

CHAPTER IV

Images and Reality: Doordarshan in Northeast India-A History

While conceptualizing social change we have emphasised the two particularly significant respects in which scholars feel our modern society differs from all previous societies. While some have laid stress to the significant feature of the power of industrial technology along with large scale mass production, automation and speed of transportation that have exhilarated the process of social change, others have emphasised the existence of a system of mass communication through the newspaper press, television, radio, the paperback and similar media which have contributed significantly to the process of awareness and change in society.¹ Scholars who have emphasised on the power of the media in the twenty-first century have even gone to the extent of stating that “we navigate through a vast mass media environment unprecedented in human history.”² The over whelming importance of the media in our lives they felt can be recognised when we imagine life without the media. Our entertainment, our understanding of politics and the world around us, and even our perception of ourselves would probably be different. The influence of mass media it has been reiterated is just not limited to what we know, but the crucial role that the media plays in almost all aspects of our everyday lives providing us messages that also affects how we learn about our world and interact with each other. As mass media gives us constant reports from our environment and the society around us and helps us in our decision making capacity, binding us in our social relations, our families and close friends and because of this big role that media plays today scholars believe it has brought about a process of “information revolution.”³ Information revolution as Irving Fang describes, the profound and lasting changes involving new means of communication that permanently affects entire societies, changes that have shaken political structures and

¹ Lewis Anthony Dexter, “The Basis of Mass Communication in Society”, in Lewis Anthony Dexter and David White (eds.), *People, Society and Mass Communication*, New York, 1964, p.3.

² David Croteau and William Hayness, *Media Society*, (third edition), California, 2003, p. 3.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-16, Kamlesh Mahajan, *Television and Women's Development*, New Delhi, 1990, pp.155-212.

influenced economic development, communal activity as well as our personal behaviour.⁴

We have underscored in the previous chapter how scholars while underlying the unprecedented role that mass media plays in our lives and social relations have attributed this to the technological innovation that has helped change the face of mass media in recent years. Cable television, satellites, fiber-optic technologies and especially computers have helped create an explosion in media products and formats. This they say has resulted in a change and a process of narrowcasting which now combines computer technology with other specialised media products allowing users to make choices, provide responses and customize media products. This interactive technology has ushered in networking in media as developers are now beginning to fuse telephone, television, fax, stereo, digital video and computer into a single media center.⁵ But while emphasising the importance of mass media in our lives it has been pointed out that mass communication never acts by itself on an individual, but jointly with other determining forces such as the individual's personality, resources of stored knowledge of values and attitudes, the individual's group relationship with others in the family, co-workers, play groups, religious and political groups. Mass communication therefore is believed to affect an individual, only in combination with these other factors, as every member of the mass communication audience brings along with him or her their own set of personality resources and group relationship.⁶ Though mass communication is considered to play an important role in individuals' daily lives by providing information and entertainment and having affects even in interpersonal relationships but how much of lasting and permanent impact it leaves needs deeper and detailed study in the context of evolving societies. Though it is difficult to accept the 'information revolution' theory that scholars have emphasised and its impact on bringing lasting and 'permanent' changes to society as there is a tendency among individuals to resist change especially if it affects their rigidly held values and norms, but what seem acceptable is the fact that mass communication does act in combination with other determining forces be it an

⁴Irving Fang, *A History of Mass Communication: Six Information Revolution*, Boston, 1997, preface, xvi.

⁵ David Croteau and William Hayness, *op.cit.*, p.12.

⁶ Wilbur Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication*, New York, 1957, pp.53-54.

individual's personality, their previously held beliefs or even in their group relationship in family and society. This becomes relevant especially in patriarchal setups with strong traditions and values. As mentioned in the previous chapter that it is also in such patriarchal contexts and situations that we need to understand the kind of role mass communication could play in ushering in progress and gender equality in society.

While delving upon this role we have realised how India was amongst the earliest country to adopt broadcasting. We have underscored the fact that the world wide evolution of radio as a means of mass communication became a broadcasting channel in India after Independence of the country as it was felt that All India Radio (AIR) could become the only mass medium that had the potentiality to be quickly developed into an effective and truly national service. Though during the early period of AIR's history it operated essentially for entertainment, but in the course of time the programmes were diversified by the addition of school broadcasts and rural programmes. The objectives of broadcasting is to provide 'information, education and wholesome entertainment' through the production and transmission of varied programmes designed to "awaken, inform, enlighten, educate, entertain and enrich all sections of people."⁷ Broadcasting has since the inauguration of its first regular radio service in 1927 and its evolution has been in transition from an analogue mode (recordings that use magnetic tapes) of content creation, transmission and distribution to a digitalised mode of the present times enabling it to offer a whole range of new channels and applications along with a convergence of audio-video and data services within the same bandwidth occupied by a single channel in the analogue mode throughout the country including the Northeast states. Not only has there been a major focus on improvement of technology through digitisation and expansion of more AIR stations in remote and far flung areas of the country but the thrust in the programme content has been to cater to all sections of listeners through programmes such as Farm and Community programmes, Environment programmes, Health and Family welfare programmes, Social awareness programmes, Women's and Children's programmes besides other programmes. The endeavour of these programmes is not only to spread information and impart education but also "to

⁷ *Prasar Bharati, All India Radio 2007*, p.67.

bring in change in social attitudes and behavioural practices towards women.”⁸ While we have presented a detailed overview of the radio, its evolution and its role in fulfilling modern day information needs of society but in order to have a more holistic view of public broadcasting in our country along with its role in ushering in social change, the evolution of the other wing of broadcasting the audio-visual medium or what is commonly known as the television is also necessary. To understand the furthering of this function we would now make an in-depth study of the vast network of Doordarshan (henceforth referred to as DD) the official audio-visual media of broadcasting in our country.

