

Gender Construction in the Media
during the 12th Lok Sabha Election

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Occasional Paper No.37



Centre for Women's Development Studies

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September 2002



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Abstract

This study analyses the coverage of three newspapers viz., The Hindu, The Hindustan Times and The Pioneer, on the question of women's political participation (including reservation and party tickets) and women's issues/perspectives/concerns during the 12th Lok Sabha election held in January-February, 1998. The study further explores the processes of gender construction in political communication by examining the coverage of two women politicians - Jayalalitha and Sushma Swaraj. The findings indicate that the issue of political participation did not emerge significantly on the media agenda during this period. Also, women did not appear as an important constituency or an interest group that can influence the electoral process. Their issues/perspectives/concerns were hardly addressed. Lastly, a drastic difference in the treatment meted out to two women politicians suggests how the media functions within our cultural and gendered contexts.

Acknowledgement

I owe gratitude to the Centre for Women's Development Studies for providing me support to carry out this study. I am grateful to Dr. Kumud Sharma, Dr. Mary John and Dr. Malavika Karlekar for their useful comments and suggestions. My special thanks are due to Chanchal da for reading the final draft and writing an opinion article based on this study in the Pioneer. I am also thankful to Dr. Preet Rustagi, Ms. Gouri Banerji and Ms. Arpita Mandal for editing parts of this Report. Lastly, I appreciate the technical assistance provided by Mr. Nandan, Ms. Usha, Mr. Sundaresh and Mr. Swaminath Mishra.

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List of Abbreviations

AIADMK	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
AICC	All India Congress Committee
AIDWA	All India Democratic Women's Association
AP	Andhra Pradesh
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CM	Chief Minister
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPI(M)	Communist Party of India(Marxist)
DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
HT	Hindustan Times
JD	Janata Dal
LS	Lok Sabha
MDMK	Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
MGR	M.G.Ramachandran
MP	Member of Parliament
NAWO	National Alliance of Women's Organisations
NCW	National Commission for Women
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NTR	Nandamuri Tarakarama Rao
OPED	Opposite the Editorial Page
PM	Prime Minister
PMK	Pattali Makkal Katchi
PTI	Press Trust of India
SP	Samajwadi Party
TDP	Telugu Desam Party
TMC	Tamil Manila Congress
TN	Tamil Nadu
TNCC(I)	Tamil Nadu Congress Committee(Indira)
UCC	Uniform Civil Code
UF	United Front
UNI	United News of India

Gender Construction in the Media during the 12th Lok Sabha Election

Media, in a democratic society in particular, assumes a significant role during election time. Needless to say that for most of us, elections have little reality, apart from its media version. We rely on the media for most of our information such as: Who are the contestants? What are the issues on their agenda or manifestos? What kind of policies are they proposing for various problems facing the people and the country? Which constituencies are they trying to reach? Further, is the media playing the role of a facilitator or a mediator between the public and policy makers? Are they carrying citizens' concerns or those of various constituencies, to the policy makers? Such efforts, on the part of the media, gain much more importance in a pluralistic society, where different groups with different interests contest political definitions and decisions (Patterson, 1980).

Yet, it is up to the media to decide which issues are included on its agenda and which do not. Some issues, people, parties, newsmakers and news themes dominate coverage, while others get ignored or marginalised. In that sense, what we see is not 'the reality', but the media version of it, since election news depends upon various factors or decisions made by news organisations about what to observe, what to report and what emphasis to place on various parts of the coverage. It is certainly a tedious task to figure out such factors due to the non-transparent relationship between the news organisation and its sources, the complexity of the relationship between politics and the mass media, the internal working within a media organisation and the perception of mediapersons towards various issues etc. However, the nature of the coverage of various issues in any of the media is indicative of certain phenomena. The coverage may reveal the media's tilt towards certain issues, parties, personalities, and so on. One can certainly argue that since all news stories are filtered through reporters and editors, their preferences are necessarily reflected in the total issue output (Patterson, 1980).

The 12th Lok Sabha (LS) election in India was held in the beginning of 1998. The Congress-I government, in the year 1997, withdrew support from the United Front (UF) government, causing its downfall. The UF government was the first to initiate the issue of one-third reservation for women in Parliament. However, many of its own Members of Parliament (MPs) refused to support the Bill when it was proposed. Seeing the hostility of some MPs towards the issue, women's movements constantly lobbied for women's reservation. Most of the political parties included this issue on their election manifestos and promised to introduce one-third reservation for women in Parliament and state assemblies if brought to power. Women's presence has never exceeded beyond eight per cent in Parliament since India's independence. While it was easier for women to get one-third reservation in the local Panchayats, reservation in Parliament proved to be a tough task. To date, the issue stands unresolved, with various leaders and parties divided over it. For the 12th Lok Sabha election, various parties once again placed this issue in their manifestos.

Regarding the media, the question that concerns us is the extent to which women's political participation (including reservations and the parties' giving tickets to women)

elections were held. The announcement for elections was made in December 1997.

In the following section, I shall first of all examine the coverage of women's political participation and women's issues in the three newspapers. I have clubbed the first two objectives in this analysis. Section II would look into the coverage of Jayalalitha and Sushma Swaraj in terms of several variables and section III would focus on the gender construction of two leaders.

Section 1

Women's political participation, women's issues/ perspectives/ concerns: An analysis of coverage in three newspapers

A) *The Hindu*

In tune with the criteria mentioned earlier, I marked all the items concerning women's political participation and pertaining to women or women's issues vis-à-vis elections. Items that made just a passing reference to women's issues or their political participation were not coded. Surprisingly, the Hindu carried merely 20 items in this regard. Of these, two were pictures, both of which depicted women (one each from National Commission for Women {NCW} and Bihar Pradesh Congress I) demonstrating for 33 per cent reservation for women. These pictures were not accompanied by any report/story. The remaining 18 items are discussed as follows.

Women's Political Participation in The Hindu

Chart 1

Item No.	Date/ 1998	Author	Title of Story	Place-ment	Page No.	Type of item	Primary actor	Women speaking subject	Picture of women
1.	3/1	Soma Basu	NCW to motivate women voters (women focused)	Unclassified	20	Article	NCW	Yes (NCW)	No
2.	4/1	Staff Reporter	Vajpayee promises free education for girls	City	3	News story	Vajpayee	No	No
3.	5/1	Staff Corresp.	BJP will enact law on quota for women	News	11	News Story	Advani	No	No
4.	8/1	Staff Reporter	Political parties ignore NCW delegation (women focused)	News	11	News story	NCW	Yes (NCW)	No
5.	9/1	UNI	Panel urges parties to field more women	National	7	News Story	CPI	Yes (NCW)	No
6.	10/1	Special Corresp.	BJP plans to field more women candidates	From the States	4	News Story	Mridula Sinha	Yes (Sinha)	No
7.	13/1	Staff Reporter	One-third quota for women in political parties sought (women focused)	State	3	News Story	NAWO	No (statement)	No
8.	20/1	Staff Reporter	AIDWA appeals to women to vote independently	State	3	News Story	AIDWA	Yes (as party)	No
9.	22/1	Special Corresp.	Women nominees more winnable? (women focused)	National	9	Article	None	No	No
10.	25/1	Staff Reporter	Women stand to be counted – and voted (women focused)	Front Page	1	News Story	NCW/ Ranjana	Yes (NCW)	No
11.	29/1	Staff Reporter	Ranjana Kumari not to contest polls (women focused)	State	3	News Story	Ranjana	Yes (Ranjana)	No

The first item entitled 'NCW to motivate women voters', written by Soma Basu, was carried on 3rd January 1998. A three-column item initiated by the media seemed to set the stage for the issue of women's reservation and significance of women as voters during this election. The author finds it 'unfortunate that since independence, political parties have squandered many opportunities to prevent increasing marginalisation of women in politics. Women are treated as an exclusive constituency by political parties, who take a fancy in promising them benefits – which usually vanish with victory after polls – and easily forget

that unless this vital 50 per cent of the population, is fully involved in political configurations, democratic aspirations of the people will remain unfulfilled'. Basu further throws light on the NCW's plans to 'launch a pre-election motivation of and for women to broaden the political parties' appeal and perspective'. While giving the statistics on women in previous elections, Basu focuses on the strategies of the NCW to apply pressure on political parties to put up more women candidates. Two members of NCW got an opportunity to express their voice in this piece. However, the item was placed on a very insignificant place i.e. the unclassified page, number 20. Nonetheless, it set an agenda, for which the credit may be given to its author, who apparently put in the effort to approach the NCW. Yet after this good start, the Hindu carried 'run of the mill stories' till 20th January. A cursory look at the headings is sufficient to reveal their nature (see items 2-9 in chart 1).

Most of the stories had 'officially important' or 'known' actors making statements on women or women's issues, thus making the stories newsworthy in themselves. They include, for example, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee speaking at a national convention of the BJP mahila morcha; L.K. Advani addressing a convention organised by a state mahila morcha; the NCW making a statement on the behaviour of political parties; the Communist Party of India (CPI) in its meeting assuring the NCW of giving more tickets to women candidates; Mridula Sinha at a press conference declaring BJP's stand on giving more representation to women; the National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO) issuing a statement demanding reservation for women, and the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) giving a call to women to vote independently in its central executive committee meeting. All these stories fit very well into the social organisation of news. In other words, newsgathering was passive in the sense that special efforts are not required to cover such stories, as journalists either have prior information of these meetings or press conferences, or they receive press releases or statements. Also, as mentioned earlier, such stories are about the activities of important actors and hence become newsworthy in themselves.

On 22nd January, the paper carried an item entitled 'Women nominees more winnable?' This was the second media-initiated item, written by a special correspondent who basically provided details of a study conducted by the Women's Political Watch which highlighted that women candidates are winners over male candidates. The item questions the definition of winnability through statistical data from previous elections, which highlight the success rate of women has been higher than men. However, the author of this item offered no opinions or arguments. Veena Nayyar, the head of the Women's Political Watch appeared only in passing at the end of the item. It seemed that the author did not speak to Ms. Nayyar personally but carried her opinion generated from that study. Nevertheless, one can acknowledge that the paper spared a three-column space for this item.

A third item that was the first to make front-page news appeared in the paper on 25th January (Women stand up to be counted - and voted). A three column item, but written by a staff reporter, (and carried on Sunday when political news is less), broke the story of the women's movement fielding its own candidate. The story was innovative in the sense that it was the first time in the history of the women's movement that its own candidate was fielded. The item obviously carried news value and also involved a central organisation such as the NCW. Actors like Mohini Giri (then chairperson of the NCW), other members

of the NCW, and the candidate Ranjana Kumari, were present on the occasion to face the press. The item was a first response to an important event. The paper observed silence over the next three days, when it could have carried some opinion article on this development. For instance, it could have approached leaders from various parties to know whether anyone would support Ranjana Kumari's candidature, it could have approached other women's organisations or activists to have their opinions, or it could have approached laywomen to voice their reactions. By ignoring it completely, the event became effectively insignificant. On 29th January, the paper carried a small story entitled 'Ranjana Kumari not to contest polls'. In a press conference, Ranjana Kumari said that major political parties refused to support her candidature. The item was there as a matter of 'fact', a sequel to the earlier one. Both stories were authored by staff reporters, who rank lower in hierarchy than a special correspondent. Moreover, none of the stories were accompanied by a picture.

The story of fielding, and then withdrawing the candidate, was over as far as the paper was concerned. No effort was made to question those major political parties as to why they couldn't support Ranjana's candidature. No story was written on what the movement should or should not do next time. No effort was made to locate the movement within the political landscape. Neither Mohini Giri nor Ranjana Kumari for that matter appeared in the paper after this. There was no letter to the editor on this development. It clearly showed how the press could ignore certain themes or issues and render them insignificant.

After 29th January, the paper was back to its 'run of the mill stories' (see items 12-18 in chart 2).

Women's Political Participation in The Hindu
Chart 2

Item No.	Date/ 1998	Author	Title of the story	Place- ment	Page no.	Type of item	Primary actor	Women speaking subject	Picture of women
12.	4/2	Staff Reporter	Women hold the key in Himachal (women focused)	From the States	4	Article	None	No	No
13.	6/2	Special Corres.	Dal promises quota for women	Front Page	1	News Story	Janata Dal	No	No
14.	11/2	Sarabjit	Leaders rope in their families	Elections 98	9	Poll Graffiti	None	No	No
15.	16/2	Special Corres.	First phase polling for 222 seats today	Front Page	1	News Story	Election Comm.	No	No
16.	24/2	Staff Reporter	Sonia promises 33 p.c. quota for women	Elections 98	9	News Story	Sonia Gandhi	Yes (Sonia)	No
17.	24/2	Special Corres.	Attitude to women: Cong. no different from other parties (women focused)	Elections 98	20	News Story	Girija Vyas	Yes (Vyas)	No
18.	25/2	PTI	Mixed feelings for women candidates (women focused)	City	2	News Story	Dikshit & Raj Bala	Yes (both)	No

The first item was merely a statistical profile of male and female voters in various constituencies of Himachal Pradesh, for both the Lok Sabha and Assembly seats. Although the story indicated the changing patterns in women's voting behaviour, their position on various issues was not taken into consideration. The story did not tell us how women's views were different from men, or how and why their voting behaviour had changed. Are women beginning to vote as an interest group? Are they beginning to take positions? The next four items did not have women or women's issues as central actors or

themes. For instance, the second item was about the Janata Dal (JD) releasing its manifesto and involving important actors like Deve Gowda and Madhu Dandavate. A brief reference was made to Dal's promise of reserving seats for women as declared by Deve Gowda. The third item was the first one to be carried on the election page. However, the item, after making a brief reference to the number of women contesting in Punjab, moved on to focus on how various leaders/parties roped in their families in their campaigns. Women found a special reference in terms of helping the men of their families in opening election offices, organising meetings and keeping social contacts. Women were not central to the item, which was written in a lighter vein. Another item carried on the front page was 'First phase for polling for 222 seats today'. Covered by a special correspondent, the item served to set the stage for polling the next day. It provided details on the general arrangement for polling in various constituencies. In the latter half, the item presented a statistical profile on women contestants and compared it with that of the previous elections. In this exercise, it also took a look at the situation in various states. As if to fulfil the formality, the concern over the small number of women contestants was expressed through a statement by M.S. Gill (the then Election Commissioner) who described it as 'disappointing' and not a 'good sign' for the country. There were no comments on how more women could be brought in or how political parties could be taken to task for not giving tickets to women and so on. Sonia Gandhi, during her campaign tour in Kannur, promised 33 per cent quota for women on 24th February. This was the second item to find space on the election page and it is quite obvious that the item was given importance due to the Congress's star campaigner. However prominent the heading may sound, the reference to women's quota appeared quite briefly.

The same day's newspaper also carried an important item covered by a special correspondent from Ahmedabad, but the item entitled 'Attitude to Women: Congress No Different from Other Parties', was carried on page 20. Girija Vyas, the Congress I's All India Women's Wing Chief, at a press conference, openly criticised her own party for sponsoring only one woman nominee in Gujarat. As the heading suggests, the item carried an element of sensation and conflict, whereby Vyas appeared to be criticising her own party on the issue. In the last item, Sheila Dixit and Raj Bala briefly narrated their experiences of campaigning.

Apart from this scanty coverage on the issue of women's political participation, the paper did not carry a single item pertaining to women's problems/needs as a social category or as a constituency. There was just one item, whereby Vajpayee referred to girls' education, and this story obviously carried news value as it involved a significant political actor. The politicians were never asked how they would address the needs of women in education, employment, health etc. Journalists never approached women voters to gather what they expected from their leaders and what they would like them to do when in power. They never sought opinions of the movement vis-à-vis elections on women's issues.

On the whole, in terms of physical indicators, there were just three items carried on the front page. These items were related to the women's movement fielding its own candidate, which was carried on a Sunday edition; the Janata Dal's manifesto release; and details on the first phase of polling. The last two items did not focus on women as primary concerns or actors. There were just two items carried on the elections page and they were related to leaders roping in their families in Punjab and Sonia's campaign tour, in which 'women' were not the central concern. One item in which women were the central concern was

carried on page 20 under the column 'Elections 98'. Only two items were covered by specified authors viz., 'NCW to motivate women voters' and 'leaders' rope in their families.' Furthermore, only five items were covered by special correspondents, most of which were related to, for example, the JD manifesto, First phase of polling, and the BJP's plans. Only two items covered by special correspondents had women as their primary concern. There was no item covered on the editorial page, nor was there any interview held with women's activists or movements to have alternate opinions, or ordinary women to know their needs and problems. There was no editorial carried on women at all. The Hindu did not take the parties to task for not giving reservation or tickets to women. Not a single picture accompanied the 18 items carried in the paper. Although women were speaking subjects in ten items, it may be noted that all those women belonged to political circles. In the rest of the items, women had no voice. Either the political leaders or media/journalists referred to or commented upon them.

