

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

At its best, television is the most powerful medium of communication ever devised and at its worst, it is as bad as its worst critics suggest it might be.

John Condry, 1989.

Communication is an integral part of human living. The nature of human socialization entails communication among individuals of a social setting. Defleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989) define socialization as a "... complex, long term, multi dimensional set of communicative exchanges between individuals and various agents of society that result in the individual's preparation for life in a socio-cultural environment. From an individual perspective, socialization equips an individual to communicate, to think, to solve problems using techniques acceptable to society and in general make her own adaptations to her personal environment" (p.209). That is, communication and socialization are inextricably interlinked.

There are various agents which act as teachers in the process of socialization; casual, unplanned agents could be family members, deliberately planned agent would be the school. Over and above these two, there are other agents which perform socialization function "... accidentally, unwittingly and inadvertently ... among these unintentional agents in contemporary societies, the mass media appear to be playing an increasingly significant role". (Defleur & Ball Rokeach, 1987, p. 212).

Condry (1989) reiterates and elaborates on the socialization

as well as psychological effects of mass communication media, with specific reference to television. While teaching a course on social development to university students, he repeatedly encountered questions about television effects on socialization of the individual which compelled him to compile research and theoretical review of the effects of television on the socialization of the individual. Reiterating the psychological aspects to mass communication media, Reeves and Anderson (1991), point out that cognitive theories emphasize the interaction between viewers and stimuli they process and Bandura (1977) point out that social learning can take place using media images as models. This way interrelationship between psychological theories and communication media are apparent.

What is television ? Condry (1989) offers interesting definitions "... first of all, television is a device for receiving pictures and sound broadcast over the air; secondly, it is an industry which was developed in order to programme or use the device and finally, television is what is shown on the device, designed by the industry. That is, television is all of the content that it shows" (p. 1-2).

Television came to the world in 1920's. The diffusion of television viewing among the world population has been remarkably rapid. At present, people of the developed countries have all an access to television and in India, 78 percent of the population had been covered by television networks by the end of the year 1991 when this investigation started. People watch television

rather than do anything else in their leisure time because (a) in the long run, it works out as an economical form of entertainment, since it needs only a one-time investment, (b) it is an effortless way of passing leisure time unlike reading, or going out in search of other forms of entertainment, (c) it is an attractive medium with colourful images, dramatization and current information and (d) it tends to fulfill other psychological needs such as companionship, escape, relaxation, apart from information and entertainment. Thus, a great majority of people who have an access to television do watch it. If that is so, how does television affect people ?

Effects of television viewing have been described from different perspectives by researchers and communication and other social science theorists. The subtle influence of television has been summarized by Bronfenbrenner (1979). While theorizing on the ecology of human development, he describes television as an exosystem phenomena which, crossing the ecological borders, enters the microsystem of the individual. He says "... to the extent that the powerful medium exerts influence on the interactions between family members, it represents an instance of a second order effect ... " (p.242).

Baehr (1980) while commenting upon media effects points out "...that we cannot trace very precise causal connections between messages and effects should not dissolve the complex question of the power of the media. They occupy a central position in culture in two important ways ... media provides the majority of

the population with their dominant leisure activity... media constitute a major source of information about and explanation of social and political processes. ... they help establish an order of priorities about a society's problems and objectives (p. 30). While Jeffres (1986) describes television effects as social, political, economic and cultural, Condry (1989) classifies television effects as indirect and direct effects.

According to him, indirect effects of television relate to the displacement of other activities and changing life styles of people due to time and duration of television viewing. The direct effects of television, on the other hand, imply the effects caused due to the differential perceptions of the content of television. The direct effects of television are the concern of this investigation, with specific reference to viewers perception of and content description of female portrayals on the Indian television, the Doordarshan.

In the forthcoming pages, the review of theoretical and empirical literature, that have a bearing on this investigation are presented in detail.

The broad outline for Review presentation is as follows:

- * Television viewing patterns in western societies.
- * Female portrayals on television based on content analysis research in the West.
- * Viewers perception of traits of televised portrayals.
- * Social reality of television portrayals.

- * Social expectations role of television portrayals.
- * Identification with television portrayals.
- * Doordarshan - the Indian television and
- * Rationale for the present investigation.

Television viewing patterns

"Most people watch television. It is hard to avoid".

John Condry, 1989.

Prior to understanding the effects of television viewing, it is essential to understand the time, duration and content viewed by people, since television viewing patterns could be important determinants of perceptions of television content.

Most people incorporate television viewing as an important daily routine activity in their lives. However, adults are uncomfortable about admitting that they do watch television regularly. In the western societies, the proliferation of television is near total and has over time, acquired a reputation as a negative status symbol. In fact in the highly affluent families not possessing the television set is the latest trend (M. Andrews, Personal Communication, April, 1990). In the American Society at least, television viewing has acquired a reputation of social undesirability (Condry, 1989).

Measuring television viewing time to any degree of accuracy is therefore a difficult task. Self reports of average American adults indicate a mean of 2 hours of television viewing in a day.

Roper Organization Data (Morgon, 1984) indicated that adults reported, viewing television for 2.59 ± 1.86 hours per day and NORC (National Opinion Research Center) data indicated similar duration for three consecutive years (Hirsch, 1981); 2.29 hours per day. Rubin (1985) measuring levels of television viewing of young adults found that they viewed for 2 hours a day. Interestingly other objective assessments by NORC, such as use of electronic devices indicated that the television set is switched on for 7 hours a day and on an average, an adult watched television for 4 hours.

Correlates of television viewing

Age differences do surface in western researches, in relation to television viewing while repeated researches have established that children were heavy viewers of television, close to 5-6 hours per day, among adults different patterns emerge. Older and retired people were found to view considerably more television than younger and employed (Condry, 1989); housewives and retired women were the heavy and extremely heavy viewers according to NORC General Social Survey data (Hirsch, 1981) and in terms of actual age, respondents with 43 years of age viewed for 3.60 hours and those around 74 years, viewed television for 5 hours a day (Rubin & Rubin, 1981).

Gender differences indicate that at all ages except in adolescence, women watch much more television than men at every hour of the day or night. Only for sporting events does the hours of viewing favour men (Condry, 1989). NORC data too

indicate that 72 percent extreme and 62 percent heavy viewers were women, the house wives and the elderly, among the American population (Hirsch, 1981).

Socio economic status data indicate that in the western societies blacks watched significantly more television than the whites and among the whites, the older, poorer and less well educated watched significantly more television than the younger, more affluent and better educated (Condry, 1989) Hirsch (1981) points out that the NORC data indicated that the extremely heavy viewers were invariably from the lower socio economic strata of the society, who were less educated and usually black.

With reference to family size and number of children, western review indicates that larger families generally watched longer hours of television than small families (Condry, 1989).

Reseaches related to psychological variables such as authoritarianism, attribution, sensation seeking, locus of control, anxiety, creativity, poor social interaction and assertiveness were found to predict television viewing time and duration (Conway & Rubin, 1991).

Programme preferences

Study of programme preferences is found to be a difficult area of research since in most western societies, multitudes of channels are available simultaneously for the viewers. Therefore, (Condry, 1989) points out that with the sheer

magnitude of programmes available for the audience with varied characteristics, programme-by-population category analysis was an extremely difficult task. However, in general, situation comedies, suspense mystery drama, and feature films were the most popular, while news and informational programmes were least popular, (AE Neilson data, cited in Condry, 1989), with the average American audience.

Reasons for viewing television

The uses and gratifications of television viewing has been widely researched. Day time television serials tended to provide entertainment, had social utility, provided relaxation or escape from problems, escape from boredom, provided advice and a chance for reality exploration for the viewers (Compesi, 1980); others found that reasons and motives for viewing were determined by the content chosen to view (Rubin, 1983). Rubin and Conway (1991) found that the viewer's personality characteristics interacted with their motives for viewing television.

It can be summarized that television viewing was an important activity in the lives of people, viewer's characteristics interact with the television viewing and viewer's derive many uses and gratifications from television viewing.

Female portrayals on television : content analysis.

"Media has ... trivialized what ever attempts women have made to redefine their roles"

Kamla Bhasin.

Content analysis is a careful and replicable way of

describing and recording the content of television (Condry 1989, p. 58). This procedure yields valuable information on what television portrays and how it portrays, which information in turn, is necessary to understand television's contribution to personality changes in people, in their attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours.

The format of a audio-visual media like television places limitations on its ability to portray every aspect of human life truthfully, mainly due to constraints of time and other resources. Television portrays important actions of the characters which are relevant for the story or topic and excludes a wide range of behaviours that are not directly related. This leads to a certain amount of distortion of reality due to omissions. However these are not as salient as some aspects that are deliberately highlighted, or ignored which have a bearing on the feelings, attitudes, values and behaviours of viewers. These are a cause for concern.

Content analysis as a research form was taken up during the 1950's in the United States (Condry, 1989) and the most extensive studies were conducted by George Gerbner and his associates. Since then this method has been immensely popular and a wide range of topics have been content analyzed; Demographic traits of portrayals such as occupations (Dominick & Rauch, 1972; Downing, 1974; McNeil, 1975) Age (Downing, 1974; Greenberg et al 1980) marital status (Signorielli, 1982), Gender frequency in appearance on television screen (Dominick & Rauch, 1972,

Greenberg et al, 1980; McNeil, 1975) Gender roles (Signorielli, 1985, provides an extensive review) and violence on television (Gerbner et al 1980, 1986).

Gender roles on television

An elaborate analysis of the content related to gender roles on television are presented below since this is the major concern of this study.

Gender issues on mass media receive wide attention the world over, due to the general awareness of discrimination against women, and more so due to the militant campaigning of the feminists in the Western countries against gender bias in media portrayals, and consequently television received a large share of criticism and censure.

Signorielli (1985) points out that extensive perusal of content analysis of gender roles indicate that the women's reality in the changing contemporary society and the television mediated women's dimension have hardly any correspondence to each other.

Every form of television programmes have been found to either misrepresent or underrepresent the female, albeit to varying degrees, the Day Time soap operas (Downing, 1974; Greenberg et al, 1982), prime time programmes (Goff, Goff, & Lehrer, 1980; Greenberg et al, 1980; McNeil, 1975; Segger & Wheeler, 1973; Signorielli, 1985), network commercials (Courtney & Whipple,

1974; Dominick & Rauch, 1972, Ferrante et al, 1988; Furnhorm & Voli, 1989) Children's television commercials (Verna, 1975) News participation in US (Singleton & Cook, 1982;) and in Canada (Soderland et al, 1989) and as news makers (Rakaw & Kranich, 1991) were all found to misrepresent women, while, prime time humorous programmes were more fair to both the genders (Stocking, Sapolsky & Zillman, 1977). Interestingly, even child characters were found to be victims of gender stereo typing (Peirce, 1989).

It must be noted that United States of America is the largest producer of television programmes as well as the exporter of the programmes to other countries. Consequently, most of the research on television content originate from America. Gallagher (1981) warns, "portrayals of women in the media in North America, are to be evaluated, not simply in terms of pervasiveness of American media within national boundaries but of their potential resonance within an increasingly global order of communication" (p. 37).

