CHAPTER V

Conclusion
Introduction

Looking back at the survey data in the previous chapter, the key questions raised by this study in Chapter 3, the conceptual tools described in Chapter 1 and the review of the discourse on television in Chapter 2, let us recall what we proposed to do in this study, what we intended to probe, how were we going to do that and what did we come up with.

The Issues Framework

Having defined basic concepts, especially 'social' self, we had posited the basic constituents of personality in terms of an individual component and a social component, the study tried to explore the following changes:

(a) in terms of change in the constituents and constitution of social self;
(b) in terms of the redefinition/reallocation that the media causes through interaction, content and exposure in the formation of social self;
(c) in terms of how does this change affect the other agencies contribute to the formation of personality, and
(d) in terms of the level of change -- structural and functional.

Based on this framework the following question were raised:

The Key Questions

Q1. What is the direct impact of media/television in the formation of social self?
Q1a. How is self presented/constructed in media/television?
Q2. What is the direct impact of media/television on other agencies--family, school, religion, community, peers, SES -- that contribute to the formation of personality and social self?
Q2a. How are the agencies of socialisation presented/constructed in media/television?

Q3. What is the nature and type of changes in agencies of socialisation caused by media/television and what is the nature and type of changes does this change cause in the formation of social self in society and in an individual?

Q3a. What are the nature of processes that help the changes in the formation in the social self due to media/television and the socialisation agencies?

To carry out the study we developed a questionnaire that was self administered to a purposive sample with a total of 574 respondents. The data was entered in a SPSS (ver7.5) programme and analysed in six sections. These sections were -- profile of respondents, media use and habits relating to television, ranking of social agencies, television influence, and changes brought about by television.

Having gone through the overview of the problem, proposition and the data from the survey, three points came out quite clearly. One, that there is a definite shift in the compositional mix of the socialising agencies (the section on ranking); two, that media and in particular television has gained primacy for many people particularly the younger generation (ranking for younger and the crosstabulation, the preference over...section), and three, there is a significant change in the attitudes, values and behaviour of people which they associated with television. The question, then, is that, are these dimensions linked in a meaningful fashion, is there an association between the upwards shifting of the ranking of media/television and the downward movement in certain attitudes, values and behaviour? Put in another way, one may ask, if there is a pattern larger than the apparent trend that is visible in externalities of behaviour
change, are the changes structural and fundamental? Related to that is the question about the nature and process of the change and its various aspects and its trajectory. Let me recall the conceptual model presented in Chapter 3 for understanding the process and outcome of the direct and indirect interactional engagement with television for the individual and society (Fig. 5.1 is reproduced school for ready reference)

Fig. 5.1 Conceptual Model Reframed
The model had posited that the two routes—one via social agencies and other through media/television that become inputs for the individual for formation and development of his self, themselves present a different composition. This results in a recomposition of the mix of the social and individual self for the person. What we were interested in was the nature of that change or shift, its manifestation, meaning and implications.

The answers in the various sections of the questionnaires provide some indication of the patterns and trends. The top answers in the section relating to television showed some of the signs and symptoms of the urban settings and the changing valuations of the relational aspects. The increasing crowding of spaces, lack of time and feeling of loneliness was reflected in television being seen as ‘company’. The other aspect that came out clearly is that the most common reason for watching television was ‘entertainment’ and ‘information’ seeking. Also that television is being seen as ‘part of daily life’ shows its universal appeal and acceptance. The aspect of television being used for relaxation is also symptomatic of the increased anxieties and pressures of the modern urban life. Overwhelmingly respondents also saw television as ‘addiction’ as they couldn’t keep away from it. This aspect of television has also come out clearly in the answer to the question—what would you do/feel if there was no television from tomorrow?

