

## DISCUSSION

Television in India has become an important socio-cultural dimension in the lives of the people. The last decade (1982-1992) has witnessed a phenomenal growth of the television industry, with transmitters spreading all over the country and covering approximately 80 percent of the population. Indians have started viewing television regularly and research on television viewing among Indians is picking up. This study on television viewing and perceptions of television content indicated certain interesting results which are discussed in this section.

### Gazing at the small screen

It is no exaggeration to say that television viewing is currently important among the daily routine activities of an average Indian family. While Doordarshan's telecast spanned from morning to late night with intermittent gaps in the afternoon, during the period of the study, close circuit cable networks had become extremely popular and International Channels have started gaining audiences among Indian households. Upper middle class and affluent families had acquired video cassette recorders as a matter of course and with no dearth of video cassette lending libraries, there was a lot to watch on the small screen for the people.

Television viewing had become more or less a national pass

time for Indians and National Television Survey (Times of India, February, 1993) indicated that Gujarat topped the list in the extent of television viewing. It is therefore, important to understand the role it plays in the lives of people. Western literature is replete with evidences of the socializing effects of television. Gerbner et al (1982) point out that "... television dominates the symbolic environment of modern life " (p. 14). They further state that exposure to television was an important indicator of understanding its contribution to peoples ways of thinking and acting. Differential levels of television viewing according to their researches, had differential effects on the perception of television content by viewers. Thus, the need to understand the television viewing duration and content viewed. These two dimensions assume importance in any study aiming at finding out viewer's perception of television content.

That television had not only an important place in the house, but also in the lives of people was made clear by observations carried out during the investigation of this study. In every house, the television set occupied an important place right in the drawing room. The investigator found 53 respondents attentively watching the television and in 11 household; the television set was switched on with no one paying particular attention to it at the moment of the interview.

In an average week, the respondents of this study watched television for a mean of  $12.6 \pm 5.43$  hours, accounting for about 1.8 hours of viewing per day. This finding indicates that Indian

viewers watch slightly lesser amount of television than their western counterparts. Morgan (1984) reports  $2.59 \pm 1.86$  hours of viewing per day, while a large National Sample Survey indicated 2.9 hours of viewing among American adults (Hirsch, 1981). While the above finding are based on self reports, objective measures like the use of electronic devices to measure length of television gazing indicated that on an average the television set was on for 7 hours and adults viewed for 4 hours in a day (Hirsch, 1981). Indian researchers have found that on an average, adults in India watch television between 1-3 hours daily (Bahl, et al, 1988; Brown, 1990; Narayanan, 1984; Patty & Beharia, 1991; Vilahilam & Yaseen, 1987), across many cities of the country.

#### Demographic variables

Age : Significant age differences are common in Western television viewing patterns (Condry, 1989, Hirsch, 1981, Rubin & Rubin, 1981). The study sampled a wide age range of 21-50 years. However, age was not found to be related to either years or hours of Doordarshan viewing, but was significantly related to cable viewing. While younger respondents viewed cable for longer hours, as age increased, cable viewership was found to be lesser. Certain reasons could have contributed to lack of age differences in Doordarshan viewing, (a) though commercial television started in the year 1976, until the ASIAD telecasts in 1982, it was restricted to few major cities. Most of the respondents of this study, had been exposed to television media for the same period of time. (b) television viewing is mostly restricted to certain

periods of the day, since most of the entertainment oriented popular programmes are telecast between 8.p.m. to 10 p.m. and (c) most viewers had access to only one channel and all households contained only one television set. Therefore co-viewing of the population prime time programmes was common. These reasons could have easily nullified age differences in Doordarshan viewing.

Gender : In this study, no gender differences surfaced in television viewing. Family viewing the prime time programmes on National Channel could be an important reason for lack of gender differences. Urban residence could be another reason for this finding. In rural areas, where community television sets are used, women tend to watch much less television than men or children since they are occupied elsewhere with work or social taboos prevent them from doing so. Whereas, most of the women in urban households conduct their household activities in the vicinity of the television set, and there are hardly any taboos preventing women from being in the same place as men in the urban houses. In the western countries, however, women tend to watch significantly more television than men, except for sporting events, where viewing hours favour men (Condry, 1989).

#### Socio economic status

When television came to India, it was a prestigious matter to possess a television set; it was an added status symbol. Most of the higher income families bought a television set as soon as television started functioning, while the low SES group had to

wait to be able to afford a television set. Thus, there were significant differences in years of television viewing among the respondents of this study. The longer years of viewing seem to have led to disenchantment among the viewers and as years passed by, Doordarshan viewing seems to have reduced. In addition, the higher income groups also had access to a wide variety of leisure time and entertainment activities, while low SES group cannot possible find a lesser expensive entertainment than the Doordarshan, Doordarshan is singled out here since all other television viewing, close circuit cable, VCR, International Cable networks, all cost regular expenditure in terms of subscription fees or lending of facilities such as cassettes. Therefore, heavy viewership of Doordarshan programmes among low SES group is not surprising. Western studies too point out that racial minorities, low SES populations, and uneducated people watch significantly more television than high SES or well educated and employed individuals (Condry, 1989; Hirsch, 1987).

Children : Number of children in the family was positively related to Doordarshan viewing but negatively related to cable viewing. This could be due to the fact that since cable viewing consists mainly of film and film related programmes, parents may not have been willing to let their children view these programmes excessively. For this reason, parents either did not subscribe to this facility or restricted their own cable viewing considerably. These reasons apparently did not apply to Doordarshan since Doordarshan was generally considered in a more favourable light by the viewers. Earlier researches on children

in Baroda city (Mayuri & Mohite, 1992<sup>a</sup>, 1992<sup>b</sup>; Shastri, 1992) had found that children are regular viewers of Doordarshan, and viewed at least for one and a half hours per day. Western literature too points out that large families generally watch significantly longer hours of television than small families (Condry, 1989).

Gender stereotype : Respondents with male orientation viewed significantly less of Doordarshan. This would, apparently include most of the men as well as few women who attributed higher levels of masculine traits to themselves. This group may not even have leisure time that facilitates viewing television for long hours. Since they may be employed and also possess traits that facilitate their active participation outside the home, they may also have different set of ideas about spending leisure time and watching television may not rank high on their preferences. Interestingly western researches are silent on this aspect, though gender stereotype is researched upon with regard to other dimensions of television viewing.

Self Esteem : Female respondents' self esteem scores were found to be related positively to years of viewing, hours of cable viewing and negatively related to hours of Doordarshan viewing. Respondents who had longer access to television viewing and facilities for cable/VCR viewing, seem to also possess higher scores on self esteem. There may be a host of other factors associated with high self esteem which could have led to such a relationship. Respondent women with high self

esteem were probably in higher socio economic status with higher levels of education, an occupation outside the home, and have probably different avenues for amusing themselves. Doordarshan, therefore may not have figured as an important activity in their lives.

