CHAPTER I

Introduction

Television became a national phenomenon in India when on August 15, 1982, the national programme of Doordarshan was inaugurated. In 1984-1985, the people of Kerala were introduced to the virtual world of TV. Since then revolutionary changes have taken place in the field of media communication and also in the lives of the people. Today about 60% of the households of Kerala own TV sets. In 1985, the TV transmitters of Kerala were relaying the national programme which was in Hindi and English. Regional language programmes were limited to a few hours. Now there are three private Malayalam channels besides Doordarshan Malayalam channel. Two more channels are set to be operational this year. All these channels broadcast programmes for 24 hours. In addition to these channels all important channels in English language the world over are available to the people of Kerala through cable. The cable network is spreading its wings all over the rural areas of the state.

Television has come to occupy a central place in the lives of the people. TV, to a great extent, determines the rhythm of people's life not only in towns but in villages as well. The ubiquity and the real or imagined power of this medium has drawn much attention to it over the last 15 years. In fact, whatever has happened in 50 years in the West in the field of television communication has taken place in Kerala within the span of just 15 years.

The people in the West who were opening their eyes to the new reality of TV were practically unaware of its impact on their life. But, the people of Kerala, though fascinated by the new medium, have been, from the beginning at least, dimly aware of its great power. Their enthusiasm
was always tempered with caution. The fast spread of TV and the channel revolution that followed have added to their anxiety.

This anxiety is more about the growing-up of children. Young children whose basic personality structure is being formed spend a lot of time before TV. TV appears to compete with the traditional agencies of socialisation such as family, school and religious organisations. The chief socialising agency is, of course, the family which is supported by the school and the religious community. Parents who are charged with the responsibility of socialising the young are naturally concerned with the impact TV may have on their wards.

Parents would want their children to assimilate the norms and values of the society and not to be influenced by ideas or ideals that go contrary to those values. This concern of parents is but a reflection of the inclination of the society at large, to keep its cultural foundations intact. Thus along with parents' concern over their children there is a social concern as for the impact of TV on culture. There are people who express the fear that TV will undermine the culture of India.

The view that TV should be kept away from children and that foreign TV programmes, if not foreign channels, should be banned may be held by a few, but will not find general acceptance. Such an approach is neither feasible nor healthy. But still, people are worried about the negative influence of TV on children and also on society and culture. This necessitates scientific studies on the effect of TV on people, especially on children. This is the context in which the present study has been undertaken. Before outlining it further a brief history of the arrival of TV and the expansion of TV network is given below.
A. The Arrival of a New Medium

TV is extremely popular wherever it has been introduced. It engages the two most powerful senses of human beings: eyes and ears, but does not demand much effort from the viewers. For children, it serves as a window to the world. They begin to enjoy watching TV even before they pick up their mother tongue.

1. Development of TV in the West

Experiments done by many scientists at various laboratories and university centres contributed to the development of TV.

NBC began a regular television service in 1939 in the US. Soon 10 commercial stations were licensed and several companies were manufacturing home receivers. The outbreak of war halted this expansion process. At the close of the war more stations came up and in the ensuing competition there was a round chaos in the broadcasting arena because of the interference of one station's signal with another's. The Federal Communications Commission in 1948 stopped further licensing of stations. In 1952, it set up a comprehensive licensing and frequency allocation system and lifted the freeze.

Following the removal of barriers against the founding of new TV stations, TV broadcasting stations proliferated. In 1952, there were 108 stations in the US to which another 200 were added by 1954 and yet another 150 by 1956.¹

In 1948 alone there was an increase of 400% in the number of TV sets. By the beginning of 1952 there were 15 million sets in American

homes and in 1953 the number went up to 20 million. In 1951 23% households were having TV sets, in 1955 66% households owned a TV set, and in 1957 80% had the sets. In 1996 more than 98% of American households had one or more TV sets.²

American television began with four networks but in 1955 it settled down to three: NBC, CBS and ABC. In 1970, there were 650 network affiliated stations. Today there are about 120 commercial stations and 360 public and educational stations in the US. Broadcasts reach about 96 million households.³

In the UK, British Broadcasting Corporation television, introduced in 1936, was suspended during the second world war. By 1956 BBC could be received throughout Britain. BBC-1 began operations in 1937; BBC-2 was established in 1964. BBC is a corporation run on the revenue from license fees and maintains its public service character. In 1954, Parliament established the Independent Television Authority (ITA) to provide commercial TV. This service presented an immediate threat to the comfortable monopoly of BBC and forced it to compete for audience.

