CHAPTER III

CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF PRIME TIME

(What has been portrayed and what has been left out )
This chapter deals with a detailed study of serials telecast by Doordarshan at prime time, for example, Humlog, Kashmkash, Buniad, Adhikar, Uddan etc- I have tried to analyse these serials in order to show the merits of Doordarshan in taking up these serials and also the shortcomings of these.

Secondly, in this chapter I have dealt with issues like amniocenteses, dowry system, joint family system, problem of lower class which have not been taken up in these serials.

And lastly, I have dealt with the emerging new trends in the liberalised media. There is a general shift of the serials from radical feminist approach to liberal traditional set up. The women are projected more in their traditional roles even symbolised by their dressing and jewelry e.g. Sas bhi kabhi bahu thi , Ghar-Ghar ki kahani etc. The serials portray women adhering to the patriarchal set up. The emphasis is on upper middle class at the expense of other sections of society. We shall now take these serials individually and analyse their projections of women in particular. The emphasis is on
women characters and hence other aspects of these serials have not been discussed.

"The traditional method of media analysis is that of contents analysis, wherein the manifest content of the message is regarded as the most important area for scientific social analyses. 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 accessed with varying degrees of sophistication. Certain basic assumptions are taken in order to use this methodology to describe women's presence on television:

**STAND POINT OF PERSONAL LIFE**

The action of soap opera is not restricted to the familial or quasi-familial institutions but everything is told from the point of view of the personal".

A second major melodramatic feature of soap opera is its excessive plot structure. If family life is the main focus of "HUMLOG" narrative the life of Basesar's wife is presented as one replete with extraordinary conflicts and catastrophes
appear as a purely sensationalist tendency to cliche and exaggeration – a common objection leveled at melodrama since the late nineteenth century. It is important to note however, that within the fictional world of the soap opera all those extreme story lines such as kidnappings, bribery, extramarital affairs, obscure illness and so on. Which succeed each other at such a breath taking pace, are not treated in a sensational manner but are taken entirely seriously.

The parameters of melodrama require that such cliches be regarded and assessed not for their literal, referential value – that is their realism but as meaningful in so far as they solicit a highly charged, emotional impact. Their role is metaphorical and their appeal stems from the enlarged emotional impact they evoke it is the feelings being mobilised here that matter. An excess of events and intensity of emotions are inextricably intertwined in the melodramatic imagination.

A third structural characteristic of the soap opera is its lack of narrative progress. HUMLOG like all soap operas is a never ending story, contrary to classic narratives which are
typically structured according to the logic of order/disorder/restoration of order, soap operas never reach completion. They represent process without progression and as such do not offer the prospect of a conclusion of final denouncement in which all problems are solved. Thus soap operas are fundamentally anti utopian an ending happy or unhappy is unimaginable. This does not mean of course that there are no moments of climax in soap operas. But as Tania Modelska has observed the‘mini climaxes’ of soap operas function to introduce difficulties and to complicate rather than simplify the character life¹. Here a basic melodramatic idea is conveyed the sense that life is marked by eternal contradiction by unsolvable emotional and moral conflicts by the ultimate impossibility as it were of reconciling desire and reality. As Laura Mulvey has put it.

"The melodrama recognises this gap by raising problems, know and recongnisable and offering a personal escape similar to that of a day dreams a chance to work
through inescapable frustrations by positing an alternative ideal never seen as more than a momentary illusion\(^2\).

The life of Basesar’s wife character in HUMLOG exemplifies and dramatizes this melodramatic scenario.

In general then it can be said that the soap operatic structure of HUMLOG opens up a narrative space in which melodramatic characters can come to life symbolically characters who ultimately are constructed as victims of forces that lie beyond their control. A character like ‘mother’ will never be able to make her own history; no matter how hard she tries eventually the force of circumstances will be too overwhelming. She lives in the prison of an eternally conflictual present. No wonder that she reacts with frustration, bitterness, resignation and cynical ruthlessness on the rebound.

**ANALYSIS OF CHARACTERS:**

Pleasure fantasy and the negotiation of femininity one could assert that melodramatic heroines like Basersar’s wife should be evaluated negatively because they attest to an outlook on life that stresses resignation and
despair. Isn’t melodramatic imagination a particularly
damaging way of making sense of life because it affirms
tendencies of individualistic fatalism and pessimism? And
isn’t such an impact especially harmful for women as it
reinforces and legitimises masochistic feelings of
powerlessness? Wouldn’t it be much better of women and
girls to choose identification figures that represent strong,
powerful and independent women who are able and
determined to change and improve their lives such as
BADAKI?

