INTRODUCTION
The role of media in early liberal thought was defined mainly in terms of a watchdog, however, the expectations from this medium widened with the development of mass society. Today media acts as a cornerstone of Democracy which imparts information on public issues and through which citizens convey their opinions, plays a crucial role in giving voice to people. Replacing the model of face to face communication or public gatherings of the past to discuss public issues, media today acts as the mediator and facilitator between policy makers and the citizenry. Various expectations from electronic media include, educating the masses, empowering the under privileged sections like women and other weaker sections of the society. It helps to educate the masses politically and make them aware of their political and legal rights and privileges. It exerts ‘influence’ and acts as ‘power resource’ in terms of exerting influence in society. They are a ‘forum’ where public affairs are played out; they are the ‘source’ of varied definitions of social reality, changing culture and values and most importantly they are a
source of public meaning system which signals the public definitions of normality and ‘deviance’ in society.

One may legitimately question the democratic role of media in representing women’s concerns and their participation in public space; women constitute half of the world’s population and have acquired political citizenship in most of the societies. Yet, their concerns and status have remained marginal within the social, economic and political structures. Sonia Bhatt has asked certain relevant questions, which concern media on women’s issues. Firstly, “does media perceive women as politically important and hence promotes their political participation in the public sphere?” Secondly, “does it allow women the right to communicate and be heard?” Thirdly, “what kind of ideas and ideologies the media, in relation to women is perpetuating?”

Communication through symbols is a prerogative of human beings and they create, transmit and develop symbols for interactive purposes. Human society is based on communication. The advent of mass communication has been
a necessary corollary of industrialization. Electronic media, in the same way, is a natural consequence of the development of Industrial society. Social scientists are rightly attracted to the electronic media. Expertise is devoted to find the pattern flow, determinants and the impact of electronic media on society. Television is an important compound of this media, which is revolutionising the process of information, education and socialization. Social search related to mass media is fast emerging as a specialized field in many disciplines.

A volume of research was commissioned and published by UNESCO on women and communication issues up to 1980 but there has been an acceleration of research efforts since 1980 as more emphasis was placed on the provision of summaries, synthesis and reference materials. The two major works during this period were of Ceulemaus and Fauconnics titled ‘Mass media: The image, role and social conditions of women’ (1970) followed by a comprehensive study of unequal opportunities. ‘The case of women and the media’ by Gallagh in 1981.
According to these studies it was revealed that media images tended to define women within the narrow confines of her traditional cosmetic roles and her sexual appeal. These two dimensional images by their alternative portrayals did not reflect any significant contribution to their cause in contemporary society. The other major observation was that there was a disproportionate amount of negative evidence available on the media image particularly of American Women. In other words lacunae in the research efforts in so far as women and media issues in the developing countries are concerned were clearly discernible.

On the other hand, Grallagher has shown that the depiction of women in mass media is remarkably consistent throughout the world. Barring media controlled by governments with a strong commitment to social change, the overall picture highlighted the negative features of media treatment of women. These include media under representation of women and their issues; use and abuse of women's concern; use of women as a commodity in
advertising; an ambivalent attitude to women evident in certain stereotyped images in which women were exclusively and unalterably 'good' and 'pure' or definitely and unchangeably 'bad' and 'immoral'.

According to another document, study after study revealed that as far as media context was concerned, men outnumbered women by two or three to one's. In addition, women were generally younger than the men and were cast in very traditional and stereotypical roles.

**WOMEN AND MEDIA**

In print media women figure very rarely. They are in news in cases of rape, Adultery or when some women organisation takes up special issues like Sati Rup Kanwar case or Shah Banoo case. Women's issues are used to sensationalise the news in print media. Such is not the case in Television. Though women may not get enough representation in News but serials cannot do away without them. How they are portrayed in Television – is the question, which has been dealt in the thesis.
THE STUDY