There were three committees that made significant changes to broadcasting in the UK. In 1960, the Pilkington committee examined the output of commercial television and was extremely critical of the output and as a consequence proposed a new channel to the BBC. This became then BBC-2.

In 1977, the Annan committee was critical of both BBC and ITV for having become complacent and of being a cosy duopoly. The committee

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recommended that the fourth channel should be managed by an independent open broadcasting authority. This became channel 4 which started in 1982.

In 1986, the Peacock committee was set up to review the BBC licence fee. The commission favoured deregulation with the greatest possible freedom of choice for consumers. It recommended the lifting of all restrictions on cable and Satellite channels.\(^4\)

The era of Satellite television was inaugurated in July 1962 when Telestar I satellite was launched. The first commercial communication satellite, Early Bird, was launched in 1965.

This enabled the expansion of cable TV at a fast pace. Cable TV had already begun its service in 1950 at Lansford, Pa, USA. It rapidly turned into an extensive and fast growing business. As the era of satellite communication dawned, cable TV came to large cities. By 1965, an estimated 1.7 million homes in the US were served by about 1600 cable TV systems. In 1970, 4.5 million homes were served by 2385 cable TV systems. By 1996 there were about 11600 cable systems in operation in the US. Two thirds of the TV homes had cable connections. With the arrival of cable TV, the number of TV channels available to home TV sets increased by scores.\(^5\)

In Europe, the dish that can receive signals direct from satellites is popular in certain countries like the UK and Spain. But cable TV network is widely used in Germany (53%), Netherlands (90%) and Belgium (97%).


\(^5\) John Gunn, op.cit.; p.426.
The penetration of DTH (direct to home) and cable in Western Europe as in 1993 can be seen from the table below.

**Table 1: The Penetration of DTH and cable TV in Western Europe**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>All TV households (in thousands)</th>
<th>DTH households (in thousands)</th>
<th>Percentage penetration</th>
<th>Cable households (in thousands)</th>
<th>Percentage penetration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>31390</td>
<td>4430</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>16660</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>20900</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>22168</td>
<td>2571</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>20166</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>11249</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>3765</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3637</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>6076</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5468</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of channels available in Europe currently stands at 80 national channels, 900 local and regional channels and 140 satellite channels. But European TV audiences, specially adults are satisfied with their domestic channels; almost 94% watch only the domestic channels. But children are heavy viewers of cable and satellite channels. Almost half of their viewing time is spent on those channels, but viewing those channels decreases with increased age.7

2. Expansion of TV network in India

Television in India has got a history of 40 years. In the first 20 years, it was confined mainly to the metropolitan cities like Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. In the 1980s and the 1990s it reached out to all the regions and became a truly national phenomenon. It was in the second stage that TV was introduced to Kerala.

An experimental TV station was started in New Delhi on September 15, 1959 with a grant from UNESCO and with equipment offered by the US and Philips (India) company. The objective was to discover what TV could achieve in community development and formal education. The emphasis of broadcasting in the beginning was on its public service function.

In 1961, educational TV programmes began to be broadcast from Delhi station for the benefit of science teachers. But by 1965 entertainment programmes had to be introduced under pressure from TV manufacturers and the public. That year TV service was regularised in Delhi with daily broadcasts of educational programmes and entertainment. In 1967, the Krishi Darshan programme for farmers was introduced. This programme with its rural orientation still remains a part of Doordarshan programming of all its centres.

In 1972, the Bombay centre started functioning. By 1975 Calcutta, Madras, Lucknow, Pune and Amritsar centres also became operational.

Multinational companies which were eyeing on the large market of India wanted to give Indians a taste of TV. It prompted NASA to lend its ATS 6 satellite for one year. The understanding that TV was for public education was still prevalent and hence a plan was conceived for broadcasting programmes to the villagers. Thus the Satellite Instructional TV Experiment (SITE) was conducted from August 1975 to August 1976. Its education programmes were beamed to 2400 villages in six states.