Such concerns are of course often heard in feminist
accounts of popular fiction, but it is important to note here that
they are often based upon a theoretical approach – what could
be called a role/image approach or more conventionally
images of women approach – which analyses images of
women in the media and fiction by setting them against real
women. Fictional female heroines are then seen as images of
women functioning as role models for female audiences. From
such a perspective it is only logical to claim that one should
strive to offer positive role models by supplying positive images of women. And from this perspective, feminist common sense would undoubtedly ascribe Basesar’s wife character to the realm of negative images, reflecting a traditional stereotyped or trivialized model of womanhood.

However, this approach contains both theoretical and political problems. Most importantly, because it implies a rationalistic view of the relationship between image and viewer (whereby it is assumed that the image is seen by the viewer as a more or less adequate model of reality) it can only account for the popularity of soap operas among women as something irrational. In other words, what the role/image approach tends to overlook is the large emotional involvement which is invested in identification with characters of popular fiction.

To counteract this attitude we first of all need to acknowledge that these characters are products of fiction is not a mere set of images to be read referentially but an ensemble of textual devices for engaging the viewer at the level of
fantasy. As a result female fictional characters such as Basesar’s wife and Badaki cannot be conceptualised as realistic images of women, but as textual constructions of possible modes of femininity’ as embodying versions of gender subjectivity endowed with specific forms of psychical and emotional satisfaction and dissatisfaction and specific ways of dealing with conflicts and dilemmas. In relation to this they do not function as role models but are symbolic realisation of feminine subject positions with which viewers can identify in fantasy.

Fantasy is central here. In line with psychoanalytic theory, fantasy should not be seen as mere illusion, an unreality but as a reality in itself, a fundamental aspect of human existence. A necessary and unreasonable dimension of psychical reality. A fantasy is an imagined sense in which the fantisising subject is the protagonist, and in which alternative scenarios for the subject’s real life is evoked. Fantasising obviously affords the subject pleasure, which according to the psychoanalysts has to do with the fulfillment of a conscious or
unconscious wish. Here I would suggest more generally that the pleasure of fantasy lies in its offering the subject an opportunity to take up positions which she could not do in real life, through fantasy she can move beyond the structural constraints of everyday life and explore other situations other identities, other lives. It is totally unimportant here whether these are realistic or not. As Lesley stern has remarked gratification is to be achieved not through acting out the fantasies but through the activity of fantasising sing itself.

Fantasies and the act of fantasising are usually a private practice in which we can engage at any time and the content of which we generally keep to ourselves. Fictions on the other hand are collective and public fantasies they are textual elaboration in narrative form of fantastic scenarios which being mass-produced are offered ready made to audiences. We are not the originators of the public fantasies offered to us in fiction. This explains of course why we are not attracted to all the fictions available to us. Most of them are irrelevant. Despite this, the pleasure of consuming fictions that do attract
us may still relate to that of fantasy' that is it still involves
the imaginary occupation of other subject positions, which are
outside the scope of our everyday social and cultural identities.

All too often women have to negotiate in all sorts of
situations in their lives – at home, at work, in relationship in
larger social settings. In this women are constantly confronted
with the cultural task of finding out what it means to be a
women, of marking out the boundaries between the feminine
and the unfeminine. This task is not a simple one especially in
the case of modern societies where cultural rules and roles are
no longer imposed authoritatively but allow individualistic
notions such as autonomy personal choice, will, responsibility
and rationality. In this context, a framework of living has been
created in which every individual woman is faced with the
task of actively reinventing and redefining her feminety as
required. The emergence of the modern feminist movement
has intensified this situation; now women have become much
more conscious about their position in society and
consequently are encouraged to take control over their own lives by rejecting the traditional dictum that autonomy is destiny. Being a woman in other words can now mean the adoption of many different identities composed of a whole range of subject position not predetermined by immovable definitions of femininity.

Identification with melodramatic heroines can be viewed in a new way. The position ascribed to Basesar's wife by those identifying with her is one of powerlessness a self destructive mode of femininity which in social and political terms could only be rejected as regressive and unproductive.

"The state is not only a regulator of communication institutions it is itself a communicator of enormous power. How this power is exercised is of major interest to a political economy of culture. Governments are inevitably anxious to promote their own views of the development of policy and to ensure that legislative initiatives are properly understood and supported. But in Indian context there is no available official material, which could provide insights regarding
Doordarshan’s planned strategy and programmatic efforts towards the cause of women in India. No such thought seems to have been given in Doordarshan’s generally adhoc approach to program content and program Schedule.”

This quotation holds well even today. The report, which has a chapter on women indicts Doordarshan as a government controlled and financed medium for failing to fulfil its expected role in furthering the stated national objective of women’s equality.

After the Gulf war i.e. in 1990’s with the introduction of private news channels e.g. Zee TV, Star TV, Sony and many others portrayal of women on the small screen has changed. From a Liberal portrayal there have been soap operas, which portray women in a more ‘radical’ form.

