

Chapter 4: Silenced pages: coverage of women's issues in Indian mainstream newspapers

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Abstract: Through the lenses of media pluralism and feminist theory, this chapter investigates the ongoing under-representation and distortion of women's issues in Indian mainstream newspapers. The chapter shows that women—especially those from rural, Dalit, Adivasi, and working-class backgrounds—remain mostly absent or marginalised in news coverage across important sectors like crime, business, politics, and sports. This fact is based on the report titled Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) conducted in the year 2025. The study, which draws on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of the "silenced subaltern," contends that this exclusion is systematically caused by patriarchal, caste-based, and market-driven editing logics that deny women narrative agency and epistemic authority. The analysis also shows how gendered portrayals are shaped by newsroom hierarchies, sourcing procedures, editorial rules, and financial imperatives that prioritise elite, male voices and dramatic event-based reporting over contextual and intersectional viewpoints. Instead of being shown as authoritative subjects, women are often depicted as victims or symbolic symbols, which perpetuates what Spivak refers to as epistemic violence. The study emphasises the potential of counter-public spheres to emphasise women's lived experiences and voices by contrasting mainstream media practices with alternative journalism projects like the People's Archive of Rural India (PARI). In the conclusion, the study argues that in addition to ongoing support for alternative media platforms, structural changes in editorial policy, newsroom composition, and journalistic training are necessary to achieve media plurality and gender justice.

Keywords: *Media Pluralism, Gender Representation, Silenced Subaltern, Epistemic Violence*

1 Introduction

Media Pluralism, as a concept, emphasises that a diverse range of voices, viewpoints and information sources should be heard and seen. As the European Court of Human Rights considers that there can be no democracy without pluralism, media pluralism is well thought-out as important corollary to the freedom of speech and expression. Mainstream newspapers, one of the important mass media, are thus, expected to maintain democratic deliberation and social justice. Women representation and coverage of sufficient women issues in every beat of newspaper, is thus decisive to maintain media pluralism. Under representing women in mainstream media means portraying a distorted view of reality