B) The Hindustan Times

A total of 24 items were found in the Hindustan Times relating to women's political participation and issues. Barring one picture, in which a physically handicapped woman was shown casting her vote, nine out of the remaining 23 items were primarily women-centric, focusing on women's political participation (see the following chart).

Women's Political Participation in The Hindustan Times
Chart 1 (All items women focused)

Item No.	Date/1998	Author	Title of story	Place-ment	Page no.	Type of item	Primary actor	Women speaking subject	Picture of women
1	13/1	None	None	Elections 98 (Poll info)	8	Brief	Women's orgs.	No	No
2	23/1	Usha Rai	Parties leave women high and dry	Elections 98	8	Article	None	No/author	No
3	25/1	HT Corres	Women's groups field candidate (Sunday)	Elections 98	8	News Story	Ranjana	Yes (NCW/Ranjana)	Yes (Ranjana)
4	30/1	Usha Rai	Women's candidate a non-starter	Elections 98	8	News Story	None	No	No
5	1/2	Usha Rai	It's thumbs-up for women as more join the fray (Sunday)	Elections 98	8	Article	None	No	No
6	2/2	Abhay Kumar	Women left in the lurch	Elections 98	8	News story	None	Yes (CPI leader)	No
7	15/2	Shyamala S.	For quota, you need a vote bank (Sunday)	News Week	12	Article	None	No	No
8	17/2	None	Gender gap in polls	Editorial	13	Editorial	None	No	No
9	25/2	HT Corres.	Eves teach men a lesson in poll ethics	Nation	12	Article	3 women leaders	Yes (leaders)	No

The first brief item under the column 'Poll Information' merely informed readers that women representing various organisations marched down Parliament Street demanding one-third reservation for women. Although the women represented various important organisations, no information regarding where they came from, what was their socio-economic background, or what would they achieve from reservation, was sought. The brief item clearly conveyed the insignificance attached to the issue. The second item, initiated by media on 23rd January and written by a woman journalist, provided an

account of ticket distribution to women by various parties. The item also stated that the common excuse of political parties for not giving tickets to women was that they are not winnable candidates. The item provided the statistics given by the Women's Political Watch to counter this argument. It also informed its audience about the NCW's decision to field its own women candidates in this election. The story was mainly factual in nature rather than analytical. Along with a picture of Ranjana Kumari, the third item carried on the 25th announced the fielding of the women's movement's candidate in the election. As mentioned in the previous section, the item obviously carried news value. But as in the case of the Hindu, the paper said nothing more on the issue until 29th January. The paper did not consider it important to approach various political actors to seek their opinion on this issue. On the 30th, 'Women's candidate a non-starter' talked about the failure of the movement to have a consensus on the women's candidate. Although written by a woman journalist, the emphasis of the item was found to be more on the fragmentation and conflict within the movement, which is considered as the staple diet of the media by scholars. The author wrote, 'the question being asked is: how can women fight for one-third reservation in the Lok Sabha and the Assemblies when they cannot come together to back even one woman?' Since no name was specified, the question was obviously posed by the media collectively. Further, specifying the name of a woman activist, the author wrote how the activist 'berated a member of the NCW for putting up Ranjana Kumari as a consensus candidate'. The author wrote further that even Mrs Dandavate and Mrs Krishna Kant had reservations about Ranjana Kumari's contesting as an independent candidate. They would have preferred her to fight with the backing of their party, that is, the Janata Dal. Amazingly, the paper made no effort to approach any woman activist, to seek opinions of Mrs Dandavate and Krishna Kant, or to find out the standing of the Janata Dal earlier when Ranjana Kumari was fielded as a candidate.

The item 'it's thumbs-up for women as more join the fray' provided an account of which women had been able to get tickets in various political parties and the attitude of leaders towards giving tickets to women. The next item also provided an account of which party fielded how many women within the Bihar region.

Shayamala S., on 15th February, reviewed the entire issue of women's political participation in her article entitled 'For quota, you need a vote bank'. It gave an account of how various leaders responded to the NCW's seeking appointment from them; about the NCW suggesting names of women candidates, the winnability factor, the problems women face in fighting elections, and so on. Encouragingly, an editorial on 'gender gap in polls' was carried on 17 February. In the first paragraph, it brought to attention the political hypocrisy of leaders vis-à-vis the women's reservation bill. In the second paragraph, it contemplated whether reservation is the right approach, ultimately taking a position against it. Instead, it was in favour of 10-15 per cent of tickets for women in every party. However it did not suggest how to achieve that measure or how such a measure could be ensured. The last item, i.e. 'Eves teach men a lesson in poll ethics' recorded the experiences of women contestants brought together by the NCW. It aimed to show how women candidates could break the male ways of contesting elections. Women contestants explained how they refrained from distributing liquor and cash to win slum votes. They also said that it was advantageous to be 'a woman' in terms of entering people's homes and talking to them.

It may be noted that in all the above items, the questions of how women's reservation, and

ultimately participation in politics, would affect the issues of governance, criminalisation in politics, conduct in parliament, improvement of their own status, broader issues of development and so on, were never raised. Only in the second item, a brief appeal by the movement touched upon the issue of corruption, criminalisation, and the like. This appeal came from Ranjana Kumari, but the author (a woman journalist) offered no debate or opinion on it. In none of the items were the politicians approached and questioned for not giving considerable party tickets to women.

Although the items were women-centric, none of the above items got front-page coverage. Nonetheless, encouragingly, six items were carried on the Election page and another, as part of the editorial. Further, five out of the total were written by specified authors and two by the HT's correspondents. It is important to note that out of five items written by specified authors, four were authored by women journalists, indicating that they can play an important role in bringing up women's issues. It would have been easier for these well-known and established journalists to find space for their stories. Yet one cannot ensure the quality of the item on these grounds over the standard norms of professional writing in journalism. Out of nine items, women were non-speaking subjects in six, and in only three items were they speaking subjects. In most cases they were being referred to or being commented upon by the media/journalists. Eight items carried no picture. Only one editorial was carried in the Hindustan Times. Most of the items were news stories.

Some items in which women received attention as voters were as follows.

Women's Political Participation in The Hindustan Times

Chart 2

Item No.	Date/ 1998	Author	Title of story	Place- ment	Page no.	Type of item	Primary actor	Women speaking subject	Picture of women
1	2/1	Ashok Das	Sonia charisma may work with AP women	Unclassi- fied	9	Article	Sonia/AP women	No	No
2	4/2	PTI	Women voters	Nation	7	State brief	Women voters	No	No
3	11/2	Sunita Aron	Sonia takes steam out of BJP drive	Nation	7	Article	Sonia	Yes (ordinary women)	No
4	17/2	HT Corres.	Women show up in large numbers	City	3	News story	None	No	No

The first item discussed whether Sonia's entry into electoral politics or campaigning would fetch her votes from women voters in Andhra Pradesh (AP). Similarly, the third item contained comments from some women (and also men) in Lucknow, expressing their acceptance of Sonia Gandhi. However, in both the items, women voters did not appear as power definers themselves. Rather, they appeared as the 'emotional' voters who would identify and empathise with Sonia Gandhi easily. Apparently, the Hindustan Times targeted to make Sonia Gandhi acceptable through women voters within the political scene. For instance, in one of the items on 17th February, it was written 'Women are very emotional. They see Sonia Gandhi's picture in the paper and they start shedding tears for their sister'. Item two was a 'brief', announcing that women electorates outnumbered male voters in Gujarat. Item four informed its readers how women showed up for voting in large numbers in Delhi. It focused on the women's enthusiasm. *Yet again there were no opinions from women regarding their role as voters, about what voting meant to them, about what women wanted as voters from their leaders, and whether they thought their*

needs had been addressed. Reasons for women's changing voting behaviour were not carried, nor was it mentioned whether or not women held different opinions on different issues as compared to men.

None of these items were carried on any important pages. In only one item, women appeared as speaking subjects. None of the items carried any picture. In three items where women appeared as non-speaking subjects, media/journalists commented upon them. Specified authors wrote two items and in these, Sonia Gandhi was the central actor and concern.

The remaining items covered in the Hindustan Times were as follows.

Women's Political Participation in The Hindustan Times
Chart 3

Item No.	Date/ 1998	Author	Title of story	Place- ment	Page no.	Type of item	Primary actor	Women speaking subject	Picture of women
1	4/1	HT Corres	BJP to free girls' education	Front page	1	News Story	Vajpayee	No	No
2	10/1	Prakash Patra	Cong daubs pro-poor paint to woo voters	Front page	1	News Story	Congress	No	No
3	10/1	Rajindar Sachar	New agenda for the polls	Editorial page		Article	None	No	No
4	29/1	HT Corres.	Parties ignore women	Elections 98	8	News Story	Cong/TDP	No	No
5	31/1	HT Corres.	UF for full mandate to finish task	Front Page	1	News Story	UF/leaders	No	No
6	5/2	Kumkum Chadha	Patriotic pitch Sonia's solution to saffron swipe	Front page	1	News Story	Sonia	Yes (Sonia)	No
7	5/2	None	What the parties have promised	Elections 98	8	Chart of issues	None	No	No
8	6/2	HT Corres.	New deal for agriculture, expansion of quota system	Nation	10	News Story	JD/leaders	No	No
9	17/2	HTC	Names missing from voters' list	City	5	News story	Women voters	Yes (ordinary woman)	Yes (Sushma & a woman)
10	17/2	Aditya Sinha	Sonia signals 'success'	Elections 98	9	News Story	None	No	No

Barring one, the remaining items in the paper mainly involved important actors or 'political' issues. All these items made brief references to women or women's issues, including the issue of political participation. For instance, the items discussing the manifestos of major political parties made a brief reference to women's reservation. Vajpayee, in his address to the BJP Mahila Morcha, took up the issue of literacy and reservation (4th January). He also called for a death sentence for those guilty of rape, and promised to put up an adequate number of women candidates. Another item entitled 'Congress daubs pro-poor paint to woo voters' (10th January) mainly discussed the Congress manifesto. Very briefly, it touched upon the issue of providing 33 per cent reservation to women. In a guest article entitled 'New agenda for the polls', carried on January 13, women's organisations were briefly appealed, by the author, to play a role in these elections by uniting and putting up their own candidate on the slogan of women empowerment and co-relate their programme with NGOs.

'Parties ignore women', carried on 29th January, merely focused on the number of women candidates put up by the Telegu Desam Party (TDP) in AP. In 'UF for full mandate to finish task', UF, at a press conference, released its manifesto on 31st January. In this item, the issue of 33 percent reservation received a brief reference whereby Deve Gowda said that his government was trying for a consensus on this issue.

In yet another item, carried on 5th February i.e. 'Patriotic pitch Sonia's solution to saffron swipe', Sonia appealed to women electorates by telling them that she was aware of their problems like rising prices, management of household, child care problems and so on. She also reminded them of Rajiv Gandhi's move to empower women through reservations at the Panchayat level. An item 'What the parties have promised', carried on 5th February, charted out what various parties had offered to people in their manifestos. Women merely constituted one of the components of this package. The JD manifesto also very briefly mentioned the issue of 33 per cent reservation for women on 6th February, in an item entitled 'New deal for agriculture, expansion of quota system'.

On 17th February, an item entitled 'Names missing from voters' list' narrated how three women voters got agitated because their votes had already been cast by someone else. One of the women voters' even complained to Sushma Swaraj. The item also mentioned how the turnout of women voters was low until 11 am in some areas. However it made no effort to explore the reasons for it. Thus, *in all these items, women were not the main focus. Most of these items had important political actors or they discussed manifestos with reference to which women appeared briefly in them.*

Overall, the Hindustan Times carried 24 items, out of which one was a picture. Of the remaining 23, only four items were carried on the front page. These four items were related to: the BJP addressing a conference, a profile of the Congress I manifesto, the UF manifesto, and Sonia addressing a rally. It may be noted that all four items had important political actors or themes. Women were not the central concern, particularly in the last three items. However, the Hindustan Times carried nine stories on its Election page. Out of these nine items, seven were directly related to women, or in other words, they had women as their central concern. As mentioned earlier, out of these nine items, five were written by specified authors and two by an HT correspondent. Further, out of the five specified authors, four were women journalists. Only one editorial concerning women was carried and even it's stance was against reservation for women. Only two items were accompanied by pictures. No interview with any actor was conducted focusing on the issue concerned. Only four articles concentrating on women were carried, out of which three (i.e. item 3,5,7) were carried on Sunday, when political news is less as compared to other days. Ordinary women hardly got voice in the coverage. Mainly women leaders or women with political connections spoke, and that too, in merely four items.

C) The Pioneer

Twenty-two items related to women were carried in the Pioneer, out of which two were pictures. In the first picture, carried on 8th January, 2-3 women representing Mahila Congress activists appeared, demanding 33 per cent reservation for women, at the All India Congress Committee's (AICC) office. The second picture, carried on 18th February, focused on a rural woman at a rally. She had her hands raised in joy at the rally, addressed

by Congress star campaigner, Sonia Gandhi. Out of the remaining 20 items, fifteen significantly dealt with women or were women-oriented (see Chart 1).

**Women's Political Participation in The Pioneer
Chart 1**

Item No.	Date/1998	Author	Title of story	Place-ment	Page no.	Type of item	Primary actor	Women speaking subject	Picture of women
1	4/1	Staff Reporter	Vajpayee for educating women free	City/Nation	4	News Story	Vajpayee	Sushma spoke briefly	No
2	5/1	Agencies	Hindu, Muslim personal laws biased: Advani	Nation	5	News Story	Advani	No	No
3	6/1	Manjrika Sewak	The hubby, the baby and now the country (women focused)	Gender	10	Article	None	No	Yes (Sushma)
4	8/1	V. Radhika	Gracious Laloo floors women	Front page/Nation	1 & 4	News Story	NCW/members	Yes (NCW)	No
5	13/1	Shubhangi Khapre	Democracy for nation, farce for women (women focused)	India Votes	7	Article	Women leaders	Yes (leaders)	Yes (casting vote)
6	18/1	Abhijit Dasgupta	Reds paint Ramrajya in black	India votes	7	Article	CPI (M)	No	No (sketches)
7	22/1	Women's Political watch	Women and winnability myth: 1996 polls (women focused)	India votes	7	Chart	Pol. watch	Yes (excerpts)	No
8	4/2	Manisha Vardhan	The number of this game is zero (women focused)	India votes	7	Article	NCW/members	Yes (NCW/members)	Yes (Ranjana)
9	5/2	V. Radhika	A manly paradise	India votes	7	Article (Hum)	None	No (Cartoon)	No
10	7/2	None	Frank confession (women focused)	Editorial page	8	Editorial	Janata Dal/Gowda	No	No
11	8/2	Sanjay Singh	Wooing women voters and Bhagat	City	3	News Story (Campaign trail)	Sheila Dikshit	Yes (Sheila)	Yes (Sheila)
12	10/2	Vijaya Singh	Facilitate their participation (women focused)	Editorial page	8	Article	None	No	No
13	12/2	Romita Datta	For widows, apartheid continues (women focused)	India votes	6	Article	Widows in Kashi	Yes (ordinary woman)	Yes (ordinary woman)
14	19/2	Manjrika Sewak	Reaffirming a forgotten pledge (women focused)	Concerns	10	Article	None	Yes (women leaders)	No
15	25/2	V. Radhika	Women's poll meet comes a cropper (women focused)	City	3	Article	NCW/women leaders	Yes (women leaders)	Yes (Dikshit)

The coverage in the Pioneer was less event-oriented. For example, there were nine articles, two interviews and just four news stories. However, a sense of seriousness was missing in many of the items, and they were generally 'light readings' or 'humorous' in nature. Although all fifteen items significantly focused on women, there were eight items which specifically and directly pertained to the issue of women's political participation. They were item numbers 3, 5, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14 and 15, as given in the above chart. Out of these eight items, seven were opinion articles. Again, seven items were written by women journalists, and one of them carried the by-line of Women's Political Watch, and five of them carried pictures.

Four of the items were carried on the 'India Votes' page. To elaborate upon them, the first article i.e. 'The hubby, the baby and now the country', carried on 6th January and initiated by media, discussed the marginalisation of women in Indian politics, and chalked out arguments for and against reservation and the justification of reservation vis-à-vis the Indian constitution. It also brought to attention how various parties had fielded such a less number of women and talked about the performance of women in power. The second article 'Democracy for nation, farce for women' by Shubhangi discussed the women's position in a democracy and how parties' give hollow promises. There were admissions from some women politicians in connection with whether their parties would field 33 per cent women. It also carried quotes from Sushma Swaraj, Najma Heptullah, and Mohini Giri.