The findings in the section on ranking of social agencies were quite a surprise. Although the presumption was that the perceived ranking for television for younger people would be higher but it would be number two was a complete surprise. The set of tables for ranking are a revelation. Another more elaborate study that focuses on this aspect would be interesting to probe more deeply and validate the findings here.
The differentiation of agencies for the younger people has several implications. We are aware of some studies that utilise such ranking of social agencies, values and attitudes that market researchers use for designing and positioning their messages, strategies, products and services (O&M, 1997). One such study explored the family values in youth and another probed gender sensitivity for positioning the launch of a product. The cross tabulations of the agencies ranking again revealed the shift and shuffle across the two generations. It is quite revealing to note the losers and gainers in this redistribution. The gain of television in ranking for younger respondents at the ‘cost’ of family, education and religion is clear enough indication for the roles and functions television is able to perform for the respondent. Also the other way to look at it is that television is making other traditional socialisation agencies ‘appear’ problematic in a comparative analysis. No doubt the traditional socialisation agencies have to wake up to the new realities and update their positions, content, practices and processes. But on the same hand this should not let the baby to go with the bathwater.

The section on television influence gave us insights into the agreement on changes in the social agencies by television as well as informed us whether it was positive or negative and whether the influence of some of the social agencies has increased or decreased. It also gave us the type of changes in functions of social agencies, the nature of shift in emphasis in values and basic philosophies, and the degree of conflict in role models offered by television to the ones offered by social agencies.

The section on changes brought about by television had a long list of changes but was factored into two basic divisions of external or functional and internal or structural. It was clear that although most of the changes were taking place that were external but there were enough markers that the inroads into the structural terrain was not
insignificant. Also the changes themselves are not just superficial, they are seen as standards of good life and they are to be desired for themselves as an end in itself. The other aspect of change reflected in the findings of the two complementary questions suggesting that the television was fulfilling the needs not met by the social agencies. These needs could be varied -- redefinition of old belief, upgradation and expansion of knowledge base, new informational and skill needs, personal desires, ambitions, decisions and spaces, or just the new demands of the new work culture and ethic. Television on the other hand was able to fulfill some of the fantasies and vicarious pleasure for the person that was not possible in the old milieu of social agencies alone. A lot of lifestyle oriented changes and consumption patterns did not go in harmony with the traditional values of austerity, contentment and thrift. The domain which was considered familial such as decision about marriage, job, money, love, children was clearly shifting to the private and individual domain. Television seemingly played a big part in facilitating that shift because the presentations and constructions of the stories and characters were also going through the similar situations in television.

Last but not the least, the answers to the question —what would you feel or do if there was no television from tomorrow— is an indicator of how ingrained television has become not only for the younger people but for all age groups and gender. Although it was difficult for the younger generation to even imagine life and times which was there without television just about twenty years ago and even ten years ago cable and satellite hardly existed for them. Respondents felt they will be bored, will not know how to pass time, will not be entertained, will feel a loss of source of information and some said they would die! An interesting point to be noted in these expressions is the feeling of being cut away from ‘the world’, meaning outside their milieu, immediate
context. This seems to have more to do with the visual element than the news per se. All of this had a role to play in the nature and outcome of the shift in the compositional mix.

Some aspects of changes of the compositional mix

We would like to take up two aspects of the changes in the compositional mix in the person. One is the stages of the changes and second is the nature of the process of changes in the individual and social mix. Lastly, we would like to conclude by relating the findings to the model, stages and the nature of these changes to the larger aspects of the changes to the cultural variabilities and the question of mythic of media/television and the parasocialisation of the individual and the society with a note on the new and upcoming challenges for the questions probed in this study.

Stages in the changes in the compositional mix of the person

As we explained that in the conceptual model, television and its affect come to us from two different directions/modes. One, is the direct mode as we receive it and second from the social agencies as they in turn get affected by television and then pass on the inputs to the person. We would like to take up an extension of the conceptual model and try to explain the shift in the mix of social/individual for the person. To recall, the triangle representing the self was divided into two components of individual self and the social self. In the Figure 5.1 the triangle represents the self and the interactional inputs to it are coming from the media/television and society, which we experience directly, and the projected inputs of society as constructed and presented in and by television. Similarly the society also gets to 'see' itself in the presented form in the television and in the real individual with a reciprocal effect on
both. The self is able to see a projected self which acts like a mirror for the person to adjust his position.