The study of portrayal of women was designed for a short span of time i.e. 1985-1992. Rather than covering all the serials it was decided to focus on Prime-time serials which include serials like, Humlog, Buniaad, Aur Bhi Hai rahen, Adhikar, Uddan and Swabhiman. In these serials I have taken up issues which Doordarshan has portrayed and at the same time the issues which were deliberately or otherwise left out. The issues, which were left out by Doordarshan, are issues of amniocenteses, joint family problems, problem of working women, judicial rights of women etc. It is not to say that Doordarshan has been a total failure in the positive portrayal of women but it is clear that because of its inherent structural limitations i.e. being a state owned media it could not prove a major vehicle in movement of women’s cause. Despite having advantage of no commercial compulsions, Doordarshan could not act as an engine for creating an environment for appreciation of women’s cause in the society. There is a persistent lack of objectivity in women’s depiction
in all kinds of television programs. A few attempts to launch women specific serials could not withstand the popularity of mythical serials like Ramayan and Mahabharat, which clearly visualised them in their typical subordinate roles. A woman was more an object of desire and decoration without any ideological leaning of their portrayal. Serials like Uddan or Adhikar failed to set a stage where women's cause could take leap forward through powerful media projections.

Serials fighting for women's cause were forced to telecast during noon sessions and were categorised as 'women's serials.

Some recent research studies have thrown light on specific areas of concern as for instance, women in development. Steeves (1986) contend that just as women in development literature has failed to emphasise development communication, so the theoretical literature of development communication has failed to consider gender. The preliminary findings showed that although in the fictional world of television, men still hold the better professional positions.
There was an interesting trend, which showed that female characters were more powerful and were striving for equality. According to the conventional notion that news content would change if the number of women journalist producers increased were not supported by empirical evidence. That the existence of sex and power differences must be recognised and given a regular place in research questions about news production and news content.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On the Indian scene, there is a multitude of articles and papers on the relationship between women and media. The working group on software for Doordarshan set up in 1982 published its report in 1985. The Joshi Committee report contains a chapter on women and media. It condemns television’s heavy reliance on feature films and film-related programs, emphasising the middle class orientation of program output and the near eclipse of working class women. The working group recommended that woman’s dimension should be integral to programming rather than be limited only
to women’s programs and that the heavy dependence on commercial films should be reduced. Other recommendations stressed content focus on existing women’s groups and struggles, significant contributions of women poets and artists, grass roots organisations and the like.

The audience research units of Doordarshan and the Indian Space Research Organisation have from time to time, produced various impact studies, such as women, television and rural development: An evaluation study of SITE in a Rajasthan Village 1980. Report of a sample survey on Morning transmission and Ghar Parivar (1979), women’s lives and Television as a medium for development.

It has been observed that in general women character continue to be portrayed in an inferior position relative to men. In this asymmetrical relationship the ‘wife and other’ image is predominant. They further add that there seems to be a tendency to construct a pan Indian character of women, which is difficult to identify with any one region of India.
Joshi (1986) who studied the participation of women at the higher decision making levels of Doordarshan reported that a large number of women felt that increasing the proportion of women employees in the structure would improve program quality and bring about a more balanced perspective. But it is found that larger women participation at the managerial level too does not lead to elevation of women’s status.

In general, as the UNESCO survey has shown, very little is known about women and communication in the developing world. The area is thus wide open to both empirical and theoretical work.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

The field of communication has been in a state of ferment for sometime now. The initial approach to communications was based on the relatively simple paradigm of the transfer of a message from the source to the receiver. According to White, this marked the early phase of mass media studies during which there was an intuitive belief that
media could shape opinion, could mould behaviour and even serve as a parched for a host of individual and social problems. Over the years, the inadequacies of this paradigm let to a new “receiver – centered paradigm in which the emphasis shifted to interacting individuals together creating meaning. Culture was regarded as important intervening variable between the source and individual effects. During the 1960’s the importance of structural factors was underscored as American and European researchers started questioning the supposedly benign intentions of mass media and began interpreting media messages as exploitative ideologies of elite’s. For them, patterns of communication and media organisation were inherent in a given social structure and thus change could not be effected simply by changing the messages of powerful media but required a more equitable distribution of social power.

A basic premise underlying several approaches to the role constitute the main instrument for ruling elite for maintaining ideological control over masses. According to this
Marxist orientation the mass media are a means of social control whereby the ideology of the capitalist class is promoted in order to maintain status quo and inhibit class-consciousness among the proletariat. The Marxist belief that all knowledge and art, including mass media content, are formed in the super structure of society and that super structure is conditioned by the mode of production, the economic and material base.