SITE was a turning point in the history of Indian broadcasting. Commercial interests began to exert pressure on the Government for the expansion of the TV network in India. On January 1, 1976 the first commercial was aired on Indian TV. In the same year TV was separated
from AIR and Doordarshan came into being. Terrestrial transmitters were put up in six more cities to cover about 100 million people.

In the 1980s, India entered into the era of Satellite communication. Communication satellites designed by India were put in geostationary orbits. Though the first satellite INSAT I-A failed to become fully operational, INSAT I-B began to provide communication facilities throughout India. In August 1982, Doordarshan operationalised its first national channel. During 1984-85, 120 TV transmitters were installed to increase coverage. By 1988 TV broadcast covered 500 million people which constituted 62 per cent of the population. 8

In 1993-94, Doordarshan signals reached 83.6 per cent of the population. Today, the national channel of DD operates through a network of 897 terrestrial transmitters to make available the TV signals for over 87 per cent of population.

According to the Doordarshan audience research wing, in 1988, 90 million people watched TV regularly. In 1999, DD programmes were watched by 350 million viewers. There were 17.34 million TV sets in India in 1988, 40.34 million sets in 1993; the number of sets went up to 63 million in 1999. 9

In the 1990s, foreign satellite channels 'invaded' the Indian skies which brought about radical changes in the conception of TV. TV was no

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longer under the government control and the new situation compelled Doordarshan to open up and run itself on commercial lines. It was the Gulf war in 1991 that brought CNN to Indian homes. Star TV, a Hongkong based TV network, began operations in India in the same year. Other foreign and national channels began to broadcast programmes not only in English but also in Hindi and other regional languages.

By 1993, DD had five satellite channels besides 10 regional language channels\(^{10}\). A number of private companies also started broadcasting in various regional languages such as Asianet, Sun TV and Vijay TV.

3. Satellite channels in Malayalam

CNN and STAR networks opened up new vistas of Satellite communication. Satellite channels in regional languages was an idea pregnant with possibilities. Asianet, a Malayalam channel, was the first one to seize upon the opportunity. Asianet presents the background of its inception:

CNN-STAR TV fare triggered the appetite for living room entertainment in India, but the ability to understand English and the sophisticated programme content was a limiting factor. Besides, those who considered these foreign channels as harbingers of globalisation and a liberating influence in general, latest started worrying about these influences changing values of their kids. From educationists and criminologists to pediatricians opinions converged on the undesirability of alien influence on our society. 'Invasion from the skies' was a topic of serious discussions in Seminar rooms, classrooms and even legislatures...

There was also an awareness that in a country as large as India, the regions and small linguistic and cultural communities were important communication spaces, falling between national and international communication... This importance of

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'diversity factor' lay beyond the geographical, cultural, linguistic and political aspects, but also as regards the potential of this diversity to create new markets. The idea of 'Asianet' - a Malayalam Satellite Television Channel - took shape in this context.11

Asianet started broadcasting in 1993 with its central studio at Trivandrum. It claims a viewership of 800,000 households in Kerala, 5.78 million households on an all India basis and a million households outside India.12

Though Asianet speaks of lofty ideals such as 'modernising Malayalee society' and 'opening up Malayalee minds to an avalanche of ideas from all sides' its strategy has been to cater to the tastes of Malayalees in Kerala and outside. It does it rather efficiently with its innovative programming. Along with conventional programmes like feature films, film-based programmes, teleserials, sitcoms and chatshows, there are socially relevant programmes like Kannadi, Nammal Thammil and programmes on science, arts, language and books.

Surya TV, the Malayalam channel of Sun Network started functioning in 1996. The Sun Network, started in 1993, has got channels in Tamil and other southern languages. Its programme mix more or less follows the pattern of Asianet. Kairali channel is a Malayalam channel started in April 2000 by a company sponsored by the Marxist Communist Party. Though it has leaning towards the party in the presentation of news and in other news-based programmes, it is an entertainment channel like any other satellite channel. DD4, the Malayalam Satellite channel of Doordarshan, is predominantly an entertainment channel.

12. Ibid.
Two more Malayalam channels are in the offing: Jeevan TV and India Vision channel, both of them sponsored by religious groups. The former, especially, promises wholesome entertainment which does not compromise on values. Thus Malayalees are having a variety of competing programmes to choose from.