Fig. 5.2 Stages and outcomes of changes in the compositional mix of the self

It is not as if the ‘alternative’ mode of society was not present prior to television (there were other forms of media) but because of the unique characteristics of television as technology and as institution, and because of television content, form, exposure, interaction and structure its influence and impact is much greater and powerful. There is a subtle but compelling and continuous process of transformation in the compositional mix of the self. We had defined self as constituted of the ‘social’ component and the ‘individual’ component. The change in the components is always taking place with or without the television as there are other factors that have impact on the composition. Knowledge base is ever increasing, interactional domains are ever widening and the process of learning is a dynamic one that lends itself to change. But there lies the difference. This change is or was happening in the domain of the inputs that were not dramatically or drastically changing. Neither were the means and modes of interaction undergoing fundamental changes, they were more or less same. There was a basic social ethic that operated and maintained the balance. There were opportunities for individuals to flourish, there were opportunities for innovations, and there were new things taking place but the crucial difference was that these happened
not at the cost of the social. Of course, there were aberrations and exceptions, there probably was also some coercion and oppressiveness but the primacy of the social prevailed. This might be construed as the Eastern ethic, the Hindu philosophy, the high context culture or the collectivist paradigm. There were certain basic principles that were the guiding force and that was the reason (principally Karma and Dharma) Weber did not find the spirit of capitalism having worked and succeeded in the East. We shall advert to that a little bit later.

To start with let us try to understand the process of change through the five stages. The five triangles represent the five stages of transition and transformation. At stage one the self is composed of the social (the bigger bottom portion) and individual component (the upper smaller portion). The sizes of the components represent the manner in which the person has always been characterized in Indian society.

In stage-I there is an internal dynamic but there is no compositional reorganisation. Basically, the individual and the social component remain in proportion. The mode and means of interaction is primarily face to face. The individuality is socially constructed. The focus is on the social. The ethic in this stage is non-material and other worldly. This is supported by the religious scriptures and social sanctions. The means and modes of production are primarily human controlled and human propelled. The individual finds his ‘calling’ in the acts and actions in the social domain. He or she also locates the dreams and aspiration manifested in the social components. In fact there is not much difference in the individual and the social. The identities are so over lapping that it is difficult to distinguish between them. Of course, there are changes happening in the physical and human environment. But because the society and
individual are in an organic relationship with the physical environment/nature that they do not see it as a system that needs to be mastered, controlled and exploited.

In the second stage some changes begin to affect the compositional mix of the self. These changes are as a result of the changes happening outside such as the means and modes of productions changing from human power to mechanical power. The industrial revolution initiated this change in the West much earlier than in India. India was under colonial rule at that moment. We experienced the changes brought about by the industrial revolution not only in a smaller quantity but also at a much slower pace. For the West another fundamental change which happened before or sometimes in simultaneity was the development of the print media. Weber has linked the development of the Protestant ethic with the rise of the spirit of capitalism. In our case neither the print revolution nor the industrial revolution gained primacy because we did not experience it directly and also because we were under British rule. But none the less the effect of both these changes reached us and began to change certain section of society. These changes were not effecting the base (see figure 5.1 stage-II). As these changes were effecting only a small section of society for whom the base or the fundamental ethic was still the same these changes were not noticeable. This is what happens in stage-II – there is change but it does not affect the basic ethic and it is happening in a small quantity for a certain section of society.

In stage-III the change which got initiated earlier tends to spread its net. More people begin to take to the new paradigm. The scale of change also gains momentum as new invention and innovation take place at a rapid speed. The industrialisation accompanied by the print revolution facilitates change further. As a larger section of
society begins to see the change and is forced to adopt to the new circumstances the change in the compositional mix of the self-person also began to change at a faster pace. The means and modes of social interaction also begin to affect in a way that now it has found acceptance because the conflict generated by the changed circumstances compel people to shed some of their traditional beliefs and practices which no longer seem to work. The factor of competition and market enter strongly in the basic ethic of the people. This is a natural outcome of the adoption of mass production and consumption. In the West this happened rapidly and they changed over to industrialised economies and profile motives gained quick acceptance. The ethic of progress and prosperity through individual gain and achievement became the order of the day. Although there is a difference in interpretation of this phenomenon by Marx and Weber the two things which are common to both is the change. Whether the change came about through in religious ethic or through the means and modes of production caused in the religious and work ethic is besides the point. The net result is that change in the environment and specially the nature social interaction produced change internally in the compositional mix of the individual.

