CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Communication is one of the fundamental necessities of life on this earth, not only for human beings but also other forms of life like animals and insects. It is the activity of conveying meaningful information. Communication requires a sender, a message, a medium and an intended recipient, although the receiver need not be present or aware of the sender's intent to communicate at the time of communication. Thus communication can occur across vast distances in time and space. The communication process is said to be complete once the receiver has understood the sender.

Human communication can be broadly divided into interpersonal communication – which is a one-to-one exchange of information between two people and mass communication - which is the term used to describe the various means by which individuals and entities relay information through mass media to large segments of the population at the same time. Mass media refers collectively to all media technologies, including the Internet, television, film, newspapers, and radio, which are used for mass communications, as these are used both for disseminating news and for advertising. The term 'mass' denotes great volume, range or extent of people or production and reception of messages. Visual communication is communication through visual aid and is described as the conveyance of ideas and information in forms that can be looked upon. Visual communication solely relies on vision, and is primarily presented or expressed with two dimensional images. It also explores the idea that a visual message has a greater power to inform, educate, or persuade a person or audience.
Film, television and internet are the major forms of present-day visual mass communication. Out of the present mass media we are exposed to, Film and Television are the ones which reach out to the remotest corners of the world, because of its ability to communicate to people breaking barriers like literacy, language, time etc, which usually hinders the other media like newspapers or internet.

The present research deals with these two powerful forms of mass communication, namely Films and television. In reference to the ability of the medium to have the maximum reach, among the audience that is a recipient of these media, children occupy a major position with 42% of the total population in developing countries (according to a survey conducted by TNS Media research – a global market research agency working in over 80 countries in the world). This is also proved by the increasing amount of child-related content being produced for television and films in the present-day situation.

“Movies can and do have tremendous influence in shaping young lives in the realm of entertainment towards the ideals and objectives of normal adulthood”

-Walt Disney [1]

In a bid to relate to the younger audience, the production companies which produce child-related content often use children themselves in their projects. This helps the children in the audience to immediately connect to the characters they see on screen. With increasing number of films, television programs and advertisements being produced for the children as audience, the demand for children performing on-screen is also on the rise. But as these children work hard in order to entertain and educate the numerous children in the audience, their own time, freedom and personal lives would become questionable. It is therefore the purpose of this research to look into
this group of children – the child actors and their lives in a micro setting – the Kannada film and television industry.

Before the exploration of the actual problem in question, below is a brief introduction of the key concepts around which the study revolves around. It outlines the origin, brief history and the definitions which sketch the basic picture of these concepts.

1.1 Films – Magic in darkness

The origin of the name **Film** comes from the fact that photographic film (also called film stock) which has historically been the primary medium for recording and displaying motion pictures. Many other terms describing this medium exist, like - motion pictures, the silver screen, the cinema, flicks, pictures, and movies. Film is considered by to be an important art form, a business, means of telling stories, a powerful medium, and means of entertainment, information and education.

“Cinema combines the cold logic of science with the subtle abstractions of human imagination. No matter what goes into the making of it, no matter who uses it, how one makes financial profits, a political body or propaganda or an avant-garde intellectual product for satisfaction of an aesthetic urge – the cinema is basically the expression of a concept or concepts in aesthetic terms which have crystallized through short years of its existence”

- Satyajit Ray [2]

Film, as a mass medium, is very powerful, as it is a combination of all arts, sound, visuals etc., and has a lot of impact, which can be designed according to a producer/maker’s desire. It can hold the exclusive attention of the viewer when shown in the dark room, as if he/she is directly involved or is a part of what is happening on the big screen. It gives infinite flexibility to the maker in terms of imagination and communication to his/her target audience. It is extremely subtle and powerful at the same time.
Indian Cinema

It has come a long way since 1886, when the Lumiere Brothers’ Cinematographe unveiled six soundless short films at Bombay's Watson's Hotel, and Alam Ara – the first talkie film in 1931. Today, India is one of the leading film industries in the world, competing with the best in the world both in terms of quality and quantity of films made. By 2003 as many as 30 film production companies had been listed in the National Stock Exchange of India, making the commercial presence of the medium felt.