In this chapter I shall deal first with the portrayal of women on Indian Doordarshan between period 1985-90 and then proceed to show how after 90’s if at all there has been any change in the portrayal of women. The Main prime time serials being discussed are Hum Log, Buniyad, Udaan,
Adhikar, Kashmakash, Aur Bhi hain rahen, Stree, Air Hostess. Noting the failure of efforts to raise women’s status through development measures and constitutional guarantees and emphasising that despite such interventions the position of women had deteriorated, as brought out by the 1974 Report of the committee on the status of women, The Joshi Committee report made the following observations about Doordarshan’s approach towards programming for women.

“Middle class ideologies of women’s roles as wives and mothers provide the underlying basis for most programs. In a country where 36 percent of the agricultural workforce is female, women continue to be projected as predominantly non-producers and 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 programs. The Plural nature of Indian Culture and the diverse roles that women play is neither acknowledged nor
communicated. This results in a reinforcing of the stereotyped images and role specifications of women in a unidimensional projection of their reality”.

Urging that Doordarshan should formulate clear cut guidelines at the earliest regarding the positive portrayal of women, the Joshi Committee report recommended that this portrayal must take note of all facets of their lives as workers and significant contributors to family survival and the national economy, and that it must further endeavor to integrate women in all sectors of national life and the development process on equal terms. These guidelines, it said must emphasise that the ‘women’s ‘dimension’ forms as an integral part of all Doordarshan programs and not be merely confined to the women specific program.

“The Joshi Committee report exposed two premises.(a) that the integration of women into the development process will automatically achieve equality for them and (b) that the Doordarshan( post – independence India’s gift to society, as
the Joshi Committee reports puts it) since it is a government department, is beholden to execute this national objective.\footnote{4}

Another assumption that seems to be implied rather than stated, is that given Doordarshan’s objective to implement the national objective of equal rights to all citizens, including women, as enshrined in the constitution, it must ensure equitable representation on Doordarshan to all sections.

To understand Doordarshan’s approach towards women’s portrayal with respect to programming I have classified feminism under three broad category (a) Liberal feminism (b) radical feminism and (c) socialist feminism. It is broadly under these theories upon which different soap operas are based.

Liberal feminism supposedly natural role of women as wives and mother account for unequal position of women in society. General liberal principles of liberty and equality should apply to women as well. “Equal rights” or “reformists” feminism are other labels for these principles which find their
political translation in attempt to change legislation, in affirmative action programs, in stimulating women to take up unconventional roles and occupations and to develop masculine qualities to acquire power. Such role reversal is much less strongly advocated, for men.

Humlog, one of the earliest mega serial on Doordarshan, presents life of a lower middle class family where education to younger generation bring in new aspiration and values. Women in the family are repressed and deprived of authority, particularly the mother, and an uneducated traditional housewife. However, despite the authoritarian character of father, an irresponsible head of the family, three daughters of the younger generation reflect a sense of confidence and ambition. Women of two generations seem to carry different set of values of life. Doordarshan, the ultimate director of this serial, fathers, in projecting women of younger generation with modern values in a positive role model. The character of Manjhli, who defies tradition and conventions, is projected in a negative frame. Ambition for women seems to
be a taboo and unacceptable. Doordarshan, in its efforts has ended up concluding that women even if supported by education may not sustain the rigours of outside world if left alone. This projection is basically a mirror image of the value system prevailing in Indian society during those times.

Sex role stereotypes, prescriptions of sex appropriate behaviour, appearance, and interests, skills and self-perceptions are at the core of liberal feminist media analysis. Numerous quantitative content analysis have shown that women hardly appear in the mass media, be it depicted as wife, mother, daughter, girlfriend as working in traditionally women specific professions (secretary, nurse, Receptionist) or as sex object. Moreover they are usually young and beautiful but not very educated. Emphasis is more on the physical attributes rather than intellectual skills of women being encouraged.

Prime time serials like Humlog and Buniyaad adhere to above ideology. All the women are shown to prescribe to traditional role of wife, mother and daughter and the one, e.g.
Manjhali, the second daughter in Humlog, who does not adhere to traditional values, is portrayed in a negative role. She wants to go out of the house and work in films, which is against traditionally accepted role, is shown to fall into bad hands and is raped whereas the eldest daughter, Badaki who is docile, self sacrificing and opts for a traditional job is portrayed in a positive role for her. For sometime the serial makes the audience believe that going out of the house and choosing non-traditional jobs will lead women into bad hands. Hence women should comply with traditional roles.

Traditional values like staying in a joint family despite the differences in family is also portrayed very well in Booniyaad. The eldest daughter-in-law of Haweliram, Kulbhushan’s wife, Lochan, belongs to a higher class and finds difficulty in adjustment with her in laws. Kulbhushan understands her problem but at the same time he does not want to leave his family. The wife succeeds in breaking the traditional value – of staying in the joint family and leaves the in laws house to make her own house of dreams where she can
enjoy certain degree of freedom. However, her character is not portrayed positively. It is seen as a sin by her.