The stage-III in figure 5.1 still has not been affected the base and that is why the questioning of the change does not begin to happen or at least it does not happen in intensity that will follow when the intended, unintended, the short term gains and long term problems of the fall out of the adoption of modern ethic will begin to manifest in a scale and manner that will because of concern. From our point of view the means of interaction have further diversified into mediated forms such as the telephone and the film. Let us remember that the progression of the industrial and modern means of production and consumption and the changes in the “graphic revolution” did not come
to us even at that stage as we were in involved the struggle for independence. The prime mover for India was not the industry, not the media and not the progress and prosperity (all of them were important) but at that moment what was the most significant factor was to gain independence. The leaders of the independence movement specially, Mahatma Gandhi belongs to a persona category that reinforced the social component of the self matrix as is evidenced in his *Hind Swaraj*. For us, then the individual components of the matrix of self was still under check. Although there were changes brewing and a lot of fermentation was taking place because the industrial and communication forms were taking their base at that point in time. For the general public the collective ethic and the religious overtones were still very strong and the fundamental principle of Karma and Dharma prevailed. This is not to give any legitimacy to the oppression by patriarchy or the caste system against which a lot of social reformers of that era campaigned and worked to eliminate the evil practices such as Sati and dowry. What we are concerned at this stage is the shift in the compositional mix without still effecting the base.

It is after this stage the thins begin to change and show. Stage IV is where balances between the individual and the collectivity begin to change in a fundamental fashion. The West had already accepted the primacy of the individual as the basic principle. The family and community had fragmented and given into the nuclear or single parent families. The attachment to the social and communitarian philosophy had taken a back seat. Also notice that new modes and means of production, which have now advanced from mechanical to electrical and to the electronic mode becoming all-pervasive. Technology leads us into everything. On the graphic revolution side the means of information and communications have become so wide spread that life
seems impossible without them. Also notice the symbiotic relationship between the means and modes production, the market forces and the means of communication information and transportation. There are other change which are very noticeable by now. Some of these are the changes in the roles and status of women. This is a major change in the West. The second change is in the field of education. Education has become universal and the societies in the West are highly literate. The third major change is the emergence of the new independent states that now have become free from the imperial and colonial rules. This in effect means that the industrialised nations need to look for new markets. This also means that the cost of production increases because of high the cost human capital in the industrial societies. On the other hand, the new developing economies are beginning to taste the fruits of independence and democracy. The primary force for them, including India, was no longer the struggle for independence. It was time now to reap the fruits of the struggle, scarifies, tears and sweat which they had denied themselves voluntarily, time now to benefit from the effort, which till now was not available or desired/wished for because of the nationalist mindset and the single minded focus on for struggle for independence.

The fifth stage corresponds to other two major changes. One, with regard to the external change in the means and mode of production which become the information and service provision. The field of interaction, the primary mode, becomes the quasi mediated interaction (Thompson, 1995) and the television takes precedence over the other agencies. These changes have far reaching implications for the compositional mix for the individual. With the ‘new temples of modern India’, as Nehru would call them, the big industries, the big dams and scientific labs, educational and research
institutions promoting scientific temper, the things began to change. The opportunities for trade and business grew. The occupational avenues diversified. The educational openings and the value for education increased. The democratic institutions and processes gained ground. Land reforms were introduced Green revolution and white revolutions followed. Population increased. Urbanisation boomed. Transport and means of communication improved. The nation became self sufficient in food, the era of scarcity ended and the new middle class ushered in (Varma, 1999). The idea of India changed (Khilani, 1998). But what did not change or did not change to any great degree or quantum, at least for a while, was the primacy of the traditional socialist agencies and processes and the outcome in terms of personality structures and types. People still adhered to the social ethos and communitarian life. Lifestyles were more or less the same with little changes in certain pockets and sections of society. Family was intact. School and teacher were revered. People were religious and god fearing. They still valued children. The mottoes were still simple and contended life with the Karma and Dharma principles being believed and followed. And then came television. Then color television. And then satellite and cable, foreign channels, music channels, news and current affair channels, regional channels, entertainment, sports, films, documentaries, wildlife, nature, even adult channels almost made an entry.