Gramsci (Simon 1982) saw media as being embedded in what he called the ‘civil society’ and propped his theory of hegemony to explain the relations between classes and their reciprocal interaction with media. It was a tool to understand society. A hegemonic class, or part of a class, gains consent of other classes and social forces by creating and maintaining system of alliances by means of political and ideological struggle. An important concept related hegemonies to that of the national, collective, popular will. A class wishing to establish hegemony should not only concentrate on its own class interests but take into account popular, domestic
demands and struggles of people which do not have a purely class character, that is, which do not arise directly out of systems of production. Such struggles may be related to civil liberties in national liberation movements and movements of empowering women.

Two other concepts related to hegemony are those of the civil society, as mentioned before, and common sense. Commonsense is used by Gramsci to indicate the uncritical and largely unconscious way in which a person perceives the world. It is often confused and contradictory and is compounded of folklore, myths and popular experiences. The civil society, of which media, the church, the family etc. are parts is the scene of class and popular democratic struggle and is the sphere where hegemonies are exercised. Organisations comprising the civil society all embody social practices, which are associated with the assumptions and values which people accept often unconsciously. Activities designed to change the spontaneous consent given by the masses to their hegemonic
class are political and the movement for women's empowerment is political in this sense.

The media which acts as the cultural arm of the state, and which revives components of commonsense such as folklore and myths, is an important bulwark of spontaneous consent and as such the locus of a great deal of feminist scholarship.

One of the methods of media analysis is that of the content analysis wherein the manifest content of the message is regarded as the most important area for scientific—social analysis. Typically in content analysis the analysts in relation to media content establish certain conceptual categories and the presence or absence of these categories is then quantitatively assessed with varying degrees of sophistication.

Another method by which media can be analysed is by discipline of schematics, semiotics or seminology, the science of signs, concerned primarily with how meaning is generated in contents (films, television programs and other works of art). It deals with function According to Fiske and Hartley, the
central concerns of seminology are two, the relationship between a sign and its meaning and the way signs are combined into codes. Codes are highly complex pattern of associations which are learnt in a given society and culture. Its codes and sub codes are applied to the message in the light of a general framework of cultural references which constitutes the receivers patrimony of knowledge, his ideological, ethical, religious, standpoint, his psychological attitude, his tastes, his value system etc.

Fiske and Hartly have suggested that television performs a 'bardic function' operating as a mediator of languages producing messages not according to the external demands of the text nor of the individual communicator but according to the needs of the culture.

Studies on gender in the field of mass communication have been done mainly from Feminist – liberal and Marxist – perspectives (Janus 1977 and Sayers 1982).

According to these perspectives society organises itself according to expectations about the place, men and women
should occupy in keeping with their biological functions. The social regulation of these functions has restricted women to the domestic sphere whereas it has facilitated man’s participation in the public sphere. The feminist liberal and Marxist feminist paradigms connect this sexual segregation in the mass media’s image representation to the socio-economic sphere. Socialist – feminist theory relying on both Marxist and Structuralism emphasises the importance of equality between genders in all spheres of activities, traditional and non-traditional, private and public. Liberal feminism on the other hand, emphasises the increasing movement of women into non-traditional roles. Socialist feminists assume that media and popular culture perpetuate and develop cultural ideology. To improve women’s status these structures must change. They further argue that transforming mass media and popular culture can make a difference even in the absence of a Socialist Revolution. In this they differ from Marxist feminists and believe that change in women’s status is predicted irrespective of changes on the economic structure of the state.
The feminist perspective has shifted the crucial debate in media studies from the ideological roles of the media in capitalist society to a discussion on the construction of women's exploitations and subordination, materially and ideologically within patriarchy. Media is seen as a system of representation, a point of production of definitions. Because these are cultural questions, a cultural reading is necessary to understand this, following this, feminists can move towards alternative modes of media production and distribution. Feminist criticism of media then attends to the process by which the work of gender ideology is done. Barrett (1980) lists these processes a stereotyping compensation, collusion and recuperation. The criticism focussed on the disparity between women's representation on media and their actual lives. Later the very notion of women as image came to be questioned; it was felt that the media do not reflect or distort, rather, there exists a dialectical relation between women's representation on media and their actual lives. There exists a dialectical
relation between media and culture, which together construct the notion of women.