Gallagher's (1981) comprehensive analysis of portrayals of women in mass media, summarizes that across many countries of the world, just like in North America, women's images on the television most often followed traditional stereotypical patterns ignoring the social changes in their respective societies. Women were not only underrepresented and misrepresented, their portrayals were very often derogatory. This holds good for female images in United Kingdom, Canada, Columbia, Brazil, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Federal Republic of Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Iran,

Senegal, Australia, Japan, Philippines and Newzealand. However, she reports that in China, the Government controlled media did not show images detrimental to women. But off late, economic reforms in Chinese society show a slow change in which the trend in women's images on media may follow those in other countries.

With reference to Pakistan, Parvez (1984) analysed five most popular tele-series telecast during 1975-78, and found that women's portrayals were passive and most of their expressed needs were typically feminine.

Female representation on television

Overwhelming amount of research is available, especially from the United States of America with reference to female portrayals on television. Following is a brief discussion on gender representation on television in general.

Number of female characters versus male characters

Programme-wise differences of female characters as against male characters have been documented meticulously. There were twice or even more number of male characters when compared to female characters in major roles in children's programmes (Busby, 1974; Nolan et al, 1977). Prime time network programmes were clearly dominated by male characters with the average representation of males being three times greater than the females (Greenberg, 1980; Haskell, 1979; McNeil, 1975; Signorielli, 1974). In day time soap operas some researches found that the presence of male and female characters were more or less

balanced (Cassate, Andersen & Skill, 1980) whereas others found that females were under represented in terms of major and supporting roles they played, since a great majority of the females were in minor or bit roles (Segger, 1974). News related programmes too indicated that women were grossly under represented and when they did appear as Newscasters and Anchor persons, they were assigned less important events to narrate (Singleton & Cook, 1982). Even public service announcements on Network television were most often made by male announcers rather than female announcers (Schuetz & Sprafkin, 1978). And only in commercials male and female characters appear in more or less equal numbers (Bretl & Cantor, 1988) but in voice-over for advertisements, again males dominate (Verna, 1975).

Demographic traits

Age - Male characters were more often seen to be older than female characters. There were generally between 35-44 years while female characters were between 25-34 years; youthfulness of females has generally been accentuated on the television (Gerbner et al, 1980).

Occupation - Men on television had greater range of occupations while women were either restricted to the home or were in typical feminine jobs like nurses, secretaries and so on (Busby, 1974; Greenberg, 1980; McNeil, 1975; Miller & Reeves, 1976; Lemon, 1978). Interestingly, however, in actual numbers, television women were more often in professional occupations than can be seen in real population according to the US census reports

(Defleur, 1964) and single women in variably held jobs more often than married women on the television (Haskell, 1979).

Marital status - Female characters on television were more often found to be married when compared to male characters (Signorielli, 1974) and the married state reduced options for women to play active roles outside their homes (Signorielli, 1982).

Minorities and lower social class groups: Minorities and social groups such as blacks Hispanics and Asians were grossly under-represented, and even when present, played minor or bit roles in television programmes (Gerbner et al, 1982, Signorielli, 1985).

Personality traits : Trait portrayals of male and female characters on television have been extensively covered and documented, both in adult as well as children's programmes.

Men on television were independent and brave (Busby, 1974) used aggressive behaviour for solving problems (Dominick, richman & Wurtzel, 1979), reinforced and punished others equally (Downs & Gowan, 1980), were less overt in expressing happiness or unhappiness (Harris, Voorhees, 1981), discussed professional or business matters more often (Katzen, 1972), received approvals for heroic deeds (Nolan et al, 1977) were more often close to masculine stereotypes and less often androgynous (Peevers, 1979), were smart, rational and stable (Signorielli, 1974), did not

indulge in household work (Streicher, 1974), more often engaged in ordering and advising behaviour, mainly for masculine topics such as business, law, crime and government (Turrow, 1974), and boys played sports, went places and indulged in mischief (Peirce, 1989).

The female characters on television, on the other hand, were dependent, meek, affectionate and sensitive (Busby, 1974), used helping behaviour in problem solving situations (Dominick Richman & Wurtzel, 1979), were more often expressive about happiness and unhappiness (Harris & Voorhess, 1981) reinforced others rather than punished them (Downs & Gowan, 1980), were more involved in home, romance and physical appearance (Harris & Voorhess, 1981, Haskell, 1979, Katzman, 1972), were nurturant, used concordant behaviours such as affiliation, compliance and politeness (McArthur & Eisen, 1976), were more passive and less often engaged in problem solving behaviour, were dependent on others to solve their problems (McNeil, 1975) suffered unsuccessful marriages more often than men, with employed women facing unsuccessful marriages more often than housewives, and employed women were less committed to their professions (Manes & Melnyk, 1974), tend to receive appreciation for resourcefulness and physical appearance (Nolan et al, 1977), score more on Masculine traits as well as Androgynous traits, apart from Feminine traits (Peeves, 1979) were youthful, attractive, warm, sociable, and less adventurous (Signorielli, 1974), were most often engaged in household work (Dominick & Rauch, 1972, Streicher, 1974) and advised and ordered in topics related to love, family, home and

personal problems and were seldom seen possessing superior knowledge except in traditionally feminine areas (Turrow, 1974), had succorance and affiliation as predominant needs while achievement, harm avoidance were way below in need hierarchy (Parvez, 1984), were more often victims of aggression and crime rather than perpetrators (Gerbner et al, 1978) , and young girls talked on telephone, read and helped with housework (Peirce, 1989).

The above summary of male and female portrayals indicate that television faithfully follows the gender stereotypes as seen in traditional societies of all countries. Gallagher (1981) points out that when theorizing about the relationship between women and media it can be hypothesized that " . . . mass media as a cultural force do not simply reflect, but subtly and indirectly help shape social reality . . . social attitudes and behaviours are learnt through a complex process of imitation and comparison with the attitudes and behaviours presented by significant individuals and groups and by cultural forces, including the mass media" (p. 35). However, internal demands of media organizations tend to aid the mass media in playing a particularly conservative role in socialization, reinforcing traditional values and beliefs. Ample evidence has been found through projection of stereo-typical portrayals of men and women in support of the above hypothesis.

The feminist movement during the 1970's, however, brought with it a great deal of concern and criticism of media's role in

subjugation of women in the world. A great deal of criticism has been heaped on audio-visual media, especially the television, for perpetuating stereotypical gender images. Consequently some change in gender images was anticipated and few researchers studied changes in female images on television.

In a comparative analysis of female portrayals in television commercials in the United States, Bretl and Cantor (1988) found that between 1971 to 1985, some gaps in gender portrayals had been covered over the years : Men and women appeared in almost equal numbers, in the 1985 study when compared to earlier studies. Male characters were increasingly depicted as spouses and parents, but still women were more likely to be shown in the domestic setting than men, and as users of domestic products. But, over the 15 year period, narrators in the advertisements were still predominantly male.

Prime time programmes, however, were not found to incorporate changes in female images. Although there was some increase in the representation of women and slightly more heterogeneity of their occupations, women on prime time generally remained under represented and were portrayed as performing more interpersonal actions than men, who were more often engaged in decisional, political and operational actions (Vandenberg & Streckfuss, 1992). Analysis of women's occupations on prime time, over a long period from 1966 to 1989, indicated that occupational ranges for women had widened across years, single women were more often seen and their social status had improved. However, minority women were

still under represented. The interpretation of reasons for change in female portrayals as given by the researcher, was that it was economically viable to portray single women rather than a felt need due to social advocacy (Atkin, 1991). However, single, working women too were more often portrayed in romantic involvements and were seen to worry about typical feminine problems such as not being able to attend to children and inability to socialize (Reep & Dambrot, 1987).

Thus, some trends have emerged during the 90's in favour of a more equalitarian representation of women and men on the television, but there is still a lot more ground to be covered.

To summarize, it may be fruitful to use Gallagher's comments. She highlights the status of women on television in four major points, which can be the most appropriate summary of this issue; (a) marriage and parenthood are considered more important for women than men; traditional division of labour is shown as typical in marriage, (b) employed women are shown in traditionally female occupations, as subordinates to men, with little status or power, (c) women on television are more passive than men and (d) television ignores or distorts the women's movement (p 34-41).

This summary on women's image on television may hold true even in the last decade of the twentieth century. If there are changes, these are too few and far between to create a favourable impact on people's mind. Whether this holds true with regard to

Indian television needs to be studied.

Trait perceptions of televised portrayals

"Television changes us more than we change it. We do not interact with television, we encounter it".

John Condry (1989).

Theorists of television effects have often cautioned against the passivity that television encourages (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), passivity in terms of not only physical activity but also cognitive involvement. Television effects research, however, points out that the person viewing television need not be only a recipient of information and images, but may participate in the process of viewing television content. As Condry (1989) puts it, the indirect effects of television can have an impact on feelings, attitudes and values of viewers which may in turn trigger thought processes. That is, television viewing may involve considerable cognitive-affective activity on the part of viewer. Partly supporting this argument. Newman (1982) found that while a quarter of the viewers he studied did view television in a passive, thoughtless state of mind, most others had found something thought provoking in the programmes they viewed, such as relevance of the programmes for personal life, realism of the programme and so on. Similarly Livingstone (1990) found that viewing led to cognitive - affective involvement with television characters, helped viewers take sides and interpret the narrative in different ways.

In fact, the mere entry of television into the lives of

people seems to activate them for some kind of change. In an extremely interesting study on the impact of television's arrival in a tribal community in Manitoba, Canada , Grasberg (1985) found that the group that was closer in proximity to urban community and received television first, found that their human relations underwent a change. They started perceiving themselves as aggressors in human relationships, whereas in another tribal community, far away from urban setting which received television four years later, the people perceived themselves to be victims of aggression. That is, perception of television was aided by other factors in the social setting and television was perceived salient by these first time viewers. Other interesting studies throw light on how television viewing was seen as a shared and valued activity which aided marital satisfaction (Gantz, 1985).

Despite these studies, research related to viewer perception of televised portrayals, surprisingly accounts for only a small share when compared to content analysis research by experts. While content analysis does yield valuable information in a scientific and systematic manner, it does not include the feelings and attitudes of the majority of the audience who are the target groups of the television programmes. Therefore, it behoves the the researchers of television effects, to go to the audience for their views. Unless this is done, impact of the television medium can never be assessed to any degree of accuracy. Though this appears to be a sound rationale for more viewer oriented television researches, in actual practice, there are considerably few studies tapping information in this regard.

Some researches are summarized below:

Trait perceptions

Audience perception of gender portrayals has been more or less a neglected area of research, despite the fact that gender portrayals have been extensively studied through content analysis (Signorielli, 1985). Most content analysis researchers highlight bias in favour of male while under representing female on the television medium, and hypothesize that such presentations on a powerful medium like the television will lead to distortions in the gender socialization of children (Reeves & Miller, 1978). However, in the ultimate analysis, it is the audience who can give an indication as to the real power of the television medium in impacting socialization practices. Therefore, the need to study audience perceptions.

Atwood, Zahn and Webber (1986) were probably among the few researchers who directly studied trait perceptions of televised portrayals by viewers. Adult viewers in the study, both men and women specified traits such as determined, strong, independent, professional, intelligent, skilled, traditional, care giving, feminine, realistic and non-stereotypical as positive traits of female characters on television. The negative traits they attributed to female characters were silly house-wife, sex object, immoral, selfish, aggressive, evil, exploited, victims and dependent. This list, interestingly includes both traditional stereotypical as well as non stereotypical traits.