It is not as if television came and changed things overnight. The grounds for the change were brewing for some time. The ethos of being nice to others and leading a simple life were slowly eroding. The ‘get rich quick’ stories were becoming more prevalent. The stories of being bad and able to get away with it were becoming common place. The ends were justified and the means were no longer scared. The family and school were less able to inspire or motivate the ideal in the person. Women
were striving for a place in the sun. Youth were looking for direction and outlet. Satellite television could not have found a better point of access and timing of entry. This came as a great reprieve but the initial reaction was that of shock and surprise. The invasion and the cultural imperialism debates soon mellowed down. In this connection it is interactive to recall scene from a recent popular film.

**Taal : New rules of the 20th century**

In the Hindi film *Taal* (1999, Director: Subhash Ghai) the 'second' hero Anil Kapoor who plays the character of a successful music/video master recalls of the struggles he had to face for years on before he reached this stage. He talks of his mother (mother a symbol of traditional socialising agency) who left behind some principles of 20th century with him. He displays a blackboard where these are written.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maa: Principles of 20th century</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Love is better/bigger than sacrifice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Do good/be nice to others and forget it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Do the deed without wishing for the result/gain.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Anil Kapoor character says that he followed these rules for several years after he finished education but it did not do him any good (tradition, is 'good' but alas it doesn't pay anymore). He had to live hand to mouth. He almost died of starvation. AND then came Jayadev mama in his life. He told us the rules of the 21st century; the seven commandments (Who is Jaydev mama as a symbol? - media or an ethic or a philosophy or a person?). He said --leave the old rules of the 20th Century and follow the new rules and be a man of the 21st Century. The rules were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mama: New rules of the 21st century</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Love only strengthens with the right kind of give and take. Give and Take!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Be good/nice to your own self first and then and then only (if at all) think of others. Me first, me first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Without the results/gains all work/effort is useless. What's the gain/profit/result?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) What is more important than honesty is the salesmanship? Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) To win in the competition the key is envy. Jealously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) The important ingredient in becoming rich is- Greed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) To become big you need to make others feel small. Cut him, cut him to size.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The chapter tells the audience:

I followed these rules of the 21st century and see where I am today' (rich, famous and successful). So take my advice and listen to me. And sure many did listen!

Aspects of the Processes of reorganisation of the Compositional Mix

It is certainly not as easy or straightforward as it appears that the shift of the position of media from position ‘a’ to ‘b’ to ‘c to ‘d’ will necessarily and automatically make the individual component increase at the cost of the social component. But one has to understand that the process would be similar to the thing, what might change is the degree and the pace. If we see and endorse the ascendancy of the media which comes high up to the rank value of two there has to be shift in the position share and strength of other agencies. Regression and factor analysis would be able to give us coefficients for the equation of the line for the axis of individual and social. It would not be difficult to construct a model wherein one could forecast or predict the changes in the strength of television as an agent of socialization.

Fig. 5.3 Changes in the Compositional Mix of Self/Personality in terms of Social vs. Individual
Nature and outcome of television interaction

Is it possible to question the nature of interaction with television as non-social? How different is it and how similar is it to the face to face social communication? With the essential characteristic of the interaction with television being non-reciprocity it becomes rather obvious that this interaction is fundamentally different from the interaction which is social. The question then is if the interaction with television is not social, can the outcome in terms of self/personality be social.

Let us now look at some of the possible mobilities that may be happening in the compositional mix. First it is possible that the axis that divides the social and the individual may be shifting. In our case the shift would be towards increment for individual and cutting of social. This can be represented as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Individual</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Individual</td>
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</table>

The second possibility is that the items in the individual may move over to the social component and the items from social may shift over to the individual side represented as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Social | Individual |

This could be called a case of shifting of definitions and television may cause new meanings or a revaluation and changes are allowed because of that.
Another possibility is that there may be a reprioritisation within the component of social and individual. This may or may not happen in combination with the redefinition. This can be represented as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="social_individual_reprioritisation.png" alt="Diagram" /></td>
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There are other possibilities. One such possibility is an important variation on the above. There is an increasing base of information and knowledge. The size of the components may change because of accretion. This may or may not affect the compositional mix but there is a definite change that will have its bearing on the outcome in terms of the social and individual self. This can be represented as follows.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="social_individual_accretion.png" alt="Diagram" /></td>
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There is yet another possibility which is significant for understanding the changes in the compositional mix of the social and individual in the formation of self. This happens when there is a polarisation of items from each side near the divide. This is a process which can cause diffusion or rebellion depending upon the situation.