In Indian Society, the prevalence of joint family is deeply rooted in the minds of elder generation. Breaking away from this means that the daughter-in-law has not been groomed properly for assimilating in the family. “Experimental research done in tradition of cognitive psychology tends to support the hypothesis that media act as socializing agent — along with the family — teaching children their appropriate sex role and symbolically rewarding them for appropriate behaviour”.

“It is thought that media perpetuate sex role stereotypes because they reflect dominant social values and because male media producers are influenced by these stereotypes”. The subordinate status of women is portrayed in these serials with no solution for their upliftment. Freedom of movement given to the two sons and the father and at the same time restriction imposed on the same freedom to daughters and women of the family is very well portrayed. Women should stay in the four
walls of the house in the pretext of protecting them is supported in these serials.

It is not to say that Doordarshan has not attempted programs for women’s development. But if development means socio-economic transformation then the women’s integration into development has failed.

Government’s policy of ‘reservations’ in jobs and recent demand for reservations in Parliament is no solution to the secondary status of women. It may be a means to achieving the goal but not the goal. Instead of correcting the sub-structure, emphasis is being laid on changing the super structure, which may lead to a dead end. The main task of the media should be to make the people aware of their rights by which real change can be achieved. This is not an easy task for example “despite studies on women’s work such as those recording the widespread incidence of women in agriculture, the delivery of agricultural resources continues to be directed towards men”.7
It is seen that when power is enjoyed by one section of society or class at the behest of other class or section it is very difficult to share the power with the less privileged. “Women whose security lies in stable patriarchal relations or in the privileges of their class and men whose identity and dominance may be undermined if women’s life options are increased.” Hence all attempts to bring women at par with men are thwarted and stiff resistance by the patriarchy is shown. The most recent example of this is providing reservations to women in Parliament. All the male members, who discuss vehemently and agree for equality of both sexes while canvassing and list it as first priority in their election manifesto act in a most undemocratic way when it comes to the real time. They do not hesitate in even ripping apart the bill when introduced in the Parliament. This shows the fear psychosis among the patriarchy and the insatiable desire for power.

Just by providing reservations in jobs and Parliament, the problem of gender development is not solved. From the
past experience of Panchayat election, research has shown that women representatives have acquired the political posts, but real power is enjoyed by the patriarchy. The representatives are mere de jure heads while the de facto powers are enjoyed by the male member be it husband/father/son. “What we can assume on the basis of what we know is that gender relations are structured in dominance; they are not generally relations between equals but are produced as categories of power and hierarchy.”

Liberal media strategies have had some unwarranted consequences—“firstly the emphasis on role reversal for women in particular has created a new stereotype of ‘super women’ the response of commercial culture to the demands of liberal feminism.” Such type of portrayal has been done in “Uddan”, Kalyani in this serial has gradually acquired the status of a ‘hero’ donning the male police uniform, fights to reinstate her father’s land and honour, she perforce surrenders and represses her ‘femininity.

Secondly unforeseen consequences of liberal strategies
is showing painfully in developments in the media workforce. The number of female journalist has increased considerably in recent years with the United States in the forefront. "Sad enough however, American researchers have observed 'a female majority in the field does not translate into superior power or influence for women, instead, it has been translated to mean a decline in salaries and status for the field". This phenomenon is not observed in the field of media only but in all fields. The workplace where women out number men is considered as a field which is non technical, require less brain and is more manual operated job. The gender division of labour in industry is a social division of labour, and therefore can vary according to the situation. What is common, however, is that wherever a job is done exclusively or predominantly by women, it comes to be classified as being less skilled and of lower value and significance, and this is especially so in countries like India where equal pay for work of equal economic value has never been fought for and therefore the subjective basis on which
jobs are evaluated is neither brought under scrutiny nor challenged.  

The women workforce in Industries who is more rewarding is rejected because it is considered as ‘heavy work’. On the other hand, where domestic labour is concerned, women are usually assigned exclusive responsibility be it carrying heavy pots of water, household provisions or babies, sometimes for long distances or time period are physically more taxing than many industrial jobs. They become ‘women work’ not because they belong to the domestic economy, which is supposed to be a woman’s sphere but because they carry the symbol of subjugation.