'Women and wannability myth', carried mainly in the form of graphs on 22nd January, questioned the definition of wannability by providing data from the 1991 and 1996 polls, and proved the wannability of women and loseability of men. The item 'The number of this game is zero' by Manisha, carried on 4th February, was about Ranjana's candidature. The item got a better display in the Pioneer than in the Hindustan Times or the Hindu. The author managed to get comments from actors like Najma Heptullah, Mohini Giri, Syeda Hameed and others on the issue of fielding Ranjana Kumari as an independent candidate. Ranjana Kumari was also briefly interviewed in this connection.

'Facilitate their participation' by Vijaya Singh, carried on 10th February, articulated the reasons for low participation of women in political institutions and what should be done about this situation. However, the article argued against the act of reservation for women and instead reasoned for a clean political system, which is again not an easy solution. Manjarika Sewak, in her article 'Reaffirming a forgotten pledge' on 19th February, also examined the Bill and questioned whether reservation could empower women. It sought opinions from political women like Brinda Karat and Margaret Alva. Overall, the item supported reservation for women. The plight of widows in terms of not having the right to cast their vote and choose the Prime Minister of their country was brought out by Romita Dutta in an article 'For widows, apartheid continues' on 12th February. However, 'Women's poll meet comes a cropper' by Radhika on 25th February seemed to make a mockery of women candidates who were invited by the NCW to share their experiences. The item focused more on 'tension' amongst the candidates from different parties rather than highlighting their experiences.

No comments, however, were sought from male politicians in these articles. They were generally written by women, focused on women, and sought comments from women politicians, thus promoting the notion that only they needed to be concerned about women's political participation.

Although the remaining seven items were also women oriented, they mainly involved important political actors. For instance, one item covered Vajpayee addressing a convention of the Mahila Morcha and raising the issues of women's education, rape, 33 per cent reservation and so on. (4th January). Advani, during his election campaign on 5th January, promised 33 per cent reservation to women. Putting emphasis on the Uniform Civil Code, he appealed to women to vote for the BJP. The only item carried on the front page i.e. 'Gracious Laloo floors women', talked about how various political parties reacted

to the NCW and women's organisations on demanding tickets for women. Of all the people/parties, only Laloo was 'gracious enough' to receive them and assured them of fielding as many candidates as possible, something that the paper might not have expected from a lower caste leader. The item contained quotes from Mohini Giri, Padma Seth and Veena Nayyar. 'Red paints Ram Rajya in Black', carried on 18th January, focused on a booklet published by the CPI (M), Bengal unit. The author mentioned that the booklet had devoted one whole chapter to the BJP and women. The author brought to attention how Ram Rajya was a farce from equality, how it would oppress women, or how the BJP would perceive women in its Ram Rajya.

'A manly Paradise' made a 'light' reading, narrating the author travels across villages to observe the electorates' moods. Any question regarding women's issues, according to the author's, were met with hostility.

'Frank confession', the only editorial, discussed the JD manifesto. In the first paragraph, it brought to attention the JD's positive standing on 33 per cent reservation for women vis-à-vis Sharad Pawar's derogatory remarks on women in Parliament, and hence made mockery of it. In the second paragraph, it focused on other aspects of the manifesto. The last item i.e. 'Wooing women voters and Bhagat' was about Sheila Dikshit campaigning in East Delhi and H.K.L. Bhagat appealing to voters to vote for his younger sister. He made a special appeal to women on the grounds of Sonia Gandhi being a woman herself.

Two items out of the above were carried on the 'India Votes' page, and one on the editorial page. Three items made light/humorous readings, while four were by specified authors, of which two were women.

There were, in all, five items that made a brief reference to women. In other words, women or their issues/concerns were not the main focus of these items. Interestingly, four out of these five were carried on the 'India Votes' page and four of them were by specific authors. The items were as follows.

The item 'My wife will not be CM' (Chief Minister) was an interview with Prafulla Mahanta. A question regarding the reservation of women in Parliament was posed to him, to which he said 'thirty percent reservation could be implemented only if that many constituencies were earmarked as being reserved for women. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to ensure that a sizeable number of women enter Parliament. One has to take the 'jungle law' of politics also into consideration while distributing tickets'. There was no further dimension or question raised by the interviewer. 'One is company, two a crowd' was about how the Janata Dal, Congress and BJP fared in fielding women candidates. However, it began with a non-sensible statement whereby the Chief Minister of Karnataka, J. H. Patel, was reported to have believed that reservation for women would bring 'bright and beautiful faces to Parliament and state legislatures which today have many useless men'. Meanwhile 'Only states can make Centre strong' had only one question related to women - 'There's an impression that atrocities on women have broken all records in the state and your own government's figures show a spurt in the crime rate.' The question/statement was posed to Bhairon Singh Shekhawat in an interview, to which his reply was that, when he became CM, he made it clear that nothing should remain hidden. That was why it appeared that the crime rate had gone up compared to previous years. In reality, the figure was only 3.8 per cent against the national average of 22 per

cent. There was no further questioning on how even the existing rate should be dealt with.

Women's Political Participation in The Pioneer
Chart 2

Item No.	Date/ 1998	Author	Title of story	Place- ment	Page no.	Type of item	Primary actor	Women speaking subject	Picture of women
1	29/1	Prabhat Sharan	My wife will not be CM (Interview – Mahanta)	India votes	7	Interview	Prafulla Mahanta	No	No
2	2/2	P. T. Bopanna	One is company, two a crowd	India votes	6	Article (Hum)	None	No	Cartoons
3	5/2	Alok Sharma	Only states can make centre strong	India votes	7	Interview	Shekhawat	No	No
4	13/2	PNS	SP signals post-poll pact with Cong	Nation	5	News story	Samajwadi party/ Yadav	No	No
5	18/2	Omer Farooq	Seething beedi workers shun all candidates (women-focused)	India votes	6	Article	Beedi workers	Yes (ordinary woman)	No

SP signals post-poll pact with Cong: 'BJP must not form govt' was about the Samajwadi Party (SP) giving indications of aligning with Congress after the polls to stop the BJP from coming into power. The SP's general secretary released the manifesto. The item discussed various issues in manifesto, and in seven lines it referred to women as follows: 'the manifesto does not promise direct reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and the Assemblies, but says that the Constitution should be amended to ensure that all parties give a slice of tickets to women in elections'.

'Seething *beedi* workers shun all candidates' was about a war between *beedi* workers and cigarette companies that had become a hot election issue. The item specified that 90 per cent of *beedi* workers were women. In the item, women workers aired their grievances against politicians, stating that they planned to boycott the elections. The item also mentioned that due to naxal activism in the region, political awareness was high among women workers. The Union government gave tax rebates to mini-cigarette companies in the year 1994, which was a blow for the *beedi* workers. Subsequently, the sale and production of *beedi* dropped, and *beedi* workers were unhappy with all BJP, Congress and TDP leaders for not solving their problems. Thus the item did not appear here particularly as women's issue. However, the women workers in particular were unhappy with Chandrababu Naidu for relaxing prohibition. No sequel to this statement was noticed, so it was not known whether they actually boycotted the elections or not.

Out of the five items, one was humorous; while two were interviews making a passing reference to women. Four items were carried on the 'India Votes' page, including both these interviews, and the four were by specified authors. It may be noticed that although the Pioneer's coverage was less event-oriented, when coming to women, it did not carry a single interview with ordinary women. It carried only one editorial that briefly criticised the JD for its position on women's reservation. Although the number of articles was more in the Pioneer, many of them were humorous/light in nature, diffusing the issues involved. *In terms of physical indicators, the Pioneer carried only one item on the front page, and ironically this item was 'Gracious Laloo floors women'. It was mentioned earlier that this item focused on how various political parties/leaders reacted to women approaching them in connection with giving tickets in the election. The title of the item indicates how one*

could not have expected a leader from a lower caste to be gracious enough to pay attention to women. But to the newspaper's surprise, he was gracious enough to welcome women while other parties refused to meet women, and that perhaps was the reason for carrying this item on the front page. However, a significant number of items were carried on the India Votes page, two items on the editorial page. There were eleven articles, in all, noted in Pioneer. There was no interview focusing on the issue concerned, except for two interviews each, with Shekhawat and Mahanta referring to women very briefly. Women appeared as primary actors in only seven items, out of which six had women leaders as primary actors. Women were speakers in only nine items, out of which leaders spoke in seven items. Ordinary women spoke in just two items. Lastly, only six pictures were carried, out of which four were of leaders and two, of ordinary women.

General Observations and a Comparative Analysis of Three Papers

The issue of women's political participation and women's perspectives/issues/concerns did not emerge as significant election issues in the three newspapers examined during the 1998 Lok Sabha elections. In terms of the media's performance, the number of items covered was notably low. In addition, out of the given coverage, very few items were completely women-focused. Most of the items were event-oriented news stories, while opinion articles, negligible editorials, interviews and pictures were few in number. The stories hardly got front-page coverage. The Hindustan Times and the Pioneer performed better in terms of giving coverage on the election page/India Votes page. Although women appeared as speakers in many items, they largely belonged to political circles. Furthermore, women appearing as primary actors also largely belonged to political circles. Ordinary women or women as a constituency/interest group with various concerns hardly got voice in the media, indicating that voters did not get voice in political communication. The NCW appeared as the main organisation in the name of the movement. While the AIDWA and the NAWO appeared in an item each, other organisations were not covered. It also suggests that journalists do not reach citizens aggressively enough in the reporting process to listen to how they frame their problems and what they see as solutions to them. It may be argued that journalists need to talk and listen to the marginalised sections and then report what they hear and see. It may encourage parties or politicians to address the issues which the public considers important (Buckner, 1997; Gartner, 1997). The coverage on women's issues/perspectives/concerns was almost negligible and whatever existed was mainly referred to or commented upon by politicians who tend to get coverage by virtue of their positions and not the issues per se. Only one issue-oriented item (Vajpayee speaking on girls' education) was noted in the Hindu, while two items referred to women's concerns in the Hindustan Times. In these items, Prime Minister Vajpayee and Sonia Gandhi were the primary actors. The Pioneer carried women's concerns in four items, out of which two had Prime Minister Vajpayee and Advani as the primary actors. The other two were initiated by the paper itself. 'Gender gap' did not emerge as an important issue or a significant development in the media coverage. What is more, there was hardly a focus on women's voting behaviour, the shifts, or reactions by party strategists. Lastly, the story-building process reflected through itemisation showed serious omissions in the coverage. As an example, it was found that interviews and answers were not followed through, and vital questions were never pressed or answers extracted.

Coming to the individual papers, in a period of two months, The Hindu, The Hindustan Times and The Pioneer carried merely 18, 23, and 20 items each respectively (see the

chart below).

A Comparative Picture of the Nature of Coverage in the Three Newspapers
Chart

Variables	Hindu	Hindustan Times	Pioneer
No of items	18	23	20
Women focused stories	9	9	10
Front page coverage	3	4	1
No of editorials	none	1	1
Editorial page	none	2	2
Election page/column	3	9	10
Women as primary actors	10 (all political women)	6 (5 political; 1 ordinary)	7 (5 political; 2 ordinary)
Women as speakers	10 (all political women)	6 (4 political women; 2 ordinary)	9 (7 political; 2 ordinary)
Interview with women	none	none	One with Sushma but not on women's political participation
No of stories by women	1	6	9
Items with pictures of women	none	2 (both political women)	6 (4 political women)
Independent pictures	2 (political women)	1	2
No of articles	3	7	11

Apart from two independent pictures, 18 items analysed in the Hindu were not accompanied by any picture. The two independent pictures also focused on only political actors. Further, only three items each were noted on the front-page and election page. There was not a single item carried on the editorial page, suggesting that the Hindu carried no editorial on this issue at all. Encouragingly, women appeared as speakers as well as primary actors in each of the ten items. Yet, again, these speakers and actors were political ones or belonged to political circles. Ordinary women did not appear as primary actors or speakers even in a single item. Most of the items were event-oriented news stories. Just three articles were noted in the total coverage. There was no interview held with any actor – man or woman, political or non-political – on the issue in question. Lastly, while five stories were authored by special correspondents, there was only one by a specific author, who happened to be a woman.

Out of the 23 stories carried in the Hindustan Times, only nine were women-focused, while only two were accompanied by pictures, which again were of political actors. There were just four stories carried on the front, which were not women-focused. Only two items were found on the editorial page, page one of which was an article that briefly referred to the role of women's organisations in elections. Although the second item focused on the 'gender gap in polls', as mentioned earlier, it took a stance against the reservation of women. Encouragingly, the Hindustan Times carried nine items on the election page that carries importance during election period. Although one of them was a brief item, a total of six items carried on this page were completely women focused. It is also important to note that women journalists wrote four of these items¹. At the same time, three women-focused items were carried on Sunday, when political news is relatively less. Women as speakers and as actors were noted in six items each, out of a total of 23 stories. Out of six items where women spoke, four were political and two were ordinary. Further, out of six items in which women were primary actors, five were political and one was ordinary. The

Hindustan Times did not conduct any interview in connection with the issue under study.

Out of 20 items carried in the - Pioneer, ten were women focused. The paper carried the maximum number of pictures, six items were accompanied by pictures, out of which four carried political actors. Further, ten items were carried on the India Votes page and a total of eleven articles were carried by the Pioneer in its coverage. On the other hand, its performance vis-à-vis the editorial front and pages was equally bad. There was just one item noted on the front and two on the editorial page. The Pioneer carried one editorial, as had the Hindustan Times, but like the other papers, it is political women who got the opportunity to speak. Women spoke in nine items, out of which seven were political, and two, ordinary. Women as primary actors appeared in seven items, out of which five were political, and two, ordinary. The daily, nevertheless, carried the maximum number of stories (i.e. 9) by women journalists.

Section 2

Media coverage of Jayalalitha and Sushma Swaraj: A Quantitative Analysis

A) Jayalalitha in *The Hindu*

Jayalalitha, the general secretary of AIADMK, holds a powerful position within her party. Needless to say that she was a key player in the political scene in the elections, and the formation of a government at the Centre depended upon her alliance. Jayalalitha, by virtue of holding a top position in the party and as a key player, fitted very well into the criteria of making news. Therefore, one would expect that Jayalalitha would receive a significant place in the media, particularly the *Hindu*, which caters to South India. However, it was found that Jayalalitha appeared as a primary actor in only the following ten stories:

Jayalalitha as a Primary Actor in *The Hindu*
Chart 1

Item No.	Date/ 1998	Author	Title of story	Placement	Page no.	Type of item	Jayalalitha speaking subject	Picture
1	3/1	Suresh Nambath	No review of alliance with BJP: Jayalalitha	Front page	1	News story	Yes	No
2	4/1	No by-line	Congress still wooing AIADMK: Jayalalitha	News	8	News Story	Yes	No
3	20/1	Special Corres	AIADMK announces seat accord, releases list	Front page	1	News story	Yes	No
4	20/1	Special Corres	Jayalalitha sees conspiracy	Front page	1	News story	Yes	No
5	31/1	Special Corres	AIADMK 'advice' to BJP on Ayodhya	Front page	1	News story	Yes	No
6	3/2	Special Corres	Jayalalitha campaign in Chennai cancelled	News	11	News story	Yes (in a statement)	No
7	4/2	Special Corres	Jayalalitha begins campaign	News	11	News story	Yes	No
8	8/2	Suresh Nambath & Spl corres.	Jayalalitha launches tirade against TMC	Elections 98	10	News story	Yes	No
9	11/2	Staff Reporter	AIADMK combine will uplift minorities: Jayalalitha	News	11	News story	Yes	No
10	14/2	Special Corres	Only people can decide: Jayalalitha	Front page	1	News story	Yes	No

Out of these ten items, six were covered by special correspondents, while only one item was covered by a specified author. Another was covered jointly by a specified author and a special correspondent. Five stories were covered during press conferences and three during election meetings/campaigns, indicating that these stories were covered as routine. There was not a single picture carried with any of the items. While five items were carried on the front page, only one item was found on the Election 98 page. Moreover, there was no item on the editorial or OPED pages:-

Jayalalitha appeared as a secondary actor in the following 13 stories:

Jayalalitha as a Secondary Actor in The Hindu

Chart 2

Item No.	Date/ 1998	Author	Title of story	Place-ment	Page no.	Type of item	Speaker/ prime actor	Picture of Jayalalitha
1	4/1	Special Corres.	BJP to think about coalition after polls	Front	1	News story	Advani	Yes
2	14/1	Special Corres.	DMK front to finalise seat-sharing soon	News	11	News story	Karunanidhi	No
3	20/1	Staff Reporter	Karunanidhi attacks AIADMK, BJP tie-up	National	9	News story	Karunanidhi	No
4	31/1	Special Corres.	CM Cautions people against AIADMK, BJP	News	11	News story	Karunanidhi	No
5	1/2	Special Corres.	TNCC (I) to lead 14 party front	News	8	News story	Thangabalu	No
6	2/2	Special Corres.	BJP blames Congress, U. F. for instability	News	11	News story	Vajpayee	No
7	5/2	Special Corres.	Karunanidhi pooh-poohs Jayalalitha's charge	News	11	News story	Karunanidhi	No
8	8/2	N. Kalyana Sundaram	Scenario points to coalition: Moopanar	Front page	1	Interview (with Moopanar)	Moopanar	No (Picture of M)
9	11/2	Special Corres.	ADMK alliance unprincipled	News	11	News story	Karunanidhi & Moopanar	No
10	12/2	Special Corres.	BJP denies remarks against AIADMK	Front page	1	News story	Govinda-charya	No
11	20/2	Staff Reporter	Bank irregularities: Moopanar rebuts charge	News	11	News story	Moopanar	No
12	25/2	Special Corres.	Statue 'desecration' issue snowballing	News	11	News story	Various leaders (& Jayalalitha)	No
13	27/2	Special Corres.	Tight security will continue in Coimbatore, says CM	News	11	News story	Karunanidhi	No

All the thirteen headings indicate that Jayalalitha played a secondary role in these items. As seen in the table above, all the items had other actors as speakers or primary actors. While no picture of Jayalalitha was carried in the previous section, one picture of Jayalalitha was noted in this section, whereby she was seen standing along with Advani and leaders from allied parties. She may have been placed in the centre of the picture, but she was not the primary focus as such. *Jayalalitha was being commented upon by others i.e. mainly political leaders and hence, she herself remained voiceless in these stories.*

In both the categories, that is, where Jayalalitha appeared as a primary or a secondary actor, she was not interviewed by the Hindu, while an interview was held with Moopanar. Even in general, as I observed while screening the paper, the Hindu conducted interviews with several (male) leaders. But Jayalalitha did not receive this privilege. There was no editorial commenting upon her policies and issues taken up. A majority of the items were carried in the form of news stories.