B. The Growing Concern About TV

The account above shows that TV found ready acceptance wherever it was introduced and spread far and wide in a short span of time. People were fascinated by this audio-visual medium and allowed themselves to remain under its 'hypnotic' control.

1. The debate in the West

In the US, after the depression of the 1930s and World War II people wanted to relax. Jeff Greenfield described the mood of the people at that time: "We took television into our homes and closed the doors behind us."13 Young parents wanted shows that idealised the home and stimulated warm feelings for it. Teenagers wanted to see not just how to dance but also how to dress, how to behave, what to emulate. Young children needed orientation. By the close of 1950s, TV was deeply woven into the fabric of American life. By 1960 virtually all Americans were watching. "It was a national mania of a magnitude never experienced before."14

Gradually the quality of the shows came down. Producers wanted to reach the largest possible audience. For this they had to go down to the lowest common denominator. Action and adventure became the hallmark

13. J. Foules, op.cit.; p.12
14. Ibid.
of television. In 1961, the highest ratings went to ABC's 'The untouchables', a show awash in gore and mayhem. Though the content sank low, audience watched. It was as though TV had some hypnotic hold over the viewers. The issue that raised alarm bells was that children were also watching these shows.\textsuperscript{15}

Violence on TV became a public issue. Senator J Dodd opened hearings on television violence in June 1961. Industry representatives immediately promised to reduce violence in the programmes. The US witnessed unprecedented violence in 1967, parallel to the bombing and destruction in Vietnam. There was vandalism in American streets. Between 1963 and 1973 while the war in Vietnam was taking 46,212 lives, firearms in America killed 84,644 citizens. On July 26, 1967 President Johnson established a National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. The commission which submitted its report in March 1968 laid much of the blame for the crisis on the media, on TV in particular. But the commission did not find a causal relationship between TV coverage and the disorders.\textsuperscript{16}

The national unrest persisted. In 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy were assassinated. In June 1968 President Johnson appointed a new national commission headed by M.S. Eisenhower. The focus of the study was again on media. The commission's report said that the amount of on-the-air violence in 1968 had actually increased slightly over 1967. The report pointed out that there were 600 separate acts of TV violence per week, that half of the leading characters acted violently and one out of every ten leading characters killed somebody. With regard to children, the report noted that there took place a process of 'observational

\textsuperscript{15. Ibid.}
learning'. It found that the younger the child, the more he identified himself with the programme and learned from it.\textsuperscript{17}

Then again in 1969, the Chairman of the Communication sub-Committee requested the Surgeon General to appoint a committee to study the harmful effects of televised violence on children. Despite the pressure from TV networks and disagreement within the committee, the Surgeon General’s scientific Advisory committee stated that television violence did have an adverse effect on certain members of the society. But broadcasters continued to insist that research on the behavioural effects of TV violence was inconclusive.\textsuperscript{18}

The debate in the US went on. The issue was taken to the courts when in New York city, Ronnei Zamora a 15 year old boy killed his 82 year old neighbour. He had shot her down as she came back unexpectedly when he was burglarizing the home. In the trial the defendant’s counsel blamed it on TV. Ronnei Zamora was a TV addict and had avidly watched all action/adventure programmes.\textsuperscript{19}

Such shoot-outs at home or on campus are not isolated events in the US. One such incident took place at a Colombian high school where a high school boy shot down 13 students. In a TIME/CNN poll conducted after the incident, 64 per cent of the respondents favoured legislation to restrict children’s access to violence and sexually explicit entertainment. The broadcasters responded with cosmetic changes in their programmes to the pressure exerted by people’s representatives and other groups of concerned citizens. The globalization of media in the 1980s and 1990s

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{19} J. Fowles \textit{op.cit.}; pp.1-2.
perhaps changed the tenor and tone of the debate. America was fighting to maintain its dominance over the skies but the perennial problem of violence still beset its society as illustrated by the recent shoot-outs on school campuses.

2. Growing anxiety about TV in India

If the concern of American society on TV was centred round violence shown on it and its impact on children, Indians have had varied concerns. Doordarshan, the largest TV network in India, with its wide reach in rural areas has always been under Government control. So there has always been an indirect control over violence shown on TV, for the producers could not ignore the sentiment of the common people in this regard. But with the arrival of foreign and indigenous private channels this control is getting diluted day by day.