India also boasts of films from its various states and languages like Andhra Pradesh(Telugu), Assam(Assamese), Gujarat(Gujarati), Haryana(Haryanvi), Karnataka(Kannada), Kerala(Malayalam), Orissa(Oriya), Maharashtra(Marathi), Punjab(Punjabi), Tamil Nadu(Tamil), West Bengal(Bengali) and many others. Indian films are followed throughout South Asia and the Middle East.

Kannada Cinema

The cinema of Karnataka, sometimes colloquially referred to as Sandalwood, encompasses movies made in the Indian state of Karnataka based in Bangalore. Most of the movies are made in the Kannada language, with a handful of them in Konkani or Tulu. Today more than 100 films are made every year. When the first Kannada film was made in 1928, and the first Kannada talkie in 1934, little had people imagined that it would someday register such a phenomenal growth, despite its struggles, ups and downs. But with the status of an industry today, it has gone through a lot of phases and changes, and this has happened in an amazingly short span of time.
1.2 Television – Big Revolution in the Small screen

While the film industry has grown by leaps and bounds, the television - which is an equally powerful medium for communication with no barriers like literacy, language or time - has not remained far behind.

Television in India has been in existence for about four decades. For the first 17 years, transmission was mainly in black & white. It was considered as a luxury Indians could do without. There were initially two ignition points: the first in the eighties when colour TV was introduced by state-owned broadcaster Doordarshan (DD) timed with the 1982 Asian Games which India hosted. It then proceeded to install transmitters nationwide rapidly for terrestrial broadcasting. The second spark came in the early nineties with the broadcast of satellite TV by foreign programmers like CNN followed by Star TV and a little later by domestic channels such as Zee TV and Sun TV into Indian homes.

The initial success of the channels had a snowball effect. More foreign programmers and Indian entrepreneurs flagged off their own versions. From two channels prior to 1991, Indian viewers were exposed to more than 50 channels by 1996. More and more people set up networks until there was a time in 1995-96 when an estimated 60,000 cable operators existed in the country. The authorities moved in to regulate the business and a Cable TV Act was passed in 1995.

Kannada Television

Doordarshan (DD) is the broadcaster of the Government of India and its channel DD Chandana (previously called DD 9) is dedicated to Kannada. The first Kannada serial 'Sihikahi' (meaning bittersweet) was produced and directed by H N K Murthy and transmitted by DD Bangalore in
1983. Sun TV (India) was launched in 1992 as the first private channel in South India and Udaya TV became the first Kannada cable channel in 1994. Other Kannada channels that broadcast in Kannada include ETV Kannada, Ushe TV, Zee Kannada, U2 and TV9. but these were the channels started from non Kannadigas. Kasturi is the first Kannadiga owned TV channel. The channel was started by Kasturi Media Private Limited.

1.3 Actor

There are various ways in which the term actor is defined. We usually associate the term actor to a person connected with communication and media. But in the general sense, the word ‘actor’ is also used and defined in various contexts other than media. Here are a few dictionary meanings -

- An **actor** or **actress** is a person who acts in a dramatic production and who works in film, TV, radio or theatre in that capacity
- A theatrical performer
- A person who acts and gets things done
- A person who puts on a false manner in order to deceive others
- One who takes part; a participant
- One who represents a character in a dramatic production
- A person who does something or participates in something

But, since the research deals with film and television, we would refer to the ‘actor’ in the sense of a performer in the media, in the context of this research.

An actor in the media communicates a character and situations to an audience through speech, body language and movement. This usually involves interpreting the work of a writer under the
instruction and support of a director, although some work may require the actor to improvise the reactions of a character to a situation.

Work varies enormously: from live stage performances of the classics and community theatre, to soap operas, radio work and film roles. An actor's role may also involve education, training or therapy, as well as entertainment.

An acting career inevitably incorporates periods of unemployment, underemployment and alternative employment. Work activities vary from actor to actor and even for the same actor, depending on the contract.