On the other hand, Zemach and Cohen (1986) found that viewers attributed only traditional feminine traits such as gentleness, sensitivity, shyness, conscientiousness, child loving and warmth to female characters and stereotypical male traits such as willingness to take risk, leadership abilities and aggressiveness to male characters. Attribution of stereotypical traits to male characters appears to be more common, while female characters are judged to possess masculine as well as feminine traits and thereby were often perceived as androgynous personalities (Dambrot, Reep & Bell, 1988).

Children too seem to perceive male and female characters differently. Boys tended to identify more with male characters with traits such as strength, attractiveness and humorous behaviour while girls identified more with both male and female characters who were attractive and realistic (Reeves & Miller, 1978).

Perceptions of roles and occupations

Researchers have found that children are especially vulnerable to perceptions of stereotypical nature of roles and occupations of televised characters. Children's conception of six occupations, Doctor, Psychiatrist, paramedics, judges, lawyers and police coincided with their stereotypical portrayals on television (Jeffres-Fox & Signorielli, 1979).

Adult viewers too found stereotypical images of male and female characters, in terms of roles performed and occupations

held. Female characters' occupations included clerical and teaching and their roles indicated housework, child care and shopping for food, while males were more often found to hold a wider variety of occupations and their roles included money management, decision-making for major spending and providing for the family (Zemach & Cohen, 1986).

Correlates of portrayal perceptions

Though research does not throw much light on what characteristics of the viewers are likely to interact with the perceptions of televised portrayals, some trends can be identified.

Age effects indicate that both children (Reeves & Miller, 1978, Jeffer-Fox & Signorielli, 1979) adolescents (Myers & Biose, 1992) as well as adults (Zemach & Cohen, 1986) were equally susceptible to stereotypical perceptions of televised portrayals.

Gender differences indicate that female viewers exhibit more non-stereotypical perceptions than male viewers (Dambrot, Reep & Bell, 1988, Reeves & Miller, 1978). However, there were other studies which do not indicate any gender differences in the perception of male and female characters of televised portrayals (Atwood, Zahn, & Webber, 1986). Interestingly male television characters always received stereotypical trait attributions, while female characters received more non-traditional, non-stereotypical trait attributions, and that too mostly by female viewers and less often by male viewers (Dambrot, Reep & Bell,

1988).

Gender role orientation of the viewers too seem to have affected trait perceptions of televised portrayals. Undifferentiated viewers rated both male and female characters low in expressive and instrumental traits, compared to how androgynous viewers rated them, while, masculine gender role orientation appeared to block their perception of expressive traits in both male and female characters on television (Dambrot, Reep & Bell, 1988). Similarly, androgynous respondents perceived television female characters to be androgynous (Goff, Goff & Lehrer, 1980), and Brazilian television viewing correlated consistently and strikingly with liberal-modern gender views (Straubhaar & Viscasilles, 1991).

Though the above studies in general sampled viewers of different socioeconomic groups, none of them report SES differences in perceptions of portrayals on television. There certainly seems to be dearth of information in this regard.

Perceptions of portrayals and behaviours of viewers

The question how perceptions such as the above relate to behaviours of the viewers have been addressed by a few studies. Morgan (1984), studying television viewing in relation to overall perception of life, found that heavy viewers felt that their life was bad when compared to light viewers.

Interestingly self perceptions were found to be affected by

television. Affinity to television was found to be related to roles, traits and feelings viewers attributed to themselves (Newton & Buck, 1985) perceptions of elderly portrayed as assets and useful citizens was found to be related to elderly viewers' positive self concepts (Korzenny & Neuendory, 1980), and viewing of non stereotypical male and female images enhanced the viewer's independence of judgment in a testing situation and self confidence while giving a speech (Jennings-Walstedt, Geis & Brown, 1980), and emphasis on physical attractiveness of female portrayals affected young female viewers' conception of their own body images (Myer Jr. & Bioca, 1992).

Sexual content on television too seems to affect perception of viewers. Older viewers perceived sexual content to be too explicit and totally unsuitable for child audience and most often detrimental to teen-age audience (Sprafkin, Silverman & Rubinstein, 1980) and viewing of sexual content on television was related to satisfaction of their own sex life among adolescent viewers (Baran, 1976).

Considering the importance to viewers perception, this review indicates that western researchers have not invested much effort in this regard. Atwood, Zahn and Webber (1986) point out that even when viewers were studied, the researches employed experimental designs or close-ended surveys, but rarely do audience get an opportunity to say what they think.

Therefore, there was need for open-ended interviews with viewers to help them express their perceptions, feelings and

attitudes about the content of television. Atwood, Zahn and Webber's (1986) study used such as format and this format was found suitable even for the present study.

Social Reality of Television

"It is not reasonable to ask television to be more realistic, to always tell the truth, whatever that is. But television could be more responsible in the way it portrays the "fact" of the world, it could balance some of its most common distortions by a dose, every now and then of the truth".

John Condry (1989).

The age of mass communication has brought with it an increasing contact with mediated representation of the complex physical and social world (Defleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989). Researchers studying the process and effects of mass communication have developed several propositions that are based on the principle that meanings and interpretations of reality are socially constructed.

Foremost among the researchers who espoused the ability of television, mass media's most prolific form, to impact reality perceptions is George G^ber^Aner. At the Annenberg School of Communication, Pennsylvania State University, Gerbner and his associates have long worked on the "cultural indicators" project which dealt extensively on the role television played in reality perceptions of viewers. Studying perception of violence on television they proposed the theory of cultivation which attempts to explain the process through which television content influences viewers' reality beliefs.

Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli (1986) describe television as a centralized system of story telling. It is a part and parcel of daily life and its various programmes bring a relatively coherent world of common images and messages into every home. The repetitive nature of television's mass produced messages and images form the mainstream of a common symbolic environment.

The cultivation theory

The cultivation theory is based on the persistent and pervasive influence of the television on viewers perception of their social world.

They claim that the term "cultivation" for television's contribution to conceptions of social reality is not simply a fancier word for "effects", nor does it imply a one-way process. The effects of this pervasive medium on the composition of the symbolic environment are subtle, complex and interrelated to other influences. It is an interaction between the medium and its audience, which is a continuous process as long as the audience use the medium. Thus "..... television neither simply creates nor reflects images, opinions and beliefs, rather, it is an integral aspect of a dynamic process, the messages are created and projected based on the societal needs and ideologies which are perceived and incorporated into the behaviours and belief systems by the viewers who in turn develop their identities based on the salient messages they perceive" (p.23).

Television, thus links the individual to a larger, if synthetic world, a world of television's own making. Most of the individuals with certain social and psychological characteristics and world views, who also have fewer alternatives as attractive and compelling as the television, use it as their major source of cultural understanding and participation. To this extent the television dominates their sources of information and as continued exposure to television mediated messages occurs, it is likely to reiterate, confirm and nourish their values and perspectives. This process is called the "cultivation process" by Gerbner and his associates.

As successive generations grow with television's version of the world, it reiterates the beliefs and converts non believers into believers of the television mediated reality. That is, viewers enter and remain in the "mainstream" of the television world.

Mainstreaming, thus, means that television cultivates common perspectives, by overriding differences in beliefs and behaviour that arise due to other social, cultural and demographic influences. It represents, in short "... the homogenization of divergent views and a convergence of disparate viewers" (Gerbner et al 1986, p.31)".

The second major concept in the cultivation analysis is called "resonance". They claim that cultivation will be most

pronounced when other aspects of one's social environment are most congruent and thereby "resonate" with television's message. For instance, people living in high crime infested areas, when encounter violence on television screen, will receive a double dose of violence related messages and are often found to show strong association between television viewing and fear.

They summarize by adding that the cultivation analysis of reality perceptions are designed primarily for television and it tends to focus on the enduring and common consequences of growing and living with television.

The process through which the cultivation of beliefs occurs

James Potter (1991) in a recent article pointed out that research literature related to cultivation of reality beliefs through television messages has indicated that television does contribute to reality beliefs, but does not throw light on "how" this process of cultivation operates. He summarized three important ideas that may indicate an underlying process through which cultivation occurs; (a) the process of cultivation may contain subprocesses of learning and construction, (b) the influence of cultivation may be different with first order estimates and second order beliefs and, (c) not all people at a given viewing level are equally susceptible to the cultivation effects. He insists that research tapping information with regard to the above processes is critical in order to understand the effects of television in construction of social reality.

Hawkins and Pingree (1982) while reviewing empirical research on the cultivation hypothesis, presented a two-component model of cultivation process in which "learning" and "construction" were the subprocesses. Potter (1991) offers another, a more elaborate model which includes "learning", "construction" as well as "generalization". The concepts in this model are defined as follows :-

- * Cultivation is the relationship between television viewing and real-world measures, whether for first order estimates or second order beliefs.
- * Learning is the relationship between television exposure and television world perceptions, be this for first order estimates or second order beliefs.
- * Construction is the relationship between a television world perception and real world perception of the same order.
- * Generalization is the relationship between first order estimates and second order beliefs in the same world either television or real world.

An explanation of first order estimates and second order beliefs is called for here. Hawkins and Pingree (1982) define first order estimates as those in which the viewers are required to make quantitative estimates of the occurrence of certain event. E.g. Percentage of women are employed in professional occupations on television or real world. Second order beliefs assess generalized beliefs about the world. For instance "Do you think women are employed as professionals ?" Would be a question to which the viewer needs to respond. Probably as a rating scale

such as "very often" "sometimes", "rarely".

Using this model Potter (1991) found among adolescents the evidence of the construction subprocess i.e. adolescent's perception revealed a relationship between television world perception and their real world perceptions with regard to topics such as affluence, divorce, females and health. The qualitative estimates of real world the adolescents made for the above topics were significantly related to their television world perceptions. No conclusive support was found for other subprocesses studied. That is, adolescent's real world perceptions were coloured by television perceptions. Thus further research is clearly indicated in this dimension of social reality perceptions.

Correlates of social reality perceptions

The third contention in the previous discussion, that not all viewers at a given viewing level are equally susceptible to the cultivation effects is an indicator for a further study in this direction.

Gerbner et al (1986) argue that cultivation effects are present for all viewers, but their influence varies as a product of the viewers' personality characteristics. Thus emerged a wide range of studies attempting to assess individual differences and their contribution to reality perceptions of television content. Some of the most salient among the research findings may be summarized as follows :

Age : Hawkins and Pingree (1981) argue that the relationship

between age and perceived reality could be a complicated one. It can be predicted that stronger television influences would operate on young children who would be in a more inflexible and dogmatic, Concrete operational stage in their cognitive abilities. On the other hand, the limitation of their cognitive abilities may prevent young children from making inferences about the causes and messages of televised actions. That is young children do not possess information processing abilities to construct social reality beliefs from televised content, not probably until the age of adolescence.

Empirical evidence suggests that there is a curvilinear relationship between degree of perceived reality and age (Potter, 1988). For instance, research conducted on children from 4 through 16 years consistently showed that the reality beliefs gradually decreased as age increased (Greenberg & Reeves, 1976; Hawkins, 1977), while Ostman and Jeffers (1980), reported that reality beliefs increased from age 18 through 87.