However, apart from the above stories, the Hindu carried eleven other items which were 'media-initiated' that is, they were mainly carried in the form of articles where authors from within the organisation or outside. It presented their opinions or analysis of various

issues or actors. These items neither had Jayalalitha as a primary actor nor anyone else. It was only within this category that two items each, on the election and editorial pages were carried. Authors were the speaking subjects in this category, thus raising the question of who enjoys the prerogative to speak between the media/journalists and politicians? Who should actually have the privilege? Are politicians given a fair chance to speak? And even if the media speaks more, what kinds of issues are taken up? It is important to carefully analyse this aspect in future research, as this pattern was uniform in all the papers. Section III of this paper briefly discusses the kind of 'issues' taken up in the stories.

Media Initiated Items on Jayalalitha in The Hindu

Chart 3

Item No.	Date/1998	Author	Title of story	Place-ment	Page no.	Type of item	Speaker	Picture of Jayalalitha
1	4/1	C. Raghavan	Expediency to the fore	The Nation	13	Article	Author	Yes (Jayalalitha & Advani)
2	4/1	Harish Khare	Can Sonia get the Congress back on the rails?	The Nation	12	Article	Author	Cartoon of Sonia
3	5/1	R. Parthasarthy	The 'saint' and the 'sinner'	State view	6	Article	Author	No
4	12/1	K.K. Katyal	Free-for-all-alliances	Editorial Page	10	Article	Author	No
5	18/1	Inder Malhotra	Corruption: no more a shocker	Opinion	16	Article	Author	No (graphs)
6	25/1	Harish Khare	Will bofors boom again?	The Nation	12	Article	Author	No (graph)
7	5/2	None	Uneasy fronts in Tamil Nadu	Editorial page	10	Editorial	Author	No
8	8/1	4 specified authors	Star wars in the political arena	The Nation	12	Article	Author	Pictures of various stars
9	15/1	Sevanti Ninan	Banking on box appeal	Magazine (front page)	1	Article	Author	No
10	15/2	Special Corres.	3-cornered contest for prestigious seat	Elections 98	10	Spotlight	Author	No
11	16/2	K. Raghunathan	Their credibility at stake	Elections 98	7	Analysis	Author	No

On the whole, in the two months of coverage, Jayalalitha appeared in only 34 items, which does not give her an average of even one item a day. Out of these 34 items also, she appeared as a primary or central actor in only ten items, and it is in those items alone that she was also a speaking subject. There were thirteen items in which other actors held the primary position, while Jayalalitha held an insignificant one. In all these items, she was being referred to or commented upon by others. There were 11 items that were not typically event-oriented and which could be called media-initiated items. In these items also, Jayalalitha was being referred to or commented upon by media. As regards the type of stories, in its entirety, Jayalalitha appeared in 21 news stories which are normally event-oriented and factual, and she appeared in 10 articles and one editorial. Not even a single interview was held with Jayalalitha. One would wonder whether it was due to the inaccessibility of the politician to the journalists, or it happened as a result of the choice of the journalists, or it was a policy decision taken by the newspaper organisation. Jayalalitha had only four pictures in the entire period of two months. In terms of placement, she appeared on the front page in only eight stories and on the elections page only twice. Furthermore, she made an appearance on the editorial page only twice. There

is only one indicator that establishes Jayalalitha's significance, which is that she was covered by a special correspondent in 17 stories and by a specified author in 11 items. Otherwise, in spite of her being a key player in politics in real life, she did not receive a prominent place in the Hindu during the election period.

B) Jayalalitha in The Hindustan Times

Jayalalitha as a Primary Actor/Focus in The Hindustan Times

Chart 1

Item No.	Date/ 1998	Author	Title of story	Placement	Page no.	Type of item	Speaker	Picture
1	2/1	HT Corres.	Jayalalitha puts up a grand show	Unclassified	8	News story	No (description by author)	No
2	6/1	G.C. Shekhar	Jayalalitha bounces back into contention	Nation	7	News analysis	Author	No
3	20/1	HTC	Jayalalitha spares 15 seats for allies	Nation	7	News story	Author	No
4	31/1	HT Corres. of PTI	Jayalalitha releases manifesto, calls Sonia a foreigner (factual)	Nation	7	News story	Jayalalitha (yes)	No
5	2/2	PTI	Jayalalitha cancels Delhi trip (Factual)	Unclassified	9	News story	No (press release)	No
6	9/2	G.C. Shekhar	Jayalalitha plays tragic heroine	Elections 98	8	Article	Mainly author, & Jayalalitha	Her cartoon
7	10/2	S. Rajagopalan	It's barbs all the way. Dravidian style	Front page (continues)	1 & 12	Article	Mainly author	Her cartoon
8	15/2	HT Corres.	Onion adds spice to TN electioneering	Front page	1	Article	Mainly author	cartoon

Out of these eight items, only two items were found on the front page, while only one item was noticed on the election page, with none appearing on the editorial page. Again, there was no editorial commenting upon Jayalalitha and no interview held with her. Three items each were written by specified authors and an HT correspondent. Not a single picture of Jayalalitha was carried along with these items. Further, Jayalalitha got little opportunity to speak. In most of the items, thus author was the speaker, thus reserving the sole privilege to speak.

Out of these 13 items, one each was carried on the front page and on the editorial page. However, an interesting observation was that while in earlier items, where Jayalalitha was the primary actor, there was only one item carried on the elections page, in the above mentioned coverage, four items were found on the elections page. Further, there were eight opinion articles, and seven items written by specified authors. However, Jayalalitha was hardly a speaker in these items. She was mainly commented upon by media/journalists. Three pictures of her were found in this coverage but none portrayed her in action. There was one editorial that mainly focused on the BJP agenda. Briefly, it referred to Jayalalitha's advice to the BJP to put the Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura issues on the backburner and give priority to issues like poverty, unemployment, drinking water, and electricity. The stories were mainly opinionated and had no primary actors otherwise. In this category also, journalists reserved the right to speak (mainly) to themselves.

Jayalalitha as a Secondary Actor in The Hindustan Times

Chart 2

Item No.	Date/1998	Author	Title of story	Placement	Page no.	Type of item	Speaking subject	Picture
1	11/1	Kalyani Shankar	For some legacy does it	News Week	12	Article	Author/No primary actor	cartoon
2	14/1	HTC	BJP keeps Jayalalitha's pride, apologises quickly	Nation	12	News story	Author/others	No
3	22/1	Prakash Patra	Questing for coalitions, parties defy all logic	Elections 98	8	Analysis	Author	Yes (passport)
4	1/2	G.C. Shekhar	Star wars	Magazine section	3	Article	Author	Yes
5	2/2	HTC & agencies	Allies to get power cake: Advani	Front page	1	News story	Vajpayee/primary	No
6	2/2	None	Discordant voices	Editorial page	11	Editorial	Author	No
7	6/2	Kalyani Shankar	Testing time for newly formed coalitions	Elections 98	8	Analysis	Author	No
8	8/2	Kalyani Shankar	No cause for notice	News week	12	Article	Author	Yes (passport)
9	8/2	None	Safe-at home	Magazine section	3	Snippet	Author	No
10	11/2	Kalyani Shankar	Playing sympathy cards to win votes: parties trying to cash in on peoples' emotions	Nation	12	Article	Author	No
11	11/2	G. Rajaraman	Stress gets better off the leaders	Elections 98	8	Article	Author	Cartoon
12	19/2	G.C. Shekhar	A vote for the future FM	Elections 98	8	News story	Author/Chidambaram prim actor	No
13	21/2	HT Corres.	Swamy may make it to LS, courtesy Jayalalitha	Unclassified	22	News story	Author/Swamy prim actor	No

Appearance of Jayalalitha in the brief items in The Hindustan Times

Chart 3

Item No.	Date/1998	Author	Title of story	Placement	Page no.	Type of item	Speaker/prim actor	Picture
1	18/1	None	No headline	Elections 98	8	Poll info	Yes	No
2	20/1	None	No headline	Elections 98	8	Do	Yes	No
3	27/1	None	Partners humiliated	do	8	Do	Yes(in a statement)	No
4	7/2	Khushwant Singh	Why the R-day parade? (Ode to Jayalalitha)	Editorial page	13	Column	No	No
5	17/2	None	Shock treatment	Elections 98	8	Poll info	Yes	No
6	19/2	None	Poser to Jayalalitha	do	8	Do	No (Karunanidhi)	No
7	20/2	None	ADMK manifesto	Elections 98	8	Poll info	No (Karunanidhi)	No
8	24/2	None	Jayalalitha demands repoll	do	8	Do	Yes (statement)	No
9	25/2	None	Jayalalitha's directive	do	8	Brief	Yes (statement)	No

Out of the nine items above, eight were found on the election page but were carried in the form of briefs under the column poll information of the page. These were election briefs that did not even make normal or regular news stories. All these items had no date line or by-line. One of them (item 4) was a regular column in the paper that contained a small poem on Jayalalitha. None of them had any pictures of Jayalalitha. She was a speaker in six of these items.

C) Jayalalitha in The Pioneer

Jayalalitha as a Primary Actor/Focus in The Pioneer

Chart 1

Item No.	Date/ 1998	Author	Title of story	Placement	Page no.	Type of item	Speaking subject	Picture
1	3/1	Gopalan	ADMK rally turns out to be a flop show	Nation	6	News story	Author	No
2	4/1	PNS	ADMK-BJP pact has bright future, says Jayalalitha	do	7	News story	Yes (Jayalalitha)	No
3	12/1	T. N. Gopalan	After sowing storm, Jain report reaps wilderness	India Votes	7	Article	Yes + Author	No (Jain)
4	20/1	PNS	Jayalalitha slams Sonia for silence on DMK-TMC	Nation	5	News story	Yes	Yes (passport)
5	21/1	T. N. Gopalan	Jayalalitha, allies miscast in TN drama	India Votes	6	Article	Author	Yes (pass)
6	31/1	PNS	AIADMK joins in the UCC chorus	Nation	5	News story	Jayalalitha	No
7	7/2	PNS	A fresh lease of life	India Votes	7	Article	Author	Cartoon
8	9/2	Lakshmi Iyer	Jayalalitha-BJP pact marks new era	Front page	1	Article	Author	No
9	10/2	Lakshmi Iyer	Amma is quite a charater to watch	Front page	1	Article	Author	Passport
10	10/2	Lakshmi Iyer	Will Amma make a come back?	India Votes	7	Article	Author	Passport
11	14/2	T. N. Gopalan	Jayalalitha rises, but not enough	India Votes	6	Article	Author	No
12	14/2	A Surya Prakash	'Empress' on the offensive	India Votes	6	Article	Author	Cartoon
13	20/2	Chandan Mitra	TN crowds in 'Jayalalitha, Jayalalitha hey' mood	Front & Nation	1 & 5	Article	Author	Passport
14	28/2	Chandan Mitra	Down under, polls are still a thunder	India Votes	6	Article	Author	No

Overall, out of the 30 items, only three appeared on the front page and two on the editorial page. Although there were 13 items on the election page, eight of them were poll briefs. There was just one editorial in which Jayalalitha appeared. The paper did not interview her during the entire period. She was covered by a specified author in eleven

items. Even here, one could see that the specified author covered those stories more often in which Jayalalitha played the secondary rather than the primary role. The paper carried only three pictures of her and it was mainly the author who spoke in most of the items. Jayalalitha was a speaker in just four items and in some she spoke through press releases or statements. She was a primary actor, or received primary focus, in just eight items.

Out of these 14 items, only three were carried on the front page, while there were none on the editorial page. Although, half of the items were found on the India Votes page – a page that carries importance during election time - Jayalalitha did not appear in any editorial. There was not a single interview held with her and five pictures of her were carried, all passport size. Jayalalitha was a speaker in only four items. In most of the items, Jayalalitha was being referred to or commented upon by media/journalists. Correspondingly, the number of opinionated articles were higher, that is, 10. Also, ten items were written by specified authors.

Jayalalitha as a Secondary Actor in The Pioneer

Chart 2

Item No.	Date/ 1998	Author	Title of story	Place- ment	Page no.	Type of item	Speaker/ prim actor	Picture
1	4/1	T.N. Gopalan	Advani for 'direct talks' with Muslims	Nation	7	News story	Advani	No
2	6/1	T. N. Gopalan	Jayalalitha's rally a damp squib	Nation	5	News story	Author	Passport
3	14/1	PNS	BJP decision leaves Jayalalitha fuming: ADMK not consulted on list announcement	Nation	4	News story	Author	No
4	19/1	T. N. Gopalan	It's numero uno for Jayalalitha	India Votes	6	Article ('light')	Author	Cartoon
5	7/2	T. N. Gopalan	Netting in the numbers	India Votes	6	News story ('light')	Author	No
6	13/2	Lakshmi Iyer	Hindu consolidation on test	India Votes	7	Article	Author/ common people	No
7	14/2	Sinha & Avasthi	Alliance with Kanshi harmed us	India Votes	7	Interview	Kalyan Singh	No
8	16/2	A Surya Prakash	Hegde-Jayalalitha Inc: Best ad agency for BJP	Front	1, 4	Article	Author	No
9	22/2	T. N. Gopalan	DMK front awaits nasty surprises	India Votes	7	Article	Author	Passport

Out of the nine items, only one item was found on the front page, with none appearing on the editorial or OPED pages. India Votes' carried five items. In this category, one interview was recorded. However, the interviewee was Kalyan Singh, while Jayalalitha appeared in connection with a brief question. Eight items were written by specified authors. Jayalalitha appeared in only two still pictures, and she was not a speaker in any item.

On the whole, Jayalalitha appeared in 23 items, out of which she was a primary focus in 14, holding a secondary status in nine. In only four items did Jayalalitha appear on the front page. She was totally absent from the editorial and OPED pages, but made an appearance 12 times on the India Votes page. Although there was neither an editorial on Jayalalitha nor any interview conducted with her, she appeared in 14 articles. She was

covered by a specified author in a significant, 18 items. Still, there were just seven pictures of Jayalalitha recorded and all of them were still and passport size. Jayalalitha was a speaker in only four items, which again indicates that some newspapers may not provide much opportunity to politicians to speak.

A) Sushma Swaraj in *The Hindu*

Sushma Swaraj appeared in 25 items, including in three pictures. The following items projected her significantly, and in many she was a central or primary actor.