An important characteristic of work done directly for one’s own household is that it is not remunerated or acknowledged in any way. Interestingly in many third world countries, it is acceptable for these same tasks to be done by men, provided they do them as waged labour -- for example, as hotel workers or domestic servants. But these men, like other male workers, would not readily do the same tasks in
their own homes for no reward. It is assumed that a woman is more suited to unwaged work, and can afford to do it because there is no necessity for them to earn. True, a woman is suited for the house hold job by virtue of her traditional subjugation in home but in society unremunerated jobs no matter how tiring physically and emotionally, are given second rate status or no status at all. Ask a housewife about her profession and the reply would be that she does not do anything. Whereas the reality is she does sixteen to eighteen hours duty which is twice than the normal working hours in the office.

Doordarshan in its serial has not questioned the right to equal pay for equal work or try to alleviate the down trodden status of housewives. In Humlog the mother or the housewives drudges all day doing household jobs and suffers the status of side player. She does not have any say in the activities of her husband or children. Presenting a role model she is timid, worried about keeping up social appearances, afraid of
consequences of taking on any hard decision but loyal to her unusual eccentric husband.

RADICAL FEMINISM

In radical feminist discourse 'patriarchy', a social system in which all men are assumed to dominate and oppress all women, accounts for women’s position in society. Patriarchy is conceived to be the result of men’s innately wicked inclination to dominate women, a genetically determined need that they can fulfil – in the last instance – by exercising their physical strength.

Radical feminists have been in the forefront of exposing male abuse of women and politicising issues formerly considered as private; sexual violence, wife battering, incest pornography and more recently sex tourism and trafficking in women. It is obvious that men can have no place in radical feminist utopias. In order to free themselves completely women have to cut off all ties with men and male society, and from their own communities. Lesbianism therefore is essentially following political choice – another example of
radical politicisation of the personal. Since mass media are in the hand of male owners and producers, they will operate to the benefit of a patriarchal society. Apparently their premise does not need further research given a few media studies that have been conducted from a radical feminist perspective. In radical feminist analyses the power of the media to affect men’s behaviour towards women and women’s perception of themselves is beyond discussion.” Researchers may have been unable to prove a direct connection between any particular instance of media and any partial act, but there can be no doubt that media distortions contributes to a general climate of discrimination and abuse of women.13

That Doordarshan enforces patriarchy is clearly evident from the serials it telecasts during the prime time. In Udaan, Kalyani is the elder child, who feels dejected at the time of the birth of her baby brother. At the time of the naming ceremony of the child she is alone and neglected. Birth of a baby son makes Kalyani aware of her inferior gender identity.
Her father, who is soft on tenants, does not adhere to joint family system – and absence of traits which enforces patriarchy is treated as a step son, not a true heir to the old patriarch. As a result he has to suffer dejection and is thrown away from the family without being given any share in the patriarch’s property.

In Humlog the character of ‘Manjhal’ when questions the ‘ given role of women’ has no space for her freedom. The serial portrays that a strong single women who are not contained and defined by marriage and family has no place in the society. She has to be either married or banished beyond the pale of such a possibility through the mechanism of rape, celibacy and suicide / death. The containment has to be a sexually definitive one.

**The patriarchy enforces itself in many ways namely –**

a) Differentiates gender on biological front thus proving to be on a superior front.

b) it entrenches property rights and
c) Uses physical power for submission of the weaker sex.

Adhikaar, which was telecast on Doordarshan, was considered as a meaningful program for women. "However, the 'successful' case strategy was a trap – it resulted in the concealment of the patriarchal attitudes of the judiciary in respect of cases that were either not admitted or were lost.”

Not one episode addressed issues such as rape, prostitution, domestic violence, and restitution of conjugal rights or loss of land. None of the cases focussed on women belonging to minority communities or the personal laws that apply to them. Except for one single episode dealing with a working class situation, all the cases were centered on the problems of middle and upper class women. Media's role here is questionable about its concern for women as a class. A media in a poor country like India must be a voice and face of the voiceless, faceless millions; it is warped just be the face of the upwardly mobile, urban middle class.
The very conception of the serial that judiciary is free of gender prejudice is wrong. Instead of generating a healthy debate on women and law, right to abortion, right on the body and ‘mind’ the serial suggested that if something wrong has been done on women it is their fault, firstly by creating a situation and secondly by not fighting legally. But in Indian society is it possible for the lower middle class or for that matter upper middle class to fight in the court without the help of patriarchy? “The abysmal record of the judiciary in innumerable rape cases (even those involving minors), the few convictions obtained in the case of ‘dowry deaths’ the many loop holes in the law relating to the property rights of women, so that victory in a case is purely ephemeral, are all indicative of the patriarchal nature of the legal system and judiciary. In cases of rape, women lose because their past sexual history and the question of ‘consent’ are used as evidence to damn them.” Dowry death’ cases are converted into suicides. This aspect of the legal system vis-à-vis women was completely ignored by the serial.¹⁴
“An analysis of judgements in rape trials which have come up on appeal to High Courts and the Supreme Court of India, and of legal discourse on rape reveals the impossibility of capturing the complexity of what Carol Smart calls the ‘binary logic’ of the law.”