What are viewers gazing at ?

Doordarshan's, National channel provides a wide variety of programmes in order to fulfill the Government's policy of using this medium for educating, informing as well as entertaining.

Tele-serials were most popular followed by film based programmes, commercials and news. Programmes of general interest and information were not popular inspite of the fact that there were a wide variety of programmes in this category. Interestingly, feature films do not figure among the five most popular programmes. Three of the most popular programmes were tele-serials, indicating the importance this format of programming receives by viewers. Another interesting feature about tele-serial viewing is that people either watched them regularly or totally avoided watching them. There is hardly any "occasional" viewership for tele-serials. This is a clear cut indicator for producing qualitative tele-serials which not only educate, but entertain at the same time. Otherwise, there are no takers for these programmes.

Film based programmes are general favourites and most respondents viewed them regularly. However, the audience for

late night films and regional films were considerably less compared to prime time films and film based programmes. Interestingly, many viewers complained that the films chosen for telecast were outdated, uninteresting and uninspiring, while film song programmes were bordering on the vulgarity and many a time unsuitable for family audiences. However, these feelings did not discourage them from viewing film based programmes, **Chitrahaar**, the film songs programme was very high on the popularly viewed programme list. Western literature too indicates that prime time films were very popular with Western audiences (Condry, 1989).

News, especially the prime time Hindi news bulletin was very popular. Most audiences watched this programme. While English news was very popular with the high SES audiences, none of the low SES respondents viewed the English news bulletins. This finding contradicts western researches where news were among the least popular of programmes (Condry, 1989). Interestingly television seems to have created an awareness among women for acquiring information of general interest by watching news bulletins, since low SES women admitted that even though they hardly ever read news papers, they do make efforts to watch the Hindi news bulletins regularly.

With regard to programme preferences high SES respondents looked for information while low SES respondents looked for entertainment more frequently from the television medium. Young adults apparently, were more interested in the television medium rather than older respondents.



### Why gaze at the small screen ?

The respondents of this study admitted that they watched television for entertainment, information and spending leisure time. A meagre number of respondents admitted that they watched television out of compulsion. This is interesting since, the chances of compulsion could have been higher in the case of their audience who had access to only one channel and received only national programmes predominantly in Hindi language, while the regional Gujarati programmes were not accessible to them. This finding indicates that Doordarshan was not perceived to be a forced form of leisure time activity; most respondents chose to watch Doordarshan, rather than indulge in other forms of leisure time activities. Though seeking information was an important reason for watching television, the most informative programmes were in the general category and viewership for these programmes was very low with exception of messages and public announcements (96%) dramatic programmes (35%) of afternoon transmission and the news round up of world events (35%). This is a clear indication for making informative programmes more entertaining and altering, their timings to cover a wider audience.

These results are comparable to many western studies. There is a wide range of research literature available on this dimension under the broad area of "uses and gratifications of television viewing" research. In general, a wide range of reasons were attributed to television viewing: entertainment, information, pass time, escape, relaxation, status enhancement (Convay & Rubin, 1991; Compesi, 1980) provide advice, social

utility, reality exploration (Compesi, 1980). That is, television viewing is certainly fulfilling needs of people other than entertainment and information. It is probably these other reasons which will determine the use of this medium on a long time basis. This could especially be true with regard to reasons such as escape from routine, companionship, release from boredom and so on. The fulfillment of the psychological needs will eventually make television an even more powerful force in the lives of people than it already is. Therefore the need to study the effects of this medium in the lives of people.

#### What did the viewers perceive ?

Perceptions of female portrayals were studied in terms of positive and negative traits of the portrayals, perceived reality, perceived social expectations role of the portrayals and identification with the portrayals.

#### Positive and negative traits

Female portrayals were in general considered to be positive. The most frequently mentioned positive characters were Kalyani Singh - **Udaan**, Mrignayani - **Mrignayani**, Mohana - **Kashish**, Prema - **Humrahi** and Rukmini - **Sungharsh**. Among them, Kalyani Singh was clearly the most popular and a favorite with many respondents.

The positive traits that were attributed to female portrayals include traits of strength such as courage, determination, intelligence, hardworking, honesty. Among attractive traits, beauty was mentioned more often and among compassionate traits,

consideration for others altruism was mentioned very frequently. The respondents felt that traits of strength were clearly the most dominant traits exhibited by the female characters. Interestingly, the traditionally considered feminine traits such as motherliness, devotion, dedication, affectionate nature were not often perceived by the respondents as dominant traits of female characters. In fact, respondents considered certain stereotypical feminine traits, such as dependent, sentimental and emotional as weakness of characters and placed them in the category of negative traits. That is, the female characters who possessed strong traits which are traditionally considered masculine, as well as beauty and altruism, the two stereotypical feminine traits were considered the most positive of all portrayals.

The negative female portrayals, Devki and Patrani were considered to be cruel, selfish, jealous meddlesome, cunning and shrewd. Here again, strong negative traits were attributed more frequently than weaknesses or repellent traits. Thus general, even the negative characters were perceived to exhibit both masculine as well as feminine negative traits.

These findings indicate that androgyny seems to predominate the perceptions of female portrayals by the respondents of this study. This aspect has been discussed in greater detail in the trait comparison section of viewers and content analysis.

### Perceived reality of female portrayals

There was a divided opinion on reality of televised female portrayals, with 44 percent respondents having low reality beliefs and 56 percent having moderate to high reality beliefs about the female portrayals on television.

It is important to reflect on the possible reasons for low perceived reality of female portrayals since, (a) tele-serials were the most popular programmes watched, with very high viewership (70% on an average). (b) seven serials dealt with contemporary social settings and characters, and (c) reality perceptions, to a certain extent would be prerequisite for people to be impressed with characters, find them worthy of imitation and identify with them.

