

# Problems and Perspectives of the Relationship between the Media and Human Rights



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Edited by

G. P. Pandey,  
Charu Joshi  
and Paromita Das

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## PREFACE

People not only have the right to live, but also to live with human dignity. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says, “All beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” The concept of human rights has risen from that of the natural rights of all humans. Time and again, history shows the existence of human rights as an essential component in the well-being of human civilisations at any given time.

In 539 BC, the armies of Cyrus the Great, the first king of ancient Persia, conquered the city of Babylon. He freed the slaves, declared that all people had the right to choose their religion, and established racial equality. This was recorded on a black clay cylinder in the Acadian language, which is today known as the Cyrus Cylinder. Most importantly, it is the world’s first charter of Human Rights. Its provisions parallel the first four Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. From Babylon, this idea spread quickly to India, Greece, and Rome. There, the concept of “natural law” emerged, in observation of the fact that people tended to follow certain unwritten laws in the course of life, and Roman law was based on rational ideas derived from the nature of things.

Documents asserting individual rights, such as the Magna Carta (1215), the Petition of Right (1628), the US Constitution (1787), the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789), and the US Bill of Rights (1791) are the written precursors to many of today’s human rights documents.

Religious documents, e.g. the Vedas, the Bible, and the Quran, have also referred to the duties, rights, and responsibilities of citizens. In the Indian context, the “Dharma” of the Vedic period has advocated about human rights values. The post-Vedic period saw the rise of Buddhism and Jainism, which were efforts to establish welfare communities in respect of the protection of human rights.

However, over the years, the human rights concept as such has gone through a set of transformations. Presently, human rights have come into existence as part of every nation’s political system.

Also, the modern bodies of internationally guaranteed human rights have their sources in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, or the Universal Declaration) promulgated by the United Nations in 1948.

The charter of the United Nations (1945) emphasises saving the generations to come from the scourge of war and reaffirming their faith in the fundamental human rights.

However, most people are still unaware of their rights. According to a poll conducted by Amnesty International, the largest human rights organisation in the world, only 8% of adults and 4% of youths are aware of the “foundation stone for human rights.”

The media is the arm of any modern democratic polity, through which the people exercise their freedom of information. This freedom of information (right to information) is crucial in making all human rights activities effective, as it is a public communicator. It not only gives facts (in the form of news), it also analyses and comments on the facts and thus shapes the views of the people. Its impact on the society is beyond doubt and debate. It has been setting for the nation its social, political, economic, and even cultural agendas. With the advent of satellite channels and the ever-growing internet, its impact is even sharper and deeper. With regards to 24-hour news channels, people cannot remain neutral to and unaffected by what the channels are serving day and night. It is therefore of paramount importance that the media plays an important, decisive, and ethical role at all levels and in all parts of the country and the world.

The media has been entrusted with the responsibility of guarding the rights of the people in a democratic and political setup. This points towards the pivotal role that the media can play in ensuring that the people who make a political system enjoy its positive outcome. However, it is important to come out of the visionary discourse of the media and look critically at its role and function in our present sociopolitical context with respects to human rights.

There are two main points of intersection where the worlds of the media and human rights meet. First, reporting matters have direct or indirect human rights content, and second, freedom of the media is itself a human right.

There are large numbers of serious human rights issues in India and the world over: brutal killings of innocents by security forces, terrorists and militants, arbitrary arrests and detentions, the denial of fair trial, migration and refugees, mental and physical violence against women and children, rape and sexual assaults, dowry deaths and torture, domestic violence, honour killings, human trafficking and prostitution, kidnappings, child labour, poverty, the caste system, the lack of education and proper healthcare facilities for women, and endemic unemployment.

Hence, at the present juncture there is a great need for the promotion of human rights awareness and its effective implementation by the

government and pressure groups, such as non-governmental organisations. This is not only to equip the victims of human rights violations in seeking effective redressal, but also to make the redressal mechanisms efficient, effective, and human-rights friendly. When addressing the human rights situation of countries like India, Nepal, and Bangladesh, the media can throw light on the actions and inactions of the administration. Also, the media can create pressure for bringing change in the society and administration, which in turn leads to justice for the innocent victims and sufferers.

