements. The items like NIRMA detergent or LUX soap stayed well-known women's attack to be promoted during that era. The media and the example of commercials have completely changed in the post-globalized period and it has turned into a dynamic mode and device to shape, mold and change public opinion and make markets and interest for various items by anticipating thin, trim, sculpted woman bodies like a product. Be it homecare items, telecommunication, beauty products, IT products, food or lingerie, the women body has been utilized unsparingly to promote and advertise stock. So as to offer items, recreated pictures of women with altered sculpted looks are displayed before masses to impact their view of a perfect woman rendering the women a commodity in the process. Visual and print media by anticipating, commercializing, commoditizing and reconstructing women picture misdirects the woman with respect to what is her genuine picture. One anticipates in the media or one herself conveys or the endorsed by the regulating societal structure.

Secondly, media is promoting the stereotyped gender instigated projection of women picture. For example, over the most recent three decades, the media appears to have strengthened stereotyping by anticipating women as homemakers, tolerant and docile to suit mass perception and taste, also amongst its devoted customers, the women who might purchase

specific items for the body, beauty, and house. In this manner in India, women on small or big screen still perform conventional part of washing garments, perpetually serving sustenance grown-ups, needing for makeup to end up more delightful and showing their garments. A contemporary advertisement of an item 'MOOV' demonstrate that woman in the family unit is drained by the day's end doing and completing everyone her errands and experiencing spinal pain, to her break comes a rubbing cream 'MOOV' so that she can further work better to meet her relative's impulses and extravagant? After using the miraculous balm, a barrage of orders began flowing from the entire family to make her serve it again as a machine.

Thirdly, media is promoting not only commercialized as well as a glamorized image of the women is a major contribution of the media in the post-globalised time. New faces of youthful and arousing models selling perfume, soft drinks, laptops or expensive cars in a sizzling way promote more glamour than the products. In the post-liberalized market economy, an increase in the working women populace by numerous counts and women rising as accomplices in doctors, financial decision making, professors, administrators or managers have been helpful overlooked by the media. Shockingly, anticipated women picture has been more clearly impregnated with fabulousness remainder by the media over and over. With the fashion industry's and mass media depictions of women as sex object and beauty, there is flat out refutation of 'real woman'. The woman which we find in broad communications or fashion shows portrays not the real but

rather a picture of women based on male libidinal desires. The recreation of women pictures in the name of women rights and equality of gender is far expelled from reality as women still endure sexual slavery and domestic violence and, honor killings, abortion or financial decision, lack of participation in reproductive and at home. The media effectively has glamorized not enabled the women at praxis level.

And fourthly, media is a failure to issues; take to bits real image, and social changes. According to Devereux

...mass media are an important agent of transformation and social change, they are inextricably bound up with the capitalist project and they play a central role in the reproduction and continuation of various kinds of social inequalities at local, national and global level. (Devereux, 2003, p.9)

What the media has passed up a great opportunity is unwinding gender inequality and gender perspective to help women causes particularly in India. Bathla (1998) contended that Indian media deliberately disregarded the need to raise issues of gender inequality and injustice. Today in India, women remain the second sex trapped in the triple bind of patriarchy, religion, and capitalism. The media has rendered lacking consideration regarding women voices sometimes and passed on that their worries were unimportant to a law based nation. The media has assumed a questionable part: It has engendered the interests of commercial value esteem as often as possible by advancing the mod picture of women and at worst it has remained negligent of the concerns of social change at an attitudinal level to free

women. For media projection of glamorized woman image and body has involved profiting at the business level through social issues and change being a non-money spinner has assumed a focal part in the proliferation and continuation of different sorts of social imbalances local, national and global level. The real women related issues need to change in societal demeanors, perception, and treatment of women as equivalent partners and the media has felt shy of engendering the social shades because of there no money in such themes.

Conclusion

This thematic discourse endeavored to reflect how the media both print and visual in the advancement of mainstream culture has anticipated women image and body as a stimulus to sensual enjoyment. It additionally held prevailing patriarchal tint with accentuation on conventional standardizing practices to actuate obviously or covertly the perfect picture of women. Keeping a hypothetical translation that tended to women, gender stereotype, body, image and self, the paper highlights a couple of shapes of the subject, for example, gender commoditization, gender stereotyping and commercialization, exposition of women body and image as gender politics, objectification, gender inequality and division among gender etc.

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The media all around has reproduced the women picture remembering its business benefits and anticipating it to round up benefits by drawing a wedge between the 'real image of women and reconstructed image'. It advances regulating shackle and stereotyping to feed the mass mind about women picture by anticipating division: attractive question versus delightful being holding perpetual gender struggle in the social structure as suggested through the topic. The media is an instrument of introducing social change while keeping up congruity has failed more in the advancement of women body and picture among masses by its projections than got the genuine picture of the front line. To a great extent, a remade picture of women's body as spread by the media has not served the reason for women club making a disharmony among the brains of everyone: the eyewitness, the women, the readers and the viewers of the media.

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