The reasons that could have operated in the case of this study are (a) reality beliefs may be influenced by the television viewing motivations. If respondents viewed television with a purpose of finding something informative, inspiring, worthy of learning, and in general providing guidance for appropriate actions and behaviour, they are likely to search for certain amount of realism in television portrayals. Instead, if respondents viewed television to escape from real life problems, go away into a fantasy world, then they would not look for realism on television. In fact they would not appreciate reality depiction on the television. For instance, men belonging to the high SES group in this study, repeatedly complained that there

was too much of depressing reality on the television and thus they preferred to avoid watching Doordarshan programmes. However, in this study, a general question was used for studying viewing motives. No indepth analysis was therefore possible interlinking motives with perceived reality of television portrayals. This could, in future lead to an interesting study. For instance, entertainment motivation contributed strongly to a sense of realism of television content and escape motivation did not contribute to perception of reality of television in the American context (Rubin, 1983). (b) Another aspect that needs consideration here is the television viewing behaviour of the respondents. As common observation would tell us, if an individual is watching television in total silence, all alone, paying undivided attention to the drama that is unfolding on the television screen, the chances of perceiving the characters therein as close to reality are strong. On the other hand, if television is being watched amidst other activities, in the presence of other family members, with distractions created due to intermittent conversation, then, there is a likelihood that television portrayals appear less salient or realistic. Since, most Indians view television as a family activity, there are probably chances that the portrayals do not leave a serious impression in the minds of the viewers and may appear less realistic. Prior research support in this regard is hard to find. But this is worth studying since Indian television viewing situations are considerably different from western television viewing situations and may contribute significantly to perceptions of the television content.

### Perceived social expectations role of female portrayals

Social expectations role perceptions were quite high with regard to tele serial female portrayals, with 67 percent indicating high beliefs and 33 percent showing moderate to low beliefs.

Respondents did consider that tele serial females had personality traits that indicated expectations of the society. They perceived female characters basically to be providing not only positive images of women but also certain normative standards of behaviour, worthy of emulation. Thus, Defleur and Ball-Rokeach's (1989) contention that certain social expectations when projected on mass media can lead to creating knowledge among the viewers with regard to society's expectations of behaviour, does find support from this study. This knowledge creation is considered an important function of mass media and the results of this study indicate that Doordarshan is playing this role to a certain extent.

### Identification with female portrayals

This dimension measured four levels of identification - 'no identification', 'would like to be', 'I am like' and 'Would like to and I am like'. Most of the respondents, 85 percent identified with female portrayals at one of the three levels of identification with only 15 percent indicating no identification at all. Majority among those who identified were at the level of 'would like to be'.

The female characters that were found worthy of identification were Kalyani Singh, Mrignayani, Mohana, Sunitha, and Prema respectively.

Most often, traits of strength were quoted at 'would like to be' level of identification. These traits include courage, determination, self respectful, honesty and intelligence. Altruism, beauty and smartness were the other traits frequently mentioned. It is interesting to note that very often respondents felt that they did not possess the desirable positive traits and aspired to possess them.

But some respondents took pride in saying that they had courage, self confidence, determination and were honest just like their favorite female character on Doordarshan.

It is however, important to note that the number of responses received for 'would like to be' level greatly out-strip the number of responses received for 'I am like'; 'while would like to be' 'traits' received 239 responses, 'I am like traits' received only 46 responses in all. That is, female portrayals were perceived as different and probably better than 'self' so that they inspired the respondents to desire emulation of certain traits.

Who perceived what ? Correlates of television female portrayal perceptions.

The results of analysis of variance, correlations and chi-

square tests indicated that with regard to perceptions of female portrayals, SES, gender, gender stereotype, hours of Doordarshan viewing and were found to be significant variables.

#### Gender differences

Gender differences were apparent with regard to negative trait perceptions, perceived reality and perceived social expectations role of female portrayals. Female respondents perceived negative traits significantly more often, had higher scores on perceived reality and perceived social expectations role of female portrayals.

Interestingly, positive trait perceptions do not indicate gender differences, since more or less similar percentage of male and female respondents attributed positive traits in all three categories, traits of strength, traits of compassion and traits that attract, while there were clear differences in negative traits perception with women perceiving traits of cruelty and repellent traits significantly more frequently in female portrayals than men.

Women in this study sample, seemed in general much more interested in television as a medium of information and entertainment and especially were avid viewers of tele-series, while men were not equally enthusiastic about the medium. Women's general involvement with the medium may have had its effect on their perception of portrayals. It is also a fact that



female characters would certainly impress female audiences. Female viewers can easily sympathize and empathize with females on the medium, and therefore, more clarity in the perceptions of female portrayals.

Women also perceived female portrayals to be more close to reality than men did, and they did consider female portrayals to be providing normative behaviour standards for emulation and there by were fulfilling a social expectations role.

With regard to identification, men and women did not differ significantly. However, women did identify with portrayals more often than high SES men.

#### Socio economic status differences

Positive and negative trait perceptions, and identification were significantly related to SES of the respondents, while occupation of respondents was related to perceived social expectations role. Low SES respondents, in general, attributed more traits, both positive and negative, to female portrayals, and identified more with them.

It appears that, low SES respondents were more enamoured of the television and this reflected in their attribution of traits. They took Doordarshan more seriously and reacted to it in a more positive manner than the high SES respondents since all SES variables had a strong negative correlation with identification. Respondents low in education, occupation and income and total SES

scores, may have lesser access to other sources of information and also consider Doordarshan as an authoritative informant whose messages are worthy of serious consideration and imitation.

#### Gender stereotype differences

Gender stereotype differences were noted in positive trait attributions, perceived social expectations role, and identification but not with regard to negative trait attributions and perceived reality.

More often, respondents with feminine and androgynous gender stereotype, perceived positive traits in female portrayals and tended to see female portrayals as providing normative behaviours for emulation and generally identified more with female portrayals. Gender stereotype was unrelated to perceived reality as well as negative trait perceptions.

Western research supports this finding in the sense that androgynous viewers do find androgynous traits in televised portrayals (Goff, Goff & Lehrer, 1980). This finding may also have resulted due to the reason that tele-serials tend to interest feminine and androgynous persons more often than masculine individuals, whose television viewing interests would be crime and sports rather than dramas, (Condry, 1988).

#### Doordarshan viewing differences

Hour of Doordarshan viewing was significant for perceived social reality and perceived social expectations role.

Respondents who watched Doordarshan for longer hours, did perceive Doordarshan female portrayals to be close to reality and believed that they provided models for behaviour emulation.

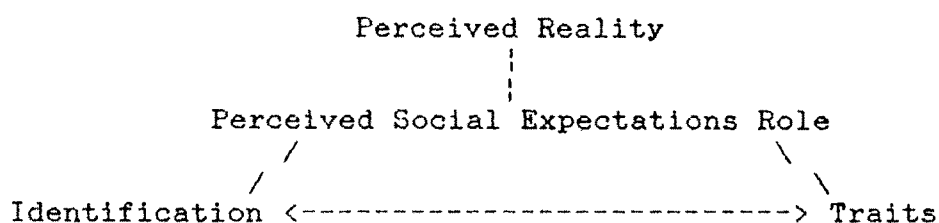
Though the correlation value was significant only at .05 level, the direction of the relationship between hours of Doordarshan viewing and reality perceptions follows the claim made by cultivation analysis of Gerbner and Associates; the more television people see, the more likely that they will believe in the reality of televised portrayals. This research does support this above argument, though the relationship is certainly not very strong. For instance, the relationship between hours of Doordarshan viewing and perceived reality is not significant when the effects of the other two variables related to perceived reality are removed (Product-Moment  $r = .1256$   $p < .05$ , partial  $r = .09614$   $p < NS$ ). Not much confidence, thus, can be laid on the correlation between these two variables.