Television (TV) represents one of the very important medium of the electronic media and is the latest arrival in the field of media and mass communication. *Television* means ‘seeing at a distance’ which scholars believe have revolutionised communication technology by its capacity of combining audio and visual effects bringing the world into our drawing rooms, bed rooms and the business chambers of the viewers. Some scholars have expressed that in several respects perhaps the age of television has turned back the clock of human learning to an earlier age when most learning was based on what the eye could observe directly. Today the evolving technology of television makes it possible to see events as they happen or after some delay giving a better grasp of reality including the political world than ever before.⁹ Others feel that not only has television been able to bring in a sense of intimacy and personal involvement between the spectator and presenter or the actors and participants on screen but because of its innate capacity of transmitting pictures and sound live, it has almost become a ‘window to the world.’ This has made the status of television as Denis McQuail perceives it as one of the most massive of the media in terms of reach, time spent and popularity which has continued to grow all the time to its global audience.¹⁰ Besides its primary role as medium of entertainment, television is regarded today as the main source of news and information, a public informer, an educator, playing a vital role in modern

⁸ Interview with Ravi Srikumar, Programme Executive (PEX), All India Radio Delhi, on 26th April 2011.

⁹ Doris A. Graber, “Seeing is Remembering: How Visuals Contribute to Learning from Television News”, in Denis McQuail (ed.), *Mass Communication* Vol. IV, New Delhi, 2007, p.102.

¹⁰ Denis McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory*, (fifth edition), New Delhi, 2009, pp. 34-35.

politics and a single largest channel of advertising in nearly all countries.¹¹

It is viewed that the telegraph, telephone, motion picture and the radio have all played a role in the way we get information and entertainment and today much of the way we live has been greatly affected by such mediums. Yet scholars believe that television has gone further than all of these in affecting how we spend our hours and our money, how we relate to others, and what we talk and think about. They have emphasised that because of its many advantages television has become a hit over other tools of mass communication. Among its many advantages they have listed the capacity of television of reaching audiences who prefer to hear and see activity passively instead of the more active experience of reading. The easy availability of cheaper television sets and the watching of programmes which in most times requires little energy, intelligence, or education to enjoy, have also made the television a popular medium. Irving Fang feels that because of one or another of these reasons television is popular with the poor, the uneducated, children, as well as the elderly. According to him most people watch television as a form of relaxation.¹²

The invention of television like the radio was not the ingenuity of a single individual but the world wide efforts of several individuals with a scientific bent of mind. The roots of television dates back at least to 1817, when Swedish scientist Jon Berzelius discovered that selenium, which is sulphur like chemical element and a by-product of copper refining, conducted electricity, depending upon how much light shone upon it. Several decades later in 1873, an Irish telegraph operator Joseph May, tried to transmit a signal by exposing a selenium resistor to light and sent a signal across the ocean on the Atlantic telegraph cable. Two years later, American engineer Philip Carey proposed a means of television using a camera containing an array of selenium cells, each wired to a light bulb in a matching array in a receiver.¹³ Thus in different countries, the English, Italian, German, French, Russian, and American inventors continued to improve upon the means of transmitting. These efforts led to the inventions of some other machines too such

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹² Irving Fang, *op.cit.*, pp.152-153.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.154.

as the modern wire photo transmission, fax machines, and to the flashing lights that spelled out news headlines on New York's Times Square. While such inventiveness were being carried out in these countries, on still another track, English scientist Michael Faraday in 1830 was successful in sending an electric current through a vacuum in a glass bottle. Improving on this experiment, Sir William Crookes in 1878 built a bottle that sent rays of electrons from its *cathode*, or negative terminal, to its *anode*, or positive terminal. In 1884, Paul Nipkow a German science student transmitted a still picture in an experiment using a rotating disk with a spiral of holes that broke the image into segments of varying light intensity that struck a selenium plate resulting in transmission of image with changing electrical current. A decade later a German scientist, Karl Braun, in 1897 added a fluorescent coating to the inner face of the Crookes tube so it glowed when struck by the cathode rays. All such experiments were some of the early efforts to the making of what came to be known later as the television. It may be mentioned that while the television invention was almost through, the technical problems surrounding the inventions of other machines were also being overcome separately and the typewriter, the telephone, the motion picture, the phonograph and the radio, all reached to a usable level within a few years of each other. However, the scientific principles underlying the technology leading to the invention of television was established by Logie Baird a British electrical engineer. By this time a workable television camera was also developed by the Russian born American engineer Vladimir K. Zworykin in 1923 and the American inventor Philo T. Farnsworth in 1927.¹⁴

In 1907 a Russian scientist, Boris Rosing, had designed an electronic system of wireless transmission using a cathode ray tube and by 1923 he gave a television demonstration using a camera tube to transmit a still image to the face of a cathode ray tube. Around the same time experiments were also going on in America and in 1925, an American inventor, Charles Francis Jenkins, sent the image of moving windmills to a receiver five miles away, the first transmission of a moving object.¹⁵ By this time, the American Telephone and Telegraph System (AT&T), a telephone company, was also experimenting and was able to transmit a black-and-white still photo from Washington to New York in 1927 and colour photos in 1929 of a bunch

¹⁴ Marcel Danesi, *Understanding Media Semiotics*, London, 2002, p. 11.