There are some instances where, in the process of the violation of human rights, the media has worked as overseer by informing the people accurately. For example, the Manorama Devi rape and murder case by Assam Rifles soldiers in Manipur state of northeast India on December 16, 2012, the Nirvaya case, who was brutally gang raped on a moving bus, the Jessica Lal murder Case, the Shah Bano Controversy, the Priyadarshani Mattoo murder case, the Gitika Sharma Suicide Case, and the Bobby Murder Case were brought to light by the media. The media in its various forms, especially television and the ever-evolving internet, and especially social media, has worked together to give justice to the victims. This is the role of the media in the true sense.

At times, however, the media has been insensitive. For example, the television broadcast of men stripping an Adivasi girl in broad daylight on November 27, 2007 in Guwahati city, India during a mass protest assembly was against humanity. The media flashed the name of the victim and the video footage was shown over and over, at times with blurred effects and sometimes without any editing in the local news television channels, alongside pictures in local newspapers. Also, the peace protest by Irom Sharmila for more than a decade in Manipur against the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) should be scrapped, as it is under review for committing human rights violations for decades in India. Still, such incidences continue to take place not only in India but also worldwide.

The conference entitled “The Media and Human Rights: Problems and Prospects” is a realistic and rational endeavour to highlight some of the important aspects with regard to human rights. As our constitutional obligation, the theme “the Media and Human Rights” in the context of development is very relevant for our society and democracy.

This book brings before you diverse thoughts and approaches towards the media and human rights related issues from India, Nepal, and Bangladesh. It is a comprehensive effort to highlight various critical perspectives. This anthology of the conference papers would be highly

useful and relevant to not only academics, researchers, scholars, planners, and policymakers, but also to professionals working in the media industry.

Dr. Afsana Amin Soma and Dr. Sucharita Chakraborty in their paper critically analyse newspaper reporting of women-related issues. This study focuses on the northeastern state of Assam, India. To be more specific, three mainstream daily newspapers of varied categories, i.e. national, regional, and local language, with the largest circulation in Assam, were included in the sample for the study. The methodology adopted was content analysis. The study endeavoured to delve deep into the types of women's issues being frequently published by the selected newspapers.

Dr. Ayesha Afsana in her paper attempts to find internet-use patterns among the female Muslim students studying in higher educational institutions in the Silchar Town of Assam, India. The findings reveal that the majority of rural and urban female users accessed the internet from home, for searching and downloading study materials, e-mail, and sending attached documents. The study concludes that the internet is a valuable source of information for students who are looking for ideas relating to their projects, assignments, and other innovations.

Dr. Mita Das, Dr. Surender Kumar Upadhyay, and Mr. Arindam Sarkar, in their paper "Human Rights Education and the Role of the Media," study the role of the media and awareness brought about by the media in promoting human rights education. The study is based on secondary data, using a historical and theoretical research method.

Dr. Paromita Das and Ms. Satarupa Roy, in "Hindi Films in Creating Awareness Against Dowry in India," discuss the advent of the dowry system in India, the various acts to safeguard women against it, and the role played by mainstream Hindi films in spreading awareness towards its eradication. The paper has adopted the case study method using three films produced in different eras and with storylines based on the dowry system.

Ms. Lalita Chhetry and Dr. Charu Joshi analyse social media as a tool to formulate the collective shift in social consciousness. The study uses the case study technique, which focuses on the molestation of a teenage girl in Guwahati City, Assam, India during 2012. The paper attempts to see the potential of social media in human rights conflict situations and peace promotion with respect to the particular incident of the molestation case.

Prof. M. Zahangir Kabir and Mr. Diwan R. Hassan examine the media's role in the protection of human rights in Bangladesh. The paper states that the media and the Bangladeshi journalists are also at risk when reporting critical human rights related issues, despite the presence of a stringent legal regime. But the media in Bangladesh is very bold in promoting people's rights and is critical of the ruling government.