Doordarshan viewing follows a similar relationship with perceived social expectations role. It's (Product-Moment  $r = 0.1420$   $p < .05$  while, partial  $r = .05872$   $p < NS$ ) falls when four other variables effects are controlled for. Therefore it can be interpreted that hours of Doordarshan viewing's contribution to differences in these two perceptions, should be viewed with caution.

#### Interrelationship among perceptions

The results of this study indicate that the four perception

variables, traits, perceived reality, perceived social expectations role and identification were related to each other in the following manner.



While trait perceptions, identification and perceived social expectations role were interrelated, perceived reality was found to be related to only perceived social expectations role. As indicated in the results section, the three perception variables, reality, social expectations role and identification have shown stable relationships with each other even after partial correlations were computed and the effects of other significant variables were controlled for. These interactions briefly indicate that female portrayals were considered to be highly positive, were worthy models for behaviour imitation, acted as a source of prescriptions of the society laid down by an authority, whose reality may be suspect, but whose imitation should be desired.

Thus James Potter's (1988) argument may be revisited. Female portrayals on tele-serials of Doordarshan were not often close to reality (low perceived reality), but do provide worthy models and prescribe behaviours for emulation (high social expectations role, perceived utility) and the viewers would like to imitate positive traits and behaviours of the portrayals (high

identification). This argument does indicate that the three perception variables may be measuring related concepts of perception of televised content. However, further empirical evidence in support of this argument is required before conclusive interpretations may be drawn, (see page 38).

#### Correlates of perceptions of female portrayals

Among the demographic variables, SES variables and gender and among personality variables, gender stereotype were more often found to be related to perception variables, while television viewing variables were less related, Hours of Doordarshan viewing was significantly and positively correlated with perceived reality and perceived social expectations role, but the relationship was not strong. The interrelationships among perception variables were strong with only one relationship, that of perceived reality and identification being nonsignificant. Thus the conceptual frame work was as follows :

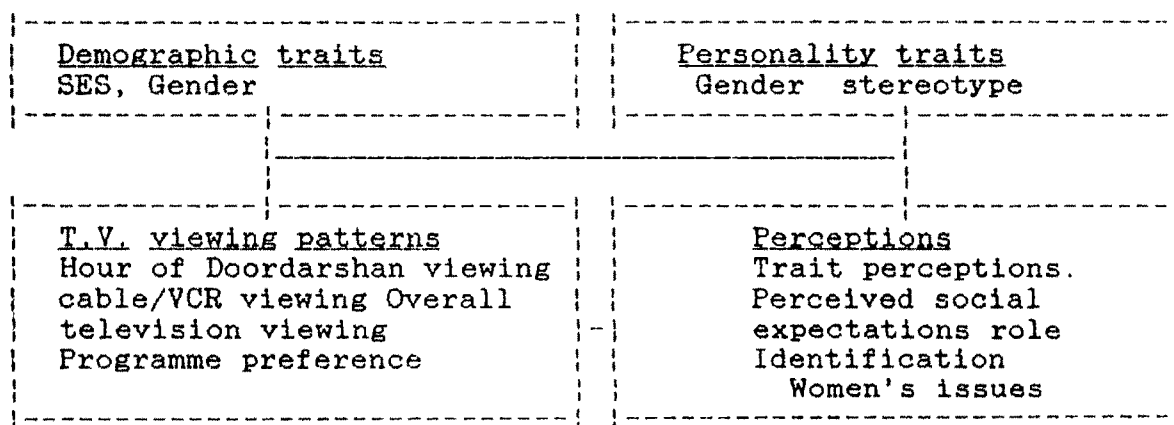


Figure 34. Conceptual frame work that emerged from the study.

Self esteem, the other personality variable was related only

to television viewing time. As far as this study is concerned, SES, gender and gender stereotype of viewers were much more salient in affecting perceptions of television content.

Though arguably an important variable as far as perception of female portrayals are concerned, self esteem did not emerge as salient in this study. There could have been reasons for this which are rooted in the measurement of a global self esteem and its relationship to perception of television content and strength of the female portrayals in affecting self perceptions. Since perceived reality and identification with portrayals were not found to be related to self esteem, it is necessary to research further in this area before arriving at any conclusions.

Interestingly television viewing variables and age did not emerge as significant for perceptions of content of television. For the time being, television, with one channel and a set of prescribed programmes seemed to have had the viewers as captive audiences and lack of other sources of televised content to view, the age and duration of television viewing differences were nullified.

When the salient variables are considered, this study clearly indicated that the low socio economic groups, women in general, those respondents with feminine and androgynous gender stereotype and to a certain extent, those who viewed Doordarshan for long hours had attributed female portrayals with highly positive traits, found them reasonably close to reality, ascribed high

social expectations role to them and identified very often with them.

In summary, it can be stated that, Doordarshan's impact as a provider of information and knowledge was much more stronger for low SES viewers and female viewers than high SES or male viewers, irrespective of their age.

Dynamic or a Drudge ? Content description of female portrayals on Doordarshan and comparison with viewers perceptions.

The content description of Doordarshan programmes in terms of significance accorded to the female portrayals, was done by using the criteria of frequency of presence of female characters as against male characters across certain selected dimensions namely their presence in tele-series, role significance, locations seen in, social class, family role portrayals, social role portrayals, occupations held, age ranges, marital status and personality traits exhibited.

With reference to programmes other than tele-series, male, female presence was noted in the various roles they played such as a news casters, announcers, anchor persons, artists, subject experts, interviewers, lead roles in fillers, guest appearance and a character in tele-series other than those ten tele-series analysed.

What do the tele-series show?

It is still a man's world... The results indicated that in general male characters outnumber female characters in most categories of programmes on Doordarshan in frequency of presence. However, their gender difference was not found to be statistically significant for many categories. Presence in the ten most popular tele-series and occupations held by the characters did indicate statistical differences in gender frequency. Male characters were significantly more often present in nine out of ten tele-series. Only in **Kashish**, they were more or less equal in number. These results are in congruence with Western television research result. There is extensive content analysis research in support of females being 2-3 times lesser in number than males on a wide variety of programmes among the western researches (Signorielli, 1985).

