

News television and violence against women



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Syed Miraz Ahmed 20 July 2012 Updated 8 Feb 8035 views

In the absence of news television, reality will perish. Well this is what a common man is made to think. The Supreme Court has widened the scope and extent of the right to freedom of speech and expression upholding that the government has no monopoly on the electronic media.

Are we being forced to take in everything the television tells us as the word of God, then? Are news and events being presented as they are or are they customized to be apparent from a sensational vantage point?

There can be endless queries as such. What's more pertinent amongst all is that: does the media trip [over](#) ethics and if so how often? The role media plays in shaping ideologies, governance, social developments, prejudices, movements and armed conflicts is much more than what [meets](#) the eye.

Guwahati recently saw how luxuriously News Live captured footages of a mob outrageing the modesty of a teenager crying out for help. This [lead](#) to widespread public outrage and walk-out by the opposition in the Assembly. The role of News Live that succumbed to film the prolonged act of assault in the absence of government machinery, raised brows.

Objectivity and obligation to truth has become a maddening commercial race since the boom of satellite news televisions. News makers have moved from reporting facts to doctoring facts. With MIB eager to dish out more licences, accountability for the contents beamed is largely uncontrolled and blurring.

Case in point is [India](#) where social responsibility requires massmedia to function for the betterment of the society rating high in violence against women. NorthEast [India](#) has a number of un-reported cases of violence against women wherein a media-partner is required to build up a strong database.

Television being a visual medium of communication is well positioned in informing and educating people about the issues affecting them in a way that derides hype and information overload. Latent with the power to influence the mind, television media is expected to show reasonable analysis and decency and reserve to exactly know when and where to draw the line.

The Press Council of [India](#) Chairman, Justice Markandey Katju in April asked the government to form a committee to place restrictions on social media which he said was “often acting in an arbitrary and an irresponsible” way. According to him: “Unless this is done irreparable damage may be done to individuals or to the society, as the material shown may be inflammatory or defamatory or otherwise harmful to the people.” His observatory remark about the social media is justifiable. But what makes him have a soft spot for the electronic media?

[India](#) has no separate provisions or legislations for the freedom of press. The press enjoy no higher privilege than freedom of speech and expression itself. Interestingly, electronic media is a free bird not under the purview of the Press Council Act like the print media.

This reminds another harrowing incident wherein miscreants were involved in brutally assaulting a woman-member of the Assam Legislative Assembly inside a hotel at Karimganj. The entire episode was canned by News Live and aired 'no strings attached.' This cast serious doubts in the duplicitous involvement of the media house now under investigation.

Was News Live reporting mob-violence against a woman or highlighting political infighting or both? Whatever it may be, it made evident its myopic capacity and shallow understanding of reporting violence against women. It was gross, inaccurate and outright judgemental; all of which are not great newsmaking virtues.

Television needs to ethically censor repeated clips depicting extreme violence. Can media undermine the long standing socio-psychological impacts of the women survivors? For whom does the media report in the whole bargain?

Since media is expected to lend voice to the under-represented and play a participatory role in the reconstruction of the society and in the prevention of violence against women. Television news broadcasters ought to regulate contents depicting grievous mob-assault on women as a moral obligation to the society and the survivor in particular.

Dr. Gaurav Déka, MBBS, is of the opinion that the individual who filmed the barbaric incident is a citizen first, journalist the next and without much a do must have been apprehensive at the very first instant that a co-citizen's right to security of life and honor was being violated. “The journalist was indifferent to the teenage survivor's repeated plea for help apparent all through the broadcast. A content regulatory board should be constituted for television channels because repeat-casts incite phobic tendencies and destabilizes the psychological makeup of the survivor, worsening matters further,” he concluded.

A humane approach in reporting cases of violence and abuse is seemingly a rarity. Md. Nekibur Zaman, Senior Advocate and Vice Chairman of the [North East Bar Council](#) says that the Press Council of [India](#) must enforce regulatory frameworks for television news broadcasters. He shamed the electronic media for having been utterly deficient in handling the news content.

The decline of media ethics is under close observation. Senior journalist and women's [rights](#) activist, [Sabita Lahkar](#) maintains that a thin line separates media's [rights](#) as citizens and media's role as journalists or reporters. “We have observed the electronic media here becoming overtly sadistic when it comes to reporting issues of violence and abuse against women. In the absence of a regulatory board, its a mad world. Women live with insecurities and incidences of violences further ghettoize women.”

The content broadcast autonomy of the electronic media does not leave it unanswerable. “News editors should strike a proper balance of neither sensationalising issues nor broadcasting too perfunctorily so as to unbuild the survivor's case,” says academician, Dr. Srutimala Duara. She feels that the videojournalists who filmed the assaults bit by bit are party to the molesters themselves. Its pathetic how content auditors sanction reports that shift focus from perpetrators to the survivors as credible, she asserts.

1926 formed International Federation of [Journalists follow](#) a set of guidelines for reporting violence against women in the most ethical manner possible. The 1993 [UN](#) Declaration on the Elimination of [Violence Against Women](#) is an internationally accepted definition with which media should accurately identify violence against women.

Media's tendency to go [over](#) the board can be more detrimental to the society than the perpetrators of crime while using judgemental language. While News Live's Atanu Bhuyan and Gaurav Jyoti [Neog](#) are on a short holiday, other television news casters shall be closely watched [over](#) for how they watch dog.

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