Indian TV, both DD and private channels, are much dependent on cinema. A good percentage of the programmes are film-based. Thus violence and sex in films, to some extent, reach homes through the small screen. According to Leela Menon, children in Kerala skip childhood to become instant teens because of TV addiction. A regular diet of over-sexuality and violence targeting adults is avidly absorbed by children and teens. It adversely affects reading, alters family relationships and widens gender gaps. Children grow into passive observers instead of vibrant participants.²⁰

Indian cinema always provided escape to the people from the harsh realities of life. Today, TV performs that function to a very large measure. People, especially children, identify themselves with screen characters. The serials based on epics and puranas are taken for real by the people and the characters of these serials command great respect from viewers.

Children would act out the scenes they saw on TV. A number of cases were reported during the broadcast of Ramayana, a popular serial, in which children’s eyes got injured in their attempt to act out certain scenes of the serial involving fights with bows and arrows. The broadcast of a serial ‘Saktiman’ had to be suspended on complaints that children put their life at great risk imitating the superhuman feats of the hero of the serial.

A Delhi boy who was a XI class student, 16 years old, climbed upon the top of a train with his friends at Nizamudeen station in order to enact a musical scene from the Hindi film 'Dil Se'. As the line was charged he was thrown off the train top and died later in hospital. The boy was a great admirer of the hero of the film and other film stars.21

Such bizarre incidents show that some young persons, their number may be a few, confuse the virtual reality of TV with real life. It also indicates the susceptibility of children to media messages in general and advertisement messages in particular. The advertising industry in India is increasingly targeting children in their pursuit of increasing sale volumes. Many parents are worried over the demands children make for products they see advertised on TV.

The most serious concern parents in Kerala express about TV is that it takes away children’s study time. Children watching TV for long hours lose not only their study time but also their sleep. Loss of sleep in turn affects their studies. Most of the children share the ‘craze’ of their elders for cricket. Watching long cricket games on TV regularly may have serious consequences for studies. On the other hand there are many parents who take precautions that TV does not affect the studies of their children and they seem to succeed in their effort.

How sex and violence on TV affect children, what impact advertisements have on children, whether these advertisements foster consumerist values at the expense of human values, how TV is going to affect children’s intellectual development, attitudes and values - these are some of the questions that are uppermost in the minds of parents and other concerned persons. Yet there is another larger issue: the issue of the impact of TV on culture.

3. Impact of TV on Culture

As mentioned earlier, in the 1980s and the 1990s TV acquired global reach, the US becoming a key player. In TV programming US companies were virtually unbeatable. Hollywood's worldwide exports, including TV programmes, video-tapes and films, doubled in value between 1987 and 1991 from $1.1 billion to $2.2 billion. American domination is reflected not only in American based global channels like CNN and MTV but also in indigenous channels which depend much on Hollywood programmes. India is no exception to this general trend.

Awareness of this domination is at the roots of the fear some people have in this country of cultural invasion. They feel that a steady flow of American or American-styled TV programmes in the long run will undermine the foundations of Indian culture. Bandana Mukherjee writes of this invasion of culture:

In her long existence India had to face many invasions: Aryan invasion, Parthian invasion, Muslim invasion, Christian (British) invasion. But in the later 20th century she faces a totally different and devastating onslaught which we express as the media aggression... It is a dangerous by-product of Western imperialism. With each stroke of this intellect’s evil paint-brush, most of India’s entertainments

through TV programmes, films, dramas, theatres, literatures and their reviews are introducing something patently absurd, harmful and unacceptable to the basic Indian norms of life.23

The world view underlying Indian culture is different from that of the Western culture. In India, a person considers himself to be part of the cosmos. Ideally he does not strive to conquer nature but, instead, tries to live in harmony with every creature. The emphasis is on participation and co-operation. In the West, man is supposed to conquer nature and by science and technology he tries to dominate over nature24. This striving for domination results in competition. Success in competition becomes a value in itself.

An Indian who has a sense of participation in the cosmic process prefers to look at the unifying elements and hence at the unifying spirit. So Indian culture can be considered basically spiritual. An all-pervading religiosity can be seen in the life of the people.

