

# Mirror Image

THE MEDIA AND THE  
WOMEN'S QUESTION

VIMAL BALASUBRAHMANYAN

A CED PUBLICATION



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## The Media and the Women's Question

Vimal Balasubrahmanyam

CENTRE FOR EDUCATION & DOCUMENTATION  
Bombay  
1988

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The Media and the Women's Question

Vijay Balakrishnan

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Published by:

**Centre for Education & Documentation**

3, Suleman Chambers  
4, Battery Street  
Bombay 400 039, India

Cover Designed by:

S. Muralidharan

Typeset by:

Verba Network Services  
139, 8th Main Road, 12th Cross  
Malleswaram  
Bangalore 560 003

Printed by:

Verba Network Services  
at Mudrika Offset Printers  
16, 5th Cross, Sudhamanagar  
Bangalore 560 027

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Special thanks to Nelson Bennett of Sarah Lawrence in Ghana, Ghana, for his detailed reports of the experience of the respective groups with the media. Special thanks also to all the women in the media who shared their thoughts on the subject of initiating change while working within the system, and their experiences in trying to influence media content since some of them do not wish to be identified. I am naming none.

I am deeply grateful to all those who responded to my questionnaire on what they had about feminist writings, those who wrote me detailed letters supplying information on specific points, and sent me catalogs, reports, videos and other materials relevant to the study. For making available from his office a regular supply of a variety of national newspapers and magazines, thanks also to my husband, K. Balasubramanian, without whose help I could not have accumulated a fairly detailed study of the print media. To Mr. R. Krishnamoorthy, thanks for his excellent typing of the manuscript.

My special thank you to my friends in CED for their encouragement and support and for making this book a reality.

## FOREWORD

No, this is not one more study on sexism in the media. Plenty of research has already been done to demonstrate that the media is sexist and today we can take this as an acknowledged fact which need not be proved all over again. However, the issue of women and the media has developed certain new dimensions in the wake of the activities of the women's movement and also because of the media's own response to the mood created by the Women's Decade. This book is an effort at examining these emerging features of the mass media in relation to the women's question.

It is hoped that this study will be of use and interest to women's groups, people working in the media professions, students and teachers in university journalism departments, and women and men who are at the receiving end of the media's messages. The study concentrates mainly on the English language print-media — newspapers and mass circulation magazines — from the early 1980s to around September 1987, with a brief look at television and just a glance at cinema and at advertising.

The first section presents a collection of insights, culled from findings in media sociology, which provide a basis and a framework for examining the media's treatment of the women's question. The six sections which follow cover: the legitimation of the women's question in the media in recent years; the media's distortion of this issue; interactions between media and the movement; audience responses to feminist messages; how the media cashes in on the women's question; and finally, some suggestions for initiating change and tackling the media's sexism and distortion of the women's question. A large number of boxes compiled from a variety of sources have been included to make this book as informative and useful as possible.

This book could not have been written without the warm and helpful responses of many people to my requests for information and comments and I gratefully acknowledge their assistance.

Special thanks to Nalini Bhanot of Saheli, Tanushree of Chingari, Maitreyi Chatterjee of Nari Nirjatan Pratirodh Mancha and Renana Jhabvala of SEWA for their detailed accounts of the experiences of their respective groups with the media. Special thanks also to all the women in the media who shared their thoughts on the subject of initiating changes while working within the system, and their experiences in trying to influence media content: since some of them do not wish to be identified I am naming none.

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And finally, a very special thank you to my friends in CED for their encouragement and support and for making this book a reality.

Secunderabad  
December 1988

Vimal Balasubrahmanyam

P.S. Gouri Dange has sub-edited this book. Thanks.

— C.E.D.