Sushma Swaraj as a Significant or Primary Actor in *The Hindu*
Chart 1

Item No.	Date/ 1998	Author	Title of story	Place-ment	Page no.	Type of item	Speaking subject	Picture
1	3/1	Special Corres	Three more Congressmen join BJP	News	11	News story	Yes/ spokes-person	No
2	16/1	Special Corres	BJP's talks with NTR-TDP inconclusive	News	11	News story	Yes	No
3	16/1	Special Corres	BJP will not let Rupee fall	News	11	News story	Yes	No
4	17/1	Special Corres	Sonia's challenge on bofors will boomrang: Sushma	Nation	9	News story	Yes/ Spokes-person	No
5	5/2	Staff Reporter	Main contest between Sushma and Ajay (as contestant)	City	2	Spotlight on South Delhi	Author	No
6	5/2	Special Corres	BJP deposes Narendra Modi for Gujrat campaign	News	11	News story	Author/ Sushma – spokes-person	No
7	13/2	Staff Reporter	Sushma's concern over crime (as contestant)	State	3	News story	Yes/ candidate	Yes passport
8	13/2	Staff Reporter	From cakewalk to keen contest (as contestant)	State	3	Campaign Trail	Author/ quotes from ordinary people	No
9	21/2	Special Corres	Sushma sees plot to make Sonia PM	News	21	News story	Yes/Gen. Sec.	No
10	22/2	PTI	Women should enter politics	Election 98	9	News story	Yes/ spokes-person	No

Sushma was a significant actor only in nine stories, even though she was playing multiple roles of a spokesperson, general secretary and contestant. None of these stories were carried on the front page. Only one item, that also a brief one, was carried on the election page. In addition, only one item carried a picture of Sushma, and two items focused on her campaign trail. Although she appeared significantly and in a positive light in those items, she was not a speaking subject (4&7). In only one item, she spoke about her constituency (no. 6). Although a special correspondent covered five out of nine stories, it is interesting to note that in those five items, Sushma spoke either as a spokesperson or general secretary situated in the party. On the whole, Sushma as a contestant appeared only in three items (4,6&7) and a staff reporter, who ranks lower than a special correspondent in the newspaper hierarchy, reported all the three items. No item was written by a specified author. There was one prominent picture of Sushma carried with item no. 6 in which she

expressed her concern over the crime situation in Delhi while addressing a press conference. The picture showed her sitting on a chair authoritatively.

Three independent pictures of Sushma projected her in a favourable manner. In one of them, she was seen sitting with Prakash Singh Badal, Gurcharan Tohra, and Madan Lal Khurana (16th January). All four were sitting on the floor. While Khurana had his head covered with a handkerchief, Sushma had her covered with the 'pallu' of her saree. In another picture she was seen being felicitated by Muslims at the Okhla Ramlila grounds (4th February). She was all smiles and garlanded heavily in this close-up picture. In the third picture, she was being offered sweets after she filed her nomination papers (24th January). This was carried on the election page.

Sushma Swaraj as a Secondary Actor in The Hindu

Chart 2

Item No.	Date/ 1998	Author	Title of story	Place- ment	Page no.	Type of item	*Speaker/ prim actor	Picture
1	3/1	Special corres	Cong announces three Delhi candidates	Front	1&2	News story	Sushma speaks briefly; mainly author	No
2	8/1	Special corres	SP won't canvass for PM if Akalis do	Front	1	News story	Yadav	No
3	13/1	Staff Reporter	Khurana to contest from Delhi Sadar	Front	1	News story	Author	No
4	24/1	Staff Reporter	Dhawan, Sushma file nomination papers	State	3	News story	Author	Dhawan
5	24/1	PTI, UNI	Paswan, Gowda, Devi Lal file papers	News	11	News story	Author	No
6	31/1	Staff Corres	Joshi, Sushma Swaraj visiting Belgaum today	From the states	5	News story	Author	No
7	2/2	Staff Reporter	Candidates begin padyatras, meetings	City	2	News story	Author	Dhawan Campaigning
8	3/2	Staff Reporter	Poll scene hots up in Capital	State	3	News story	Author	No
9	5/2	Staff Reporter	Cong. Accuses BJP of 'double talk'	State	3	News story	Author	No
10	6/2	Staff Reporter	Bansi Lal joins Delhi campaign	State	3	News story	Author	Yes
11	7/2	Staff Reporter	'Corruption-free' claim by BJP discounted	State	3	News story	Author	Maken
12	15/2	Staff Reporter	Over 150 sensitive booths identified	City	3	News story	Electioner Commissioner & author	K. L. Sharma (BJP)

Sushma played the secondary actor in 12 items, all of which were news stories. Most of them did not have anyone as a primary actor, and the author was the main speaker. In all these stories, the author mainly focused on the election campaign in Delhi, generally being covered by staff reporters. There were just two items covered by special correspondents. Sushma spoke briefly in just one item, and there was just one picture of her carried in this category. While no item appeared on the front page with Sushma as a primary actor, in this category three items were noticed on the front page.

Apart from these 12 items, Sushma Swaraj appeared in a picture, though not prominently. She was seen standing along with other six BJP leaders releasing the party's

supplementary manifesto for the Capital. In this item, 'BJP promises a new deal for Delhi', Sushma did not appear in the text.

On the whole, Sushma appeared in 22 items out of which she was a primary focus in 10. In only three items did she appear on the front page, but holding a secondary status. She was totally absent from the editorial page and the OPED page, and appeared on the election page only once. Only two items were accompanied with pictures of Sushma, but three independent pictures projected her in a favourable light. Sushma was a speaking subject in only nine items, and appeared mostly in news stories. No interview was held with her and no editorial or opinion article made any reference to her.

B) Sushma Swaraj in The Hindustan Times

Sushma Swaraj as a Primary or Significant Actor in The Hindustan Times

Chart 1

Item No.	Date/ 1998	Author	Title of story	Place- ment	Page no.	Type of item	Speaking subject	Picture
1	3/1	HT Corres.	Sonia myth will soon explode: BJP	Nation	10	News story	Yes/ spokes- person	No
2	3/1	Vinita Faridi	New year resolutions	Life and Style (mag)	1	New year resolutions	Yes	Passport (yes)
3	16/1	HT Corres.	BJP promises to make Re strong	Nation	12	News story	Yes/Gen sec	No
4	24/1	HT Corres.	Sushma files papers from South Delhi (as candidate)	City	4	News story	Author	No
5	3/2	HT Corres.	Sushma laments misuse of DP staff by Centre (as candidate)	City	5	News story	Yes	No
6	4/2	HT Corres.	Trust BJP, Muslims urged (as candidate)	City	3	News story	Author/ Sushma	Yes
7	5/2	HT Corres.	Women denied ticket on winnability logic	Nation	10	News story	Yes/Gen Sec.	No
8	13/2	HT Corres.	Road, gutter non-issues in parliamentary polls (as candidate)	City	3	News story	Yes	No
9	13/2	HT Corres.	Local problems need focus to improve life in city	City	3	News story	Maken	No
10	14/2	Hemendra Singh Bartwal	Sushma playing on 'insider' turf (leader, gen sec, spokesperson)	City	4	Candidate's profile	Yes	Bigger than passport
11	15/2	HT Corres.	High-decibel poll drive in South Delhi: Sushma, Maken on hectic 'last laps' (as candidate)	City	4	News story	Author	No

Sushma was a primary or significant actor in the items tabled above. In a total of seven items, she was the lone speaking subject and appeared as a candidate. Ten items were

covered by the HT Correspondent and one by a specified author. One particular item provided a detailed political profile of the candidate, expressed in her own words. Very likely, this correspondent conducted an interview with her. Out of the three pictures carried, two were projected in a favourable manner (6&10). In one of them, Sushma was seen being hugged and welcomed by a 'burqua' clad woman at a rally in Okhla. The other picture, though 'still', was bigger than a passport size photo and showed her smiling gleefully. However, none of the items was carried on the front, editorial, or the OPED pages. Apart from one profile-cum-interview, she did not appear in any other editorial or article.

Sushma as a Secondary Actor in The Hindustan Times
Chart 2

Item No.	Date/1998	Author	Title of story	Place-ment	Page no.	Type of item	Speaking subject	Picture
1	5/1	P.K. Balachandran	Vajpayee 'dashes LTTE's hopes' (spokesperson)	Foreign	12	News story	Author + Sushma (one quote)	No
2	17/1	HT Corres.	All party chorus: Make Bofors gun deal documents public (no specification)	Front page	1	News story	Vajpayee, Sushma and others	No
3	17/1	HT Corres	Uplinking for independent channels: Govt. yet to consider it: Reddy (spokesperson)	Nation	12	News story	Main Reddy + Sushma and Gadgil	No
4	26/1	H. Bula Devi	Malhotra's stand ridiculous (spokesperson)	City	5	News story	Author/brief quote by Sushma	No
5	30/1	HT Corres	Maken launches broadside against Sushma Swaraj (as candidate)	City	3	News story	Maken	No
6	1/2	HTC	BJP lambasts Maken over Sushma tirade (candidate)	City	5	News story	Other leaders	No
7	6/2	HT Corres	Sushma plays 'Bansi' to win over jats (candidate)	City	4	News story	Bansi Lal	Yes
8	8/2	H.S. Bartwal	Sushma, Maken lock horns in BJP bastion (candidate)	City	4	City/Elections '98	Author	Passport
9	13/2	H.S. Bartwal	Maken at home in big league (candidate)	City	4	Article	Author + Maken	No

Sushma spoke, or was quoted briefly, in four items, out of which three projected her as a spokesperson. One item with Vajpayee as a primary speaking subject made front-page news. It may be recalled that Sushma, even when she played a primary actor in previous section, did not make front-page news. Also only one item was covered by a specified author in the earlier section whereas in this section, four stories were covered by specified authors. In all these items, the authors were mainly the speakers. Sushma was not a speaker in all the five items in which she appeared as a candidate. Yet, she was projected in a very favourable manner, particularly in item no.7, which was also accompanied by a picture, whereby Sushma was seen campaigning with Bansilal. She was the primary focus of this picture (6th February).

Apart from the above category, Sushma appeared in the 'Poll Talk/Info' column twice, both of which were basically brief items. One of them carried a stamp size picture of Sushma. They had no by-line or dateline.

C) Sushma Swaraj in The Pioneer

**Sushma as a Primary or Significant Actor in The Pioneer
Chart 1**

Item No.	Date/ 1998	Author	Title of story	Place- ment	Page no.	Type of item	Speaking subject	Picture
1	3/1	PNS	Demand to reduce poll period (spokesperson)	Nation	5	News story	Yes/ spokesperson	No
2	3/1	PNS	BJP rules out joint manifesto (spokesperson)	Nation	5	News story	Yes/ spokesperson	Passport
3	17/1	PNS	Sushma rushes to Jayalalitha's support (spokesperson)	Nation	4	News story	Yes/ spokesperson	No
4	17/1	PNS	BJP vows to sack Sushma Gill	Front page	1	News story	Yes plus Gadgil and Reddy	No
5	20/1	Staff Reporter	Sushma confident of comfortable victory (candidate)	City	3	News story	Yes	No
6	22/1	None	Scoring a point (candidate)	OPED	9	Diary	No	Cartoon
7	27/1	Staff Reporter	Sonia bluestar remark stirs hornet's nest: 'It is thirteen years too late' (candidate)	Nation	5	News story	Yes	Passport
8	30/1	Vishwas Kumar	Sushma begins with wooing women (candidate)	City/ Delhi Votes 98	3	News story	Yes	Yes
9	2/2	Vishwas Kumar	Okhla Muslims may vote BJP (candidate plus spokesperson)	City	3	News story	Author/ ordinary people/Sushma	Passport
10	9/2	V. Radhika	Where opulence, oppression co-exist (candidate)	City/ Delhi Votes 98	3	Constituency profile	Author	Passport
11	15/2	Staff Reporter	Sushma campaign ends with a bang (candidate)	City	3	News story	Author/Sushma	Passport
12	15/2	V. Radhika	I have been accepted by all sections (candidate)	India Votes	7	Interview	Sushma	Yes (big)
13	17/2	V. Radhika	Surprise turn out in South (candidate)	City	3	News story	Author and Sushma	No
14	20/2	Rajendra Bansal	Sonia Gandhi's apologies lack feelings, says Sushma (candidate plus spokesperson)	Nation	5	News story	Yes	Passport
15	27/2	PNS	PM should heed President's advice, says Sushma (senior BJP leader)	Nation	5	News story	Yes	Passport

Sushma also appeared in two more pictures along with the leaders of her party, one of which was carried on the front page (5th January). However, none of them focused on Sushma in a significant way and the stories/text made no reference to her.

On the whole, Sushma appeared in a total of 22 items/stories (primary 11; secondary 9; poll briefs 2). Barring poll briefs which carried no by line or date line, out of the 20 items, 13 were covered by the HT correspondent; six were covered by specific authors, and one item carried a by-line of HTC. Sushma failed to make front-page news in the Hindustan Times in those items where she was a primary or significant actor. She appeared in the capacity of a candidate in a significant number of items, that is 11. However, she was not editorialised upon, nor did she find space on important pages like the election, editorial or OPED pages. In only seven items was she the main or primary speaker. In others, the author joined her in speaking. She was hardly a significant speaker in items where she was a secondary actor.

As seen in the above table, only one item appeared on the front page and one on the India Votes page, while not a single item appeared on the editorial page. Most of the items were news stories. However, the Pioneer is the only paper that carried a full-fledged interview with Sushma Swaraj, conducted by a woman journalist. Specified authors wrote only six items, and most of these were items in which Sushma appeared as a candidate. The routine items, where Sushma appeared in the capacity of a spokesperson, by and large, carried the by-line of PNS. Sushma had nine pictures, out of which eight were passport size. Interestingly, the same picture was used in all the different items. Two pictures were bigger in size, one of which showed her sitting in a car while campaigning. The other, carried along with her interview showed her in a thinking pose. Sushma was a speaker in a total of 13 items.

Sushma as secondary actor in The Pioneer

Chart 2

Item No.	Date/1998	Author	Title of story	Place-ment	Page no.	Type of item	Speaking subject	Picture
1	24/1	Staff Reporter	Dhawan files papers amid jubilation (candidate)	City	3	News story	Author	Sushma (sitting in havan)
2	1/2	Rachna Subramanian	Meri topi bhe sexy	Magazine section	1	Article	Author/brief quote by Sushma	No
3	4/2	V. Radhika	What livens up marriage parties? Election stunts! (candidate)	City	3	Article	Author	No
4	6/2	Staff Reporter	Sushma gets Bansi to woo jat voters (candidate)	City	3	News story	Author plus Bansi	Passport
5	7/2	Staff Reporter	Cong. Plans arson. assault to blame us. alleges BJP (candidate)	City	3	News story	BJP/CP Malik	Passport
6	10/2	Staff Reporter	Dara Singh mats admires at Sushma's rally (candidate)	City	3	News story	Dara Singh	Passport
7	12/2	Staff Reporter	BJP to form govt. on its strength: Atal	City/Delhi Votes 98	3	News story	Vajpayee	No
8	16/2	None	Miles to go before hopefuls can relax (candidate)	City/Delhi Votes 98	3	News story	Author plus other leaders	No

All the eight items tabled above appeared on pages other than the front page, the India Votes page, the Editorial page or the OPED page. Six of them were news stories and two were articles. Specified authors wrote only two items. Sushma was mainly referred to or commented upon by media/politicians in this category, speaking very briefly in just one item. Four pictures of Sushma were noticed. The first one, carried with item one, showed her during a *havan* ceremony at her house. She was sitting on the ground with her head covered with sari, a garland around her neck, and she was shown laughing. The rest of the pictures were passport size in which she was seen smiling. In fact, two of them were the same as those noticed in the previous section. Another item carried Sushma's picture, in which BJP candidates were shown releasing their party's manifesto. No reference was made to Sushma in particular and the picture was recorded on the front page.

On the whole, Sushma appeared in 23 items in the Pioneer. Out of this she got primary or significant attention in 15 items and secondary in eight. Sushma made an appearance on the front and India Votes pages only once each. She made no appearance at all on the editorial page, which also means that she was not referred to or commented upon in any editorial, appearing mainly in news stories (i.e. 18). Yet, the Pioneer was the only paper which held an interview with Sushma Swaraj. Sushma was covered by a specified author in only seven items, while thirteen items carried pictures of Sushma, although most of them were passport size and repeatedly used. Sushma was a main speaker in a majority of the items (13).

With minor exceptions, both leaders failed to get due space and place in the media. In both cases, the number of stories was considerably low. The highest coverage went to Jayalalitha in the Hindu, whereby a total of 34 items were coded. However even this number does not give Jayalalitha an average of even one item a day, despite the fact that she held a powerful position both at the regional and national levels. The leaders did not find a prominent or significant place in the media in terms of the various variables studied, such as the number of pictures, status as primary actors, as speaking subjects, and as interviewees, appearance on the front, editorial, OPED, and election pages.