¹⁵ Irving Fang, *op.cit.*, pp.154-155.

of red roses, a green and red watermelon, and the red, white and blue American flag. Though the images were of poor quality, but it was the beginning of colour television. AT&T soon developed the coaxial cable and microwave transmission, both essential to modern television. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s these and other research engineers improved the television signals and the receivers. The number of scanning lines, which determine picture detail, grew from 120 to the present 525. The success of all such experiments proved beyond doubt that the future belonged to electronic television.¹⁶

This turned to be true as alternating between mechanical and electronic systems, the potentiality of the television of transmitting movable images from a fixed location to a distance several miles away was realised and it was not too long before this communication wonder became a favourite across many countries of the world. The British Broadcasting Corporation started the world's first regular television service in 1936 and soon the German engineers also began a limited electronic television service. The National Broadcasting Company (NBC), a radio network, also had its own experimental television station in New York which later became the World National News Broadcasting-Television (WNBC-TV). Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) also had an experimental station in New York, which is now WCBS-TV.¹⁷ Thus we find that the many experiments and inventions carried out in different form since the mid-nineteenth century across several countries of the world helped improve the various components of television and the transmission of images across distances resulting to the final emergence of the television set, an effort by many scientists in the field of science and technology.

However one of the difficulties that television companies faced initially was convincing the public to buy television sets, the cost of which was nearly as much as a new car and moreover the sets being big, bulky pieces of furniture with small screens presented poor black-and-white pictures and there were few takers to such machines. Interestingly in the years before World War II, television sets were mostly used in bars as a way to attract patrons who wanted to see baseball and football games but after the War ended the demand for TV exploded. This resulted

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.155.

¹⁷ Irving Fang, *op.cit.*, pp.154-155.

in the Broadcasters request for licenses, manufacturers showing interest to build TV sets and broadcasting equipment, and the public's clamour to be entertained by pictures in their parlours. Commercial television made such an impression in America that factory production of sets went from 6,000 in 1946 to 1,160,000 in 1948. The number of sets in use rose from 5,000 in 1946 to nearly one million in 1948 to almost 10 million in 1950, typically with a 7-inch or 10-inch round screens. After bitter and extended quarrels for licenses were settled, Colour television standards were finally agreed upon in 1953 and by 1954, more than 350 stations, of Very High frequency (VHF) and Ultra High Frequency (UHF), were on the air in the United States. Other nations of the western hemisphere including Japan and Canada adopted the American National Television System Committee (NTSC) that developed a picture made up of 525 lines and refreshed 60 times a second, interlacing the even numbered lines and the odd numbered lines alternately, 30 *frames* per second. European nations were divided between the two system of France's Sequential Colour with Memory (SECAM) and Germany's Phase Alternate Line (PAL) each with more lines and better picture quality than the American system. SECAM system was chosen by the Soviet Union, China, and the nations of Eastern Europe and PAL system, an analogue television encoding system used in broadcast television was chosen by Britain and most countries of Western Europe.¹⁸ Other countries of the world selected the NTSC, SECAM or PAL systems for cultural and political reasons or because of a compatible electric grid. TV thus emerged in a big way and through its effects was ready to replace radio as the primary source of mass communication virtually across the world. As the twentieth century came to a close, TV entered the Digital Galaxy with the advent of digital television, or television that is transmitted in a digital computer based format.¹⁹

Francis Fukayama felt that the post Second World War not only ushered in western liberal democratic governments as the final form of government but there was also a transformation in man's natural environment through the application of science and technology.²⁰ Eric Hobsbawn recognising this also underscored that there was not only an advancement of technology but also competing technology

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.155-157.

¹⁹ Marcel Danesi, *op.cit.*, p.12.

²⁰ For details see Francis Fukayama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York, 1993.

after the Second World War. The technological advancement he felt had a major impact on industrial organisation and methods of mass production and accelerated change.²¹ The post war period he stated saw resurgence in art, cinema, architecture and literature as well. This “artistic revolution” ushered in a “cultural revolution.”²² There was boom of the mass media particularly radio, television and films. The “radio culture” pioneered everyday life as it had the power to simultaneously speak to millions, each of who felt addressed by these powerful tools of mass information.²³ Concurrently there also rose a class of elites of non bourgeois societies to imitate the model pioneered in the west which was seen as a society generating progress, wealth power and culture by its economic and techno-scientific development in a capitalist socialist variant.²⁴ These developments have made the media in the modern world an integrative and an organised one in its production, circulation and consumption highlighted Ien Ang.²⁵ This perhaps also explains the change in the nature of television programmes that had to cater to the new emerging social class.

With the gradual adoption of television in the western and European countries there were also changes in the programmes that were being shown on television. After movies became available in sufficient numbers and videotape revolutionized television production, the live dramas that were the center piece of the so called ‘Golden Age of Television’ of the 1950s yielded to programs that could be shot anywhere, edited, and kept on a shelf. Though, television was sometimes criticised for some of its images of violence affecting disturbed teenagers and adults into mimicking the violent acts yet, for a significant segment of society, including large numbers of children and teenagers, the powerful images of television provided them the much needed source of entertainment. In the present times under the Telecommunication Reform Act of 1996, television manufacturers now install a *V-Chip* in each set to help parents’ block-out violent programs. Over the years with further changes in programme content and their presentation Marshall

²¹ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1919-1991*, London, 1995, pp.60-99.

²² *Ibid.*, pp.220-222.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp.195-224.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.229.

²⁵ Ien Ang, *Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Audiences for a Post Modern World*, London, 1996, p. 129.