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<tr>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Individual</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="social_individual_polarisation.png" alt="Diagram" /></td>
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It is important to understand the process of shift in order to understand the outcome.
Lastly we would like to discuss three cases of socialisation and change and would like to propose one that may explain why the change of a particular kind is happening in the era of television and why it did not happen earlier.

Let us first take up the case of Riesman's Lonely Crowd.

**Socialization in the Other-Directed Society – a note on the Lonely Crowd**

Parsons present an insight on the construct of Riesman's formulation in the Lonely Crowd and the socialisation in the other-directed society. A few more words will touch on the implications that these changes of direction in American society have for socialization, particularly the socializing agents - the family and the school and the peer group.

Other-directed parents, no longer able to instill in their child the unequivocal goals that an inner-directed society presented, "can only equip the child to do his best, whatever that may turn out to be. What is best is not in their control but in the hands of the school and peer group that will help locate the child eventually in the hierarchy. Since, in a changing world, they can no longer "hold themselves up as exemplars - when both they and the child know better', they install something like a psychological radar set in him that will enable him to be sensitive to the guidance of others.

Thereafter, the parents influence the children's character only insofar as (a) their own signals mingle, with others over the radar, (b) they can locate children in a certain social environment in order to alter to a very limited degree what signals they will receive, (c) they take the risks of a very partial and precarious censorship of incoming messages. Thus the parental role diminishes in importance as compared with the same role among the inner-directed. The family is no longer a closely knit unit to which...
[the child] belongs but merely a part of a wider social environment to which he clearly becomes attentive.

With the diminution of their authority parents seek to retain what control they can be manipulation in the form of reasoning", or they may seek to "force the pace... in the child's social life" as, for example, "stage manages for the meetings of three-and four-year-olds". There is, too, less discontinuity between the parents' lives and those of the children. The children have less privacy as anxious parents supervise their affairs, at the same time confronting them with the uncertainty of their supervision. The mass media, as an all-inclusive peer surrogate, beam their messages at the entire family, so that parents and children alike can participate in the discourse of consumption preferences.

In school, too, the social distance between teacher and pupil dwindles, with the manipulation of emotions and the socialization of stress on accomplishment. Teachers, increasingly, are taught "to be more concerned with the child's social and psychological adjustment than with his academic progress - indeed, to scan the intellectual performance for signs of social maladjustment. They convey "to the children that what matters is not their industry or learning as such but their adjustment in the group, their cooperation, their (carefully stylized and limited) initiative and leadership".

The curriculum tends to more "realistic" – as in the emphasis on social studies – with consumption of current affairs diminishing the time spent on more abstract pursuits. And here the subject matter may be vitiated by the effect of community vigilantes on vulnerable teachers. "Thus the children are supposed to learn democracy by
underplaying the skills of intellect and overplaying the skills of gregariousness and amiability”.

These agents of socialization – the parents and the school – have, then, virtually abdicated their authority to the peer group, for it and it alone can determine what is momentarily best and pass judgement on the child's ability to adjust. As agents for each other, the peers are now jury, now defendants; and the peer group becomes the primary and overwhelmingly significant agent of character formation. Thus the peer-group role does not complement other roles as much as it conflicts with them.

**Cultural Variability – Individualism Vs. Collectivism**

Cultural variability has been discussed from many different vantage points. Individualism-collectivism is the major dimension of cultural variability isolated by theorists across disciplines Chief among the virtues claimed by individualist philosophers is self-realization. Each person is viewed as having a unique set of talents and potentials. The translation of these potentials into actuality is considered the highest purpose to which one can devote one’s life. The striving for self-realization is accompanied by a subjective sense of rightness and personal well-being.