As Carroll and Schreiber (1997) argue, the number and placement of items indicate the seriousness with which the media consider women leaders, which may send a potentially powerful message to the readers. If they are covered frequently and on important pages, this may signal that they are significant and important political players. On the other hand, if they are covered infrequently and relegated to unimportant pages, readers may well get the impression that their presence is unimportant and their contributions, marginal. In that sense, it can be said that women politicians were not given importance by the media during the 12th Lok Sabha elections. The observation that the media/journalists kept the right to speak mainly to themselves was also made in this section. However, in this case, it needs to be explored whether this trend is followed in case of other (particularly male) leaders also, or did the bias come in due to the gender of the selected leaders?

A significant observation made was that while Jayalalitha got better coverage in terms of quantity and variables, Sushma received better display in terms of quality. She was presented in a favourable manner to the audience by all the papers. While I shall get back to this aspect in section III, I present below a summing up of the micro level differences between their coverage.

The Hindu

Jayalalitha appeared in a total of 34 items in the Hindu, over a period of two months. These items were inclusive of where she appeared as a primary actor/focus, secondary actor, and as part of media-initiated items. On the other hand, Sushma appeared in just 22 items. Correspondingly, Jayalalitha was covered by specific authors in 10 items while Sushma was not covered by a specific author even in a single item. While Jayalalitha was covered by a special correspondent in 17 items (50%), Sushma Swaraj was covered by a special correspondent only eight times (36.3%). Further, Jayalalitha got front-page coverage in 8 stories (23.5%) whereas Sushma appeared on the front-page only thrice (13.6%). On the election page, Jayalalitha appeared thrice as compared to Sushma, who appeared only once. Jayalalitha appeared on the editorial page twice, Sushma got no editorial page coverage at all. Jayalalitha appeared in eight articles, one spotlight and one analysis, while Sushma appeared in one spotlight and one campaign trail, apart from all the news stories. As a speaking subject, Jayalalitha spoke in ten items (29.4%) out of which one was not a direct quote but a press statement. In comparison, Sushma spoke in only seven items (31.8%). In the other two items, the author was the main speaker. In terms of pictures, the Hindu carried just two pictures of Jayalalitha – one along with Advani and the second, a passport size. In contrast, surprisingly, it carried four pictures of Sushma Swaraj.

The Hindustan Times

The Hindustan Times carried 30 stories on Jayalalitha while it carried only 20 on Sushma Swaraj even though the latter was a prominent player at the Delhi level and the Hindustan Times caters more to a Delhi audience. However, it may be mentioned that at least eight items on Jayalalitha were basically 'brief' items. Twelve were covered by specific authors, whereas in the case of Sushma, specific authors covered her in six items, indicating Jayalalitha's importance in the media coverage. Sushma was covered more by the HT correspondent, that is, in thirteen items, while Jayalalitha appeared in three. Two of the brief items on Jayalalitha did not even contain a headline. All (but one) of them were carried on the elections page under the poll information column. Jayalalitha appeared thrice on the front page in the Hindustan Times while Sushma appeared only once, in which Vajpayee played the primary actor. As mentioned earlier, Jayalalitha appeared on the election page 13 times (including briefs), whereas Sushma found no place on this page at all. Same was the case for the editorial page. Sushma appeared mainly on the City page, while Jayalalitha received coverage on the Nation page apart from other pages.

Jayalalitha appeared in eight articles, while Sushma made an appearance in only one article; Jayalalitha appeared thrice in news analysis and once in an editorial, whereas Sushma made no appearance in either of the two. However, an important observation was that Jayalalitha hardly had a chance to be a speaker in the Hindustan Times. She was mainly commented upon by the media/journalists, speaking only in brief items. On the other hand, Sushma spoke at least in those items where she played a primary actor, although not otherwise. Lastly, in terms of pictorial representation, the Hindustan Times carried only two passport size photos of Jayalalitha, as compared to five pictures of Sushma Swaraj, out of which two were passport size and the others, bigger.

In this newspaper, both Jayalalitha and Sushma appeared in 23 items each. However, Jayalalitha was covered by a specified author in 18 stories and Sushma, only in seven stories. Further, Jayalalitha appeared on the India Votes page 12 times, while Sushma appeared only once. However, Sushma appeared on the City/Delhi Votes page four times. On the front page, Sushma was covered only once, while Jayalalitha appeared four times. She also appeared on the Nation page seven times as compared to Sushma's five times. Whereas Sushma appeared in just two articles, Jayalalitha appeared in 14 articles. A major difference, however, was that Sushma was a speaker in 13 items (inclusive of the four items where she was a joint speaker), while Jayalalitha spoke in just four items. In rest of the items, the author was the primary speaker. In addition, the Pioneer conducted a full-fledged interview with Sushma, whereas there was no such coverage for Jayalalitha. Although seven passport size pictures of Jayalalitha were carried, Sushma appeared in a total of 13 pictures, out of which 10 were passport size.

The following section focuses on the qualitative differences between the coverages of Jayalalitha and Sushma Swaraj.

Section III

Media coverage of Sushma Swaraj and Jayalalitha: A qualitative analysis

A considerable amount of research has gone into understanding the problems that women face in politics, the factors that obstruct their participation in political life, and so on. Yet the need to explore the relationship between political women and the media is strongly felt within media studies. In other words, research on how the media treats women in office is sorely lacking. In the following analysis, I shall review some of the studies (mainly western and/or foreign) providing an insight into the patterns of media reporting on political women. This review will provide a background in the light of which I shall contextualise the coverage of Jayalalitha and Sushma Swaraj.

In her study examining the image(s) of women in Israel's Parliament, Liran-Alper (1994) discovered that women received less representation; they were characterised as emotional and aggressive, the emphasis being on irrelevant issues like external appearance and family status, feminine aspects rather than professional success, and social and welfare issues. She explains the nature of coverage through the paradigm(s) of 'symbolic annihilation', (i.e. 'absence of women', 'trivialisation' or 'condemnation', p.4), and secondly through 'public man and private woman' that 'defines man as a being who acts and earns his right to exist publicly whereas a woman is judged, and defines herself, in terms of her private roles' (p.6).

Robinson and Saint-Jean (undated) in their study on media portrayal of Canadian women politicians showed how different kinds of narrative patterns were used over a period of 30 years. The 'traditional' narrative (before the year 1970) focused on women's 'biological difference', and narrated women politicians as 'first woman' and 'token' in the non-traditional domain of politics (p.8). It primarily highlights their biological and family relationships (such as wife/widow or appendages of powerful husbands) and overlooks their training and professional qualifications. Through the 'first-woman' lens, women politicians are perceived as the 'other' or 'different', even when they have more in common with male politicians in terms of their level of education or professional background in law, political science and management. Their visible biological difference becomes the primary point of reference. Further, female politicians were questioned on a limited set of women-related issues like social welfare, education and health, rather than economics and foreign affairs. According to authors, this approach undervalues women politicians' professional backgrounds and wide-ranging capacities.

The transitional approach took account of the socio-political shifts vis-à-vis women's social roles and framed them in a 'power' network. Three stereotypes that emerged were the superwoman, champion, and gang member. A superwoman is young, intelligent, and ambitious and combines both her family and career. She is a hybrid who embodies both traditional characteristics as well as the modern traits of a businesswoman. A champion is close to superwoman but belongs to a 'certain age' and has led a more traditional life. She has entered the domain of politics after proving herself in other spheres like business, sports or charitable organisations. Her family obligations are compatible with her public duties. A gang member is one who has been accepted into the ranks by the male political establishment. This type of woman takes up a 'masculine' stance in politics, which means

that either she does not resort to what are called 'feminine wiles' to achieve her goals, or that she accepts and operates by the conventional rules of the game (p. 16). Robinson and Saint-Jean noticed that even during the 1990's, the narrative tended to ignore the substance of a woman's speech and concentrated more on her personal characteristics (looks, dress and hair). Further, a woman's prior political activities and stages in her political career signifying her 'competence' were not recognised, and finally, the media perceived women politicians as responsible for women as a class.

A couple of major conclusions which emerged from a study conducted by Carroll and Schreiber (1997) on media coverage of women in the U.S. Congress were, firstly, that newspapers clearly conveyed some messages about women in Congress. They were 'portrayed as agents of change who are making a difference despite having to struggle against sexism and to juggle family lives and careers' (p.145). The reporting also indicated that women members were most concerned with, and active around, issues of women's health, abortion, and, to some extent, sexual harassment, acting as agents of change on these issues. The authors further discovered that some articles talked about women's appearance or attire, and that some articles about women in Congress were relegated to the style pages. However, according to the authors, the major problem with coverage was that of 'omission' rather than one of 'commission'. In other words, the problem was not with what existed, but with what did not exist. The missing part in the coverage was 'any sense that women are important players on legislation other than women's health, abortion, and a handful of other concerns. There is barely a mention of women's involvement in foreign affairs, international trade, the appropriation process, or regulatory reform, for example, (p. 145).

Norris (1997) confirmed that women leaders were less visible in the news, although the difference in the amount of coverage, as compared with their male counterparts, was not that great. Journalists did not employ simple sex stereotypes in case of new women world leaders. Further, 'women leaders were not described in ways which emphasised 'feminine' characteristics, nor were they seen to focus on 'women's issues' (p. 164). Norris argues that 'the extensive amount of available information about women world leaders, and their diverse backgrounds, personalities, and interests, probably discourage the use of any simple stereotypes among good journalists' (ibid.). Nevertheless, the media employed certain common themes in the coverage. Among them, the 'first woman' news frame is a common device in all fields of achievement. Embedded in the idea of equality, women are seen as breaking the traditional barriers and entering the modernisation process within this frame. The second frame used for women leaders is that of 'the outsider', politicians who have not followed the conventional path to power, whether because of their prior political careers, styles, or their policy interests. Their rise to power is often seen as unexpected, and the prior experience of women leaders is often underplayed or undervalued, set against conventional qualifications. The third frame projected women as agents of change, symbolising a break with politics as usual. Norris concludes that the media are innocent of some of the simpler accusations of sex stereotyping, but gendered framing is commonly used.

Some general conclusions that can be drawn from the above studies are that women receive less representation in the media; the coverage associates them with domestic/private concerns (i.e. family and children) even when they are active in the public sphere, thereby indicating what their primary concerns should be; women get to be

identified with social, welfare and women's issues – an extension of their domestic roles; media are more concerned with women's personal characteristics, traits, and feminine aspects and gendered frames are commonly employed by the media through which women politicians are described or defined. Such frames include, for instance, 'first woman', 'as outsider', and 'as agents of change'.

Present Study

Within the above theoretical setting, I shall examine how the media perceived and presented the two women leaders viz., Sushma Swaraj and Jayalalitha. To begin with, I shall simply map out all the labels/expressions/characteristics/features used by all three newspapers for the two leaders. It will provide the reader with a sense of the media perceptions of these leaders. It will be followed by my interpretation of the data.

A) Jayalalitha in The Hindu

Primary actor : Mainly referred to as General Secretary; corrupt; against a foreigner i.e. Sonia, becoming PM (says - we will fight her 'tooth and nail and oppose her hammer and tongs', thus playing a nationalist situated within BJP ideology); opportunist; 'accuses' Karunanidhi of sabotaging the chances of Moopanar becoming PM; 'launched' a tirade against TMC; calls DMK-TMC alliance as cat and mouse coming together; went 'hammer and tongs' against the UF govt, the failure of DMK-TMC..; 'lambasted' the DMK govt..; gave a 'hard hitting speech' that commanded rapt attention; calls leaders from opposition fighting like cat and mouse; 'accused' the UF govt; calls the DMK-TMC alliance opportunistic; 'accuses' Karunanidhi of having unleashed violence on Dalits; she 'warned'...

Positive expressions: Concern for minorities, Dalits and women; concern on industrial front, law and order machinery and local issues; shows concern for women; Popular - accorded rousing reception by people; attracts crowds; crowd responded in positive fashion; drew lusty cheers from audience; drew substantial crowd even in rural areas; smart in terms of 'trying to work up feelings of people' by referring to two important sectors in Namakkal.

Secondary actor : Referred to as General Secretary; reference to her being in jail and facilities provided to her; corrupt; reference to her silk saris, jewels, watches, gems, pearls and soaps; alliance between her and BJP called as proverbial understanding between a rat and a frog; corrupt; amassed wealth valued over Rs. 60 crores; corrupt to extent that she owned 30 buildings from Chennai to Mahabalipuram; corrupt; equated with cholera; mouthpiece of BJP; no standing on controversial issues; opportunistic; causing rifts between DMK and TMC; corrupt; amassed wealth disproportionate to her income; virus of such corruption should not spread in future; desperate to search for issues; corrupt; trying to gain political mileage; TN was not a garden of peace during her regime; corrupt; corrupt; reference to PMK's manifesto of 1996 which described her rule as dark period in the history of TN; threatens to prosecute Chidambaram for his misdeeds; association with Sasikala.

Positive expressions: Great Dravidian leader; continues to enrich the national perspective of AIADMK by practising the politics of mass mobilisation and not manipulative politics; efforts of 'Dr.' Jayalalitha appreciated to make alliance with BJP a success;

Media initiated items: Mainly referred to as General Secretary; strategic; pragmatic; opportunist; corrupt; supremo; PMK leaders highly critical of her omissions and commissions as CM; opportunistic - as a part of her strategy, rejects declining Congress I; calculative; seeking efficacious protection from BJP and jettisoned the traditional AIADMK-CONG; has narrow and partisan interests; has roped in three of her inveterate enemies and made them sing her praise and defend inclusion of BJP in the front; corrupt; showed official misconduct by mortgaging government's interest in favour of two corporate giants; her action shocked the judicial conscience; sinner; facing plethora of corruption charges; brushed aside the plea of congress for alliance and preferred BJP; most notable cases when it comes to forging new combinations and permutations with the objective of winning maximum possible seats by hook or by crook; electorate rejected her overwhelmingly in 1996; there was revulsion against her 'arrogance, high-handedness and egregious corruption' which was visible to the naked eye; has estranged followers (and no colleagues); BJP has meekly become her junior partner and is not alone in clinging to her sari-tails; was punished for corruption in 1996; people have either forgiven her or forgotten all about her wrongdoing in public life; was given a thorough drubbing in 1996; corrupt; useful mentor or ally; electorate punished her in 1996; corrupt regime; surge of public resentment against her corrupt and autocratic rule; has added disturbing dimension to the growing trend of polarisation on caste and communal lines in TN by joining BJP; after MGR's death, emerged as AIADMK supremo; proximity with MGR; identified by people as his heroine and confidante; projected as goddess and godmother in her campaigns in 1996; Rajnikant's statement was: 'even god cannot save TN if she came to power again'; TV became a medium to show how she swindled money, spending lavishly on her foster son's marriage and on herself; a respondent quoted: I thought being a woman she will rule well. But after her lavish wedding expenditure I have voted the DMK this time; corrupt; maligned and harassed at the hands of DMK; reference to foisting of cases on Jayalalitha; corruption; her angry outbursts- causing embarrassment to alliance partners; reacted sharply when people raised slogans hailing Vaiko; concern for minorities (but for political interests).

Positive expressions: Determined; can induce confidence in partners to win; State was a haven of peace during her rule (an AIADMK candidate); good turn out at her meetings; emboldened; has improved her support base.

B) Jayalalitha in The Hindustan Times

Primary actor : Party supremo; party workers waving and cheering lustily at their leaders; sat on a specifically erected dais; responded with a beatific smile; party functionaries given the honour of sitting with Amma; reference to missing 'controversial' friend Sasikala; large paintings of MGR used or using MGR's magic; absence of giant cut-outs of Jayalalitha; town wore a festive look with colourful hoarding of Jayalalitha and MGR; Puratchi Thalaivi (Revolutionary leader); faith of AIADMK supporters in her leadership; corruption; supremo; 'successful' silver jubilee conference; smart; strategic; BJP Kowtowing to AIADMK; Advani applauded massive turnout; has proved that her allies need her more than she needs them; playing a sobbing woman singled out by Karunanidhi for vindictive and punitive action; makes tragic recounting of her suffering in jail; anti-corruption raids on her premises; narrates in typical Tamil screen tear-jerker fashion...; corruption; I am innocent and I shall prove it; supremo; tainted past; General Secretary; equitable; confident; General Secretary; refers to Sonia's foreign origins; antagonising Sonia; supremo; film heroine; lady; clinging to stereotype of grieving sobbing and wronged woman facing constant persecution by her rivals; defeat in 1996 elections; plays wailing victim to perfection; devotes more time to her sufferings at hands of Karunanidhi; warns Karunanidhi; long career in politics - 15 years; sticks to prepared text; resorts to question/answer session; has metallic voice which rings out in high pitch; lady; campaign from front seat of her tempo traveller with a microphone in hand; pink complexion which evokes admiration; missing of Sasikala-now left behind in poes garden;

missing of expensive clothes and jewels; 'amma'; corrupt; women saying - may be she has changed after going to jail; attracts crowds; faced public revulsion in 1996; attracts crowd; response to amma is heartening; enjoys popular fervour; she asks -no where in the world has a woman been subjected to so much cruelty as I have been under DMK; Karunanidhi asks her if there is another women in history who has indulged in much plunder and loot.....Beware of this lady, she is out to invoke sympathies through plain hoodwinking; corruption; pending cases; she is unfazed; corruption; attracts crowds; her financial swindles; lady; confident; plays game well; harps on return of MGR rule; day dreamer; betrayed MGR; caused deep anguish to MGR; Jayalalitha writing a letter to Rajiv against MGR; least bothered; indignities heaped on her by Karunanidhi; corruption as synonym to Jayalalitha; desperate; lady; corrupt; Jayalalitha threatened to sue and challenged Karunanidhi; furious; her concealed wealth; facing horde of corruption charges; angry; concern for minorities.