McLuhan's "global village" metaphor seem to have become a reality as television presented live coverage of events of interest and importance like the Olympics, State funeral of an assassinated leader of world stature, such as a John Kennedy, Anwar Sadat, or Indira Gandhi and other important events that transcended national boundaries, languages and cultures being simultaneously watched by many nations.²⁶

Thus the breakthrough of creating a television set through sustained effort, the adoption of this medium by countries around the world and the improved transmission of powerful images through the varied programmes had to go through the different stages of evolution to reach to its present status. Scholars now regard the utilisation of this powerful communication media combining audio and video effects to not only have revolutionised communication technology and its role in entertainment, information and education but also to bring in social change and development in a country. This was also one of the primary reasons for giving a deliberate push to the development and expansion of mass communication in our country specially after Independence since it was felt that in the early stages of free India with an economy of vast disparities in income, standards of living and aspirations, mass media could play a powerful role, and within this the potential of television in terms of outreach was perceived as immense.²⁷

A vehicle of mass communication in our country as a visual broadcasting medium is the Doordarshan one of the largest public broadcasting organisations in the world in terms of infrastructure, transmitters, software and viewership and which started its experimental telecast in the form of a UNESCO funded pilot project in Delhi on 15th September 1959.²⁸ The primary objective of the \$20,000 project was to study the use of TV as a medium of education, rural upliftment and community development and towards furthering this objective, twenty sets of television were first installed at selective community centres in and around Delhi known as 'tele-club' with a viewership of 150 to 200 people in a range of forty kilometres. The programmes telecast thrice a week were of 60 minutes duration including live

²⁶ Irving Fang, *op.cit.*, pp.159-160.

²⁷ Anita Anand, "Watch me as I Change: Social Change and Media", *Social Action*, Vol. 48, No (3), July-September 1998, p.278.

²⁸ Naval Prabhakar and Narendra Basu, *op.cit.*, p.68.

content of 40 minutes and the rest 20 minutes of documentary films. Encouraged by the success of this project another project of school TV programmes was undertaken in 1961 initially for 10 weeks every Tuesday of one hour duration in the afternoon.²⁹ It was in 1967 that television in India took a social twist when it went rural and programmes on agriculture and other programmes for farmers were introduced. Towards the end of 1970 there was a further expansion of television in India and a second television station in Bombay now Mumbai was set up in October 1972. The duration of the service was increased to three hours, and included besides news, information and entertainment programmes, two weekly programmes of 20 minutes each for 'tele-clubs' and another weekly programme of the same duration called '*Krishi Darshan*' for farmers in 80 villages. Thereafter more stations were commissioned in Srinagar, Amritsar, Calcutta, Madras and Lucknow. It may be noted that though television broadcasting began in Delhi in 1959, it was initially a part of AIR, but was separated from radio as 'Doordarshan' on 1st April 1976, and hence forth television in our country came to be known as Doordarshan.³⁰ Doordarshan in Hindi literally means 'Faraway Vision'. It was hoped that this independent media unit under the new banner – Doordarshan would help raise the quality and duration of its service. Recently, it has also started Digital Terrestrial Transmitters. On September 15th 2009, Doordarshan celebrated its 50th anniversary.³¹

From its initial experimental telecast in 1959 the official policy thereon was to expand the reach of DD to every corner of the country and towards fulfilling this target from July 1984 onwards Doordarshan started commissioning one transmitter almost every day for a period of four months, an unprecedented attempt anywhere in the world and which helped increase the number of transmitters in India to 172, covering 52 percent of the population. Another big accomplishment of DD was its transition from black and white to colour TV which began with the live coverage of the Independence Day celebration at Red Fort, Delhi in 1982. In the same year this

²⁹ For more details see, P.N Malhan, *Communication Media: Yesterday Today and Tomorrow*, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, 1985, pp.139-140, M.H Syed, *Electronic Media*, New Delhi, 2006, pp.63-65.

³⁰ <http://india.gov.in/knowindia/radio.php>, accessed on, 11th November, 2010.

³¹ M.H Syed, *op.cit.*, pp. 65-66, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doordarshan> accessed on, 1st December, 2010.

was further boosted up when the 9th Asian Games was covered and telecast live in Delhi, Bombay and Jaipur consisting of four colour Outdoor Broadcasting (OB) vans, five black and white OB vans and 20 Electronic News Gathering (ENG) units, along with a 900 strong team of Doordarshan personnel drawn from all over the country assisting in telecasting the games.³² Thus from an experimental project DD became the official broadcaster of the country trying to reach to all corners of the country infusing modern technology. Presently the total organizational setup of DD consists of 35 channels including 5 National channels, 11 Regional language Satellite channels, 11 State Network Services, one International channel, one Rajya Sabha channel, and one Educational channel called 'Gyan Darshan', besides the Direct to Home Service (DTH) called DD-Direct Plus launched on 16th December 2004.³³ It may be added that DD direct plus is India's first DTH Service offering 54 TV channels and 21 Radio stations. Also known as KU Band Transmission, DD Direct Plus is a cost effective alternative compared to terrestrial expansion through High Power transmitters (HPT) and Low Power Transmitters (LPT) for attaining nearly 100% TV coverage in the country. Towards this end Doordarshan had also distributed Dish Antenna and set-top boxes free, to community organization in far flung and remote areas of the country.³⁴ Doordarshan network consists of 67 Doordarshan *Kendras* or Production Centers, 24 Regional News Units, 126 Doordarshan Maintenance Centers, 202 HPT, 828 LPT, 351 Very Low Power Transmitters and 18 Transposers. Doordarshan has a sanctioned strength of 21708 officers and staff of various categories. All these have made Doordarshan a Public Service Broadcaster and one of the largest television networks in the world.³⁵ The present total of 67 *Kendras* terrestrially covers 79% area and 92.6% of population in India, while its signal in satellite mode is available all over India and beyond.³⁶ DD-1 which is the National Channel is the largest terrestrial network in the world covering about 91.2% population and 79% land area of the country, and it stands by the Doordarshan mandate of education, information and entertainment. The information component consists of News and Current Affairs programmes largely

³² M.H Syed, *op.cit.*, pp. 140-145.

³³ *Annual Report 2007-2008, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting*, New Delhi, p.81.

³⁴ <http://ddkguwahati.gov.in/contact.asp> accessed on 12th June 2011.

³⁵ <http://india.gov.in/knowindia/radio.php>, accessed on, 11th November, 2010.