Females on television serials were either confined to the home or were in professional jobs. Hardly ever were women shown to be in middle level jobs or as retired persons. This finding clearly coincides with western research findings (Busby, 1974; Defleur, 1964; Greenberg, 1980; Lemon, 1978; McNeil, 1975; Reeves & Miller, 1976).

In other dimensions measured, male, female differences were present, but did not reach statistical significance. In general tele-series were about upper middle class or middle class people, most female and male characters were young adults between the ages of 20-34, with single persons as well as married persons



more or less in equal numbers. Female characters were seen as spouses and in other family roles slightly more frequently than male characters in corresponding roles, while male characters were more often seen in social roles such as friends, acquaintances, work associates and superior officers. More often it was easy to determine female character's marital status. Male characters marital status, many a time, was not easily apparent. These findings too clearly indicate similarities with a wide range of western content analysis studies on gender portrayals (Signorielli, 1985).

That is, Doordarshan tele-serials are still following the "... middle class ideologies" where women's place is still in the home, embedded in a family context, and her world revolves round her household concerns and issues and problems of her family members. However, one caution should be exercised. The above interpretation can be drawn by looking at the quantitative data, but the qualitative descriptive presence of female characters shows another picture.

The following description explains this dimension.

... but women are powerful too :

Trait attributions were studied for female portrayals on the ten most popular television serials at the time of the investigation. While viewer's perception of the traits of female portrayals were studied and quantitative presence analysed, the perception of the content analysis was done at a qualitative level.

The content analyst who had no access to the information of the viewer's perception was recruited for giving brief descriptions of the major female characters that emerged during the period of the telecast in which the data was collected.

Her description of Mrignayani is presented verbatim below :

"She (Mrignayani) was well brought up, and had high values, was beautiful, patriotic, brave, skilled and gifted; qualities all becoming a queen. She is selfless in duty, supportive to the needy, and stands up herself and others when she is sure of being right. She had political insight. She was much ahead of her times". Mrignayani was considered to be beautiful, courageous, intelligent, efficient, determined, as well as considerate toward others by the respondents. Though the descriptions used by the two differ in actual words, the general character delineation can be perceived to be similar, since most descriptions used by viewers were synonymous to those used by the content analyst.

This interesting finding cuts across all characters, both positive and negative. These are presented below:

Mohana (**Kashish**) was described by the analyst to be an introvert and perhaps a little insecure emotionally. She was outwardly confident and a little arrogant too. She was helpful, independent, beautiful and sensitive. Interestingly, while viewer's perception coincided with most of the other traits mentioned above, what the analyst described as arrogance, was perceived by the viewers as self respecting. In fact the predominant trait of Mohana was found to be her self-respecting

behaviour by the viewers. They, thus perceived Mohana in a more positive light than the analyst.

Sunita (**Ashiana**) was described by the analyst as a supportive wife and mother, secure with her husband and sons. She had 'typical' expectations from her family members which are not always met with. But she gave in when she was made to understand a differing view point. She was talkative and quite spirited. The viewers' too perceived Sunitha to be affectionate, motherly and devoted to her family members. She was attributed the traits of sacrificing and consideration for others as she gave in to others.

Rukmini (**Sungharsh**) was described by the analyst as a thorough professional, tough, brave, and confident. In a male dominated area of work she does well to prove her credibility. She was well supported by her family. Overall she was a pleasant person in looks and personality. The viewers described Rukmini as employed in an unconventional job, had courage, was principled, hardworking and good to look at. The descriptions tally to a great extent. Only in the case of her family's role, the viewers felt that she was sacrificing her family interests for her job responsibilities rather than perceiving her family as supportive to her.

Prema (**Humrahi**) was described by the analyst as a teacher and a social activist who was sensitized towards women's education, and welfare. She was independent, confident and unconventional.

She was not afraid of hollow threats to her work and goes about her tasks with conviction and determination. Prema was perceived to be a very helpful and considerate person, by the viewers. They did not label her as a social activist but agreed that she had others' welfare at heart. She was attributed traits of determination and independence too.

Patrani (**Mrignayani**) was described by the analyst as an insecure, jealous, selfish and a scheming person. An overbearing personality, she had power to influence many. She was ambitious for her son and possessive about her husband, king Man Singh of Gwalior. Almost similar descriptions were used by the viewers too. Patrani was perceived to be a selfish, jealous and a rude person who schemed behind Mrignayani and had a tendency to insult her.

Devki (**Humrahi**) was described by the analyst as a rich, mean, selfish and scheming woman. She had power over men and could also win over the naive to see her point of view. She was self-assured and overbearing and emphasized her looks and femininity with striking clothes, jewelry and make up. The viewers perceived Devki to be a mean, selfish, back-biting, shrewd and cunning woman. Thus expressed that she had power over men and was both dominant and bold. They, in general felt, that she was dangerous and manipulated with others' lives. Again, the perceptions coincide with only the words used to describe differing for both kinds of perceptions.

... and the most powerful among them was

Kalyani Singh of **Udaan**. Kalyani Singh stood out as the most prominent portrayal. She had the following distinctions when compared to other female portrayals on Doordarshan (a) She was attributed the greatest number of traits among the list of 249 traits that emerged from the study by receiving 79 distinctive descriptions, (b) she was the most frequently mentioned positive portrayal, (c) she was attributed negative traits too, more often than other positive female characters, (d) she was a character with whom majority identified, and (e) she was a character with whom even male respondents identified, while they rejected all other female characters as worthy models.

Irrespective of age, gender, education, occupation and general socio-economic status, most of the respondents admired Kalyani Singh and looked forward to seeing her week after week.

She was attributed a wide range of traits that indicated strength of character; courageous, principled, determined, independent, intelligent, hardworking, honest, self confident, ambitious, successful and in general, a commanding personality. On the other hand, stereotypical feminine traits too were perceived in her; she was a compassionate person and possessed traits such as affection, devotion, helpful nature, and empathy towards others. Some female viewers found her beautiful too. Thus, she was considered to be an "androgynous personality" with a fine blend of both stereotypical masculine and feminine traits.

On the negative side, an interesting dimension to the perception of Kalyani Singh was that, some viewers thought that she was too idealistic and therefore unnatural and unrealistic, while others, who support her, argued that it is precisely her idealism which is inspiring to her audience. Some called her a person with shifts in personality; she was courageous, hardworking and successful, but at the same time, she was sentimental and weak. This duality in her traits in fact, inspired one viewer to call her a "warm, natural next door" person.

Kalyani Singh's profession came in for a lot of comment. While many viewers thought that she had been lucky to get into a profession which helped her develop a strong personality, others thought that it was her childhood hardships and family training which developed traits of strength in her and these traits in turn, were responsible for her choosing the profession in the police force.