Mr. Rachan Daimary and Ms. Anuradha Dey explored the origin, development, and changing trends of Bodo films. Bodo films are regional films that express the ethos of the Bodo community as a whole. The Bodo film industry is now 33 years old; however, its development is seldom perceived. The paper deals with the history and the present status of the Bodo films with regards to the human rights issues and technical difficulties faced by the industry. It discusses the role played by Bodo films in entertainment along with motivating, promoting, and preserving Bodo culture and bringing about socioeconomic development. Keeping in view the lack of proper documentation and preservation of Bodo films, this paper also attempts to preserve information on Bodo films and consequently Bodo culture for the future generations.

Mr. Rajeev Kumar Panda, Prof. (Dr.) G. P. Pandey, and Mr. Chandra Shekhar Pandey analyse the communication efficacy of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) India for the promotion, preservation, and protection of human rights. For the purpose of the study, the NHRC website was critically analysed.

Mr. Rajendra Man Banepali, Prof. (Dr.) Subarna Shakya, and Dr. Gajendra Sharma, in their paper “A First-Hand Breadth for Freedom of Expression in Digital Diplomacy,” explore how digital technology—text, voice, and visual transmission—has challenged an underlying assumption and distribution of actors not only at the local level but also in international relations, especially when observing the freedom of expression as a fundamental right under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations, and the structural changes in media houses and responders to meet communication compliances framed within the Media Richness Theory. They discuss the freedom of expression, structural changes in the media, and information legitimacy from the technical viewpoint towards respecting the fundamentals of human rights.

Ms. Ruth Hmingchullo attempts to look critically into the delicate, “two-edged source relationship” between the media and human rights, and the development of this relationship within the past two decades in Manipur state, Assam, India. Since the freedom of the press is suppressed in Manipur due to strong insurgent militant dominance and political influence, the press cannot exercise its full rights. Journalists in Manipur have been killed, kidnapped, threatened, and not accounted for. Despite these scenarios, the media community has been united in its stand even after 60 years of this conflict scenario. The impact of the conflict has not only been the killings, rape, and torture of innocents, but also a deep sense of fear and insecurity for the widowed woman, young students, and many others. No one is spared.

The study by Mr. Shashidhar M. R., Mr. Praveen Kumar V. and Prof. (Dr.) H. K. Mariswamy discusses the status of digital literacy among Dalit college students with special reference to their awareness, exposure, accessibility, utility, and impact of the internet and social network sites. The study also assesses the level of gratifications among Dalit college students and their participation with Dalit social network sites. The study is based in urban and rural districts of Bangalore, India.

Mr. Amarendra Kumar Arya in his paper focuses on the Indian state of Chhattisgarh, where insurgency has existed for over 30 years and the threat to press freedom is a reality. Here, not only has the media failed to play the role of watchdog for gross human rights violations, but it has also dutifully parroted the state's language. SalwaJudum was celebrated as the people's spontaneous movement against the Maoists. The newspapers selectively reported the violence perpetrated by the Maoists, leaving out the excesses of the SalwaJudum (SJ) and the security forces. The article closes with the managing of coverage even by the government and its agencies.

Dr. T. R. Ramakrishnan and Dr. Charu Joshi, in their paper titled, "ICTs to Human Rights: The Driving Force to Efficacy for Human Rights in India," critically analyse digital access in the public sphere used by the Government of India. Further, an Empirical approach was used to untangle the research question by interviewing the public and key officers from the National Informatics Centre, India. It was identified that the propaganda approach should be made mandatory to popularise human rights in India through the use of ICT tools in the public sphere. The study is of use for researchers in governance and the body of literature of the National Human Rights Commission in India.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is a compendium of seminar papers from a two-day International Seminar on “Media and Human Rights: Problems and Prospects” held on March 11–12, 2015, and organised by the Department of Mass Communication, Assam University, Silchar, Assam, India.