³⁶ *Doordarshan India 2005-06, Prasar Bharati, Audience Research Unit*, New Delhi, January 2007, p.1.

produced ‘in-house’ or within Doordarshan studios. The education component is drawn from the contributions of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), University Grants Commission (UGC), Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET) and State Institute of Educational Technology (SIET). The entertainment programmes are telecast from mid-day 12 Noon to 3 pm and night 8.30 pm to midnight daily, and includes feature films on Friday, Saturday and Sunday and award winning regional films on second and fourth Sunday of the month. The Entertainment programmes also consist of film based programmes, sponsored serials besides other programmes. Doordarshan has a three tier programme service which includes the National, Regional and Local. The emphasis in the National programmes is focused on events and issues of interest to the entire nation.³⁷ It may be mentioned that all the *Kendras* of the Northeast links to DD1 on all days prior and after the local transmission. All the Doordarshan *Kendras* of the Northeast have a high coverage of the National Channel both in area and population. Table three (3) below presents a picture of the percentage of population and area coverage of DD1 in all the state capitals of the Northeast. The Map in the next page presents a pictorial view of the existing Doodarshan network as on November 30th 2012.³⁸

TABLE 3

Population and Area coverage of DD1 programmes in Northeast India (as on 01.12.2007)

Sl. No	STATE	% POPULATION	% AREA
1	Assam	85.4%	81.1%
2	Meghalaya	97.8%	95.1%
3	Arunachal Pradesh	56.5%	18.4%
4	Mizoram	75.2%	71.3%
5	Nagaland	72.4%	71.5%
6	Tripura	93.5%	93.5%
7	Manipur	69.8%	40.6%

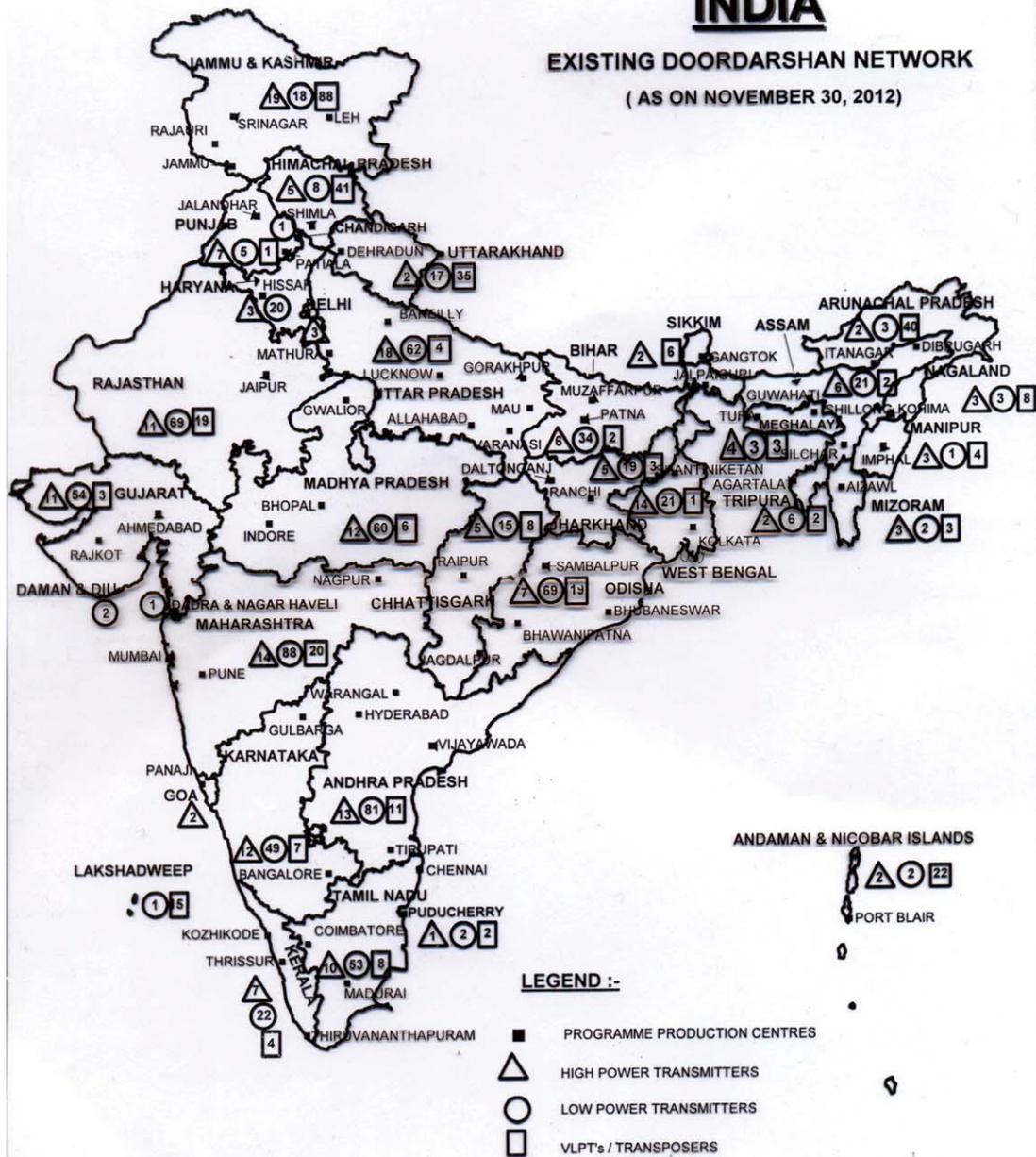
(Source *Annual Report, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting 2007-2008*, New-Delhi, 2008, p.99)

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.12.

³⁸ *Annual Report 2012-13*, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, p. 135.

