ABSTRACT

Is Technology Gendered? Assessing Social Transformation through Technology and Media Representation in 21st Century India

Saheli Chowdhury*

Abstract: This paper utilizes feminist intersectional approach to assess social transformation through media representation of gendering of technology in 21st century India. Feminist critiques have acknowledged gender along with other social variables like class, race, religion, and sexuality as a decisive amalgam of constructing gender power relations that shape the everyday life experiences for women. In addition, feminist researches further advocate that along with these sources of identities other institutions such as science, technology and media symbolize and reconstitute the existing ideologies of gendered practice prevailing in the society. Dwight E. Brooks and Lisa P. Herbert (2006) posit that the commodified texts produced by media construct notions of self-identity i.e. what it means to be a male or female, heterosexual or homosexual, elite or poor in the larger social context, i.e. it ultimately represents social realities. Similarly, Judy Wajcman (1994) advocates that technology is not a neutral scientific product, rather it bears the imprint of dominant patriarchal knowledge and practices that encroach every aspect of public and private lives. Therefore, technology along with media plays an integral role in crafting the knowledge about one's class position, sexuality, masculinity and femininity, based on the notion of biological differences, technical expertise – dictating who can access to technology, what kind of technology one can use, and what kind of technology usage will make one more acceptable within the patriarchal arrangement of social order.
However, Indian sociological discourse has been mostly oblivious to the relationship between gender and technology and more specifically to the distorted media depiction of the gendered nature of technology. This paper hence explicates how the present Indian visual media culture expresses and consolidates power relationships between technology and women; secondly this paper also elucidates how the intersection of gender, class and sexuality accentuate such stereotypical representation.

Keywords: Science and Technology, Social transformation, Gender, Intersectionality

"Those who design technology are simultaneously designing society" - Thomas. P. Hughes (1987: 1).