This seminar was an attempt to penetrate deep into the existing discourse of human rights and media as well as analyse and give solutions to the major issues related to human rights and media, such as: the role of the media in protecting and promoting human rights, the media as a cause for violations of human rights, human rights and natural justice, and the challenges before the media related to human rights.

The thorough discussion and brain-storming sessions of the seminar were divided into eight technical sessions under the sub-themes: (i) the Media and Protection, Promotion and Preservation of Human Rights with regard to Children and Women’s Issues; (ii) Globalisation, the Commercialisation of the Media, and Human Rights; (iii) the Media, Domestic Violence, and Human Rights; (iv) Media Advocacy and Human Rights Coverage; (v) Challenges in Human Rights Reporting; and (vi) Human Rights Education and the Role of the Media.

We are indebted and express our heartfelt gratitude to the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi, without whose generous financial support and full sponsorship the two-day International Seminar would not have been possible. We are also grateful to the Honourable Vice-Chancellor of the University, Prof. Somnath Dasgupta, Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof. Debasish Bhattacharjee, and Registrar Dr. Sanjib Bhattacharjee for their support in bringing out this book.

We take the opportunity to give our heartfelt thanks to all the speakers and participants that include learned scholars, research fellows, students, and media professionals who travelled from across India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Dubai to lend their valuable views and opinions through their academic papers and lectures, respectively.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to Prof. (Dr.) Subarna Shakya (Professor, Tribhuvan University, Nepal), Mr. Taimur Raja Choudhury (Editor, Dainik Samayik Prasanga), Dr. Manoj Kumar Patairiya (Additional Director General Doordarshan, New Delhi), Dr. Dinesh Acharya (Chairman, Megafin Group, Dubai, UAE), Dr. Gajendra Sharma (Associate Professor,

Kathmandu University, Nepal), Mr. Subir Ghosh (General Manager, Public Relations, Hindustan Paper Mill Ltd., India), Prof. Sanjay Mukhopadhyay (Professor & Head, Department of Film Studies, Jadavpur University, India), Prof. G. Ram (Professor, Department of Sociology, Assam University, Silchar, India), and Prof. Ranju Dhamala (Professor and Head, Deptt. of Political Science, Assam University, Silchar) for chairing the technical sessions. Also, we would like to thank Prof. M. Zahagir Kabir (Professor and Head, Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Manarat International University, Dhaka, Bangladesh), Mr. Diwan Rashidul Hassan (Director, Public Relations and Publications, Bangladesh Agricultural University), Dr. Dinesh Acharya (Chairman, Megafin Group, Dubai, UAE), and Mr. Rajendra Man Banenepal (Knowledge Management and ICT Associate, United Nations Information Centre, Kathmandu, Nepal), without whom this seminar would not have been successful.

We are also grateful to Dr. Syed Murtaza Alfarid Hussain, Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication, Assam University, Silchar, who acted as the Chief Rapporteur during the two-day International seminar.

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We hope that the book will be of great use to the researchers, scholars, planners, and policymakers, particularly in formulating media policies and programmes towards human rights development and implementation.



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

### **A**

AIE: Awareness, Implementation, Effects  
Al: Awami League  
AT: The Assam Tribune  
ATSUM: All Tribal Students' Union Manipur  
ATTF: All Tripura Tiger Force

### **B**

BAL: Bangladesh Awami League  
BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation  
BC: Before Christ  
BLTF: Bodo Liberation Tigers Force  
BNP: Bangladesh Nationalist Party  
BTC: Bodoland Territorial Council

### **C**

CAI: Computer-Assisted Instruction  
CCpur: Churachandpur  
CCTV: Close Circuit Television  
CPS: Crown Prosecution Service  
CSO: Civil Society Organisation

### **D**

DAVP: Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity  
DJ: Dainik Jugosankha  
DSLR: Digital Single Lense Reflex

### **F**

FGC: Female Genital Cutting  
FGM: Female Genital Mutilation  
FM: Frequency Modulation  
FTII: Film & Television Institute of India  
GDP: Gross Domestic Product