In contrast, in the collectivist values nobody is an isolated individual. Rather, his (or her) uniqueness is a secondary fact. First, and foremost, he (or she) is several people’s contemporary. His (or her) life is founded on these facts economically, socially and physically. In this system group activists are dominant, responsibility is shared and accountability is collective because of the emphasis on collectivity, harmony and cooperation among the group tend to be emphasized more than individual function and responsibility.
In individualistic cultures, “people are supposed to look after themselves and their immediate family only,” while in collectivist cultures, “people belong to in groups or collectivities which are supposed to look after them in exchange for loyalty” (Hofstede & Bon 1984). The “I” identity has precedence in individualistic cultures over the “we” identity, which takes precedence in collectivist cultures. The emphasis in individualistic societies is on individual’s initiative and achievement, while emphasis is placed on belonging to groups in collectivist societies. People in individualistic cultures tend to be universalistic and apply the same value standards to all People in collectivist cultures, in contrast, tend to be particularistic and, therefore, apply different value standards for members of their in groups and out groups.

Triandis (1986) argues that collectivistic cultures focus on the in-group and individualistic cultures do not. Collectivistic cultures emphasize goals, needs, and views the in-group over those of the individual; the social norms of the in-group, rather than individual pleasure; shared in group beliefs, rather than unique individual beliefs; and value cooperation with in group members, rather than rely on out-group members. He contends that the larger the number of in-groups, the narrower the influence and less the depth of influence.

Since individualistic cultures have many specific in-groups, they exert less influence on individuals than in-groups do in collectivistic cultures, in which there are a few general in-groups. Triandis also points out that in-groups have different rank-orders of importance in collectivistic cultures; some, for example, put family ahead of all other in-groups, while others put their companies ahead of other in-groups. Triandis’s (1986) conceptualization further suggests that members of collectivistic cultures draw
sharper distinctions between members of in-groups (e.g., those with whom they go to school or work) and out-groups and perceive in-group relationships to be more intimate than members of individualistic cultures. In-group relationships include brother/sister (family in-group), coworker and colleague (company in group), and classmate (university in-groups), to name only a few, while out-group relationship include, but are not limited to, interactions with strangers and / or members of different ethnic groups.

Triandis and his associates (1985, 1986) have argued that there is a personality dimension, idiocentrism-allocentrism, that corresponds to cultural variability in individualism-collectivism. Ideocentrism at the psychological level correspond to individualism at the cultural level while allocentrism at the psychological level is equated with collectivism at the cultural level. Triandis et al. (1985) found that allocentric group goals, viewing the in group as an extension of the self, and goals to group goals, viewing the in group as an extension of the self, and strong in-group identity. Allocentrics reported greater social support than idiocentrics, while idiocentrics collaborated by Triandis et al. (1986) in Puerto Rico.

The Stories, Television and Socialisation

Television challenges and changes the role of both religion and education in the new culture. For the first time in human history, children are born into homes where mass-produced stories can reach them on average more than seven hours a day. Most waking hours, and often dreams, are filled with these stories. The stories do not come from their families, schools, religious scriptures, neighborhoods, and often not even
from their native countries, or from anyone with anything relevant to tell. They come from small groups of distant conglomerates with something to sell.

The cultural environment in which we live becomes the byproduct of marketing. The new symbiotic relationship of state and television replaces the historic nexus of state and dharma. The "state' itself is the twin institutions of elected public government and selected private corporate government. Media, its cultural arm, is dominated by the private establishment, despite its use of the public airways.

Giant industries discharge their messages into the mainstream of common consciousness. Channels proliferate and new technologies pervade home and office while mergers and bottom-line pressures shrink creative alternatives and reduce diversity of content. These changes may appear to be broadening local, parochial horizons, but they also mean a homogenization of outlooks and limitation of alternatives. For media professionals, the changes mean fewer opportunities and great compulsions to present life in saleable packages. Creative artists, scientists and humanists can still explore and enlighten and occasionally even challenge, but, increasingly, their stories must fit marketing strategies and priorities.

Viewing commercials is "work" performed by audiences in change for 'free' news and entertainment. In fact, we pay dearly through a surcharge added to the price of every advertised product that goes to subsidize commercial media, and through allowing advertising expenditures to be a tax-deductible business expense. These give-aways of public moneys for private purposes further erode the diversity of the cultural mainstream. Broadcasting is the most concentrated, homogenized and globalized medium. The top 10 advertisers pay for two-thirds of all network television. For
networks, allied to giant transnational corporations — our private "Ministry of Culture" — control the bulk of production and distribution, and shape the cultural mainstream. Other interests, diverse ideologies, minority views, and the potential of any challenge to dominant perspectives, lose ground with every merger.

