



# The Influence of Mass Media on Rural Women's Social & Economic Development

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**Abstract :** Rural women's social and economic development is a crucial aspect of India's overall growth and development. Mass media is a significant role providing education to women in India. Education provides knowledge to the people. People derive knowledge from formal education and other media sources such as Social Network Sites, Newspaper, Radio, Cinema, Television, Exhibitions, and Museums. Media is considered as the fourth estate of democracy. It has become an essential part of our lives and serves in various forms like television, community radio, books, magazines, newspapers, mobile phones, the internet, etc. These different forms of media help to educate, inform and entertain our society. Mass media has been affecting the social lives of rural women. It plays a vital role in changing the personality of rural women as it influences their thinking and understanding level, thus, widening their mental horizons. The primary role of mass media is to inform and educate rural women. It also recognizes the problems of rural women which they confront in their daily life. The present paper has made an effort to know the impact of mass media on rural women. In this paper, an attempt has been made to know the level of media exposure of rural women of Babaleshwar Block of Vijayapur district in Karnataka and to understand how mass media is bringing the changes in their socio-cultural life.

**Keywords:** Mass Media, Women and Rural Society.

## 1. INTRODUCTION :

The world seems to be shrinking by the moment and increasingly becoming a 'global village' in the modern era, thanks to the rapid technological advancements in the field of communication. The term 'Global village', propagated and popularized by Marshall McLuhan, in his books, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962) and *Understanding Media* (1964), is probably a mundane reality at the present times. McLuhan firmly believed that the globe could be contracted into a village by electric technology and the instantaneous movement of information from every quarter to every point at the same time. He says "During the mechanical ages we had extended our bodies in space. Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned".<sup>1</sup> Countries across the world including India have become part of the information revolution and have opened wide their doors to welcome progressive change. When took centuries for the industrial revolution to spread across the world, the Information Technology revolution occurred in a matter of decades. The changes in technology are occurring at a much faster pace now than ever before and have incredible effects on the communication between humans and their societal life. The escalation in the modernization of communication technologies and computerization has resulted in decreased cost and simultaneously increased the availability of instantaneous communication facilities as well as opened up new avenues and spheres for discussion and exploration.

India lives in its villages this famous statement given by the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, still stands true. Villages form a major and important part of our country and they represent the actual India. In India, about 69 per cent of our population lives in rural areas and the rest in urban areas (Census of India



2011). Mass media has become the most important tool of society to spread awareness and knowledge about different fields. To discuss rural women's empowerment, it is necessary to deal with the present situation of women in rural areas. Mass media can accelerate the process of rural women empowerment by making people aware of different social issues. We cannot ignore the role of women in a nation's development as women play an important role in the development of the society and the nation.

Mass media is the vehicle that carries messages to huge audiences but not all types of media are available in rural areas. Radio, television, newspaper, and mobile phones are the main media which are available in rural areas. These main media are not only a mirror of the society but also a tool of social change for rural women. The primary role of mass media is to inform, aware and educate rural women. Mass media also recognises the problems which rural women are confronting in their daily life.

### **Mass Media:**

Mass media means technology that is intended to reach a mass audience. It is the primary means of communication used to reach the vast majority of the general public. The most common platforms for mass media are newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet. Mass Media is a broad term in Media Studies that emerged in the later part of the 20th century to encompass the amalgamation of traditional media such as film, images, music, spoken and written word, with the interactive power of computer and communication technology, computer-enabled consumer devices and most importantly the Internet. Media should play an active role in exposing the issues of superstitious practices and corruptions out in public and educate people, make India a modern, powerful and industrial state that would prosper within itself and become self-sufficient to take care of the welfare and well-being of its people.

### **Rural Women:**

The rural Indian women are an epitome of strength, who is performing her household duties from dawn to dusk. However, her contribution remains unrecognized. Many after performing her daily chores have to work in their small agricultural land. Men perform operations involving machinery. Agriculture which is the mainstay of the rural Indian economy is sustained for the most part by the female workforce. They are the invisible life line of the agrarian rural community life. Rural women from childhood days have to bear the burden of taking care of younger siblings, cooking, engaging in domestic chores, looking after the fodder of the domestic animals in their parents' house. They are married off at a very early age. Many Indian rural women are condemned to a life of serfdom, anonymity, facelessness. In rural India, very few women have ownership over land or productive assets. This proves to be a road block in institutional credit. Majority of the agricultural labourers are women.