**H**

HBV: Honor-Based-Violence  
HDI: Human Development Index  
HPC (D): Hmar Peoples Convention (Democratic)  
HRA: Hmar Revolutionary Army  
HWA: Hmar Women's Association

**I**

ICC: International Coordinating Committee  
ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights  
ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights  
ICHRP: International Council on Human Rights Policy  
ICT: Information Communication Technology  
IPC: Indian Penal Code.  
ISO: International Standards Organisation  
ISP: Internet Services Provider  
IT: Information Technology  
ID: Identity  
ITU: International Telecommunication Union  
ITV: Instructional Television

**K**

KADO: Korean Agency for Digital Opportunity and Promotion  
KCP: Kangleipak Communist Party

**L**

LAUTECH: Ladoke Akintola University of Technology  
LTE: Letters to the Editor

**M**

MDG: Millennium Development Goals

**N**

NCW: National Commission for Women  
NE: North East  
NGOs: Non-governmental Organizations  
NHRC: National Human Rights Commission  
NHRI: National Human Rights Institutions  
NIC: National Informatics Centre  
NLFT: National Liberation Front of Tripura

NOW: National Organisation for Women

## **O**

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OHCHR: The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

## **P**

P: Estimated Percentage

PI: Programmed Instruction

PRAWA: Prisoners' Rehabilitation and Welfare Action

RTI: Right to Information Act

## **S**

SC/STs: Schedule Caste/Schedule Tribes

SE: Standard Error

SHCEK: Social Services and Child Protection Agency

SHRC: State Health Resource Centre

SIM: Subscriber Identification Module

SJ: SalwaJudum

SMS: Short Message Service

SNS: Social Network Sites

## **T**

TOI: The Times of India

TRAI: Telecom Regulatory Authority of India

TSR: Tripura State Rifles

TUJS: Tripura Uppajati Yuva Samiti

TV: Television

## **U**

UDHR: United Declaration of Human Rights

UI: University of Ibadan

UK: United Kingdom

UN: United Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNLF: United National Liberation Front

UNO: United Nations Organisation

## **V**

VCD: Video Compact Disc

VUCA: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity

**W**

WSIS: World Summit on the Information Society

## CHAPTER ONE

# A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF NEWSPAPER REPORTING ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

DR. AFSANA AMIN SOMA  
AND DR. SUCHARITA CHAKRABORTY

### **Abstract**

With the onset of globalisation and the feminist agenda, the women's movement has gained impetus the world over, calling for the wide use of the media's potential to promote and advocate for women's issues and rights. The controversy over the identity and representation of women in media discourse was overwhelmingly raised in the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the debate over the negative portrayal and creation of a submissive image of women in the media has continued. At present, there exists a silent agreement to treat women as second-class citizens, and women's problems are therefore not given priority in the news media. A strong consensus affects the mainstream news media in its rendition of women's news in a fair and objective way. Barring one or two instances, stories about ordinary women and their struggles for survival do not get prominence in news media reporting. In this context, the present study examines the coverage of women's issues in print media. This study is based in India, particularly the northeastern state of Assam. To be more specific, three mainstream daily newspapers, categorised as national-, regional-, and local-language, and with the largest circulations in Assam, are included in the sample for this study. The methodology adopted here is content analysis. The study endeavours to delve into the types of women's issues frequently published by the selected newspapers, the nature of reporting on women's issues, how women are represented in newspaper reports, and who features as the news source most often quoted in reports related to

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<sup>1</sup> Declaration of the UN's Decade for Women, 1975–85.

women. The findings of the study will be particularly useful for understanding the intricacies of print media reporting on women and gender issues in India.

**Keywords:** newspapers, women, print media, empowerment, development

## Introduction

The media is deemed a mirror of society and as holding immense power in shaping our perception of reality. Besides being entrusted with the multi-functional aspect of providing information, education, entertainment, and surveillance of the environment, the media is also very instrumental in forming public opinion about important issues and events. The media sets agendas and helps people to decide what to think about.<sup>2</sup> The mass media acts as a watchdog of democracy and exercises checks on the functioning of governmental machinery. The news media takes up issues and presents us with an element of priority and immediacy. Nowadays, the media holds so much power and influence that the coverage of issues and events also gains priority in the eyes of the public.