INDIA

EXISTING DOORDARSHAN NETWORK (AS ON NOVEMBER 30, 2012)



Besides the National Network of Doordarshan, there is also the Regional Language Satellite Service which telecasts regional programmes through satellite. The Regional programmes are beamed on DD Channel from the State capital *Kendra* at specific times and relayed by all transmitters in the respective States. The Regional Language Satellite Service is available in eleven languages across the country. They include DD Bengali, DD Chandana which is Kannada channel, DD Gujarati, DD Kashir in the Kashmiri language, DD Malayalam, DD North East, DD Oriya, DD Podhigai in Tamil, DD Punjabi, DD Sahyadri in the Marathi language and DD Saptagiri in Telugu. DD North East channel is a composite satellite service for all the Northeastern states broadcasting programmes in Assamese, English, and other languages and “dialects” of the Northeast. The programmes are a mix of Entertainment Serials, Informative programmes, Social programmes, News and Current affairs, and Culture. The programmes are produced at Doordarshan studios in all the state capitals of the Northeast and sent to the DD North East as their contributory programmes.³⁹

Like the growth of DD in other parts of the country, in Northeast India too there has been the establishments and installation of Doordarshan *Kendras* over a sustained period of time. The Northeastern region comprising of the eight states including Sikkim is the land of diverse people of different ethnic communities, with varied socio-economic backgrounds and DD *Kendras* needs to keep this in mind while framing and telecasting programmes to the viewers as the programmes telecast are multi lingual in nature show-casing the many tribes and their socio-cultural life styles. While we would be discussing in detail the varied programmes of the DD *Kendras* at the National level as well as in the Northeast and understand the need and the significance of programmes under various categories in the next chapter but in order to understand the characteristic of each DD *Kendra* in the Northeast and their role in social change and gender sensitivity through their various programmes it is important that we also trace the history of the establishment of the various DD *Kendras* in the capitals of the Northeast. At present there are twelve DD *Kendras* in the Northeast. Besides all the state capitals including Guwahati, Itanagar, Imphal, Shillong, Kohima, Agartala, Aizawl and Gangtok having a Doordarshan *Kendra*,

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.17.

there is also a *Kendra* each in Dibrugarh and Silchar in Assam, besides a Programme Production Centre (PPC) in Guwahati, and a *Kendra* at Tura in Meghalaya.⁴⁰

Doordarshan *Kendra* Guwahati was commissioned with LPT status on 19th November 1982. It was converted to HPT in January 1985 with a transmitter power of 10KW covering range of 89-120 Kms. The *Kendra* transmits its programme through III/09 channel Band. At the initial stage, the *Kendra* was run in a rented House at Pan Bazaar, Guwahati. Later it was shifted to its permanent area at R.G.Baruah Road Guwahati on 7th February 1992. The complex has got facilities for recording and transmission with modern technology. Besides, there is a studio for recording of Northeast programme separately (PPC, NE) and a computerized Earth Station for networking. Presently this Earth Station is utilized for Up-linking the Guwahati Doordarshan programme for networking to the entire country through Indian National Satellite (INSAT-4B).⁴¹ Doordarshan Guwahati covers a geographical area of 79% and a population of 83%. The major telecasting hours of the *Kendra* is by In-house programmes consisting of 77.9% of the total programme, 18.3% is covered under sponsored and 3.8% under commissioned programmes under its five hours of local transmission from 3pm to 8pm every day. The primary language of programmes is Assamese, besides some specific programmes in Hindi, Bodo and other “dialects.” Informative programmes covers 45% of its total programme content, with Entertainment programmes covering 29.2% and Educative programmes being 25.8%. The programmes of the *Kendra* are of varied nature targeting both the urban and rural population. While highlighting some of the programmes one does sense a kind of traditional approach that Doordarshan has adopted towards its programmes. This becomes apparent as the format of a number of its programmes has remained the same. For example the composite nature of programmes which began in the 1990’s continues upto this day from most *Kendras* of Doordarshan. We would also notice this rigidity even in terms of the telecast timings of some programmes which has remained the same for the last six decades. This is evident in some of the current programmes of the *Kendra* which has long years of telecast including the Agriculture programmes meant for the rural farmers,

⁴⁰ *Doordarshan Kendras of North-East (At a Glance)*, DDK Guwahati, 2008, pp. 1-61.

⁴¹ <http://ddkguwahati.gov.in>, accessed on 12th June 2011.

which introduce various agriculture based schemes in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, covering five days a week from Monday to Friday of 30 minutes duration at 6pm. *Kalyani* another programme of the *Kendra* is a joint initiative of the Development Communication Division, Doordarshan and the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. *Kalyani* is a health series launched on May 30, 2002 on World No Tobacco Day as a weekly programme in the nine most populous States of India including Assam which highlights and provides detailed information about water borne diseases, iodine deficiency and other illness such as Tuberculosis, Malaria, HIV/AIDS, Cancer control, Anti tobacco, Mother's health and Childcare. *Kalyani* was telecast from Guwahati DDK, four days a week from 6.30pm.⁴² The programme *Kalyani* has now been renamed as "Healthy India" with a broader concept of total health care of all in society unlike only maternal and child care based programmes under *Kalyani*. News and Current affairs are another important category of programmes. News or *Batori* an Assamese News bulletin telecast at 7pm every day, and North East News an English news bulletin at 7.15pm every day targets both the urban and rural areas. All *Kendras* of the Northeast mandatorily links DD Guwahati at 7.15 pm every day to relay the North East news. *Rupali Dhou* a programme based on Hindi film songs, *Sambhawana* a talent hunt show for the children and the youth, *Manashi* a Woman programme telecast once a week, Flagship programmes, based on the developmental schemes of the UPA Government at the centre, is telecast twice a week and are mostly field based programmes. Doordarshan *Kendra* Guwahati also telecasts some its programmes on the DTH platform. It needs to be added here that though the programme names may have been changed over a period of time to bring newness and variety but most times the concept and the treatment with some difference have remained the same. The detail of other programmes telecast from the *Kendra* would be discussed elaborately in the next chapter. Doordarshan in Assam also has a *Kendra* at Dibrugarh which was inaugurated on 9th September 1984 initially an LPT which was in 1993 upgraded to a full-fledged *Kendra*. Besides programmes in Assamese it also