There is no way within legal system to conceive of women’s sexual experience except in terms of consenting/not consenting to male pressure. The consent for sexual intercourse can be had only from a female who has attained puberty but what about rape victims who are just a few months or few years old? They are considered by law as victim or being duped. But the major problem arises for females who have grown up legally even by a few months; she is radically transformed from victim to accomplice. Thus, while recognising the relative powerlessness and lack of autonomy that characterize women’s relations with men, the point is to question the possibility of addressing this experience in the realm of legal discourse.
Even when justice appears to be done, that is, when conviction is secured, the very demonstration re-enacts and resediments patriarchal and misogynist values. Scenes of rape are unnecessarily stretched and shown to the audience without giving any practical solution by the Doordarshan. The victim and the family then tries to either hide the truth or blame the victim who forces her to leave the house or commit suicide. On the question of sexual violence Doordarshan has shown its limitations and its inability to encompass such an important issue.

Another method in the world of new technology to enforce patriarchy is amniocentesis or killing the female foetus before its birth.

In India the issue of abortion has been discussed and debated on a different platform than the west. The main point in favour of the issue is poverty created by overpopulation and abortion has been long accepted as a measure of family planning. The medical termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act of 1971 admit Parliamentary rhetoric of choice and women's
rights, but it was clearly intended as a population control measure, as several MPs pointed out during the debate on the Bill. The act was not passed as a result of campaigning by women’s group nor did there emerge any concerted anti-abortion stream of opinion in the public arena.”

The problem in Indian society is not on the question of abortion but on the question of selective abortion with the development in technology that is through the method of ultrasound the practice of selective abortion of female fetuses has increased.

Doordarshan in its serial has not taken up this issue. In Humlog and Udaan this topic has been left untouched. In Booniyaad when Lajo delivers a son, the joy of the grandmother is discriminatory. The emphasis is shown on the birth of a baby boy to whom the property can be given. Lajo is not accepted in the family because she marries without the consent of the family but with the birth of her son, the son is immediately accepted in the family. This acceptance is
instantaneous because the elder sister-in-law has two girl children and not a boy.

There is a great hue and cry over the selective abortion. Morally, one can agree that the technology should not be used only to terminate foetuses of girl child but there are many ground realities, which forces the family to take such a step. To enumerate a few, the most important reason is patriarchy. Transfer of property to a male child and social rituals and security during the old age by the male child forces the family to crave for it. Patriarchy enforces itself by perpetuating male child. Status of female is enhanced if she bears a male child rather than a girl child. Secondly the dowry system forces parents to get rid of female child before birth. Whole life the parents of female have to save for the marriage. Take heavy loans for the above purpose and look for a suitable boy. Since the status of boy’s parent is ‘high’ hence the parents of girl have to suffer humiliation because of their ‘low’ status. Even after suffering economic and mental burden the girl is not safe
at her in laws home. The greed for more money leads to innumerable dowry deaths.

Thirdly the pathetic state of females vis-à-vis males is seen in the family. The female is required to do daily chores of household, which has been discussed, without any remuneration, thus making her status low. The secondary importance to education of the females is one of the basic reasons for this state of affairs. The main aim and responsibility of the family towards the girl child is to get her married as early as possible. Education and jobs are secondary things.

In Humlog the secondary role of education for females is portrayed very well. In a middle class family, girls like Badki, Manjhali and Chutki, education has no importance. The family members are more concerned for their marriages than their economic or educational upliftment. They are many a time discouraged to pursue an independent career, which would prove fatal in their married life. In Udaan, since
Kalyani has chosen a career, which is not female type, she is portrayed as remaining single.

Fourthly, the fear of rape or situations which makes female lose control over their body leads to cases of amniocentesis. Working parents, be it of any class are always in fear of leaving behind their girl child. There are a number of cases where minors' girl child is raped. The situation of rape is not limited to minors only, the fear is persistent in any female. This fear is because of two revealing limitations: firstly, the limitations of the law and its inability to encompass the lived experience of women; and secondly, the other seeking to legitimise this experience precisely through having it recognised by the law as authentic."^{17}

Rape, in Indian society, has different repercussions than in Western Society. In Western World rape leads to mental, emotional trauma. For acceptance of the female in society for other purposes e.g. Marriage, other social rituals it has no impact. Whereas rape in Indian society is linked with purity of the girl. Though everybody accepts that it can happen with
anybody and is not due to the fault of the sufferer
nevertheless acceptance in the society for marriage or other
social rituals she may be debarred for the whole life. Thus the
result is that the victim does not make it public and even if she
gathers the courage for it there is tremendous pressure from
the family and society to hide the matter so that the future may
be protected. Despite the recent rise in pre marital sex amongst
youth, a women who has been raped is not acceptable to society.