Gender : Gender differences tend to be mixed. There are studies which show that females had high social reality perceptions (Greenberg & Dominick, 1969) while others found that gender differences were based on types of programmes (Elliott & Slater, 1980), and some with no gender differences (Chaney, 1970).

Socio economic status : Effects of social class on reality perceptions are mixed. While some studies indicated that low

socio-economic group exhibited higher reality perceptions (Greenberg & Gorden, 1972, Greenberg & Dominic, 1969) others did not find any difference among low and high SES groups (Elliot & Slater, 1980). However reality perceptions about soap operas were found to be related to education (Thomas, 1978), among the socioeconomic variables.

IQ : Children with lower levels of IQ were found to be more susceptible to television's effects on their reality beliefs (Greenberg & Reeves, 1976; Donohue & Donohue, 1977) while Chaney (1970) found no such relationship. Cognitive activity and its involvement in reality perception were found by Morison, Kelly & Gardner (1981); as age increased children are cognitively capable of a wider range of rules and strategies to interpret reality of television. For instance, children who were capable of high levels of inferential abilities, perceived television to be less realistic than those who had low involvement and less inferential abilities (Pingree, 1983).

Life experiences : People have their own experience, other mass media, friends, family and their own beliefs which could either aid or dispel the influences of social reality of television. (Hawkins & Pingree, 1981). These factors may operate in three ways, (a) television message is believed to be real when at least a minimum degree of confirmation from real world experience occurs, (b) Contrary messages from a very often used and reliable source may provide disconfirmation of television message, and (c) reality perceptions can be stronger in certain

population subgroups when their collective belief is confirmed through a television message (Hawkins & Pingree, 1981).

Empirical literature shows that people's perception of television reality is less related to their personal experience and more to other sources of information (Greenberg & Reeves, 1976)., and among personal experiences family cohesiveness and low conflicts over television viewing in the life of adolescents, discounted the effects of television salience in their lives (Gross & Morgan, cited in Hawkins & Pingree, 1981).

Exposure to television : In a way, Gerbner's cultivation theory is totally based on influence of television when people are exposed to it for a greater amount of time. Researchers contend that over time, heavy television viewers tend, to accumulate more television memories than do light viewers. "Television related memories would not in general, be used in deciding what the real world is like because they come from an unreal source. However, reality monitoring procedure is small but relatively constant; the more television related memories a person has, the more such memories tend to incorrectly be used in constructing social reality (Shapiro & Long, 1991, p. 608)."

Gerbner et al (1986) while studying perception of violent content on television claimed that "... the amount of exposure to television was an important indicator of the strength of its contribution to ways of thinking and acting. For heavy viewers television virtually monopolizes and subsumes other sources of

information, ideas and consciousness. Thus we suggest that the more time we spend living in the world of television, the more likely are we to report perceptions of social reality which can be traced to or are in congruence with televisions most persistent representation of life and society (p. 14)."

It is hard to find a more emphatic argument in support of heavy television viewing and cultivation of beliefs. Empirical literature too, to a certain extent support the above argument. People who view the greatest amounts of television have been reported to exhibit the highest levels of perceived reality (Elliot & Slate, 1980; Greenberg et al, 1982; Greenberg & Reeves, 1976), while heavy viewers found greater congruence between social reality and symbolic reality in an Israel sample (Zemach & Cohen, 1986). On the other hand Hughes (1980) and Hirsch (1981) reanalyzing the same data that Gerbner and his team used, found scarce support for cultivation effects due to heavy television viewing.

Television viewing motives : Certain motives for watching television have been found to be consistently related to higher perceptions of reality; information seeking, arousal (Rubin, 1979) and entertainment (Rubin, 1983) were the most salient motives for predicting perception of reality of television. Entertainment motive positively contributed and escape motive did not contribute to television reality perceptions.

Critical attention to television : Television viewing habits,

other than the amount of television viewing, can have an interesting relationship with reality perceptions. Active viewers, i.e. the fans of soap opera programmes were found to be less likely to believe in the reality of soap opera characters (Pingree, Starrel and Hawkins, 1981, cited in Hawkins Pingree, 1981). Another study found that the more the emotional involvement with the characters, and the lesser the viewer employs cognitive activity in interpreting television content the more the reality perceptions of television (Rouner, 1984). Morgan and Shanahan (1991) found that adolescents of Argentina, who watch more television are significantly more likely to agree that people should obey authority, approve of limits on freedom of speech and to think that it is someone's own fault if he or she is poor.

Critical attention may also subsume, the choice of content that viewers select for viewing. Hawkins and Pingree (1981) argue that symbolic messages presented in different types of programmes may not be uniform in creating social reality beliefs. Empirical research falls short of providing evidence in this regard. However, Armstrong, Neuendorf and Brentor (1992) found that greater exposure to entertainment television was related to over estimation of the black's socio economic status and higher exposure to television news was associated with belief of black poverty.

Measurement issues in cultivation analysis

Measurement of social reality perceptions has come under fire for the following reasons.

* Low correlations and inconsistent relationships: There is a strong criticism that the theoretical basis of the cultivation of beliefs has been based on low correlations. Hirsch (1981) reanalysed National Operation Research Council (NORC) data that Gerbner and his associates used, and claims that television effects in cultivation of reality beliefs is low or non-existent. The R^2 values were consistently below 0.10 in many researches and cannot be reported as worthy relationships. Gerbner answers back to this accusation by stating that the cultivation hypothesis can still be powerful because of its pervasiveness and its constancy. He claims that television is a powerful medium, its messages are stable and an accumulated total exposure to it is what counts, and everyone who watches television regularly should be affected.

* Problems of definition : Potter (1988) points out that there have been problems even in defining social reality as a concept. The problems arise due to (a) the need for a theoretical and conceptual clarity and (b) defining the concept on the assumption that the reality of the message is based on the medium itself and not with the perceivers. This perspective ignores the possibility that individuals may differ from each other in perception of reality of the same message. With reference to the conceptual confusion in defining social reality, Potter (1988) has something to say that is crucial for

measurement of social reality perceptions as well as interpretations of research results:

There is a consensus among researchers that perceived reality of television messages is a multi dimensional concept (Gerbner et al, 1981; Hawkins, 1977): Potter (1988) argues that the different dimensions in the perceived reality concept are independent of each other at the conceptual level. For instance a viewer may feel the people in television are not like those in real life (low social reality belief), but she might like a particular portrayal and would like to imitate it (high identification) and may feel that the portrayal may teach her how to change her life for better (social expectations role, personal utility). On the other hand, there may be a viewer who might find television characters highly similar to real life people (high social reality) but may find them uninspiring (low identification) and feel that there is nothing that she can learn from the characterization (low social expectations role, low personal utility). This has a bearing on the construct validation of the concept of social reality (Potter, 1988). This provocative argument has some relevance to the present study and will be further elaborated in the section on discussion of the results of the study.

* Measurement tools : Tools have been developed generally based on the assumptions that (a) perceived reality is an attitude that varies across people rather than as a characteristic of the media content, (b) perceived reality treated as a synonym for media accuracy and (c) the assumption that viewers have a

global, summary opinion of net reality across all types of programmes (Potter ,1988 p.24). The format of tools has most often been the Likert type statements which needed responses in terms of the extent to which the viewer agreed with each statement. That is, most often, second order beliefs of reality have been studied (Greenberg & Dominick, 1969; Ostman & Jeffers, 1980, Rubin, 1979, 1983).

Social reality beliefs in the present study

Social reality beliefs of television messages has not yet been explored among the Indian television viewers. This concept thus required a preliminary exploratory approach as far as Indian viewers were concerned. The theoretical aspects of this issue are discussed in the Indian review section. The measurement concerns are however, presented here.

Given the strident criticisms by reviewers of social reality researches, it was however necessary to use a reasonably refined tool for the measurement of social reality. Therefore a tool was developed with 4 items keeping in mind (a) the format of the likert method with three alternative response categories, (b) the specificity of the content based on which reality perceptions were being sought i.e. the reality perceptions were specifically studied with reference to television serials portrayal of female characters, (c) cross check items were used, (d) all items were interspersed with two other scales.

To sum up, social reality perceptions of television messages

have tremendous relevance for contemporary society, since, television has invaded the life of people and has the potential for impacting their attitudes and beliefs. Research has certainly indicated that social reality of television (a) is a complex concept and needs further investigation in order to clarify and define the concept (b) is related to a wide range of personal, demographic and television related characteristics of the viewers and (c) is a concept which may hold the key to the entire gamut of "television effects" research but needs extensive exploration in order to further establish its value for understanding the interaction between television content and the viewer's values, attitudes and behaviour.

Social Expectations Role of Television

"The images of television ... some of them accurate and useful whereas, others are inaccurate and used nonetheless"

John Condry (1989).

Perhaps the most obvious fact about human beings is their intensively social nature. A human being is a lot more than a living organism responding to stimuli. Because of her intense social nature, the individual is constantly involved in social interaction with others.

Defleur and Ball Rokeach (1989) point out that stable patterns of social interaction are what give direction to human conduct. This social interaction takes place in an organized pattern. The patterns that arise out of stabilization of rules for interpersonal interaction are collectively called "social

organization".

Social organization has four major components : (a) Norms are general rules that are understood and followed by all members of a group, (b) roles define specialized parts people play in group activities, rather than general guidelines for all members of the society, (c) ranking indicates the power, authority and prestige enjoyed by each member of a group in relation to others, and (d) sanctions are administered within groups for the purpose of maintaining social control, where negative sanctions are used to punish deviants and positive sanctions to reward conformity.

Thus social organization shows how stable social expectations characterize a social system and can be powerful influence on behaviour of the people.

Mass media and social expectations

In 1970, Defleur propounded a simple "cultural norms theory" which dealt with the following ideas....."The mass media, through selective presentations and emphasis of certain themes, create impressions among audiences that common cultural norms concerning the emphasized topics are structured or defined in some specific way. Since individual behaviour is usually guided by cultural norms with respect to a given topic or consideration, the media would then serve indirectly to influence conduct". (Defleur & Ball Rokeach, 1989, p.221).

This basic idea was further expanded by incorporating it with

the social organization theory. This revised version was called the Social Expectations theory. Defleur and Ball Rokeach (1989) say that the mass media are a major source of information regarding the social organization of specific groups in modern society. That is, the content of mass media describes or portrays the norms, roles, rankings, and sanctions of virtually every kind of group known in contemporary life. Social expectations theory, therefore, pertains to socialization influences of mass communication that result from their portrayals of stable patterns of group life. Such stable patterns define what people are expected to do when they relate to each other.

The basic idea can be summarized as follows : (a) Media frequently portrays social organization's norms, roles, rankings and sanctions. (b) These portrayals may either be accurate or distorted and misleading. (c) members of the audience assimilate this information and tend to consider them to be the social expectations of the society. (d) These expectations become part of people's prior understanding of behaviour that will be required of them as participants within a social group. (e) This accumulated information about their own and other's behaviour expectations become their general knowledge of the group behaviour in a social setting. (f) Thus definitions of these expectations serve as general guidelines for behaviour towards others. That is, it indicates, what roles to play in a specific group, how others will act towards them in a variety of social circumstances.

Thus Social Expectations role of media assumes that media provide information regarding the rules of social conduct that the individual remembers and that directly shapes the individuals' overt behaviour. Social Expectations theory portray the media as an agent of unwitting and unplanned instruction that links socialization and the social organization (Defleur & Ball Rokeach 1989).