Secondary actor : Heir to MGR's legacy; supremo; has proved her mettle as MGR's political heir; MGR himself initiated her into politics and groomed her; would use MGR magic on voters; BJP apologising to Jayalalitha; AIADMK chief; has imperious approach; gets irked; stressed that her writ ran in the state; got displeasured; neck deep in corruption cases; amma; amma; amma; lady- who was once admired by Sharad; AIADMK supremo; BJP riding piggy back on AIADMK; she is on a do or die mission; corruption cases; public anger against her is no longer as intense as it used to be; corruption issue; gets irked; supremo; attacked DMK venomously; reference to public anger against Jayalalitha which is less intense this time; lesser number of cut-outs of Jayalalitha; lesser posters and hoardings; she brought out posters with MGR; banking on short public memory; BJP riding piggy back on her; Brahmin; lady from Poes gardens, who does not wear her customary cape any longer; amma; supremo; new found ally with BJP; has taken DMK leader Karunanidhi in his own den; uses sympathy card; plays the part of a scorned woman perfectly; given up her cape and glittering diamonds; makes references to her good nature; depicts Karunanidhi as villain; Purachi Thais; exploiting MGR legacy; supremo; can lose her calm; angry; she shouted (Vaiko case); irritated; causing heartburn among both AIADMK and MDMK ranks; threatened to send Chidambaram to jail; her corrupt regime; 14 corruption cases against Jayalalitha - Chidambaram tells to a group of women; Jayalalitha nurses a personal animosity towards Chidambaram; Jayalalitha's repressive regime; corruption.

Positive expressions: Concern for poverty eradication, unemployment, provision for safe drinking water and electricity; Jayalalitha's advice to BJP on Ayodhya and Mandir issues called sensible; draws good crowds; resilient.

Brief Items: Mainly referred to as General Secretary in this category; administered a shock treatment to DMK and TMC by aligning with BJP; not doing the democratic duty of exercising her franchise; corruption; corruption charges; A poem- Ode to Jayalalitha

The Tigress once again roars
She never spent a hundred crores
On the marriage of her foster son;
It was all in the form of gifts,
And, thus, the truth from lies she sifts;
She is totally corruption free
Therefore, she aligns with BJP.

Primary actor : Rally failed to click with masses; weary and bleary eyed party General Secretary Jayalalitha; must have been a disappointed leader; association with MGR; rally a poor show; harsh; glaring eyes; Madam; rally a damp squib; rally-dismal show; association with MGR; party supremo; makes reference to agony and humiliation she underwent at the hands of Karunanidhi; AIADMK chief; reference to how she was being persecuted by the Karunanidhi regime; corruption; reference to her betrayal of Dravidian ideals by joining hands with BJP; Jayalalitha's misrule; Jayalalitha would cash in on the alliance with the BJP; harping on the stability at the Centre; General Secretary; lashed out at Sonia; Jayalalitha lost her cool at a press conference; she exploded; a senior journalist also came in for a tongue lashing; thundered in a speech that we cannot tolerate a foreigner becoming a Prime Minister; calls Sonia a hypocrite; lashed out at Sonia; inaccessible; AIADMK supremo; corruption charges; corruption; not guilty of polluting the Dravidian order by giving space to BJP; has prepared the State for a certain brand of Hindutva; pursued policy of Hindutva when CM; Amma; enjoys super Z category security; specifically designed vehicle pulls up to the stage; emerges with a grin and an arm raised to V signal; her monologue style; no sign of sympathy for her woes and victimisation; rally is a non-stop entertainment; refers to prepared text; wipes her face with handkerchief; designer cape is missing; makes her speech waving her bare arms; refers to herself as Amma and not Sahodari; with exclusion of Sasikala, has moved up the matriarchal hierarchy; plays scorned woman; makes conceited references to her good nature; rash; her colleagues stand in attention with hands folded; looks like they are undergoing corporal punishment; makes no reference to corruption cases; self-righteous; presented with silk saris by party leaders which are immediately removed from the scene; poses for press photographs; AIADMK chief; corruption; corrupt regime; corrupt; should Jayalalitha be forgiven for her venality?; has she really given up wearing jewellery?; people are satisfied that famous wrist watch is missing; has she been atoning for her sins?; Amma; AIADMK supremo is cashing on voter unhappiness; her hidden loot unearthed to the audible gasp of the electorate; her dramatic political career; continues to maintain hold on AIADMK; modest; bounced back; partial rehabilitation of once embattled Jayalalitha; has not regained her credibility completely; corruption issue; projection of injured innocence; her inability to fully regain her standing; still there is no wishing away the Jayalalitha factor; empress; hardly bothered; corruption charges; jewellery, gold, watches and shoes; AIADMK chief; grills voters on how DMK is taking care of them; her custom built air-conditioned van; delivers sermons to large crowds; she does the talking and people listening; her monologue style; her prerogative to be a monarch; has lost crown but still believes she is empress; ordinary orator; depends on prepared text; her monotonous and predictable style, question-answer session; AIADMK candidate stands like a supplicant during her speech; fair complexion; face like a ripe apple; uses fair and lively; puratchi thalaivi; outrageous (Vaiko case) was cut up with this incident; locked herself inside her hotel room for rest of the day and sulked; meticulously manicured fingers; waves only from inside her air-conditioned van; people's anger at her 20 months back; deposed empress of TN is on her way to reclaim her inheritance in substantial part ; has imperious and elusive approach; robust; puratchi thalaivi; reference to how she skipped funeral of her principle party organiser to attend wedding reception; reference to how she wrote a letter to Rajiv Gandhi complaining against MGR; reference to how she betrayed MGR; empress; she has been forgiven her excesses, even if she has not learnt her lessons fully; she is doing her homework but her grade remains 'C'; comments on her hoarding and artists' imagination – for example reference to her red bordered black gown, topped with academic hat; reference to the ornate Kanjivaram silk sari, she must have worn beneath the gown; reference to bloated cherry complexioned face; MGR's successor; comes in all shapes, sizes and colours - caped or uncaped; MGR as her mentor; must truly symbolises the secret fantasy of every male artist in TN who paints her with loving care - never mind the concomitant, voluptuous outcome; elusive; her ample but neatly manicured hands.

Positive expressions: Confident; concern for poverty, minorities and women; willing to accommodate women in AIADMK; concerns for down-to earth problems; significant leader; assertive; decision-maker; powerful hold over alliance and cadres; strident; concern for poverty eradication; no more an ostracised leader; attracts large crowds; enthused supporters; in Muslim pockets also crowds were seen patiently waiting and cheering her when she appeared; good response to her rallies; has got a modicum of respectability among middle classes by allying with BJP; crowd goes hysterical at sight of Amma; elusive leader; has substantial gatherings; imperious; has devotees.

Secondary actor : She represents the latest stage in the evolution of Dravidian philosophy by joining hands with BJP; she has enriched the national perspective of MGR; rally was a disheartening let down; Amma; retains her crowd pulling capacity; association with Sasikala; low turnout of women at convention; fuming; fretting; AIADMK chief; maintains uncharacteristic silence over BJP's unilateral decision; AIADMK supremo; Poes garden; Madam; Amma; Madam; intolerant; perceives herself as empress; voters and workers unhappy with her in 1996; she was only projecting herself; this time she is referring to MGR speeches; heir apparent of MGR; corruption; AIADMK supremo; suffers from credibility problems.

Positive expressions: Concern for Muslims; reigning deity; rising tide in Jayalalitha's popularity; large crowds for the lady; good turnout in her meetings.

A) Sushma Swaraj in The Hindu

Primary and secondary actor: Iron lady; suave; victorious; quick to realise and hence intelligent; diligent; impressive; prowess; good orator; sincere; a woman (proud of being a woman and womanly identity); smiling; iron lady; confident; confident; confident; seasoned campaigner; charismatic; well-known face; representative who cares; oratorical skills; ability to endear herself to masses; confident; serious; has faithful supporters in form of women; role model for women; strong candidate; powerful; prominent; concerned; candidate from prestigious south Delhi constituency; association with women; patriotic; has a liberal approach towards women but does not follow Western concept of liberation; trounced Kapil Sibal in 1996 election; BJP loyalist; popular; attracts large gatherings.

Negative/harsh expressions: 'Lashed' out at the Centre; 'accused' the Congress party; 'attacked' the Congress I.

B) Sushma in The Hindustan Times

Primary and secondary actor: High profile woman candidate; Behanji zindabad; beaming; smiling; arrived to a tumultuous welcome; high profile woman leader; candid; receives enthusiastic response; seasoned BJP leader; weathered many a storm in her 20 years political career; invariably in the news; lawyer by profession; youngest ever cabinet minister of the country; articulate; assertive; categorical; fiery woman leader from BJP; trounced Kapil Sibal; winner of 1996 elections; Sushma Behanji; most powerful national leader whose voice rang through out the country; prominent leader; wrested south Delhi seat by defeating Kapil; high profile woman leader Sushma Swaraj from the prestigious South Delhi constituency; victorious in 1996 elections with a large margin; formidable candidate; won against Kapil in last elections; patriotic; association with women; for women's political participation; intelligent in terms of using Urdu words etc while addressing Muslim gathering; embrace people of all religions; popular; proud of her performance as an MP; commitment to people; confident of victory; her birthday celebrated.

Negative/harsh expressions: 'Lashed' out at the Centre; 'attacked' Sonia Gandhi...; 'launched' a blistering attack on the Congress; lambasted the Congress and the UF; Has strange views; outsider (said by Maken); not so confident (Maken); not concerned about issues concerning Delhi (Maken).

Primary and secondary actor: Confident; high profile BJP spokesperson; defeated Kapil Sibal; confident; Sushmaben; nationalist; innovative; Behn Sushma; popular; trounced Kapil Sibal easily; 'vocal'; supports women's political participation; charismatic leader; identification with women; popular; wants empowerment for women and not liberation; Sushma Swaraj zindabad; clean image; confident; received tremendous response in area; secular image; high profile BJP spokesperson; likely to corner considerable portion of women votes; association with women; birthday celebrations; her victory looks certain to people; impressive; creates enthusiasm among people; supporters burst fire crackers; jubilation on her visit witnessed; elderly Sikhs were keen to bless her; articulate; right mix – of traditional and modern values; confident; appealing; behanji; good national leader; good constituency MP; association with women; women's leader; women identify with me (her); sure of her strength and performance; worthy; confident; association with women; nationalist; receives enthusiastic response; association with women; confident; her being a spokesperson has a positive influence on party image due to her speaking skills; never seen without sindoor, bindi and manglasutra; sense of dressing; her attendance (in weddings) not only enhances her image but improves party's standing in a locality; able administrator; polite; women love her; star campaigner; winning candidate; popular; right person.

Negative/harsh expressions: People 'angry' at her unfulfilled promises; she has 'unfinished tasks' to account for; secretly nursing Prime Ministerial ambitions; 'blasted' Sonia...; 'lashed out' at Congress..

Results and Analysis

The Indian press made no attempts to corner women leaders within the private sphere. Both Jayalalitha and Sushma were completely engaged in the political arena, with no apparent obligations to domestic/private concerns. This appears to be particularly the case for Sushma Swaraj, who has combined both her family and career. Furthermore, the leaders were not found to be associated with social, welfare or development issues. However, a great deal of coverage focused on their personal characteristics, traits, mannerisms, attire, looks and feminine aspects. Further, the effect of gender was produced through the positive coverage given to Sushma Swaraj and negative coverage given to Jayalalitha. This drastic difference in the treatment meted out to the two women may be attributed to our cultural and gendered contexts.

I shall elaborate upon the findings as follows. As stated above, the media did not associate selected women leaders with private/domestic issues (in terms of family or children). This is particularly relevant of Sushma Swaraj, since she is married and has still been active in the political arena. While the probability of the media being inquisitive about how women combine their 'homely roles' (as wife and mother) with their professional career or demands of an election campaign may be greater in the case of newcomers, a mention of that at any stage of a woman's political career cannot be ruled out. In that sense, a stereotype that women belong to the private did not emerge in the coverage, indicating that women leaders are welcomed or acceptable within the public sphere. It may be an exaggeration to corroborate this conclusion on the basis of the study of just one leader. However, one can say with a certain surety that the Indian English press normally does not focus on leaders' private sphere(s).

Yet, the effect of gender surfaced in a clear and significant way through the particular coverage of the two leaders, suggesting biases in favour of feminine virtues. A major

observation that came through was that Jayalalitha received an extremely negative coverage, while Sushma was projected in a fairly favourable light by the media. Both the leaders were projected on extreme ends. All three papers had very little to say about the positive aspects of Jayalalitha and the negative aspects of Sushma Swaraj. Regarding Jayalalitha, one could gather from her coverage that she was a popular leader who could attract large crowds, who was emboldened, determined, and had improved her support base. Otherwise, she generally came across as opportunistic, extremely corrupt, strategic, calculated, pragmatic, clever, harsh, arrogant, high-handed, a sinner, and much more. She was a woman who was obsessed with adornments like jewellery, gems, watches, pearls etc. A special mention may be made of a statement passed by a respondent and carried in the Hindu. It said 'I thought being a woman, she will rule well. But after her lavish wedding expenditure, I have voted the DMK this time'. Further, Karunanidhi posed, in a story in the Pioneer: 'ask her if there is another woman in the history who has indulged in much plunder and loot... Beware of this lady, she is out to invoke sympathies through plain hoodwinking'. She got equated with cholera and virus and her rule was described as a dark period in the history of Tamil Nadu. She was also projected as a sobbing and grieving woman suffering at the hands of Karunanidhi. In some situations, she could fret, fume, get angry, shout, sulk, and even be venomous and develop personal animosity. All in all, Jayalalitha was projected as an oddity, an anomaly, a deviant or an uncontrollable and unnatural phenomenon, particularly if one judges her coverage against that of Sushma's. She was portrayed as a gang member who knows how to play her game well. Her ways of speaking and campaigning were also ridiculed, even though she is a good orator and a successful and powerful politician.

On the other hand, Sushma appeared to be very agreeable, that in itself, setting the definition for an 'ideal woman'. In short, she was presented as being smiling, pleasant, beaming, suave, charismatic, an iron lady, high profile, diligent, an able administrator and a star campaigner. She held a responsible and respectable status, and closely identified herself with women and their issuesⁱⁱ. She was projected as a champion of women's rights, although she positioned herself within the liberal framework, with a number of leaders vouching for her. She had a number of pictures portraying her favourably, like performing some *hawan* ceremony, hugging a burqa-clad woman, being felicitated in her constituency, and so on. She received tumultuous welcomes at crowded public meetings. An item in the Hindustan Times mentioned her birthday and on this occasion a 'large number of women and young girls flocked to garland her in different colonies, while others rushed to the jeep with sweets'. She was a 'behanji' next door, winning people, and particularly women and young girls, with her charm. The Pioneer wrote: 'Jat women with their pallus on their face jostled to garland and embrace Ms. Swaraj'. Positive references were also made to her way of dressing up. The Hindustan Times commented at one time: 'decked up in a saffron silk sari and gold jewellery, a smiling Mrs. Swaraj signed the papers'. In short, the media provided complete legitimacy to her ideas, her words and her images and there was a clear bias in her favour. While it is true that not all the opinions printed in a paper are held by journalists, or statements carried are passed by reporters, every news item goes through the 'gatekeepers' before it is published in the paper. In that sense, it is endorsed by the papers and acquires legitimacy to a certain extent. The reporters writing on Jayalalitha may not have personal grudges against her but as a matter of fact she got projected in a negative light by the media. Similarly, though reporters may not be personally fond of Sushma Swaraj she, nonetheless, received a positive portrayalⁱⁱⁱ.