The post-industrial society has witnessed an upsurge of media with multifarious developments in information and communication technology. Despite the rapid growth of new media technologies, the print media, commonly known as “the press,” has retained its popularity as the oldest medium of mass communication. The documentation and retrieval values of printed words along with the mounting of literacy figures each year have attributed to its availability and access to each and every individual across communities in India. In this country, newspapers are widely read, and it has become a ritual for the average Indian to start the day with a newspaper in hand. Since what appears in newspaper gets mass attention and is considered more important than other events that do not get published, the pattern of coverage given to women and their problems has remained an issue of scholarly debate in media research. Media researchers and scholars allege that the news media has been discriminating against women and conferring them with limiting and stereotypical representation, both structurally and culturally, thus reinforcing the hegemony of patriarchy. Although there is inadequate research on women in the news, the existing research findings show that issues and problems related to women do not receive due coverage in news

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<sup>2</sup> Agenda-Setting Theory.

media. Women's issues are relegated in the media, meaning that secondary importance is given to women in society.

The review of available studies evaluating the treatment of women's issues in India shows that women are under-represented in the media. A study on the coverage of women's issues in the newspapers of Uttarakhand finds that news about women's issues occupies a very negligible space. More importantly, news about sexual harassment is more prominent than issues related to women's health, education, equality, and violence. In newspapers, there is hardly any discussion on or analysis of women and their problems, and news on women seldom features in the form of editorials, columns, and articles (Nautiyal and Dabral 2012).

In India, it is commonly seen that the print media especially covers atrocities committed against women, and not their achievements in different areas (Joshi, Pahad, and Maniar 2006). Typically, these stories happen to be hard news. Newspapers carry fewer articles on women. Indian newspapers are said to be biased against women, and thus coverage of issues on gender, the environment, and development is influenced by prejudices against poor people, women, and minorities (Payvar 2005). Lack of interest in gender and development issues among journalists is one reason for this. In this case, the gender stories are published, and the trend is to present them as sensational news to attract the reader's attention. Thus, the press in India is often accused of ignoring women's issues and their actual problems that need to be addressed.

In light of the aforesaid discussion, this study attempts to examine how the news media in India, particularly newspapers, reports on women and gender issues. The study seeks to understand the coverage patterns of newspapers on women's issues.

## Objectives

- (1) To study what type of news related to women is published by the sample newspapers
- (2) To examine the nature of the coverage given to women's issues (event-based or interpretative)
- (3) To find the common formats of news on women's issues
- (4) To find the most common news sources quoted in the news related to women
- (5) To investigate how the women are represented or portrayed in issues concerning them
- (6) To make an assessment about the prominence given to women's news by the selected newspapers (i.e. placement on the front or inside pages)

## Methodology

This study follows the methodology of content analysis. Since the present study is focussed on India, three daily newspapers with the highest circulations in Assam, northeastern India, are taken as samples. These are one national newspaper, *The Times of India*, one regional paper, *The Assam Tribune*, and one Bengali-language newspaper, *Dainik Jugasankha*. The study period is one month from January 16, 2013 to February 14, 2013. Thus, altogether, ninety issues of the three newspapers have been analysed to discover the objectives of the study.

For convenience in analysis, all those news stories are brought into the fold of women's issues where the main subject matter of the story relates to ordinary women. Since celebrities and film stars do not belong to the category of ordinary women, news related to them is excluded. Also, in analysing a particular edition, pages devoted to beauty, lifestyle, fashion, business, and sports are also excluded.