Television, in particular has a very powerful role to play in creating knowledge about social expectations among the audiences, since television portrays a wide range of characters belonging to a variety of roles and ranks and indicates in a subtle manner the norms they need to follow and the sanctions they would otherwise receive (Condry, 1989).

Uses and gratification research with reference to television throws some light on the television's role in the teaching - learning process of social expectations. Viewers with instrumental needs tend to view television in order to learn something from it. For instance viewers of a wide age range from 14-79 years watched regularly and found that television programmes provided valuable advice by indirectly addressing problems that they themselves are likely to face (Compesi, 1980), while creative viewers and those who were socially inclined looked for more information of useful nature from television. (Gonway & Rubin, 1991).

The format of the television programmes has received less research attention in this regard, however, college students perceived day time dramas to be providing insight into the social expectations of the contemporary world (Rubin, 1985).

It is obvious that research has not looked at Social Expectations perception as a variable, and Defleur and Ball Rokeach (1989) also suggest that it can be a broad framework, rather than a set of propositions, which can be directly tested. Therefore it becomes necessary to look at research literature on what uses people perceive from television viewing and whether television has the ability to teach them something about their social world.

That is about the general content of television. However with reference to certain specific areas projected on television it is still possible to ask questions of viewers how educative or useful they find a certain piece of information, whether a certain kind of portrayal provides information on desirable behaviours, what is expected of individuals in a given situation and so on, since television does project a wide range of characters, story lines, problems, solutions, roles and behaviours. Further, television can affect the psychological makeup of individuals, provide a great deal of the kind of information that can be used to form attitudes and beliefs "(Condry, 1989. p. 121).

With regard to the specific areas that television portrays, a lot of content analysis research indicates that violence (Gerbner et al, 1986) gender roles (Signorielli, 1985) have perhaps received a wide coverage, while family roles, social values, old age, health portrayals and occupational roles, religion and racial issues (Condry, 1989) are some of the areas that television covers regularly. For a discerning viewer, there is a lot to learn from these television portrayals; for instance, experimental research shows that children do consider using violence to resolve a conflict is alright and use such behaviour more so when they have watched violent content in children's programmes (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1963). Condry (1989) summarizes a wide range of studies that indicate that violent attitudes and behaviour can be triggered off by repeated viewing of violent content, where the viewer is desensitized to violence and learns to use it in daily life more frequently. With reference to the other areas of portrayals, audience learning is not often studied.

Using Social Expectations frame work, imbibing of violent attitudes and behaviour can thus be explained. Similarly gender role perceptions and learning of gender roles also have received considerable research attention, which conclude that sex role portrayals on television have a potential for teaching sex role attitudes and behaviour (Beuf, 1974, Morgan, 1987).

In summary, social expectations theory suggests a research frame work through which interpretation of the role television

plays in acting as an instructor to avid audience is possible. Interestingly, hardly any studies have directly measured viewers perception of television's role in providing normative behaviour standards for people to learn.

This study tries to explore this dimension to a certain extent, in the Indian context. This theoretical position in relation to the Indian television has been discussed in greater detail under the review of Indian television literature.

Identification with television portrayals

"And the imagery of television washes over us whether we are aware of it or not."

John Condry (1989).

Mass media experts claim that media contributes considerably to the socialization of the individual. The more senses the media impact, the more powerful is its influence on the individuals. One of the theoretical positions that can explain the contribution mass media could make in the socialization of the individual is the Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura and his associates developed during the 1960's (Defleur & Ball Rokearch, 1989).

Social Learning Theory

Social or observational learning theory has not been developed to account for mass media effects on people but rather, it is a general explanation of how people acquire new forms of behaviour.

Briefly, social learning theory implies that individual encounters a variety of stimuli in the environment, and tends to respond to powerful stimuli. When those responses evoke positive results, the response patterns are reinforced thus aiding the recurrence of similar responses which will gradually settle as habit patterns within the individual. When this linkage between stimulus-response occurs due to unplanned conditions and learning of behaviour takes place incidentally, it is termed as operant conditioning. Central to social learning theory is behavioural imitation, which is coupled with reinforcement. For instance, a person sees a model use a particular form of behaviour in order to solve a problem, and if the said behaviour helps the model to succeed, the observer may try to imitate such a behaviour when she faces a similar problem hoping to get similar results. When the adopted behaviour does result in resolution of the problem and thus positive reinforcement occurs, the behaviour enters the general behavioural repertoire of the person and tends to become a habit with repeated use. Thus, incidental learning of a certain pattern of behaviour has taken place (Bandura, 1977).

Television and Social Learning Theory

In spite of its general nature, Social Learning or Modelling Theory is particularly relevant to the study of mass communication because the portrayal or description of social life is a frequent subject in media content. (Defleur & Ball Rokeach, 1989). Television in particular provides innumerable, attractive models of every role, social class and behaviour (Condry, 1989) to serve as models which can aid in this elaborate process of

behaviour acquisition. Thus, if viewers watch a television character being reinforced positively for specific forms of behaviour repeatedly they see the advantage of imitating such behaviour. Observed television portrayals, tend to be imitated, and if these behaviours are reinforced positively, become habit patterns in the long run, establishing the S-R bond.

Operant conditioning, that is, inadvertent learning of behaviour is even more possible, due to the television's potential for providing vicarious learning opportunities. Thus, television images have the potential to serve as effective models for imitation in real life.

Defining this process

Social learning theorists have borrowed the term "Identification" from the psychoanalysts to label this entire process. The term "Identification" originates from psychoanalysis where it is considered to be a unconscious process where the child takes on behaviour patterns without conscious realization. This entire process, according to psychoanalysts occurs as a resolution to a conflict.

Social Learning Theorists, however, differ in their perception. They claim that, identification could be a deliberate, conscious effort on the part of the individual in order to resolve a conflict, improve their situation or derive some kind of satisfaction. There may be conscious search for a model and identification with the model's behaviour. Even if

behaviour of the model is imbibed unconsciously, the Social Learning Theorists have a name for it; vicarious learning through operant conditioning.

Identification is perceived to be "a psychological process that contributes to a sense of who one is and who one wants to be" (Cole & Cole, 1990. p. 345). Psychologists have divergent opinions regarding the mechanism through which identification may occur. The psychoanalytic perspective and the Social Learning perspective have been briefly presented above. This research looks at identification from the Social Learning perspective. Therefore the process of identification as discussed under Social Learning Theory needs further discussion.

Process of Identification

Cole and Cole (1990) discusses the process from the child development point of view while Defleur and Ball Rakeach (1989) discuss it from the point of view of the mass media effects. Both the perspectives are relevant for understanding Identification in relation to television characters and therefore a general process is discussed below blending the above two perspectives.

The primary requirement for the process to commence, is the **availability** of the model, either directly or through a medium. This is followed by **attention** to or observation of the model by the individual, which leads to the **realization** that the observed behaviour would be functional in bringing about some derived

result if adopted in a particular situation. Realization is followed by **memorizing** the behaviours of the model, to be recalled and used later when confronted with a relevant situation. **Motor reproduction** of the said behaviour occurs which leads to relief, satisfaction and other forms of reward. When reproduction of the model's behaviour result in repeated positive gains, it tends to **motivate** and the behaviour can become part of the behavioural repertoire of the individual. In other words, the behaviour becomes **habitual**. Thus, complete identification with the model has occurred.

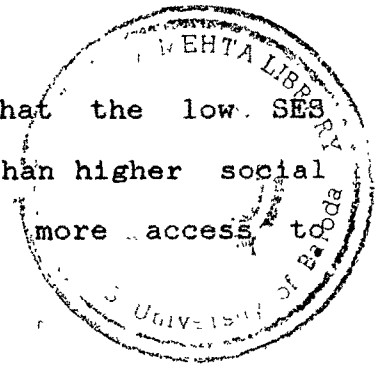
Correlates of Identification with television portrayals

Empirical evidence with regard to identification with television portrayals indicates that the following demographic and social characteristics have been found to be related to identification with television portrayals.

Age : Very young children (Bandura Ross & Ross, 1963) those between 6-12 years (Messaris, & Kerr, 1984; Reeves & Miller, 1978) and adolescents (Fox, 1980, Vijayashree, 1986) do identify with television portrayals. Research related to adults identification is not as often taken up as that of children. However, an interesting experiment indicated that college age women were affected by television content in judging themselves in relation to a hypothetical situation which would affect their self confidence (Jennings - Walstedt, Geis & Brown, 1980).

Social Economic Status : Surprisingly identification studies do not throw much light on SES variables influence on

identification though it is commonly found that the low SES individuals view television for longer hours than higher social class group (Condry, 1989) and tend to have more access to television models.



Gender : Research points out clear gender differences in identification with televised portrayals. Young boys and girls preferred programmes of characters of their own gender (Sprafkin & Leibert, 1978) and tend to identify more with same sex portrayals (Reeves & Miller, 1978).

Reeves and Miller's (1978) study found that while all boys identified with only male characters and not with female characters, one third of the girls identified with male characters. Both boys and girls were aware that male portrayals on television exhibited more desirable traits than female portrayals. It is also interesting to note that girl's choices reflected greater freedom that is given to girls to identify with portrayals of the opposite gender. Similar findings among 4th, 5th & 6th graders were reported by Eastman and Liss (1980).

Reeves and Miller also found that the traits that boys and girls highlight in the character are different; while boys emphasize physical strength, girls generally are more influenced by physical attractiveness, of the televised characters. However, adolescent girls seem to have preference for androgynous characters as indicated by two studies; Vijayashree (1986) and Fox (1980) found that adolescent girls identified more with

independent, assertive, intelligent, smart and well educated female characters and wished to be like them while equating themselves to less attractive characters (Fox, 1980).

Behaviours identified with

While it is possible to observe and learn a wide range of behaviours from appropriate models, television research suggests two major areas :

Aggression : Research indicates that children who watched aggressive characters being vicariously and positively reinforced, wanted to identify with that character (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1963) while adolescents' reported aggressive behaviour correlated highly with their viewing of violent content on television (Greenberg & Dominick, 1972). Further, there is a whole lot of research indicating vicarious identification with the victims of aggression and consequent fear that the world was a mean place to live in among children, adolescents as well as adults (Gerbner, et al, 1982). Berkowitz (1982) through various experimental researches concluded that media "activate" ideas, thoughts, emotions and behavioural tendencies associated with aggression. That is people who repeatedly watched television aggression loose inhibition to behave in an aggressive manner. This adds a different and an anxiety provoking dimension to the identification process.

Gender Roles : Television consistently portrays traditional stereotypical gender roles (see section on content analysis of

gender portrayals in this review for further details). That is, the role models available for men and women are generally stereotypical and research shows that viewers do tend to identify with televised portrayals. However, among the limited choices they have in televised portrayals, girls tend to identify more often with counter stereotypical portrayals (Vijayashree, 1986; Reeves & Miller, 1978), while boys preferred stereotypical role models (Reeves & Miller, 1978). Television viewing experiences both affect and are affected by gender schemata, especially in the case of children (Calvert & Huston, 1987).

Other behaviours like health orientation, food habits, beautification, career-orientation, family roles and others with reference to identification behaviour have not been much studied (Condry, 1989).