Though the society in Kerala has been exposed to foreign influences for many centuries and is more secular in its outlook than any other group in the country, its ethos is still religious. Joseph Velacherry observes, “Kerala culture has deep roots in religious ethos. Every village had a temple, and every Nair and upper caste Hindu household a place of household worship such as Kavu or Kuruthikalam. This was so with the lower classes also. The folk arts were temple arts and thrived around the temples.”25

In contrast with this spiritual and religious outlook of Indian culture, the Western culture is predominantly secular and materialistic, at least

23. Bandana Mukherjee, Media Invade India's Values, Prober Mukherjee, Calcutta, 1987; p.3.
24. Cf. Genesis 1:26
in its outward manifestation. It expresses itself sensuously, puts stress more on mundane pursuits and celebrates its achievements on the material level.26

The tension between these two cultural approaches echoes in the letter written by Vandana Shiva, an Indian environmentalist, to Bill Emmott, former editor of The Economist. Vandana Shiva writes,

Your basic assumption is that greed is the predominant human trait and that profits are the prime incentives of human behaviour and allocation of resources. You have universalised your values and imposed them on all humanity even though most of us do not live our lives guided by profits. We could not live in communities, we could not protect our forests and rivers if profits were the only calculus and competition our only logic.27

The fear, articulated or not, is that the basic value orientations of Indian society such as participation, co-operation, respect for elders, strong familial ties etc. could seriously be affected by the Western culture through TV. The more equal gender relations and explicit sex may not be palatable to the Indian taste. The concern is also extended to the traditional music and art forms of India which have come under the spell of Western art forms.

26. According to Fritjof Capra, this shift in the Western approach took place in the 17th century. He writes: "From the time of ancients, the goals of science had been wisdom, understanding the natural order and living in harmony with it. Science was pursued 'for the glory of God' or as the Chinese put it, to 'follow the natural order' and 'flow' in the current of Tao...the basic attitude of scientists was ecological, as we would say in today's language". He adds, "Since Bacon, the goal of science has been knowledge that can be used to dominate and control nature, and today both science and technology are used predominantly for purposes that are profoundly antiecological"; F. Capra, The Turning Point, Bantam Books, Toronto, 1982; p. 56. See also, F. Capra, The Web of Life, Harper Collins, London, 1996; p. 6.

27. Vandana Shiva, Is Development Good or Bad for the Third World?, Tree India Environment Journal, Kottayam, Vol. 15/8, Jan/Feb., 2001; p. 11.
C. Perception and Reality

People's conception of TV and its effects is a mix of reality, prejudice, impressions, and fears. To sort out one from the other is indeed a difficult task. The long and sophisticated research in the West on the effects of TV has not yielded definite conclusions. But yet one can state certain facts on which there may not be much dispute. TV, an audio-visual medium, attracts all kinds of people to it. People all over the world watch TV every day for quite some time. Children and teenagers spend more time before TV than elders. A 1996 survey of teenagers in TV owning households in 41 nations finds that they watch on an average six hours of TV per day and nowhere it is under five hours. Since children are in the formative stage and spend much time before TV, they will be affected by it.

But on the other hand, all the children are not affected by TV in the same way. One and the same programme need not elicit the same response from all the children who watch it. TV is not a 'hypodermic needle' injecting messages into the minds of viewers. Nor do viewers consume anything and everything that comes out of TV. Hence a stimulus response model of explaining TV effect is simply unsatisfactory. There are factors that come in between the stimulus and the response. In order to predict media effect, one has to turn one's attention to those intervening factors.

No child's mind is a tabula rasa, nor is his personality completely unstructured. By the time a child begins to meaningfully watch TV, his personality might have been formed to a considerable degree. That means the child must have learned how to look at the world around him, how to evaluate it and assimilate it to himself. In other words, a child, by the time he begins to watch TV, has already assimilated certain attitudes and values

28. E. Herman & R. McCheney, op.cit.; p.41
that underlie his environment. These attitudes and values are supplied by society; the process by which the child internalises them is socialisation.