## Results and discussion

**Table 1.1. Types/categories of news items on women's issues**

Types/ Categories	<i>The Times Of India</i>	<i>The Assam Tribune</i>	<i>Dainik Jugasankha</i>
Rape	6	3	8
Female feticide	1	-	2
Health	3	1	2
Education	2	-	-
Employment	1	-	-
Police atrocities	1	-	-
Sexual harassment	4	-	2
Crime against women/threats	6	3	2
Delhi gang rape case	2	-	2
Legal proceedings	4	2	2
Demand for fast-track/a women's court	1	-	-
Female children	3	2	4
Khap panchayat	1	-	1
Branding as a witch	1	-	-
Divorce	-	-	1



Abandonment of female children	-	-	1
Adolescent suicide	-	-	1
Women's helpline	-	-	1
Molestation	3	1	1
Women's conference	-	1	-
Ruchika case	1	-	-
Women's success stories	8	-	-
Violations of human rights	2	-	-
Total no. of news stories	50	13	30

The analysis of the classification/types of news items on women's issues shows that rape cases were reported most of the time in all three newspapers. This may be due to the overwhelming response to the current Delhi gang-rape case. Also, violence- or crime-related news is carried widely in the selected newspapers. Although there is a lack of variety in the reportage of issues of concern to women, the *Times Of India* fares well in giving voice to women's struggles by publishing a good number of success stories. It shows that there are few reports related to women's health, education, and employment, which constitute the core area for women's empowerment. The study also shows that the regional dailies are least concerned with women and their problems, as is evident from the narrow coverage of women's issues both in terms of number and diversity.

### ***The Times of India***

The varied subjects that constitute news on women's issues in the *Times of India* are health, education, employment, police atrocities, rape and murder, abduction, torture, sexual harassment, rape, molestation, marital rape, khap diktat, branding women as witches, a Delhi gang rape, female children, female feticide, social ostracism for AIDS, demand for fast-track/a women's court, legal/court proceedings, the Ruchika case, the threat of violence to the girl band Pragaash, women's success stories, acid attacks, violations of human rights, crime, amending laws on abortion, sexual crime, and murder by parents. The varied categorisation of women's issues as published in this national English-language newspaper demonstrates that news on women is mainly related to crime or violence committed against them. Though a small number of women's success stories are published, the myriad problems with which women are struggling for their day-to-day existence were not adequately highlighted. A lack of diversity in reporting women's problems is seen from the

analysis. The core development issues like health, education, and employment were not adequately reported by this newspaper.

### ***The Assam Tribune***

In the *Assam Tribune*, stories about women featured rape, a Delhi rape case, crime, molestation, female children, legal proceedings, health, the death penalty, a women's conference, and threats to a girl band. Thus, news on women's issues also concentrates heavily on crime, sexual harassment, and rape cases. Positive news about women, like success stories or any development-related news, was found to be totally absent in this regional, English-language daily.

### ***Dainik Jugasankha***

Dainik Jugasankha published women's news on sexual harassment, female feticide, crime, rape, the adolescent issue, female children, khap panchayat, health, atrocities, abduction, the sale of female children, threats to a girl band, divorce, death, a Delhi rape case, legal proceedings, women's success stories, and a women's helpline. Like the other two dailies, *Dainik Jugasankha* also published most of its news items on violence or atrocities against women. Issues related to the development of women and/or their socio-economic conditions were not covered.

**Table 1.2. Nature of reporting**

Nature of reporting	<i>The Times Of India</i>	<i>The Assam Tribune</i>	<i>Dainik Jugasankha</i>
Event based	43	16	38
Interpretative	9	10	26

Analysis of news reports on the basis of the nature of reporting illustrates that all three newspapers adopted an event-based or informative approach in reporting issues of concern to women. There are few instances of giving interpretative or analytical accounts of women's news.

**Table 1.3. Format of news items on women's issues**

Format of news stories	<i>The Times Of India</i>	<i>The Assam Tribune</i>	<i>Dainik Jugasankha</i>
Hard news	32	15	41
Soft news	18	-	8
Article	1	8	5
Editorial	1	2	3
Letters to the editor	-	2	2

The study shows that more than half of the news items on women were published in the hard news format. This is true in the case of all three newspapers. Barring *The Assam Tribune*, the second adopted format for news on women was soft news or features. It seems that, among the three dailies, *Dainik Jugasankha* voiced its sincere stand for women and their cause by publishing the highest number of editorials. *The Assam Tribune* devoted two editorials and *The Times of India* only one. From the analysis it appears that more articles on women's issues appeared in the regional-language newspapers than the national daily *The Times of India*. The opinions of the common people in the form of letters to the editor found a place in these two dailies only.