The most appreciated actions of Kalyani Singh were her unashamed frankness in admitting that she had been molested and commanding her subordinates to register a case against the offender and secondly, her sacrifice of the President's Gold medal for merit to a subordinate of her who had a larger share in the act of bravery. These actions too, the respondents felt, are indicative of her androgynous nature.

The content analyst described Kalyani Singh as a well brought

up person with strong family ties. She had cultivated high moral values, was righteous, self made and sensitized towards issues and needs of others. She was independent confident, brave, dignified and commanded respect from others. Thus, a similar trend in perceptions can be noted by both the viewers and the content analyst.

#### Quantity versus quality of presence

The finding that male characters outnumber female characters in almost all programmes on Doordarshan, finds considerable support from both earlier research literature in the Indian context (Report of the Working Group on Software for Doordarshan 1985, Krishnan & Dighe, 1990) as well as in western context, whose research have been extensively surveyed and compiled by Signorielli (1985). However, audience perceptions can be something different as indicated in this study. The interview in this study examined a "general impression" about gender dominance on television by viewers and found that, to a global question as to who appears more often on television, and who gets more importance on television, men or women, the general responses indicated no significant difference in perceptions. Respondents thought that both men and women tend to get equal coverage on the Doordarshan. That is, inspite of the fact that women appear less often than men on the television screen, audience do not necessarily perceive it in the negative sense, since they point out qualitative aspects as significant in gender portrayals. In other words, the sheer number of times one particular gender being present is not as salient as the actions, behaviour and

general characterization of the portrayal, in leaving a longer lasting impression on the minds of the viewers. Thus one finds that though male characters outnumbered female characters in most dimensions measured, the viewers perceived female characters, who possessed dominant personality traits as significant portrayals on Doordarshan. The way women are portrayed, even though with a middle class orientation, needs more emphasis on androgynous traits for helping viewers appreciate and emulate the female portrayals.

#### How about general programmes' treatment of females ?

With reference to the programmes other than tele-series, male-female presence was noted in the various roles they played such as an anchor person, newscaster, announcer, artist, subject expert, interviewers, lead role in fillers, guest appearance and as a character in a tele-series other than the selected ten tele-series. Interestingly women were very often seen as both newscasters as well as announcers. While giving out news, there was equal distribution of news content between the male and female newscasters with hardly ever any discrimination against any gender for the topic of news presented. Western research indicates that male newscasters always got more high profile, internationally valuable news to present while women had to present social events more often (Singleton & Cook, 1982). This discrimination does not seem to operate on Doordarshan. In fact, in January 1991, the most important news about the declaration of the Gulf War by US led allied forces, was presented by two female newscasters on the Indian television.



As announcers, women clearly outnumber male announcers. Krishnan and Dighe (1990) too found this to be true while analysing programmes in 1986. Their interpretation that good looking women in colourful attire may help add glamour to the medium, seem to hold true even in 1990's. It also appears that women do an efficient job and invariably are preferred as announcers.

Knowledge and information still seem to be the preserves of men, since men clearly outnumber women in the roles as experts, guests and anchor persons who deal with information and impart knowledge. The one time where a woman was seen in the guest show, she was narrating stories to the children of preschool age. This is anyway considered a feminine task the world over. On the western television too, guests and anchor persons are clearly dominated by men. Prominent examples of highly popular programmes are Bill Cosby show and Donahue. In these programmes women usually make up part of the audience and are present mostly for adding colour to the proceedings.

With reference to discussion programmes, women did not once appear either as the anchor person or as subject matter expert, either in the late night panel discussion programmes or in the UGC programmes. They were present only as announcers of the programmes while men took over the proceedings and were seen as experts in knowledge and information.

Women were seen as artists where the national dance programme

showed a Mohiniattam presentation. In this programme, the announcers as well as the compere were also female, again reinforcing the idea that fine arts like dance was women's domain, therefore it was alright for women to be experts and compere such a programmes. Interestingly, when classical dance appears as an educative programme among the UGC telecasts, the expert is a male while the dancer still in a female, performing the Odissi form. However, the educational programmes of Bharat Natyam was completely dominated by females, male artists were few and were only receivers of information. These observations indicated that male-female difference are to a certain extent less apparent in fine arts programme, telecast during the study period.

In programmes with a documentary format, male-voice over predominated. National Geographic Societies Science documentaries, and a programme on Calcutta museums are two examples of such programmes that were telecast.

Sports programmes were mostly male preserve, while women made up part of the audience.

Among the serials that made up the sample of analysis, deleting the ten chosen serials for content description, gender differences indicated that men out number women, In fact one serial episode **Bharat Ki Shaheed**, was totally devoted to male characters. While **Humlog** (retelecast) indicated both male and female characters in more or less equal numbers.

### Quantity Vs Quality of presence in general programmes

The above discussion already indicates gender discrimination in favour of men with the exception of Newscaster and announcer roles. In most other programmes, men dominated and hold knowledgeable, informative and authoritative positions.

That is, though women's images in none of the content analysed programmes were derogatory, obscene or titillating, they however, were still less prominent, low on knowledge and most often held secondary positions and if in major roles, they either deferred to men or were catering to children, and played a decorative role in general, rather than a functional one.

When these images are seen together with the images of some women in prominent tele-serials, Balasubrahmanyam's (1988) argument comes forcefully to mind. The disturbing reality of Indian television is that it constantly depicts double-images of women, one a weak, dependent, beautiful, decorative image and another, a strong, willful and dominant image. Co-existence of these two diametrically different images, is confusing not only to the lay audience but to even discerning, intelligent viewers. This makes one suspect the aim of Doordarshan in relation to the women's dimension.

It must be noted that this analysis was done excluding commercially motivated programmes such as feature films, film related programmes and commercials. It would have been understandable if the excluded programmes were seen to have

biased images of men and women. The programmes that were in the control of the Doordarshan authorities, programmes which they themselves produced many a time, and previewed and consciously selected tele-serials too, depict biased images. However, the viewers in general appreciated the female images on Doordarshan. That is, they had more favourable impression than what way revealed by content description.

What is so impressive about female portrayals ?

With reference to tele serial perceptions, however, this investigation indicates some positive results.

Viewer participation : Viewers tend to analyze the tele serial portrayals, perceive positive and negative traits, drew inferences for certain behaviours of the portrayals, sympathised with the characters' circumstances, criticised the character's behaviour and reacted to events and suggested how else the character could have acted upon her problems. These observations indicate that viewers are not just passive receivers of messages and indicates cognitive involvement through which the viewer processes the message, retains information, reflects on it and may probably act on it.