The traditional agencies of socialisation are family, school and religious community. School and religious community in a way act through family. Hence family can be considered the first and foremost agency of socialisation. Family transmits the ideas and ideals, attitudes and values of the society of which it is a part to the child from the moment of his existence. By the time the child begins to take active interest in TV, his mind has already been structured and it is this structured mind that perceives reality, including TV reality. The child tends to reject whatever does not fit into this structure. That means the cognitive structure does have a major say in how the child perceives reality.

The conclusion one naturally arrives at is that a well-schooled child is likely to reject TV messages that are not in consonance with his cognitive structure. On the other hand, a child whose socialisation is in some way defective is likely to be more affected by TV.

In support of the validity of this assumption two observations may be made. Children whose home environment quality is high are generally found to be free from the negative influences of TV. One has to infer that such children have assimilated the basic value orientations of their society and culture. If the argument is sound, the local culture itself will keep those orientations intact. Certain contemporary trends confirm it. Edward S. Herman and Robert W. Mcchesney opine that although Hollywood fare in film, TV and music has considerable appeal worldwide, this appeal has its limits. In Western Europe the top rated TV programmes are nearly always domestically produced. MTV global music television service has begun to differentiate its content around the world and incorporate local music.\(^\text{29}\) MTV in India is increasingly broadcasting Hindi programmes. The present

\(^{29}\) op.cit.; p. 42.
era may be one of the global media, but the programmes they dish out are becoming more and more culture-specific.

D. Hypothesis of the Study

Through socialisation, a child assimilates to himself the basic value orientations of his society. His mind gets structured according to those value orientations. This cognitive structure considerably determines how he perceives reality including the virtual reality of TV. A well-socialised or effectively socialised child is one who has got a cognitive structure that corresponds to the value system existing in his family and society. The better the family environment quality, the greater the correspondence between the two.

Therefore, the hypothesis is that better socialised children would be less influenced by TV. Conversely, poorly socialised children would be more influenced by TV. Or, the higher the quality of home environment of children, the less is the influence of TV on them. The lower the quality of home environment, the higher is the influence of TV on them. It must be noted that the term ‘influence’ is used in the negative unless specifically mentioned otherwise.

E. Objectives of the Study

The study is hinged on the basic assumption that the family environment is a mediating factor that comes in between the child and the impact of TV on him. The main objective is to test the validity of this assumption. Having this primary objective in view the following are proposed as the objectives of the study:
1. To find out the TV viewing habits and programme preferences of children in Kerala
2. To study whether TV's influence on children is mediated by socialisation in the family
3. To study the influence of TV on the cognitive, emotional, social, moral aspects of children's personality
4. To find out whether alien influences through TV will undermine the integrity of the local culture
5. To suggest ways to counter the negative effects of TV.

F. Scope of the study

TV being a very attractive medium, children spend a lot of time watching it. But the programme fare of TV channels may not be all that healthy. There is a lot of violence, sex, consumerist inducements, hedonism, alien life styles and foreign cultural expressions on TV. Parents fear that TV will have an unhealthy influence on the personality development of their children. On the other hand, they find it difficult or inadvisable to keep TV away from them, its positive influence being one of the reasons. Parents, thus, find themselves in a dilemma as to what they should do with TV. This study focuses on the conditions under which TV influences children. It proposes that a well socialised child is less likely to be influenced by TV in an unhealthy way. It also proposes, as a corollary that foreign TV channels or programmes are not going to seriously affect the local culture, provided its foundations and basic value orientations are kept intact.

G. Limitations of the study

The impact of a particular TV programme on a particular child does not come under the purview of this study. It is the cumulative impact of
long term TV watching that is the object of study. It seeks to measure such an impact on differentially socialised children. The study is of a general nature and may be a limitation.

The children under study belong to the age group of 11 to 14 years. That means all of them were born after the introduction of TV to Kerala. The presupposition is that they were growing up with TV. But, at what age TV was introduced to the life of each individual child is a factor that is not considered and may be regarded as a limitation of the study. The duration of watching and the type of programme watched vary from child to child. This is not factored in to the design of the study either.

There may be a number of mediating factors other than socialisation in the family that determine TV's influence on children. In this study the factor of socialisation is isolated from other factors and is being measured. That is yet another limitation of the study.

Finally, the scale to measure the quality of home environment has been designed by this researcher and has not been standardised. One would not know whether the scale is defective in any way, but the results indicate the basic strength of the scale.