**History**

The first recorded case of an actor performing took place in 534 BC when the Greek performer Thespis stepped on to the stage at the *Theatre Dionysus* and became the first known person to speak words as a character in a play or story. Prior to Thespis' act, stories were only known to be told in song and dance and in third person narrative. In honour of Thespis, actors are commonly called *Thespians*. Theatrical legend to this day maintains that Thespis exists as a mischievous spirit, and disasters in the theatre are sometimes blamed on his ghostly intervention!

Actors were traditionally not people of high status. However, this negative perception was largely reversed in the 19th and 20th centuries as acting has become an honoured and popular profession and art.
**Child Actor**

A child or adolescent who, when compared to others of the same age or experience, exhibits capability of high performance in intellectual, creative, or artistic areas, possesses an unusual capacity for leadership or excels in specific academic fields. The term child actor is generally applied to a child acting in motion pictures or television, but also to an adult who began his or her acting career as a child; to avoid confusion the latter is also called a former child actor. Closely associated is teenage actor, an actor who reached popularity as a teenager.

Child actors are also sometimes referred to as Child Prodigies – as someone who possesses a unique ability at a young age in a specific area which is way beyond his/her age and normal mental development. Children recognized under child prodigies are known for their abilities and achievements in areas varying from mathematics and music to sport and spirituality. Acting/performing is a part of it, and ‘Child Actors’ is one of the categories under child prodigies.

There have been many child actors in the history of film and television all over the world. We also find many examples of such talented children in India over the years – like Urmila Matondkar, Jugal Hansraj (Masoom), Shafiq Syed (Salaam Bombay), Master Manjunath (Malgudi Days), Baby Shamilee (Anjali) and many more. Along with the awe and wonder that these children generate, there have been various issues surrounding the topic of child actors all over the world. Some of them have been addressed in this research.
1.4 Present day scenario – congregation of the two media

Though both Films and TV have had their own course of growth and development, and enjoy their increasing popularity with their own set of viewers and audience, they do not move like parallel lines which never meet. The two media do meet at various common points which are similar to each other in more ways than one. Apart from the fact that both belong to the ‘visual media’ and are graphic in terms of their communication, they are quite similar in terms of the processes involved in making them. The fundamental procedure followed for any project or production from beginning to end, which is - script-screenplay-casting-shooting-editing-music/special effects-preview-release /telecast - is the same for both TV and Film production, independent of genre. In the present scenario, more specifically in the Kannada film and TV industry, the people involved in the work here are also common. With the exception of Film stars and a few highly specialized professionals, everyone from the technicians to the actors and from the spot boys to the directors would be a part of either media, or at least be open to projects from either media.

The character actors (those actors who are a part of the project apart from the lead actors) are usually the ones who would be open to doing roles in either media, especially in the case of the Kannada industry. This seems to be increasingly true in the current circumstances, as the time spent by the actor and the kind of work – in terms of creative satisfaction, popularity gained or the remuneration received is not very different in the two media (in the regional context). It therefore seems that actors would not mind switching media as long as they have good work which would keep them busy.
1.5 Structure of the thesis:

The presentation of the research data and all the information collected with the researcher’s analysis and conclusion has been organized in a specific format. Below is the description of this structure for easy reference.

Chapter 1 is the opening of the research thesis which introduces the basic concepts which constitute the research subject, like media, film and television, actors etc. It also explains the common aspects between the two media (television and film) and the reason for choosing the two for the research.

The second chapter explains basic problem that the research deals with. It describes the conflict that exists with regard to the child actors in the entertainment industry and the child labour laws. It also illustrates the situation of the parents of the child actors – the dilemma and conflicts they face in the industry. The second section speaks about the process and technique employed to conduct the research.

The review of literature speaks about the books, research papers, and articles from the newspapers/internet which have reference to this topic. It helps in analysing the current discussions about the topic.

In the chapter titled ‘Data Analysis’ the facts and figures collected by the researcher by means of interviews and observation have been presented along with the opinion of experts. A comparison of a similar situation in America for a broader perspective of the circumstance is also provided.

The final chapter provides a detailed discussion which consolidates all the information from the literature like books, articles and research papers along with the data collected by the researcher, in combination with the researcher’s opinion which would culminate in the final conclusion which would give a possible resolution to the existing conflict.