Effect of the dramatic format : Programmes not directly intended for educating the public, such as tele-serials, too have a tremendous potential for providing educative messages, which could be exploited for the purpose of positive depiction of gender issues through television media.

In fact, it appears that, when carefully crafted, dramatic content on television may have greater effect on changing attitudes and behaviour of viewers than programmes which provide information in the form of talk shows, interviews and documentaries. Viewers can interact better with a dramatic format, participate in the characters' life, albeit as an uninvolved onlooker, rather than in informative programmes which tend to have impersonal interactions and rigid formats. The mutual relationship between the viewer and the media message is much better facilitated by the use of the dramatic format, as the results of this research indicated.

Theme period of the tele-serials : The period of the theme somehow does not seem to matter as much as one would expect it would, at least, not for the viewers of this study. Mrignayani, the heroine of the period historical drama was the second most popular among the major female portrayals. In spite of the fact that Mrignayani was embedded in a context greatly differing in its culture and ideology, viewers could empathize with her circumstances, see her positive and negative traits and even perceived her worthy of emulation. She was, interestingly, appreciated for the same traits they attributed to a heroine of a contemporary period tele-serial, Kalyani Singh of **Udaan**. Thus, the socio-cultural set up and the period in which Mrignayani functions was not a deterrent to identifying with her personality traits.

The power of the major portrayal. : Another, very interesting finding of this study was that the effect of the message is enhanced to a large extent by the powerfulness of the character who gives the message. A very good message too can get lost if the major portrayal falls short of the expectations of the viewers.

An excellent example that can illustrate this is Prema of **Humrahi**. In spite of being sincere, hardworking, warm, empathetic and deeply concerned with problems of her family, Prema is not as frequently appreciated as either Kalyani Singh or Mrignayani. These two characters are greatly appreciated since the entire theme of the serial revolves around them. They are tough, uncompromising, dominant, assertive, and take firm decisions and not just make suggestions like Prema does, to her help seekers. Their decisiveness and courage in the face of adversity makes them much more popular and viewers appreciated that much more than the low key, hesitant, support that Prema provides.

In fact, in the case of Prema, the powerful, dominant negative portrayal of Devki of the same serial interfered with the appreciation that she otherwise deserved from the viewers. While discussing **Humrahi**, it is Devki that viewers recalled immediately rather than Prema. The viewer's had a lot to say about Devki. While most often her dominating negative traits were mentioned, a few viewers appreciated Devki for her courage and manipulative skills with which she controlled the men in her life. This way, whether positive or negative, the power of the

portrayal is found to be highly significant for creating long lasting impressions in the minds of the viewers.

When it comes to identification, the power of the portrayal seems to bring down gender prejudices. For instance the male viewers of the study greatly appreciated Kalyani Singh and thirteen of them admitted that they would like to identify with her.

Gender/stereotype of the portrayals : An indepth understanding of the traits and actions that respondents appreciated and identified with shows that viewers appreciated female characters with clear androgynous rather than either masculine or feminine personalities.

Both Kalyani Singh and Mrignayani were appreciated for their courage, determination, principles, hardwork, commanding power, success, ambition, and general assertive behaviour they exhibited. Besides, they were considered beautiful, kind hearted, considerate towards others, helpful and above all sacrificing.

With reference to actions and behaviours of the female characters, giving up what was theirs was greatly appreciated by the viewers. Kalyani Singh gave away the Presidents Gold Medal to a subordinate and Mrignayani sacrificed the throne of her sons. These two acts were greatly appreciated and were found worthy of their general positive portrayal. On the other hand,

assertive behaviour such as Mrignayani asking three wishes off King Mansingh before accepting to marry him, Kalyani Singh arresting a rich industrialist on charges of molestation and Mohana from **Kashish** slapping the director of her tele serial for insulting, her were equally appreciated. On a more subdued note, many viewers appreciated Mrignayani and Mohana for their beauty and general care in appearance, Even Kalyani, who tries to assert her femininity when she anxiously checks her appearance in the mirror in a party scene, some respondents not only found natural but endearing too.

Thus a fine mixture of the traditionally masculine traits with traditionally feminine traits were very much more appreciated and identified with by the respondents. It must be observed that the viewers of this study, did not label any trait as either masculine or feminine. They attributed traits to portrayals they appreciated and identified with traits they perceived as positive and disliked the traits and characters they perceived as negative. Therefore, dividing traits on the basis of gender may not be a right way to analyze viewers' perceptions of television portrayals. It may be necessary to interpret traits based on the feelings they generate; liking and thereby identification, disliking and therefore avoidance of identification.

Thus it may be summarized by saying that, study of trait perceptions of viewers and simultaneous content analysis of the traits of female portrayals, did throw some light on how powerful



a medium like television can be in influencing viewers beliefs, attitudes and may be behaviour.

#### Women's issues on Doordarshan

The respondents perceived men and women to be appearing equally frequently on Doordarshan, and felt that both genders received equal attention and importance on the medium.

Women's issues were quite well addressed by Doordarshan according to the respondents of the study. However, they felt that the priority accorded to the issues differ from those perceived salient by the viewers. When the responses to questions relating to women's concerns and issues were tabulated, five major categories of issues emerged namely, financial problems, gender related problems, personality problems, family related problems and social customs and practices.

When these problem categories were looked at from three perspectives, respondents perceptions 'in reality', 'on Doordarshan' and content analyst's perception 'on Doordarshan', it was noted that there was no correspondence to each other. What was significantly a problem for respondents in real life, did not figure as a priority area of women's issues on Doordarshan. For instance, financial problems were considered to be the least frequent problem discussed on Doordarshan, while content analysts accords it the second place in frequency of appearance. Both viewers and analyst agreed upon only one aspect of the problems, the gender related problems received second

position in frequency of appearance on Doordarshan by both viewers and the analyst.

Respondents agreed that solutions provided were often viable and if imitated, would relieve the individual's from problems.

They, however, considered that reiterating the issue and their solutions is very important for better impact on audience. Excellent programmes appear sometimes on women's issues but these are telecast when most of the family members are not watching and are often not repeated. Therefore, their impact on audience is lost.

In general, men were very skeptical about the role that television could play in improving the conditions of women in the Indian society, Whereas women felt that Indian television could play a very important role in this regard. They often opined that the women's problems were usually the product of patriarchal norms and men had a lot to do with them. Therefore, women's issues should be telecast at prime time and not relegated to afternoon transmission when most men will not watch the programmes. The fact that Doordarshan indulges in such mechanism, according to the respondents, shows its lack of serious commitment to the women's dimension on television.

Another important objection women had about Doordarshan programmes was that women were usually treated as beneficiaries of welfare measures and hardly ever their contribution to

development was acknowledged or highlighted. For instance, they are often told what to do or not to do but never are their achievements projected on the screen.