Present day women are equal with men. Most societies put a special focus on empowering women and girls, because we believe they hold the key to long-lasting social change in communities. Empowering women must be a united approach, a cause that requires continued attention and stewardship by all. We need to augment our efforts for empowering women and enhance their progress. It is our moral, social and constitutional responsibility to ensure their progress by providing them with equal rights and opportunities. Today women with their smartness, grace and elegance have conquered the whole world. With their hard work and sincerity, they have excelled in each and every profession. Women are considered to be more honest, meticulous, and efficient and hence more and more companies prefer hiring women for better performance and result.

The process of modernization enabled women to strive for and achieve greater equality in occupational, educational, political, and social spheres of activities. Women are also acquiring technical as well as specialized education as engineering, medicine etc. In short women have entered almost every branch of economic organization of our society. (Abhilasha Shrivastava, 2022)

Women must be empowered at all levels to contribute to the achievement of the principles of equity and social justice. It means to give women, power and help them face the challenges of being a woman in society. Women can play an extremely important role in shaping world future.



### Social & Economic Development:

Rural women are torchbearers for social, economic and environment transformation for the 'New India'. In India, Agriculture employs about 80 percent of rural women. Empowering and mainstreaming rural women workforce in agriculture can bring paradigm shift towards economic growth.

1. **Population characteristics** - It is a widely known fact that women live longer than men. At the same time, it is also a fact that there is less number of women than men.
2. **Health status** - Health of women is an important factor in determining the overall health of the society.
3. **Participation of women in Economy** – Women share in employment, highest in the professional, technical and related works and at least in the administrative and managerial works
4. **Educational achievements** – Census 2011 reveals that overall 84.01% of females are literate in India.
5. **Women at Home** – The Indian women in the family plays a multiple role. As a homemaker, women are a 24-hour multi-purpose worker. In everyday life and in various crises, women display strength and patience in carrying out their responsibilities.
6. **Women's participation in decision-making**– An important aspect in the empowerment of women is the extent of their involvement in the process of decision-making whether in the household or in the government.

### Status of Rural Women:

In rural communities, women are experiencing contradictions. On one hand, she is vested with the major responsibility of implementation of household chores, child development, taking care of needs and requirements of elderly family members and so forth. Whereas, on the other hand, she is subjected to various forms of abuse and mistreatment. In some of the rural communities, girls are regarded as liabilities. Their birth is not appreciated and more preference is given to male children. The individuals normally possess the viewpoint that girls should be trained in terms of implementation of household responsibilities and school education is not meant for them. They have to eventually get married, where they will not be able to make use of their academic skills. Whereas, boys are encouraged to get enrolled in schools and acquire education, as it is believed, they would contribute towards promoting well-being of their families and communities, through their educational skills. Hence, in this manner, girls experience discriminatory treatment. The status of rural women varies across cultures and countries, but common challenges include: Limited access to education and healthcare, Economic dependence on men, Restricted land ownership and control, Domestic violence and gender-based discrimination, Limited participation in decision-making processes, Heavy workload and time poverty, Lack of access to technology and resources, and Social isolation and limited social mobility

### 2. Research Methodology:

This study aims to investigate the impact of mass media on the empowerment of rural women. The objectives are: To analyze the socio-economic profiles of the respondents and to examine the uses of mass media among rural women respondents. The study focuses on North Karnataka, which comprises 13 districts, including Belagavi, Bijapur, Bagalkot, Bidar, Bellary, Gulbarga, Yadagiri, Raichur, Gadag, Dharwad, Haveri, Koppal, and Uttara Kannada. For this research, 100 respondents from the Babaleswar Block of Vijayapur district will be selected. The study relies on primary data collected through an interview schedule using a stratified sampling technique.