In Humlog when Manjhali is raped, there is no
sympathy from her family members. They do not want to own
her and all the blame goes to her because she wanted to
become independent and join film line which is against the
normal roles assigned to women. The raped person is
considered impure, not fit for marriage, and hence left with no
option but to commit suicide or leave the worldly life become
a saint as Veeravali becomes Bahenji in Booniyaad or in the
last resort opt for prostitution. She is denied her respectable
life of a woman who can pursue choices in her life. She is
effectively forced into a specific role if she manages to survive the psychological trauma. Recourse to law is very limited and very often justice is denied. "An analysis of judgement in rape trials which have come up on appeal to High Courts and Supreme Court of India, and of legal discourage on rape reveals the impossibility of capturing the complexity of what Carol Smart calls the 'binary logic' of the law". There is no method within legal system, which can show whether the female’s sexual experience was by her consent or by male pressure. Consent itself, a state of mind constituted in a complex way, has to be rigidly pegged to a linear notion of physical growth if it is to make sense within legal discourse. Below the age of consent a women cannot be expected to have agency in sexual interaction, she can only be understood as victim or dupe. Above this age, even if it is by a few months, she is radically transformed from victim to accomplice. Thus, while recognising the relative powerlessness and lack of autonomy that characterize women’s relation with men, the point is to question the
possibility of addressing this experience in the realm of legal discourse.  

Fifthly, widowhood is another problem of Indian women still following Manusmriti which makes women dependent whole life on male firstly on father then on husband and lastly on son makes life of a widow hell after her husband’s death. Emotionally and economically she is shattered. Legally in post colonial India widow has right on her husband’s property but she is dependent emotionally on her son hence she cannot take independent decisions. Media here could play pivotal role in emphasising the significance of education and awareness about the rights of women in such situation. However, it has failed to do so emphatically.

In patriarchal system it is assumed that after the death of a male another male takes over his rights and obligations. In Adhikaar, the first episode showed a young widow being duped by her in-laws into signing away her rights to the insurance policy of her husband Ramesh. When she questions her father-in-law he asks her to leave the house accusing her
of only having greed for Ramesh’s money. A sympathetic sister-in-law advises her to stay put and consult a lawyer who obtains an injunction and she gets the money. The portrayal educated for leaving a will behind.

Another episode of Adhikaar revolved around a mother who gives her property to her son as she is emotionally attached and thus became dependent on him. Later she was evicted by the son. She has to take shelter in the old people’s home where she is advised by a social worker to fight for her rights. But she finds the whole legal battle traumatic since at no stage in her she would have perceived herself in such situation. Lack of education and awareness about their rights further aggravates the emotional and economic crisis. Her inferiority, as a woman is feasible in her status as well as in totality.

That Doordarshan upholds patriarchy is clearly seen from the above discussion. The media strategies of radical feminism are straightforward; women should create their own means of communication. Technological developments in
prints and audiovisual media made the proliferation of feminist writing, newsletters, magazines, radio and TV programs, video and film groups possible. A host of feminist ideas would otherwise have not received a public forum (Kessler 1984).

A collective of volunteers, who usually work without profit motives and share responsibilities, produces most media. Radical feminist logic does not allow for hierarchies, they are thought to be a perversion of masculine society. Contributions are synonymous or assigned with first names only since it is assumed that all women share the same kind of patriarchal oppression.

“Radical media strategies have been more problematic than they seem to be at first sight, the belief that women together – all innately good people – would be able to work without competition, hierarchy or specialisation and would write or film from the same source of essential femininity, proved an illusion.”21.
There are differences in opinion concerning power and interest among the female groups also. The existence of hierarchy in any organisation or group cannot be ruled out. Another problem posed by the feminist group is their inability to attract readers/viewers beyond feminist perspective. "While their self proclaimed aim often is to inform, and mobilize larger audiences, movement, media tend to fulfil more of a ritual function."22

Serials which tried to challenge the patriarchy and had radical views did not gain much audience and after that brief period 1982-1987 "Women and their concerns have been relegated either to the women's program or the programs telecast during afternoon transmission where they are projected as part of a troika of unprivileged groups, the elderly children and women."23 With the waning enthusiasm for collective expressions of feminism the circulation figures of feminist media declined rather dramatically resulting in the demise of many of them.
“In its pure form, radical feminist media analysis have not gained much ground. However, many elements of it are also found in other theories. Socialist feminism incorporates the concept of patriarchal ideology in its Marxist analysis of women’s position without, however, adopting its essentialist stance. The conviction that differences between men and women are essentially biological has emerged in other feminist perspective as well. French feminist drawing heavily from psychoanalytic theory have very sophisticatedly located the difference between men and women in the different structure of male and female genitals, considering for example, clear linear narrative structure as an expression of masculine, goal oriented sexuality. It is to say that need of the time is not to fight over the superiority of gender but to maintain a harmonious balance between it. Targeting a sex with a radical outlook will necessarily lead to reactionary attitude. “The solution for women’s positions is not sought in withdrawing from patriarchal culture, but increasing new and
legitimate spaces for feminine voice, supposedly more process oriented”.