⁴² <http://www.ddindia.gov.in/About+DD/DD+DCD/Kalyani.html>, accessed on 19th May 2011.

produces programmes in other “dialects” including English, Nepali, Mishing, Deori, Tea communities and Tai.⁴³

Silchar the district headquarters of Cachar District situated in Barak valley in South East of Assam also has its own Doordarshan channel or *Kendra* which initially had a LPT in 1984 but later in 1987 was upgraded to an HPT thus turning it to a full-fledged *Kendra* and presently covers the three districts of Barak valley of Cachar, Karimgang and Hailakandhi covering approximately a population of 30 Lakhs. The programme composition include Agriculture, Children, Youth, Opinion based programmes, Science and Environment, Literary, Health, Sports including a Women’s programme called *Ananya* of twenty minutes duration every Monday and *Randhan Silpa* a cookery programme besides other programmes. PPC (NE) was commissioned on 1st November 1990 with the aim of integrating and interacting among the diverse groups and also at excelling in TV programme productions. PPC (NE) has 24 hours uninterrupted programmes through its satellite service which is run through a highly sophisticated Digital Earth Station attached to its studio block. Its programmes have coverage in all the seven Northeast states including Sikkim. The programmes are a combination of contributory programmes from all the states of the Northeast, its own originating ones, the commissioned as well as the sponsored programmes.⁴⁴

Doordarshan *Kendra* Itanagar in Arunachal Pradesh, became a full-fledged *Kendra* on 15th February 1996 and has transmission hours from 3pm to 5.30pm, in which it transmits its local programmes, while the rest of the time from 5.30pm to 8.00 pm relays from Delhi and Doordarshan *Kendra* (DDK) Guwahati for the news between 7.15 to 7.30pm. All *Kendras* of the Northeast mandatorily links the National Channel DD 1 after 8.00pm.⁴⁵

DDK Imphal at Agartala from an LPT channel since 20th November 1982 grew to a full-fledged *Kendra* in 2004 with two and a half hour programmes transmission every day. Besides Agriculture, other programmes include Sports,

⁴³ *Doordarshan Kendras of North-East (At a Glance)*, op.cit., pp.1-24, Summer Fixed point chart, All India Radio Guwahati, issued on 5th April, 2011.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.29-33.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.34-38.

Literary, Legal, Science, Health and Hygiene, Children and Classical dance programmes. Women's programmes of fifteen minutes duration is transmitted every first, third and fifth Tuesday and a Family Welfare programme every second Tuesday.⁴⁶

Meghalaya has two Doordarshan *Kendras* one in Capital Shillong and another in Tura, the district headquarter of West Garo Hills. DDK Shillong located at *Laitkor* peak was commissioned on 30th January 1993 with initial telecast time of one hour fifteen minutes for five days a week from Monday to Friday, which has subsequently been increased to daily transmission of two hours thirty minutes from Monday to Friday and five hours on Saturday and Sunday. Programmes include News and current affairs, Music, Family Welfare, Agriculture, Health, Education, Science, Youth, and Sports. Women's programme includes *Ka Rympei* meaning 'the hearth', initially telecast on first, second and third Monday for 30 minutes duration but presently reduced to only once a week every Wednesday at 6.30pm. The *Kendra* at Tura was commissioned on 31st May 1993. Excepting on Saturdays and Sundays, DDK Tura transmits two hours and thirty minutes of programmes on weekdays and consists of programmes on Agriculture, Health, Youth, Sports, Career guidance, Science, Western and Folk songs besides other programmes. Garo being the local language consists of 86% of its programme content. 35% of its total programme content consists of Informative programme, 46% of Educative programme and 19% of Entertainment programmes out of its total programme content.⁴⁷

The history of Doordarshan in Nagaland began on 18th October 1987 when a *Kendra* was commissioned at Kohima the state capital, initially for relaying DD-1 through a 1 KW Transmitter. A trial programme of thirty minutes duration soon began on 30th March 1993 and later regularised from Monday to Friday. From 1st May 2004, DDK Kohima increased its transmission time of programmes to two hours thirty minutes duration including ten minutes of local news in English which started from the 1st May 2003. Most of the programmes are in English though programmes are also telecast in all the other Naga "dialects." Local programmes consist of Agriculture, Devotional, Folk songs, Health, Education, Sports, Eco

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.39-42.

⁴⁷ Winter Fixed Point Chart, All India Radio Guwahati, issued on 2nd October, 2011, *op.cit.*, pp.48-49,

tourism, Weekly round-up besides other programmes. Women's programmes of thirty minutes duration are also telecast, every first, second, third and fifth Tuesdays of the month.⁴⁸

Doordarshan was known to the people of Mizoram when a 100 watt LPT was commissioned at *Tuikhuahtlang* at Aizawl in October 1982. It was however on 12th June 1995 that a full-fledged programme production centre was commissioned at *Durtlang* located to the north of Aizawl. DDK Aizawl telecasts programmes for two hours and thirty minutes every day from 5pm to 8pm on all weekdays and for five hours between 3pm and 8pm on Saturdays and Sundays both on terrestrial and satellite mode. Music, interactive programmes and 15 minutes Regional News in Mizo are some of its programmes telecast in languages such as Mizo, Hindi, Mara, Lai, English, Reang and Paite. Besides other programmes under various categories a fifteen minutes women's programme is telecast every Monday from 5.45pm to 6pm. Public Service programmes account for 60.67%, Entertainment programme account for 24.84% and News and Current Affairs constitute 14.49% of the *Kendra's* transmission.⁴⁹