In summary (a) television is a powerful instrument in providing observable models for identification, (b) the claims of Social Learning Theorists have been found to test positive with regard to effectiveness of television models, (c) identification with television models tends to occur across a wide age range and (d) there were clear gender differences with females preferring more androgynous models and males preferring more stereotypical models for identification.

Thus television effects on identification could be concluded by Comstock's (1978) comments that abundant research evidence is available in support of the argument that there may be conditions

where observation through television exerts a stronger impact on imitative learning than does observation in real life (cited in Jeffres, 1986).

Women's issues

Western television is basically an entertainment media, totally funded by commercial organizations. Therefore, hardly ever, efforts are made to project development oriented messages with the exception of health and safety public service announcements every now and then. Occasionally however, some efforts have been made to portray women's issues. For instance "Play for today" a series of serious drama on the British television carried a few plays depicting feminist views and characters during the years 1976-77. Ironically they constructed the liberated women in a way which effectively worked to delegitimize feminist issues (Baehr, 1980), and in Netherlands, since 1970's repeated attempts have been made to project women's issues on television which, unfortunately were not very well received, except for a few attempts in later half of 1980's (Hermes & Zoomen, 1987).

Thus the review on western literature may be concluded. The major concepts chosen for the study do have either theoretical as well as empirical value for television research in India. These will be expounded in the following chapter on Indian review of television researches.

Doordarshan - The Indian television

The general tenor of Doordarshan's programmes counter to its stray efforts to be purposive on women's behalf.

Chhabra, R. (1988).

Television in India started on an experimental basis, with the financial assistance from the UNESCO, in the year 1959. Gradually agricultural telecasts became important programmes from 1967. Initially, the only aim of television was educating the masses. The growth of television in India was slow until 1975. The real break through came with the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) in 1975. Educational programmes were beamed to 2400 villages in the backward regions of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan. The SITE experiment proved to be immensely successful and was followed by Kheda Communications Project in Gujarat State (Agrawal & Malek, 1986).

After the above two successful educational experiments on television, development of the Indian television, The Doordarshan, was rapid. Commercials were introduced in the year 1976. National Network Transmission was initiated in the year 1982 and the second channel was inaugurated in the year 1984.

Programme duration increased gradually with increasing infrastructural facilities. By the time, this investigation started, Doordarshan had been functioning for 31 years, with the National Network Transmission a decade old. There were as many as 523 television transmitters covering approximately 78 percent

of the population of the country. Facilities for software production had improved tremendously with 21 programme production centres spread across the country (Business India, November, 1991).

Doordarshan and development

Doordarshan is a state controlled medium. Approximately two thirds of all its programme are produced by its production centres and one third by other agencies which are normally commercially sponsored.

Doordarshan's envisaged role is to educate, inform and entertain in that order. In the first two decades of its existence, Doordarshan did educate and inform, albeit, to a very small population. The role of entertainment, started surfacing at the time of Asiad in 1982. Incidentally, transmission in colour and availability of colour television sets, helped rapid diffusion of television as an entertainment media. Commercial sponsoring of programmes too, added its own might in converting Doordarshan as mainly an entertainment media.

It must be noted, however, that Doordarshan does make serious efforts at showing a balanced version of programmes of educative value, informative value as well as pure entertainment. How far its major objective of educating the masses is being fulfilled is a debatable question.

Doordarshan and gender issues

It is hard to find a more contentious issue than media and women. There are controversies galore about how women and women's issues are projected on the media, especially with reference to television. Strident criticisms abound.

Bhasin (-----) highlights two points with reference to media's role in gender issues, (a) media help perpetuate inequalities in the home by glorifying the subservient wife's role and devoted mother's role and (b) by creating distorted self images among women since most women are uncritical consumers of anti-woman media (p. 2).

Indian constitution pledges the country to creating equality of status for all its people, irrespective of their social or demographic traits. To that end, it dedicates itself to elimination of poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, ill-health and gender inequality. All its welfare programmes and developmental efforts are claimed to be aimed towards this goal.

Doordarshan, as a very useful, influential tool in the hands of the Government, is claimed to be it's voice for eliminating the evils of this society. Therefore, women's issues were always important for Doordarshan. Doordarshan was pledged to provide development programmes with specific reference to women's issues.

Serious attempt was made initially to combine a number of developmental issues in the form of a drama so that the format

hardwork and perseverance. It depicted a success story of women establishing a cooperative coir products cottage industry. The 40 episode serial highlighted the hardships, cooperation, family resistance and small triumphs of the women, (c) **Bhadka Bale che Zindagi** (My life is in flames) was an interview based programme on burning of women, based on real life incidents. It had tremendous impact on the viewers and due to the resistance from some quarters, only three of the four episodes could be telecast. This programme highlighted the fact that fictitious depiction of problems can never match the real depiction in terms of impact on viewers, and (d) **Nyay-Anyay** presented a real life story in a drama format which was followed by a simplified version of the legal provisions given by the lawyer. The themes dealt with marriage, divorce, maintenance, custody of children, dowry, rape, eve teasing, property rights, working women in organized and unorganized sector and so on (Kalwachwala, 1986).

These above programmes are but few exceptions. In general the vast majority of the programmes projected traditional stereotypical female images in terms of traits portrayed, roles and occupations, held, and general behaviour exhibited.

Following wide spread protests by the women's movement and a general awareness created due to the UN declared Women's Decade (1975-1985) coming to a close with hardly any positive change in the women's status in the world, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry Instituted an analysis of the women's dimension on the Indian television. The Report of the Working Group on Software

for Doordarshan (1985) had declared that, "... Middle class ideologies of women's roles as wives and mothers provide the underlying basis for most programmes. In a country where 36 percent of the agricultural workforce is female, women continue to be projected as predominantly nonproducers and as playing a limited role outside the home. Women are basically seen as performing a decorative function and as being marginal to national growth and development. Their primary place is seen as being within the home and this value is reflected in the content and setting of most television programmes. The plural nature of Indian culture and the diverse roles that women play is neither acknowledged nor communicated. This results in reinforcing of the stereotyped images and role specifications of women and in a unidimensional projection of their reality" (p. 141).

They further strongly recommended the following with regard to the women's issues "... we believe that television, post independent India's gift to society, reaching as it does to the very hearths and homes of people, is the most powerful media instrument to support this (women's equality) cause. It can help shape new man-woman relationships and bring critical awareness of rights and possibilities to women confined to the four walls of their home or otherwise lacking access to information ... We therefore urge that improvement of women's condition, status and image be defined as major objective of Doordarshan ... The government must, at the earliest, formulate clearcut guidelines regarding the positive portrayal of women on the television. This portrayal must take note of women in all facets of their

lives - as workers, significant contributors to family survival and national economy and it must further endeavor to integrate women on terms of equality in all sectors of national life and the development process. Conversely, the portrayal of men must include them as sensitive, caring individuals prepared to be partners in household and childcare responsibilities. There guidelines must emphasize that women's dimension must form an integral part of all Doordarshan programmes and not merely confined to women's programmes nor isolated attempts to discuss women's issues (p.140).

A more vivid description of the women's dimension on Doordarshan is hard to find. Interestingly, inspite of the fact that the Government itself condemned the female images on its own media, for a long time social science researchers had hardly found it necessary to study this dimension in any depth. Empirical researches on Doordarshan confirm this fact. However, before moving on to the empirical evidence in this regard, certain theoretical concepts need to be briefly discussed with regard to women and Doordarshan.

Communication theories and women's dimension on Doordarshan

Three theoretical perspectives have been considered important for the study of female images on Doordarshan; namely Cultivation of reality perceptions (Gerbner et al, 1982) Social Expectations Theory (Defleur & Ball Rokeach, 1989) and Social Learning or Modelling Theory (Bandura, 1977).

Reality of female images on Doordarshan

An extensive review has already been presented with regard to cultivation of reality beliefs in this chapter. While most of the theoretical premises of cultivation of reality beliefs theory may probably apply to Indian audiences, an Indian and women's perspective needs to be further elaborated.

With reference to women and reality presentation on media, Gallagher (1981) says "... a common response of media personnel is that media simply show life as it is, however unpalatable this may be, ... therefore it reflects the reality of legal, political, economic and social subordination of women" (p.125). She further points out that systematic longitudinal studies of the relationship of media to social change would be needed in order to validate or challenge this argument.

Reality is a multidimensional phenomena. What rarely appears in social life is as real as what often appears. It is not common, nevertheless, the fact that it has appeared makes it real. That is, assertive, independent, ambitious and successful women are as real as submissive, sensitive and self sacrificing women. Kalwachwala (1986) point out that there is all the more need to reach for, identify and portray positive female images since they are few but worth emulating. She further demands that women's reality should be taken forward towards a plausible idealism, in order to counteract the persistent age old values and images of women.

Considering Doordarshan's role in portraying reality, critics have urged for a more positive attitude since "sheer duplication of the dark side of life can often lead to apathy, a passivity". (Kalwachwala 1986, p.76). Since Doordarshan is envisaged as a pro-development medium, how it handles reality depiction is an important concern. While projecting that which often exists is an essential component for creating awareness among the people, stark reality depiction is not a sufficient condition for motivating people for change. On the other hand, it may not only lead to psychological feelings of helplessness and depression, may also become counter productive in perpetuating the depressing reality.

There is a need, therefore, to project that reality which is less often seen, but beneficial to the people, helps change their lives in the positive direction. That is, Doordarshan needs to project not just real images but positive development-oriented realistic images. The critical distinction to be made here is between projecting underdeveloped, discrimination-ridden, derogatory and non-functional images in the guise of reality and progressive, functional images that may not yet be totally real but can become a reality in future, that is, realistic images. Western media can escape depicting existing reality because its role is mainly entertainment, but not Doordarshan; it is a vehicle for development.

Social Expectations Role of Female Images on Doordarshan

Volumes of advice have been given to Doordarshan as to how it

can play a social expectations role (Gallagher, 1981; Chhabra, 1988; Report of the Working Group on Software for Doordarshan, 1985). They are all justified since Doordarshan was conceived as a medium to propagate development messages among multitudes of people. It is expected to change people's beliefs, attitudes and perceptions with regard to many issues, important among them being gender issues. Female images need to be progressive, exhibit changes with changing social conditions and inspire the viewers for positive changes in their own personalities. They should be a basis for learning new and progressive ways of human interactions, beliefs, values and goals of life.

Social learning and female images on Doordarshan

Social learning or modelling theory (Bandura, 1977) has particular relevance to Doordarshan. Singhal and Rogers (1988) point out that the theoretical premise based on which the pro-development tele-serial **Humlog** was telecast, was that, the viewers would perceive the positive characters as models worthy of imitation, identify with them and model their own behaviour on that of the characters. Doordarshan, thus needs to provide positive female characters as models worthy of identification and emulation.

Relevance of western communication theories for Indian context

Social scientists, communication experts and critics have a tendency to object to the use of western models and theories in the Indian context. The three theories considered for this investigation have all been propounded in the western countries.

However, their basic premises deal with human behaviour in social settings; with particular reference to television.