Coming back to the issue, why did Jayalalitha receive negative coverage and Sushma receive positive coverage? Does Jayalalitha's negative coverage have to do just with her being corrupt? Similarly, does Sushma's positive image have to do with her clean record? If negative coverage has to do simply with being corrupt, then there is an urgent need to examine the coverage of male politicians who have been equally corrupt and unprincipled in order to determine the treatment they receive from the media. However, I would rather suggest that there could be a close linkage between the perceptions of the media and the personal backgrounds of the two women leaders. In other words, there seems to be a greater probability that both leaders' coverage has to do with their personal life/background rather than just their political or professional life. Corruption or bad administration is not exceptional to Jayalalitha. What is exceptional to her is her non-conformity to the social (patriarchal) order - the fact that Jayalalitha started her career as an actress, became the 'mistress' of MGR, and did not live the conventional life of a woman. On the other hand, Sushma is an ideal Hindu woman who visibly conforms to the social system in terms of her commitment to her married family, her ways of dressing up, her identification with other women, her commitment and loyalty towards her party, which is for women's 'empowerment' and not 'liberation'. Otherwise, Sushma's positive coverage may surprise one against the backdrop of her belonging to a party which was by and large labelled as 'communal' by the media, intelligentsia and most political parties. Keeping that in view, one may contextualise Jayalalitha's negative coverage in terms of a backlash against a woman who has not lived up to the social norms.

However, it is important to ask where media's perceptions could originate. What are those cultural contexts within which gender is produced or frameworks deployed? It is not within the scope of this study to go into the details of specific cultural contexts, as it has mainly dealt with 'how' the media has responded to women politicians, and not the 'why' part of it. Still the results certainly indicate that there is a need to go beyond the visible. At this point in time, it seems to me that the framing of the 'ideal/good woman' and the 'bad woman' has stemmed from within the discourses of India's colonial and nationalist history. The nationalist project did not bar women to enter the public eye and yet, it perceived them as representatives of the private sphere and expected them not to lose their spiritual essence and feminine virtues (Chatterjee, 1989). This framework could provide a starting point to understand the differences in the media's perception of two leaders. The results also suggest that conceptions of the private and public realms work differently in the western and Indian contexts, all of which call for further investigation.

Referencing to feminine virtues and personal appearance also indicates that the biology of a female or the fact of her being a 'woman' politician, rather than just a politician who happens to be a woman, remained at the centre of media coverage. Sushma's hyper-womanly identity and Jayalalitha's anti-womanly identity presented them as 'the other' or 'the unusual' within the male dominated political system. Sushma was 'presented' as a 'woman politician' who identified herself closely with women and vice versa, whom women loved, who had all the feminine qualities, who knew how to dress up properly, who was pleasant, always smiling, who seemed committed to every aspect of feminine identity etc. She was an icon of Indian womanhood. Her coverage focused more on her femininity, which is an attributive human status and not an achievement-oriented status. She was neither a policy expert nor an authority on important national issues.

Similarly, Jayalalitha was a corrupt 'woman politician', who could indulge in plunder and loot, who could sulk when people preferred to listen to other leaders' speeches, who was obsessed with jewellery, saris, gems, soaps, watches etc, and who could wail, sob and grieve for the wrongs done to her because she was a woman first and a politician later. In this sense, both the leaders were presented to the reader as 'the other', the 'unusual' within the political system. Evidently, the media was carried away by Sushma's hyper womanly identity and Jayalalitha's harshness and aggressiveness, which indicated how the media functioned within existing norms. While repeatedly pointing out a 'woman' politician's corruptness, the media seemed to have endorsed the view that by nature, a woman is of a 'giving nature' and hence, this amassing of wealth and corruption on the part of a woman is unethical, immoral, and unusual. Such a woman is a dangerous threat. This kind of a portrayal results out of a notion and an expectation that women in politics need to be compassionate, honest, moral against men who are seen as being ruthless, ambitious and tough leaders (Norris, 1997). Liran-Alper (1994) also points out that women's excess morality is based on 'feminine' stereotype patterns like good heartedness, gentility, softness, and greater conscience towards the weak and needy. Jayalalitha was further depicted as clinging to the stereotype of a grieving and sobbing woman. It is paradoxical that while on the one hand, Jayalalitha was a tough and aggressive politician, on the other, she appeared as a fragile person, indicating how even a successful and clever woman politician is first of all a 'woman' with 'natural' weaknesses, rather than being a politician. She can wail, grieve and sob even in a powerful and authoritative position. She was attacked simultaneously for being too aggressive and too emotional and impulsive.

The Hindustan Times and the Pioneer, in particular, made frequent references to the leaders' looks, attire, dress, pink complexion, silk saris, missing expensive clothes and jewels, glittering diamonds, sindoor and manicured fingers, etc. Apart from keeping their gender identity at the forefront, this kind of irrelevant focus trivialises women's roles in the public sphere and undervalues their competence. I suggest that we also examine the media's attitude on this aspect towards male politicians in order to determine biases, if any.

A microanalysis of the stories with regard to the issues revealed that, by and large, no linkages were suggested between Jayalalitha and women's issues or even broader issues of development and social welfare. In the Hindu, she was generally projected as being caught up in the petty politics of making alliances with other parties, her differences with the BJP, seat-sharing arrangements, and conflicts with the DMK and the TMC. The stories focusing on her were engaged in making calculations, predictions about alliances, number games, analysing internal politics of parties' etc. The Hindustan Times' stories focused on Jayalalitha's rally, her alliance with the BJP, her manifesto, her way of campaigning, her sobbing and wailing, the conflict between her and Karunanidhi, her party's stand on Ayodhya, Mathura and Kashi, the election scene in Tamil Nadu and prospects of various parties in the elections, her mannerisms at public gatherings, the conflicts between Jayalalitha and Chidambaram, alliances between Swamy and Jayalalitha, unprincipled alliances, and dying ideology. The brief items focused on seat sharing, conflicts between local parties, alliances, criticism by leaders of each other, personal attacks, etc. Similarly, the Pioneer focused on personal attacks between leaders, seat distribution, alliances, and predictions about who would win and lose. Issues like eradication of poverty, problems of the minorities and women, and the Jain Commission Report did not get a mention in even one sentence.

Even Sushma Swaraj was not associated with the broader issues of development and social welfare. She generally appeared as a spokesperson of her party and hence raised only those issues that existed on its agenda. In the Hindu, the issues associated with Sushma included the revival of economy, full statehood for Delhi, and crime and law and order in Delhi. In the Hindustan Times, the issues noted were the falling external value of the Rupee, the Centre's wasting financial resources, full statehood for Delhi, rising crimes in Delhi, land management and housing, the development of mass rapid transit system, and so on. However, all these issues were touched upon briefly in terms of space. The Pioneer focused on conflicts, winning/losing, criticism, campaign activity, filing papers, how politicians should dress up, how it had become so important for politicians to attend weddings during elections etc. Sushma was found criticising Sonia for the Blue Star Operation and the 1984 massacres. However, all the papers certainly perceived her as a champion of women's rights and concerns and she was projected as a women's leader.

It may be observed from the above discourse that both leaders were generally not associated with so-called social and welfare issues or projected as agents of change, as has been the case in the West. In fact, an analysis of the stories revealed that the media hardly touched upon issues, whether hard or soft, in the selected stories. This observation needs to be contextualised within a broader context of the general political culture of the country, indicating how gender holds an insignificant status in certain situations and that the media function within their own agendas.

For the last few years, the Indian political system has gone through various changes. One of the drastic changes which occurred was the crack in the monopoly of dynastic rule of the Congress-I, followed by the development of a multi-party system, coalition governments and so on. Further, marginalised groups also staked their claim within the political system, the result of which is that the struggle for power has increased. Since coalitions are also formed on the basis of narrow interests and gains, it became difficult for them to survive the normal tenure of five years. One person or party within a coalition holds the power to disrupt the government, and the moment one government collapses, other parties immediately indulge in negotiations and bargains to find coalition partners to form a new government at the Centre. As a result, India has seen a number of elections in the last few years. The situation still remains unstable and fragile. At the time of elections, the general environment in the country is that of who would win and who would lose. The concerns over the broader issues of governance and development find no place in this 'horse race'^{iv}.

Looking at the coverage of the two key politicians in the preceding sections, it was easy to observe that the media seems to be operating within the framework of a 'horse race'. They were least bothered about the bigger issues facing the country and the agenda of the leaders. The focus of the stories, by and large, remained on individual and party politics, alliances, seat distribution, backbiting and personal criticism by politicians of each other. This was particularly observed in the stories, looking at the coverage of Jayalalitha. Within the news stories, many items touched upon issues only in passing and did not analyse the leaders' position on them. Even the opinion articles focusing on, for example, unprincipled alliances, legacies and ideologies etc., were mainly concerned with party politics and predictions about winners and losers. This is in spite of the fact that journalists hold the privilege to be the 'speakers' over ordinary citizens and even politicians, as it emerged

from this study. In other words, selected leaders were less of the 'speakers' as compared to the journalists, in the data examined.

Alexander (1997) suggests that in order to make an election more positive and issue-oriented, journalists can take time to ask politicians/contestants hard questions and put in the effort to find ways to let them speak about their agendas. And in the face of the inability of politicians to address 'real' issues, it adds to the responsibility of the journalists to bring in their own agenda of issues which they think are more important than those of the candidates', rather than indulge in mud-slinging themselves (Baker, 1997). However, as this study also indicated, 'journalists often become so intent on reporting what goes on inside campaigns that they forget campaigns belong not to the candidates or their consultants or their pollsters, but to the public (Broder, in Buckner 1997, p.67).

Conclusion

This study made an attempt to examine the status of the issue of women's political participation (including the issue of reservation and party tickets), the position of women's perspectives/concerns/issues vis-à-vis election on the media agenda, and thirdly, the response of the media towards women politicians and processes of gender construction in political communication.

Since the question of women's political participation holds a controversial position, the study looked into how far the media responded to this question. Did it emerge significantly during the election period? Further, were women treated as a potential constituency during the election, in terms of giving space to their issues/perspectives/concerns? The findings indicate that the media did not give substantial coverage to the question of women's political participation during the election period, in terms of both quantity and quality of coverage. A considerably low number of items were coded in all the papers examined. The insignificance of the issue was also reflected through the analysis of numerous variables studied, such as the appearance of stories on important pages, status of women as primary actors, as speakers and as interviewees, number of pictures, number of editorials and so on. Further, the media did not perceive women as an important constituency or an interest group that could influence the electoral process. It may be argued on the grounds that women's issues/concerns/perspectives were hardly addressed during this period, and whatever existed, was mainly referred to or commented upon by politicians who tend to get coverage by virtue of their positions and not the issues per se.

An analysis of the coverage of Jayalalitha and Sushma Swaraj revealed that both the leaders were under-represented, in terms of both space and place in the media. The number of stories recorded was not significantly high either. The highest number recorded was that of Jayalalitha, who was covered in 34 items in the Hindu, and yet it did not give her an average of even one item a day. The analysis of their coverage in terms of variables like their status as primary actors, as speaking subjects, as interviewees, and their appearance on important pages also indicated that they did not receive considerable attention from the media.

Jayalalitha's coverage in terms of quantity and several variables examined was certainly better than that of Sushma's. Yet, Jayalalitha was presented in an extremely negative light to the readers as compared to Sushma^v. The images of both leaders as they emanated from

the media were poles apart, and the pattern was almost similar in all the papers studied. Jayalalitha came across to be calculating, opportunistic, extremely corrupt, strategic, calculated, high-handed and arrogant. On the other hand, Sushma was a smiling, beaming, suave, charismatic, diligent, iron lady, a high profile woman candidate, able administrator and star campaigner. This reflected how the effect of gender was produced in the coverage of two leaders. While questioning the negative coverage of Jayalalitha and positive imagery of Sushma, I have argued that the nature of such coverage does not simply have to do with Jayalalitha's being corrupt, as corruption is not exceptional to Jayalalitha. However, what sounded exceptional from the media coverage was the fact of a 'woman' being so corrupt, arrogant, opportunistic, high-handed etc. which goes against the ethos of womanhood within the Indian cultural context. Moreover, Jayalalitha has not conformed to the patriarchal norm of leading a 'conventional' life of a woman, which might also bring a bias to her coverage. References to her association with MGR and the occasional mention of Sasikala bring home the point. On the other hand, Sushma has conformed to the patriarchal system at a personal and political level. She has a non-controversial married life and also plays a party loyalist perfectly. She successfully brings her hyper-womanly identity from the private to the public and gets an easy acceptance from the media. I have suggested that news frames cannot be produced in a vacuum. The particular construction of this frame of the 'ideal/good woman' and the 'bad woman' needs to be explored within the discourses of India's colonial and nationalist past, whereby women were perceived as the representatives of the 'private' and their feminine virtues were perceived as the essence of the nation. It also indicates that the public/private dichotomy carry different meanings within the Indian context as compared to the West, and that needs to be investigated and linked up with the media's perceptions.

The biology, or the fact that both leaders are women rather than just politicians who happen to be women, remained at the centre of media coverage. This may be said in view of references to, firstly, feminine virtues and secondly, external appearance. This kind of coverage trivialises women's roles in the public sphere and undervalues their competence.

None of the leaders got associated with soft issues or with the broader issues of development, social welfare and governance. This needs to be viewed within the context of the media not giving importance to the issues of development and social welfare in general, as was reflected in the issues picked up from the selected stories. The general focus of the selected stories was on the petty politics of making alliances, seat sharing, calculations and predictions, and conflicts between and within parties and individuals. Even the manifestos were not discussed in depth wherever they got a reference. The coverage indicated how gender may not be an important factor in many situations, and that the media function within their own agendas. Although it may be difficult to decipher those agendas, one can certainly conclude that the media has profound interest in the political 'horse race' rather than in playing the part of a socially responsible agent within the democratic process.

Endnotes

- i Carroll and Schreiber (1997) argue that women reporters may help bring women candidates into the mainstream and may also impact in shaping political coverage and thus the climate in which women decide to run for office. Also, because of the changing gender composition of the newsroom, one might expect to find more women than men writing stories about women. Or perhaps it is women who volunteer more often to write these stories or they are more frequently assigned to them because of their gender.
- ii Sushma Swaraj herself played to stereotypes in a big way by using her hyper womanly identity. In this regard, a survey on the patterns of voting behaviour of women can reveal whether political women who play to gender stereotypes themselves gain politically from this strategy.
- iii In this regard, it would be worthwhile to investigate the influence of these images on the voting behaviour of people. It has been suggested in view of the fact that information plays an important part in forming a viewpoint and serves as a basis for shaping opinions with regard to the selection of leadership.
- iv Within election campaigns, the familiar 'horse race' frame (who is ahead, who is behind) dominates coverage of the primaries. There are many alternative topics that could serve as the focus for stories like the policies of candidates, their records in office, their background and experiences. The 'horse race' is frequently adopted because it provides all criteria of newsworthiness: a simple and dramatic headline about 'breaking' events focused on personal drama (Norris, 1997).
- v It is strongly recommended that the regional press be analysed to look into the kind of images constructed by it. This is particularly required in case of Jayalalitha who is worshipped as supreme embodiment of *Shakti* or power in Tamil Nadu (Jacob, 1997).

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CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

In order to develop, promote and disseminate knowledge about women's roles in society and economic trends which affect women's lives and status, CWDS:

- a. Undertakes, promotes and coordinates both fundamental and applied research on women and development.
- b. Organises and assists training programmes for scholars, planners, administrators, development agents, communicators, members of women's organisations/cooperatives etc.
- c. Promotes and collaborates with academic institutions, grassroot level organisations and individuals engaged in allied activities.
- d. Provides advisory and consultancy services on allied issues to institutions and organisations, within and outside the Government, including development agencies and cooperatives.
- e. Develops and promotes (in collaboration with other agencies) educational training and action programmes for women, especially under-privileged women.
- f. Undertakes activities that are consistent with the objectives of CWDS and helps to bring about attitudinal and other changes for effective participation of women from all levels of society.

The CWDS sees itself primarily as a catalyst in assisting women to realise their full potential and exercise their active influence on society and its transformation. The national policy of equal participation of women in all spheres of national development is possible if the ideas and institutions that marginalise women's role and contribution in society are weakened or eliminated. Thus, CWDS aims to concentrate on:

- i. Seeing women as active participants in politics and plans for national development and not merely as passive recipients of marginal hand-outs.
- ii. Focussing attention on women's pressing and special needs for maternity protection, child care, literacy education, widening opportunities for employment and training etc. So that they receive adequate attention and resources from various sections of society and
- iii. Re-examining educational and other value generating process which promote mystification, ignorance and distortions regarding women and their roles in society.

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