Women's issues, even when portrayed on the television, often do not consider the psychological domain of the women's personality. She is often treated as a victim who suffers in the physical sense; poverty, physical battering, hard physical labour and so on. Most often her needs as a psychological being are ignored. It may be argued that physical hardship needs primary attention but in a women's life where the physical domain ends and the psychological domain begins is not clearly differentiated. These two dimensions in their lives are interwoven and cannot be separated from the other. Programmes discussing women's issues need to consider the two dimensions together if they want to make an impact on the targeted audience. The respondents feel, this is clearly absent in the women's programmes that are telecast on Doordarshan.

In general, they felt that women's issues were there but were disappointingly few, not often prioritized appropriately and were often telecast at the wrong time of the day, when all adult members of the family cannot view them together.

#### Doordarshan and female portrayals : Some implications

This study has amply demonstrated that people who have lesser access to other forms of media, are generally affected by Doordarshan content in several different ways. The viewers in

this study not only considered Doordarshan content seriously, but also perceived many positive aspects to it. They perceived positive female portrayals, to a certain extent found them to be realistic, expected them to play a social expectations role and clearly identified with the portrayals.

It must however be remembered that, television is a dynamic medium, whose content keeps changing regularly and at each given period of time, something different in being portrayed. During this investigation there were tele-serials that clearly favoured women. Even columnists in news papers acknowledged this fact (Bajpai, Dec. 1992). Therefore, it is not surprising to find a overwhelmingly favourable perception of female portrayals. It is, however, necessary to add a word of caution. Not all programmes and especially, not all tele-serials are favourable to women all the time. The point that the results of this study drive home is that, if and when women are powerfully and positively portrayed, they do leave strong impressions in the minds of the viewers. Unfortunately, human minds forget easily and media output creates strong but transitory impressions. Unless reiterated, media impressions do not tend to lead to sustained effects. Thus, Doordarshan, if it wishes to follow the recommendations of the Working Committee on Software for Doordarshan (1985), it must repeat often the kind of tele casting it had done during the period of this investigation.

Given the cultural overload due to the bombardment of other cultures' images through satellite television networks,

Doordarshan's task has become all the more difficult. Still, one encouraging fact is that, inspite of the much wider choice available at present, people do watch Doordarshan if programmes are well made, with relevant content, powerful portrayals and an appealing story line. For instance, during the month of March, 1993, when Baroda city had become engulfed with cable network channels from 4-5 international channels, two Doordarshan tele-series on prime time, **Farman** and **Byomkesh Bakshi** were highly popular and late adolescent boys and girls clearly perceived the characters to be realistic, and identified with them (Mayuri & Mohite, 1993). That is, Doordarshan is still a powerful medium and can fulfill viewers' needs to a great extent. But it has a strong competition on its hands and needs to gear upto it. Particularly with reference to women's issues, it behoves Doordarshan to consider the following implications seriously if women's images have to fall in line with its own stated objectives.

- (a) Women's images, issues and problems have to be part and parcel of all Doordarshan telecasting and not isolated to a few programmes in a week. This will ensure the programmes reaching wide audiences, men, women and children and not targetting only women audiences.
- (b) Dramatic format of programming appears to be highly appealing to the viewers, which could be greatly exploited for creating awareness and improving information and knowledge regarding women's concerns.
- (c) Even when the story lines are simple, everyday occurrences, characters with powerful roles, and decisive traits would

draw and sustain the attention of the audiences. Therefore, desirable women's personalities would be those who are not always victims of circumstances but help themselves in solving their own problems. Most often, others are shown to be lending the helping hand, which in real life does not often occur. Women need to help themselves and this aspect should be highlighted on the media.

(d) There is a lot of criticism that Doordarshan falls back heavily on film-related programmes to fill in time and thereby tend to reinforce traditional stereotypical portrayals of men and women. Even when certain programmes do highlight positive aspects of the female personality, the film-related programmes and the commercials tend to over-shadow them. Thus, utmost care needs to be exercised in the selection of the programmes if Doordarshan wants to avoid projecting double images, that not only confuse the viewers but confound what little good the positive portrayals can do.

(e) It is not sufficient to portray women alone as androgynous personalities. Men need to be presented thus as well. Men, more so than women, are victims of gender stereotypes and bound by rigid behaviour prescriptions. It is important not only to liberate women from the shackles of stereotypes but men too. Television media is eminently suited to play such a role, since film media certainly will not take up such a role, for, it is still not considered to be commercially viable. However, Doordarshan male images do not reflect such changes. For instance, the few male characters in the ten tele-serials analysed were stereotypical to a great extent

This situation needs to be changed if television wishes to play a role in building an equalitarian society.

- (f) Women in decisive positions on Doordarshan staff are negligible and as staff artists and programme makers, women constituted only 26 percent according to a 1982 survey of 15 Doordarshan production centres (Joshi, 1987). This situation might have improved slightly in a decade, but considering the general Doordarshan output, there does not seem to be much change in the functioning of programme making and selection. If women's concerns and images have to improve, it becomes mandatory for more women in decisive and controlling positions on the Doordarshan. When this situation changes, one can expect of hope for changes in women's images on this media.

Winding up his elaborate discussion on Psychology of television, Condry (1989) quotes Edwin Newman, speaking on the PBS documentary on "Television"; 'television must have a brain as well as eye'. The eye can receive the message, but the brain must help us interpret it. The producers of television have a responsibility to provide this interpretation as clearly and forcefully as they know how. Without interpretation, pictures and images have the power to deceive, and with this power, the temptation to manipulate "(p. 279).

The power of television, thus lies in the hands of people who make up the experts in content development to be telecast. Considering its power for subtle effects and persuasion,

television programme makers have a tremendous responsibility on their hands.

Doordarshan is still in its childhood. It needs to be nurtured, cared for and developed so that people will make intelligent use of it and it will benefit future generations. That is, Doordarshan should be guided into maturity so that it can facilitate eradication of ignorance, instill awareness, build knowledge, aid information and in general, bring people together in terms for understanding, tolerance and general accommodation of different cultures within a national culture.

With regard to gender issues, there can never be invented a more powerful medium than the television. The women's movements have had their achievements, but the offshoot has been an active gender war. With women, more and more of them, became aware of their oppression, the psychological distance between men and women has increased. This distance needs to be bridged for a happy life on this planet. This is where audio-visual media can play an effective role, by providing contemporary, relevant, powerful, at the same time tolerant understanding perspectives to the gender issues. Simply speaking, television needs to provide gender models that are relevant for contemporary society and not distort reality or perpetuate stereotypes. Will Indian television, at least now, rise to this challenge ?