Given our present location within a patriarchal society for us the crucial question becomes – how are media images and representations of femininity constructed within patriarchal social and sexual relations of production and reproduction.

The complexity of interaction between women and the media may arise from the production of self-consciousness by media and society. In the Indian context the female is represented as dutiful wife and mother – earth archetype in addition to their nurturing services they provide visual pleasure.

The female self-consciousness is less inert, but still at the service of patriarchy giving and preserving life, nurturing and sustaining. She is either politically powerless or emotionally passive or imbued with mythic powers. But she is never self defined. The feminist self-consciousness on the other hand reflects the asymmetries of powers, opportunity
and situations in women’s experience. This consciousness shows attention to the pervasive pattern of subordination, limitations and confinement in society. It goes further to envision alternate non-oppressive ways of living. This view is entirely self defined.

**FORCES/PROBLEMS**

The interaction between women and television has thrown up several issues of interest to researches. The most commonly researched theme is that of disparity between women’s actual lives and that shown on the media. Similarly researches have expressed their reservations about the occupational roles most often depicted on the television. Even middle class women are almost invariably shown as raveling in housework. There is also concern about the entrenchment of the autonomy differential between women and men through television program.

The issue of the need for special programs for women as opposed to the integration of women’s concerns into all aspects of programming continues to be debated. The rationale
for special program for women is that it is specific to the needs of women and that they can be structured to time in order to draw their attention and ensure their maximum involvement.

In order to ascertain how women are projected through the television programs, special programs meant for them e.g. afternoon programs and also general programs that is prime time evening programs have been selected for the critical analysis.

The study under consideration aims at analysing the role of media on women's development. It is observed that there is no consensus concerning the role of women in society and polity as compared to the role of men, which clearly defines them as bread earner. Projection of women's role on media is thus not well defined. Many a times they are portrayed as sacrificing mother, daughter or wife.

The main purpose of this study is to critically analyze the ideology projected by media concerning the role of women. The present study, therefore, aims to provide a
systematic understanding about the manner in which women and their concerns were projected through the television medium. The study will focus on the programs, which are especially meant for women, that is, the noon programs and prime time soap operas, to show how women are projected by the state owned media. What are the kinds of pressures from the Government, the programs and messages presented through figuration and symbolisation? The study aims at offering a meaningful insight into the implication of government control on media.

The study under consideration can be analysed from three angles –

a) Content analysis of the media and their treatment of the women.

b) The influence of the media on their audience – and

c) The influence of media on women themselves.
The other question raised during the study is –

a) What would be the alternate way in which women would be projected if media were autonomous?

b) What are the ways in which women are projected in Government controlled media.

c) What are the implications of the prevalent patterns of televiewing among young educated women for themselves, polity and society?

d) How far the social determinants can explain the differences in the pattern of televising by the media.

e) Who governs media and for whom.

CHAPTERS

1. A historical background to women empowerment

This chapter deals with the regional process within Indian society which serves to entrench patriarchy and that media as an organization within the civil society resonates with patriarchal ideology. It also deals on the other hand projection of women on media as a popular collective will, which leads to women’s struggle for empowerment.
2. Projection of women in Media

This chapter deals with the question of empowerment and how true it is. It also deals with role conflict in the society. Another question posed in this chapter is what is the role of media in empowering females. There are a number of recommendations, which came up at the Beijing conference for portrayal of women.

3. Critical appraisal of prime time

Prime time serials like Humlog, Buniaad, Adhikar, Uddan, Aur Bhi hain rahen which were telecast during the period 1985-1992 has been discussed analytically.

4. Shifting Trends in Portrayal of Women

This chapter will cover serials, which have been telecast on different private channels during the post-liberalisation period i.e. after 1991. Significant changes took place in technology, society and economy during this period and all these had their own implications on media contents and its role in portrayal of women. I have analysed some of the popular serials telecast on different channels having strong
women characters like Saans, Kora Kagaz and Amannat. Women's portrayals in these serials have been compared with those of earlier serials to examine shifting trends in media concerns for women and their role in society.