The condition of the physical environment may determine how long our species survives. The cultural environment affects the quality of survival and its governance. We need to begin the long process of diversifying, pacifying, democratizing and humanizing the story-telling process that shapes the mainstream of the cultural environment in which we live and into which our children are born.

**Television a Mirror or Lens?**

The position of television as a mirror in a Median sense is fraught with problems. Television is a mirror in which we see not others but ourselves. In society (seen as a mirror) we see others as they are and as they see us. Television 'sees' us too but there is a fundamental difference. The people/situations which occur (at least in fictional programmes) do not exist, they have an existence, context and history only as much as is 'visible' and is there only if you switch the TV on. That is not the case with persons in society. This parasociality of television has a duality that is alluring as well as deceiving at the same time. This frees us from any reciprocity but at the same time does not allow for any mutual engagement and growth. At the same time the 'mirror' of television is merely a reflection, it is a construction someone purposefully and carefully made to see to it that you connect and are 'locked' to it, whether or not you do is a different question. If you do not engage with this image, they make sure you will with another. You dislike or feel offended by one, surely you will find which is likeable and sometimes criticises itself for the offensive it does. Besides being a
multiple mirror where there are different images, there is another issue of it being ‘true’. You are never told or taught to ‘read’ the television as you are told and taught to read the book. Even if one were to do so who would do it. All viewer are more or less equally media/television illiterate. You may call yourself a discerning viewers by which you mean that you watch ‘selected’ and ‘good’ programmes but that doesn’t make you media literate. There are basic principles of media literacy that have been identified which a general viewer is not even conscious or gets unmindful of when watching television. This also is very different from the tools and techniques, technologies which the maker uses to enhance the reality of his context and construct, we tend to marvel at the impossible tricks and magical transformation and seamless transitions but do not realise the ‘unreality’ of it all.

You may say – but of course, “I know it is fictional; yes, I know it is not true; surely I know what is real and what is not”. Authenticity is not something that is the hallmark of the story and fiction and certainly not of the commercial. You will be amazed at the backstage or ‘indepth’ motivational and behavioural research and designing of the whole campaign for the media product. Even the professionals are sometimes deceived by the ‘authentic’ and ‘genuineness’ of the media products, messages and strategies.

For a lay viewer this affects the acceptance/or rejection of a proposition that he sees as mundane and routine in his social world. This tends to make everyday social life monotonous, boring or colorless, static and unexciting. This may not be the case in actuality, but when you see it against the ‘mirror’ of television it does seem so. The net result of it is that one slowly phases out the ‘social’ without even knowing it.
Making the ‘social’ even more problematic Television then comes up with constructions, cues and prompts which tell you ‘I told you! So first it problematises the normal and then normalises the problematic. Television as a comparative reference tool tends to feed on the ‘object’ of the social reference systems which it bases itself on. We, the viewer, tends to get increasingly swayed in the whirlpool of self-deception and finally are left with only ourselves to bank upon. No longer we tend to draw upon social resources. And that, is what television wanted in the first place.

The difference between a mirror and a lens is that mirror does not change the path of the incident light. It merely reflects. On the other hand a lens lets the light pass through it but not without changing the path of the incident light. It refracts. In physics the refraction takes place because of the difference in the nature of medium. The principle is that the incident ray will move towards the normal or away from the normal depending on the whether the ray is passing from a denser to a rarer medium or from a rarer to a denser medium. In sociological terms if the social inputs pass through a medium which ‘constructs’ it is bound to be ‘refracted’. The nature of the outcome will be away from the normal or towards the normal but certainly it will alter the course of the outcome.

Reflection

Refraction

Fig. 5.4 : Reflection vs. Refraction
Depending upon where you position yourself (on the denser side or the thinner side) you will see the outcome as ‘away from the normal’ or ‘towards the normal’. We must not stop naively believing the media and in particular television as a ‘mirror’ that merely reflects, it is a media which lets the messages and texts to pass through like a lens that refracts the inputs and changes the path of the outcome.