**Table. 1.4. Portrayal of women**

Portrayal of women	<i>The Times Of India</i>	<i>The Assam Tribune</i>	<i>Dainik Jugasankha</i>
Victim	23	5	37
Achiever	11	-	3
Other	10	5	4

It is found that almost all the sample newspapers represented women as victims. In contrast, women are seen as achievers only in a few reports. There are some news stories where women are assigned a neutral portrayal. There are some instances where dignitaries, experts, or some other authority addressed women's issues as part of a conference, demonstration of women's empowerment, or parliamentary appearance.

**Table 1.5. Quoted news sources**

Quoted News Source	<i>The Times Of India</i>	<i>The Assam Tribune</i>	<i>Dainik Jugasankha</i>
Official spokesperson male/female	6	3	8
Police	12	-	3
Male businessmen	2	-	-
Male religious leader	1	1	-
Female official	1	-	-
Court order	1	-	1
Male politician	2	-	-
Female achiever	7	-	2
Judge	4	-	1
People's representative/minister	2	2	2
Doctor	2	1	1
Social activist/expert women's activist organisation	8	3	6
Research finding/report	1	2	4
Lawyer	2	-	2
Student's union		-	3
Women as common people	7	1	-
Unofficial	-	1	2
Female victim/family	6	-	7

The analysis of news sources in Table 1.5 above reveals that police officials were quoted most of the time in reports about women's issues in *The Times of India*. The next were activists on women's rights that followed by quoting female achievers and women as common people. Though most of the reports happened to be on crime perpetrated against women, women victims or their families are quoted comparatively fewer times. It is also found that male official spokespersons are mentioned as sources as many times as victims.

The regional newspaper *The Assam Tribune* gave priority to males as official spokespersons and then women's right activists as sources of news reports.

*Dainik Jugasankha*, the regional-language daily, also followed the trend of *The Times of India* and mentioned male official spokespersons in

most of the reports on women's issues. Women as victims and their family members also appear as the second-highest quoted news source.

**Table 1.6. Placement of news on women's issues**

Placement Of News	<i>The Times Of India</i>	<i>The Assam Tribune</i>	<i>Dainik Jugasankha</i>
Front page	18	2	7
Inside pages	33	25	50

In all three dailies, news on women is mostly carried on the inside pages. Very little front-page coverage of women's issues was found in the analysis. This indicates that the problems of women are not considered as important enough by the newspaper editors for front-page treatment.

## Conclusion

The findings of the present study support the earlier research findings and contribute greatly to the assumption that women are not taken seriously when it comes to print news reporting in India. Generally, they make the news only when some unusual or unexpectedly horrible thing happens to them. Although female empowerment has had tumultuous backing from every section of society, it appears that in the news media, women's issues have been relegated to secondary importance. It is astonishing that no page is devoted to women in any of the three newspapers studied.

Issues and problems related to women need deep focus, extensive research, elaborate interpretation, and understanding on the part of both journalists and readers. News about women is to be regarded as separate, and the reporters covering it need to have a general understanding of the socio-economic conditions of women in society and the intricacies of their problems. A dedicated team of reporters committed to the uplift of women will be of great help in attaining female empowerment. Media organisations need to sensitise their reporters to women's issues by organising workshops, training, seminars, lectures, etc. It is also to be noted that factual news reporting on women only is less likely to address their real issues from the right perspective. The nuances and complexities of the age-old tradition of deep-rooted oppression and injustice meted out to women need to be addressed in a larger domain and penetrated deep into the reader's psyche. This is possible only through analytical or interpretative writings on women. Thus, the entire reporting or coverage pattern of news on women currently existing in the Indian news media

needs to revamp itself in favour of women by giving more in-depth write-ups from all walks of society covering every aspect of their lives that need improvement and upgrading.

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