**SOCIALIST FEMINISM.**

Unlike radical and liberal feminism, socialist feminism does not focus exclusively on gender on account for women’s position but attempts to incorporate an analysis of class and economic conditions of women as well. Central concepts are the reproduction of labour and the economic value of domestic labour. Although not recognised as such, the nurturing, moral, educational and domestic work, women do in the family is indispensable for the maintenance of capitalism and the society itself. Socialist feminism shares with liberal feminism an emphasis on the need for women to take up paid labour.

The socialist feminist communication model of the seventies clings to radical models in which media perceived to be ideological instruments presenting the capitalist and patriarchal society as a natural order. However, socialist feminism is distinguished by a much greater concern for the way in which ideologies of femininity are constructed in the
media and to whose avail.

Doordarshan, in portraying women do not take account of differences in class, Caste and region. No serials shown during 1985—1990 portrayed the lower class. Serials like Hum Log, Booniyad, Udaan, Adhikaar, Swabhiman dealt with problems of middle and upper middle classes. The need and compulsions of this class is different from lower and upper classes. For example—need for lower class may be basic education, food, health and shelter whereas middle class and upper middle class strive for equality in gender status, economic independence and perseverance of status. The above concepts have no meaning for a class who does not have basic needs fulfilled. It is seen that the lower class females are economically independent. They have no taboos on the nature of work they perform for their living. But at the same time the middle class females have to restrict themselves to certain kind of jobs for their economic independence taken during emergency period like death of husband or son or unemployment of husband or son and support children. The
choice to work is not out of desire or competency but a social-economic compulsion. Middle class women generally do not opt to work till forced by their socio-economic environment.

"Socialist states have taken extremely contradictory position on state policy regarding women. In the Soviet Union the stress on releasing women for social production and decreasing her family responsibility in the early years of the republic contrasts, with the pro natalist policies following the devastation of the Second World War. All this in practice has meant that the democratic women’s movement has not proceeded smoothly in association with revolutionary politics, and that revolutionary organisations have continued to be myopic about women’s issues".\textsuperscript{25}

In India, the ‘state’ in principle believes in equality of sexes but in practice nothing much is done to alleviate women’s downtrodden status. The constitutional equality granted to women in society has not been transmitted into reality even after 50 years of its existence. In most of the
places where women are working outside their home out of compulsion or as an expression of autonomy, their problem becomes manifold. In the words of Alexandra Kolloutai the status is described very well. The wife, the mother who is a worker sweats blood to fill three tasks at the same time, to give necessary working hours as her husband does in some industry or commercial establishment, then to devote herself as well as she can to her household and then also to take care of her children.

Capitalism has placed on the shoulders of the women, a burden, which crushes her; it has made her a wageworker without having lessened her cares as a housekeeper and mother. We, therefore, find the women crushed facing from triple insupportable burden, forcing from her often a swiftly smothered cry of pain....”

The programs telecast by Doordarshan is superficial in their approach. They do not take account of socio-economic structures. Doordarshan is reluctant to focus on gender
exclusively and try to incorporate material and cultural conditions in accounting for women’s position in society.

In the crudest form, Doordarshan clings to radical models in which media can be perceived to be an ideological instrument presenting the capitalist and patriarchal society as the natural order.

After analysing the prime time serials certain solutions can be offered to include a wider section of women, first to include more female producers, secondly awareness of class distinction i.e. moving away from middle class bias and thirdly acknowledging feminist interpretation of professionalism.

REFERENCES

1 Television and Women’s culture; The politics of the popular; Mary Allen Brown: Sage Publications; New Delhi 1990
2 Affirmation and Denial-Construction of femininity on Indian Television.- Prabha Krishan and Anita Dighe: Sage Publication: New Delhi
6 Mass Media and Society
7 Dhanraj Deepa op. Cit.
8 Dhanraj Deepa op.cit.
9 Mass Media and Society- ed. By James Curran and Michael Gurevitch
14 Dhanraj Deepa
15 Gender and Politics in India,Right Bodies and Law- p.284
16 Gender and Politics in India. (Ed.) By Nivedita Menon p.278
17 Gender and Politics in India
18 Gender and Politics in India-p 284
19 Gender and Politics in India.
22 ibid.
23 Deepa Dhanraj p. 249
24 Mass Media and Society
25 Feminist, Women are Movement, and the Working Class in Gender and Politics in India.