Television has certain universal characteristics where ever it is placed. It is a medium which bombards the viewers with life-like images, which talk, act and behave differently in different situations. The viewer, whether she is in one country or another is encountering the television images repeatedly, is certain to respond to these images in certain ways. All the theories of communication are only trying to explain this interaction between the medium and the viewer. Thus, whether it in India or America, there may be similarities in the way the viewers perceive the messages of the medium. If there are differences, it is all the more necessary to test a theoretical premise in different cultures, before rejecting or accepting it. Thus, the importance of checking out the three theories with reference to Indian television. This argument is supported by Bal Subrahmanyam (1991) where she says a western theory or model should be adopted if it is found relevant to the culture.

Research on Doordarshan

Despite the fact that national coverage of Doordarshan is already a decade old in India, researches on Doordarshan have been very slow to take off. Perusal of literature indicates that there is a great deal of rhetoric and unscientific attempt at analysis of Doordarshan's impact on people. Among the researches, market surveys of popularity of programmes are predominant. For instance, the news paper, The Economic Times

regularly publishes popularity of Doordarshan programmes in its market data columns.

Methodological issues in Doordarshan research

The methodological problems that plague Indian researches can be summarized as follow : (a) Most often nominal level data are obtained using questionnaires or interview schedules, very few attempts at more rigorous data collection methods were used. (b) Consequently, analyses were restricted in scope. Most often data were explained using frequencies, percentages and at the most chi-square analysis, with the exception of a few studies. (c) Most studies have a loosely knit rationale, hardly any theoretical backing, conceptual clarity and analytical depth, again, with a few of exceptions, and (d) demographic, personality and other socio-cultural variables' effects in the viewer-oriented studies are most often absent. At the most, gender differences are reported.

Empirical studies

Basically, there are two kinds of studies related to television, the content analysis and viewers perception studies. Indian studies in these two categories are few. Some of them are summarized below :

Content analysis studies : Krishnan and Dighe's (1990) content analysis of female portrayals on Doordarshan programmes of July, 1986, is perhaps the most comprehensive of researchers in this genre to date. This study had a clear theoretical framework and an elaborate discussion based on theory. Using 15

days total Doordarshan transmission of the month of July, 1986, the study discussed in great detail the presence of male and female characters both in qualitative and quantitative terms. The analysis included in fictional programmes such dimension as goals the characters hold, positive and negative traits they exhibited, and the quality of their interaction with other characters. This analysis was done for the all categories of programmes telecast and finally, the researchers sum up their findings by saying that "... women were under represented in general, and occupied less central roles than men, marriage and parenthood were considered more important for women than men, employed women were shown in typical female occupations or as subordinate to men with little status or power, and television did not seem to recognize the women's movement" (p.112).

A similar kind of format was used by Joshi (1991) while content analysing programmes of the months of March to June, 1986, for 8 weeks. This study took a different perspective and studied women's portrayals in terms of policies, personnel and Doordarshan programmes. However, interestingly this study too found similar results as the above study. In another content analysis study Srikanth, (1991), criticized the Indian television advertisements to be encouraging cultural values of high technology, modernization and consumerism. This sums up scientific content analyses of Doordarshan programmes. There are however, many popular articles by individuals criticizing Doordarshan programmes.

Women's issues addressed by Doordarshan programmes

The non-dramatic programmes targeting women present a wide range of issues such as family planning, health and hygiene, child care, home care, foods and nutrition and so on. However, these programmes do not highlight the economic activity of women nor do they telecast programmes for women in the economic sphere (Malik, 1987).

Over the years from the first soap opera **Humlog** was telecast, an impressive number of programmes, especially soap operas were telecast based on women's issues; **Stri, Shakti, Kashmakash, Chehre, Rath Chakra, Swayam Siddha, Aur Bhi Hai Rahe** during the later half of 1980's and **Pukar** and **Majdhar** during 1990-1991. The women's issues raised by some of these tele-series include, oppression due to caste ideology (**Ratha chakra**), other forms of women's oppression (**Stri, Shakti**) Polygamy (**Kashmakash**), self employment opportunities for women (**Aur Bhi Hai Rahe**) divorce and its repercussions (**Swayam Siddha**) man-woman relationships (**Pukar**) widowhood and accompanying problems (**Majdhar**), women's strifes in affluent families (**Khandann**), and women's life during the partition in 1947 (**Buniyad**) are some such instances.

Interestingly, hardly any research literature is available on viewers perceptions of these wide range of programmes. However, Balasubrahmanyam (1987, 1988) from time to time did critique some of these tele-series for their portrayals of women's issues, and did comment on positive aspects of these tele-series, while Chaudary (1987) was highly critical of the women's perspective as

presented by the tele-serial "Kashmakash".

Viewers perception studies

If content analysis studies are few, viewer perception studies are hardly any different. The bulk of Indian viewer oriented studies have sampled children and pre adolescents (Abrol et al, 1981; Agrawal, et al, 1986; Balasubrahmanyam and Kiranmai, 1990; Mayuri & Mohite, 1992^a, 1992^b, 1993; Phatak & Singh, 1986, Shastri, 1992). Studies on adults most often take the form of market surveys which do not go beyond finding out programme preferences.

(a) Television viewing time, programmes viewed and perceived uses of television : Researches have found that while children spend about 1 1/2 to 2 hours a day watching Doordarshan (Mayuri & Mohite, 1992^a, 1992^b, Shastri, 1992), young adults were found to view Doordarshan for more than two hours in Meerut city (Mahajan, 1990). Data from Delhi, Pune and Madras and 6 villages, indicated that among the 1170 respondents, 95 percent viewed television for 1-3 hours on each week day, 84 percent watched for three hours on Saturdays and 60 percent watched for 3-5 hours on Sunday (Brown, 1990). Other studies (Vilahilam & Yaseen, 1987) in Kerala and in Delhi (Bahl, Mukerjee & Capila, 1988), report regular viewing of television but do not indicate exact duration. Similarly, in Behrampur, adults were found to view television 2-3 hours daily (Pathy & Beharia, 1991) and Narayanan (1986) reported heavy television viewing among Bombay city residents.

No clear trends emerge with reference to demographic

characteristics of viewers and television viewing. With reference to uses and opinions, urban viewers viewed television for entertainment (Bahl, Mukerjee & Capila, 1988), urban low income adults were not much impressed by televised health programmes (Mehta & Seth, 1988) and cosmopolitan city dwellers found advertisements interesting and useful (Grover & Sawhey, 1988). University post graduate students found Doordarshan entertaining, but would like better combination of entertainment, informative and educative programmes, (Padhy & Beharia, 1991) and post graduate students found Doordarshan programmes to be extremely useful in highlighting women's issues such as education, awareness about their rights, liberating themselves from the shackles of customs, equality struggle, awareness in health and nutritional matters and laws protecting women's rights (Mahajan, 1990), and even unlettered rural viewers could offer constructive criticism about television programmes not having sufficient depth of information or knowledge (Sharada, 1992).

(b) Viewer perceptions of tele-serial content: Audience perceptions of specific content of television serials is an area that has, as yet, not received sufficient attention in the Indian context. Brown's (1990) study on pro-social effects of tele-serial **Humlog**, the first soap opera on Doordarshan, is perhaps the most comprehensive of those that have been taken up. Conducted on a large sample of 1170 respondents from one city, two towns and 6 villages in three geographical regions of the country; Delhi, Pune and Madras, the study indicated encouraging results with regard to the use of pro-development serial format for reaching developmental goals. Briefly, the findings

indicated that (a) the effects of **Humlog** on viewer's beliefs about women's status were not large, but were nevertheless important with respect to the advancement of India's development goals, (b) television programmes that educate as well as entertain will increase dependency on television by viewers, (c) dramatic entertainment television programmes will more likely increase viewer's involvement with television characters, (d) **Humlog** did indicate that women's status awareness among viewers changed and (e) family planning was not advanced by **Humlog**. At a more qualitative level, Singhal and Rogers (1988) describe the relationship between audience and the **Humlog** serial as a two-way process. Audience reactions helped write the story since on an average Doordarshan received 400 letters everyday about the serial. Through the letters, the audience highlighted a number of development issues, some of which got incorporated into the later episodes of the serial.

(c) Identification with Doordarshan portrayals : Very few attempts have been made to study this dimension. Singhal & Rogers (1988) report that identification was strong with Badki, the hard working, intelligent and plain looking oldest daughter of the **Humlog** family by a wide range of viewers, while Vijayashree (1986) studying adolescent girls' perception of and identification with female characters in tele-serials such as **Humlog**, **Khandaan**, **Rajani**, **Yeh Zo Hai Zindagi**, **Thrishna**, **Mr. Ya Mrs.** and so on, found that adolescent girls, readily perceived positive and negative traits and identified with independent, well educated, assertive and good looking young women.

The other two theoretical perspectives, reality perceptions and social expectation perceptions have not yet been studied in the Indian context.

Rationale

The Review presented so far highlights the following about the western researchers : (a) From its inception, television has been a popular and powerful medium of communication the world over. (b) Extensive review is available which states that gender bias in favour of the male pervades all forms of television programmes in many countries of the world. (c) Western television research on gender roles are dominated by content analysis studies while viewer's perception of gender roles on television have less often been studied. (d) Though theoretical literature is available in support of selective influences of personality traits of viewers, research has not often looked at gender role perception's by viewers vis-a-vis their demographic and personality characteristics. (e) Western television is basically an entertainment media and women's issues, concerns and problems from the developmental perspective have hardly ever been portrayed. Consequently the range of women's issues presented and studied on television is extremely limited. (f) Gender roles on television and perceived reality of gender roles have been studied to a certain extent, however these researches too concentrated on quantitative presence of female characters more often than the qualitative trait and behaviour portrayals. For instance, many a time male verses female character presence in a

particular role or occupation is studied and less often their characteristics, the significance of their presence, and how close these qualitative aspects are to reality are studied. (g) Social expectations framework has not been studied directly, however, some research literature is available on perceived utility of television and learning experiences through television portrayals. (h) Identification with television portrayals have been studied, but more often on children and adolescents rather than on adults.

In the Indian context, (a) television researches are considerably few, gender related researches are even fewer, (b) Indian researches on adults perception of television programmes are restricted to global perceptions of usefulness of television, utility of certain programmes and programme preferences, but hardly ever, studies looked at perception of content of television in any detail, (c) researches have not often employed theoretical perspectives, statistical analyses for arriving at analytical conclusions with reference to perception's of television content and (d) differential effects of demographic and personality characteristics among viewers in perception of television content is still an unexplored area of research.

To sum up, with reference to gender role portrayals at least, viewers' perceptions studies are few in western researches and hardly exist in the Indian context. This research, hopes to fill the gap in this area. Consequently, the major focus of this research is viewer's perception of female portrayals on

Doordarshan. Content description has also been undertaken to compare expert's opinions with viewer's perception.

Viewer's and their characteristics

Viewers of television constitute a wide variety of people. The demographic and personality factors that distinguish viewers from one another are potential intervening variables. Defleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989), while discussing the selective influences theory point out that "... each factor that distinguishes viewers from one another contributes in some way to the selectivity with which viewers attend to media, interpret what they were exposed to, remember the content and thereby are influenced in their action" (p. 195).

In the Indian context, though selectivity may not operate in choice of programmes on Doordarshan since most of the viewers had access to only one channel during the period of this investigation (1991 December-1992 April), there could still be differences in perception and interpretation of the same content as a product of differences in demographic traits of the viewers. Thus, the need was felt to study viewer's perception's in relation to demographic traits of the viewers. Demographic traits such as education, occupation, income, family size, children, marital status, age and gender were isolated for study in this investigation. Equal number of respondents were chosen from two SES groups.