### 3. Analysis and Results:

Mass media plays an important role in this. Mass media can instruct people and educate them. Projects like Educational Television and Gyan Darshan are few such examples where media is used to instruct people, educate them and teach them basic skills. These basic skills help people to develop their standard of living. Mass media refers to a diverse array of media technologies that reach a large audience via mass communication. The technologies through which this communication takes place include a variety of outlets. It is the primary means of communication used to reach the vast majority of the general public.



The overlapping area of mass media has an interesting mix of people across religious, economic, educational, and social lines. Reading different texts on mass media across the globe clarified among many things the need for this type of research to maintain a conscious distance from the religious or political variables, as the services like Print Media, Radio, Private FM Radio, Community Radio, Mobile Devices, TV and Internet Via computer weave the messages with full participation from the community members to initiate dialogue and action for development of the community. To begin the data presentation, first, the demographic data of the respondents selected for the study are presented as appended.

**Table 1: The Socio-economic Profiles of the Respondents**

S. No.	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>1</b>	<b>Gender</b>		
	Female	100	100
	Male	000	000
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Education</b>		
	Graduate	10	10
	Senior Secondary	35	35
	Higher Secondary	25	25
	Less Than Higher Secondary	15	15
	illiterate	15	15
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Age</b>		
	18-35	36	36
	36-50	32	32
	51-65	18	18
	66 above	14	14
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Occupation</b>		
	Working	53	53
	Non-Working	26	26
	Housewife	21	21
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>		
	Single	16	16
	Married	73	73
	Divorced	02	02
	Widowed	09	09
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

The below table analyzes the Socio-economic Profiles of the Respondents collected data shows that 100 percent of the respondents are females while 00 percent respondents were male. On the education front, over 45 percent of the respondents were at least senior secondary and above while 15 percent respondents had educational level less than higher secondary and 15 percent respondents are illiterate. As per the age of the respondents over 2/3rd of the respondents that is over 68 percent of them were in the age group of 18 to 50 and 32 percent of the respondents represented age groups of 51 and above respectively. Majority of the respondents were working representing about 53 percent of the total respondents. Over 16 percent respondents were single while about 73 percent of the respondents were married.



**Table 2: Most commonly used mass media channels among rural women**

S. No.	Used mass media	Frequency		Percentage	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Print Media	89	11	89	11
2	Radio	95	05	95	05
3	Private FM Radio	56	44	56	44
4	Community Radio	98	02	98	02
5	T.V	100	00	100	00
6	Mobile Devices	76	14	76	14
7	Internet Via computer	59	41	59	41
8	Social Network sites	56	44	56	44

The below table analysis the data collected to study the usage of mass media amongst the respondents, over 89 percent of the respondents were aware about print media. There about 95 percent of the respondents who were listening to the Radio service. While over 56 percent respondents were listening to the FM radio for the same amount of time. For the community Radio service there were 98 percent of the respondents. While analyzing the data from the educational perspective graduates and Higher Secondary were having the largest number of respondents at 45 percent. Over 100 percent of the respondents were aware about TV and 76 percent of the respondents were aware about Mobile Devices. However, it is important to note here that a large number of respondents which about 41 percent also acknowledged that they never used internet over computer. While over 56 percent of respondents used SNS for the same amount of time.

### 3. CONCLUSION:

In rural communities, the status of women is in a declined state. Preference is given to the male members and girls are regarded as liabilities. The primary factor of bringing about improvement in the status of women is, the family members need to bring about changes in their viewpoints and regard girls as assets. They should make provision of equal opportunities for them and allow to them to get involved in various tasks and activities that would augment their status. There has been formulation of measures to bring about improvements in the status of women. These are, encouraging towards acquisition of education, augmenting skills development opportunities, encouragement towards acquisition of employment opportunities, providing equal opportunities, eliminating criminal and violent acts, eliminating discriminatory treatment, promoting effective communication skills, encouraging mobility, implementing morality and ethics, and up-gradation of status of widows. Mass media plays an essential role in changing the social and cultural behaviour of rural women. These changes can be seen in their dresses, food habits, speaking, debating and life style. It also empowers them by informing them about essential issues and development activities. The media can also help educate rural people about health and hygiene, agriculture, and environmental issues. The mass media has been identified as an important tool for disseminating information and promoting rural development.

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