Among the personality variables, two were identified; the

viewers' gender stereotype and self esteem, as these two variables are particularly relevant to the interpretations of female portrayals.

Researches have tried to answer the relationship between gender stereotype and interpretation of television content. Adolescent girls sex-role attitudes were influenced by television (Morgan, 1982), gender stereotype of viewers did play a role in perceptions of television characters (Dambrot, Reep & Bell, 1988) and androgynous viewers perceive television females to be androgynous (Goff, Goff & Lehrer, 1980).

Women's self esteem, the other personality variable, could be important as a mediating variable in the perceptions of female portrayals on television. Self concept and self esteem theories (Rosenberg, 1965; Coopersmith, 1967) have pointed out that social comparisons, social approval and social expectations form important sources of self esteem of individuals. Television as a medium with constant depiction of male and female images has the potential to play a powerful role in projecting socially approved models for each gender. Thus, by portraying worthy or unworthy images for evaluation, television can become an indirect source of self esteem for the individual.

Sanford and Donovan (1984) suggest that the stereotypical female images repeatedly projected on the mass media may have a detrimental effect on women's self-esteem. Television advertising may particularly prove to be effective in colouring

self perception of women since, most advertised, products indicate that something should be purchased or used in order to make women worthier, prettier, more efficient, better mothers, loving wives or caring daughters-in-law. The advertising in mass media thus works towards "... manipulating the self-images of women" (p. 237). Few western researches did indicate effects of television images on self perceptions (Jennings - Walstedt, Geis & Brown, 1980; Korzenny & Neuwendorf, 1980; Newton & Buck, 1985).

However no research either on gender stereotype or self-esteem and viewers perception of television portrayals are found among Indian researches. Therefore, these two personality variables were chosen to study their relationship with television and perceptions of female portrayals. Self esteem was studied only for female respondents since there is a strong conjecture that it is their self images which get affected by media portrayals more than the male self images.

Theoretical perspective

The review presented in this chapter is indicative of three theoretical positions' importance for presentation of gender roles on television and their perception by television viewers.

With reference to perceived reality of female portrayals, an argument has already been presented in the section of Indian review. It may be reiterated that real portrayals are helpful to create awareness of an issue but positive, plausible, realistic portrayals are necessary if Doordarshan needs to play an

educative role for its vast audiences. Therefore, it becomes essential to investigate how viewers perceive female portrayals on Doordarshan in terms of reality. Content analysis does give information on reality projection on television, but the opinion of a few experts is hardly generalizable to a vast majority of mixed group of audience. This media is supposed to be catering to the needs of the common people of heterogeneous nature, therefore, study of their perceptions is a more efficient way of studying the relative effect of the medium.

With regard to the theoretical framework of social expectations role of television, it is highly relevant to the study of Indian Doordarshan. Doordarshan is a state controlled medium, which was envisaged to play predominantly a pro-development, educative role. That is, it should play a social expectations role in order to tell people what is expected of them, under various circumstances of life, impact their knowledge levels, attitudes, values of life, goals and behaviours.

Modelling theory is relevant to audio-visual media anywhere in the world, for its sheer potential in portraying life-like, attractive dramatic format of programming. Doordarshan is expected to portray pro-development images precisely for providing attractive positive models for people to identify with. Therefore the need to study the extent to which Doordarshan models were found worthy of identification.

The research questions that emerge from the above review are (a) to what extent would female portrayals on Doordarshan be perceived significant in terms of the traits they exhibit, reality they project, and social expectations role they play ? (b) are female portrayals worthy of identification ? (c) are women's issues and problems present on Doordarshan ? If so, how relevant are they perceived to be by the viewers ? (d) are viewer's demographic, personality characteristics and television viewing patterns significantly related to their perceptions of female portrayals ? (e) what are the images of females of Doordarshan programmes by content description method ? and (f) is there any correspondence between content description and viewers' perception of female portrayals ?

The following is the conceptual framework evolved from the above detailed discussion.

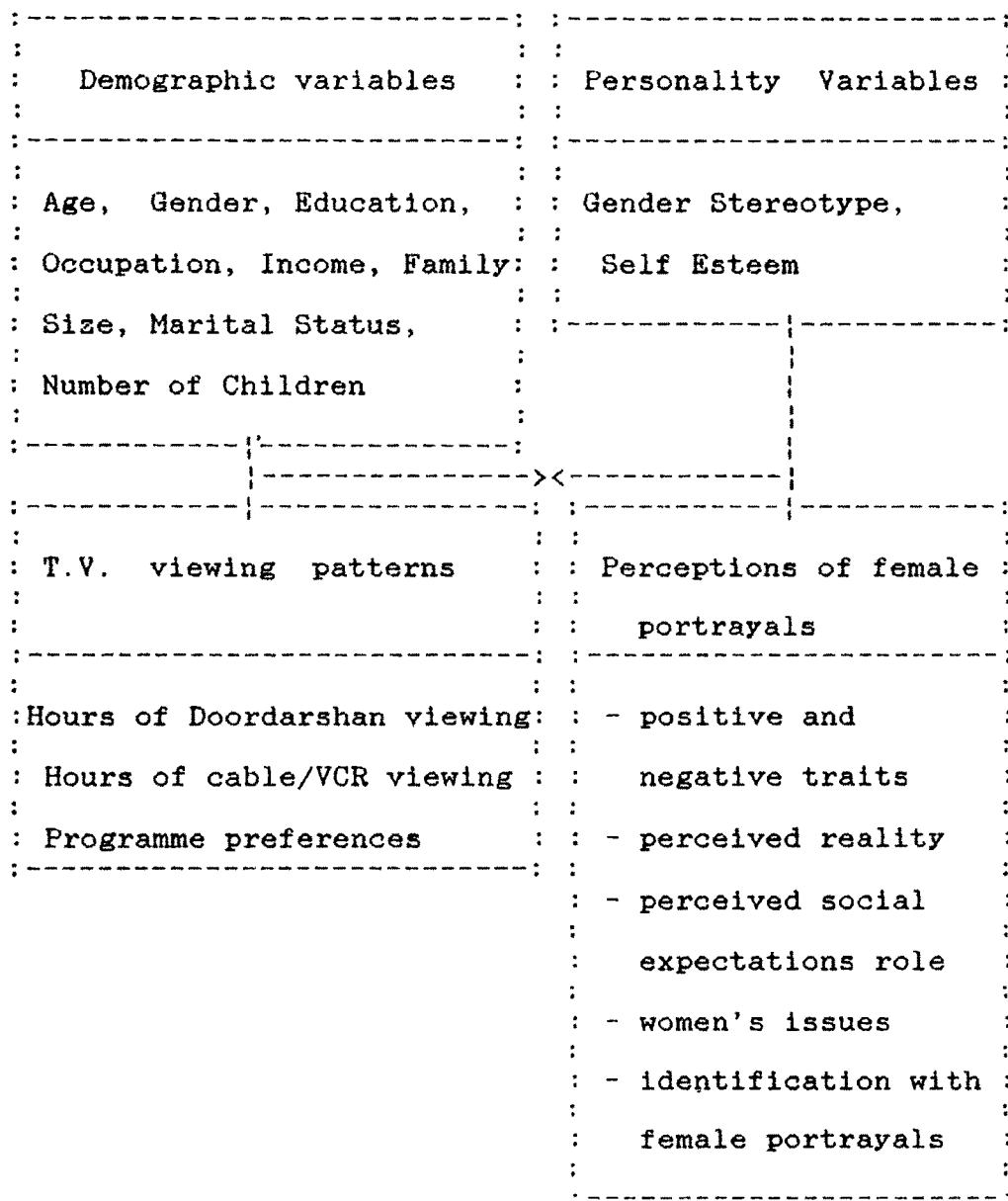


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Demographic traits of viewers age, gender, education, occupation, income, family size, marital status and number of

children, and personality traits, gender stereotype and self esteem may mediate with viewers' television viewing patterns and perceptions of female portrayals on the television. Television viewing patterns, in turn may mediate with perceptions of female portrayals on Doordarshan. The study also expects to find interrelationship between different perception variables as indicated in Fig 2.

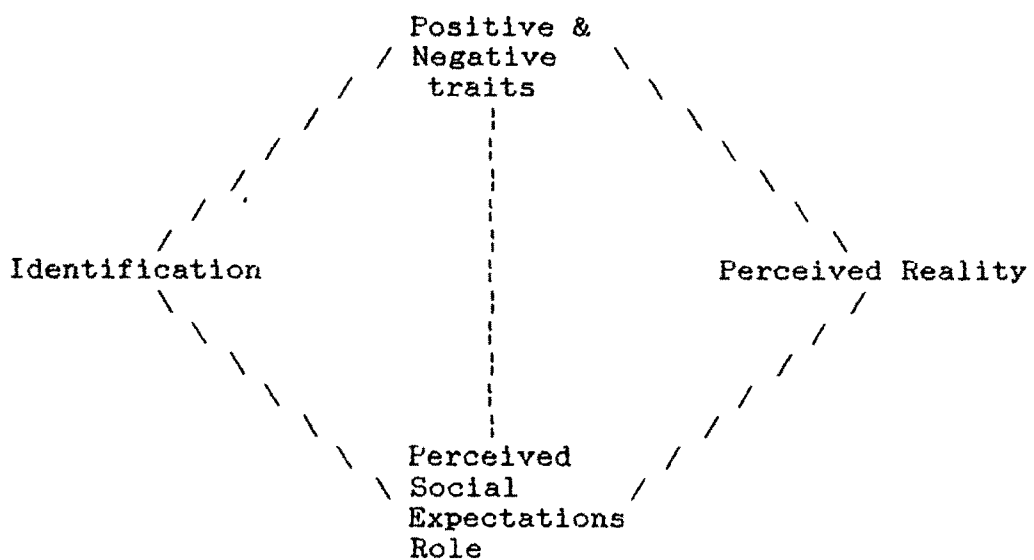


Fig 2. Expected interrelationship between perception variables.

Thus, the objectives of the study are framed as follows:

Broad objectives

To study the television viewing patterns and viewer's perception of female portrayals on Doordarshan.

Specific objectives

1. To study the television viewing patterns of female and male viewers.

2. To study the perception's of female portrayals by viewers in terms of
 - * Positive and negative traits of the portrayals.
 - * Perceived Reality of the portrayals.
 - * Perceived social expectations role played by the portrayals.
 - * Identification with the portrayals.
3. To study the women's issues on Doordarshan as perceived by the viewers.
4. To study the perceptions in relation to selected demographic, personality and television viewing variables.
5. To study the content of Doordarshan programmes in terms of significance given to female portrayals.
6. To compare the content description and viewers perception of female portrayals.

Delimitations of the study

This investigation is delimited to (a) the city of Baroda, where the sample of respondents were chosen. (b) The period of data collection from Dec. 1st 1991 to April end 1992. Majority of the results relate to the programmes telecast during this five month period. (c) Content of Doordarshan under study excluded films and film based programmes, news and commercials. (d) The perceptions of female portrayals were studied with specific reference to ongoing tele-serials during the period of investigation and (e) The age range of respondents was limited to 20-50 years.