The state of Tripura received its Doordarshan *Kendra* at capital Agartala on 27th January 1987 initially relaying only national service (DD1). The studio was inaugurated on November 20th 1992 and local programmes of one hour duration originated from the *Kendra* since 1995. Geographically and population wise DDK Agartala covers 93.5% of the area and people. The programmes are mainly in Bengali and Kokborok having a ratio of 58:42. Programmes in English are also telecast. Its programmes include Agriculture, Tribal dance, Science, Women, Children, Literary, Health besides other programmes based on information and entertainment. The *Kendra's* Women's programme consist of a 45 minutes programme every first, third and fifth Thursdays, as well as a thirty minutes Women's programme in some Saturday from 5pm to 5.30pm. It telecasts

⁴⁸ Summer and Winter Fixed Point Chart, All India Radio, Kohima, issued on 25th March, 2011, *op.cit.*, pp.54-56, Report of 'Station Profile of DDK Kohima' submitted to the DDG's Office, Guwahati.

⁴⁹ Profile of Doordarshan *Kendra*, Aizawl, Mizoram, from the Deputy Director General's office, Guwahati, accessed on 15th June, 2011.

programmes for two hours and thirty minutes every day from 5pm to 8pm on all weekdays and for five hours between 3pm and 8pm on Saturdays and Sundays.⁵⁰

The state of Sikkim obtained its Doordarshan *Kendra* a few years ago when Doordarshan *Kendra* Gangtok was inaugurated on the 1st of November 2004. It covers a geographical area of 80.4% and a population of 95.7%. Since it is relatively a new *Kendra* it telecasts a thirty minutes Agriculture Narrowcasting programme in the Nepali language every Monday to Thursday from 6pm to 6.30 pm. On every first, third and fifth Fridays it also telecasts a half hour current affairs programme in Hindi.⁵¹ Since DD Gangtok is fairly a new *Kendra* with few originating programmes produced and telecast a study of its profile and its programmes would be kept limited.

A cursory glance at the profile and history of Doordarshan in Northeast India suggests that ever since the beginnings of Doordarshan's history in the Northeast which started with the installation of a Doordarshan *Kendra* in Guwahati in 1985 expanding further to other states of the Northeast with the recent one being at Gangtok when a *Kendra* was set up in 2004, Doordarshan in Northeast India like its policy in the rest of the country has been playing an expansionist role of either installation of *Kendras*, up-gradation of existing facilities from analogue to the digital mode or increasing the reach of transmission to far flung and remote areas of the Region. There are now a total of 12 numbers of Studios, 125 numbers of transmitters in entire Northeast Region and 12 numbers of *Kendras* along with one Regional Language Satellite Channel (RLSC) DD North-East.⁵² The main function of Doordarshan is to produce and telecast TV programmes to entertain, inform and educate the people with the ultimate objective besides others as enshrined in front page of all Doordarshan reports to "promote national integration, safe guard citizens' rights, presenting fair and balanced flow of information, to create awareness about women's issue and promote social justice." It is towards the fulfilment of these objectives that a *Kendra* of DD has been established in all the state capitals of the Northeast. The region comprising of eight states including Sikkim and the people of

⁵⁰ *Doordarshan Kendras of North East (At a Glance), op.cit., p. 58*, Report of 'Station Profile of DDK Agartala' submitted to the DDG's Office, Guwahati.

⁵¹ *Ibid., p. 57.*

⁵² <http://ddkguwahati.gov.in/contact.asp> accessed on 12.6.2011.

these states belonging to myriad communities with diverse socio-economic background are a kaleidoscope of different tribes and sub-tribes with their own unique culture, tradition and life style and Doordarshan through its several categories of programmes viz' Agriculture, Children, Youth, Women, Opinion based, Science and Environment, Literary, Health, Sports and other programmes strives to showcase the unique culture and lifestyles of the myriad people of the region discharging its role as the "foremost Public Service television Organization."⁵³ But apart from the mammoth institution of Doordarshan right from the National, Regional and Local level in terms of its structure, composition, manpower and software of various programmes that gives us a comprehensive idea of the organization and the functioning of the largest public broadcaster of the country, but a study of its various categories of programmes especially Women's programmes would also provide a further understanding if the policies and programmes of Doordarshan are attuned to the social reality of the time. Has new thinking, careful planning, and innovative formatting of programmes been adopted in creating awareness of women's issues providing the communication support to women's development in the country? R.N Acharya in the work *Television in India* felt that television can in the process of change become a catalyst in three aspects a) become a medium of communication for national integration b) enlightening all sections of the society especially against exploitation of the poor and c) educating the masses and develop human recourses.⁵⁴ Though the three pronged influence of television can be that of nation building, economic growth and social development but India still being a developing nation wherein the pace and the distribution of development may not be evenly spread, the question that rises is can the public broadcaster in our country become an important vehicle of social change? The pertinent point in this regard is, has the Doordarshan through its several decades of existence been able to reach the unreached not merely in terms of geography but also sociologically? Could they educate and inform all sections of society against the ill practices that harms all and therefore, could it become a catalyst of social change and gender equality? The succeeding chapters would enquire into these aspects.

⁵³ *Doordarshan, Prasar Bharati Broadcasting Corporation of India*, New Delhi, p.5.

⁵⁴ R.N Acharya, *Television in India*, New Delhi, 1987, pp.108-109.

Mass media are that section of the media specially conceived and designed to reach a very large audience, an audience that is anonymous and usually heterogeneous people that forms a mass society which can be susceptible to the influence of the modern mass media techniques.⁵⁵ How much of this 'large audience' has Doordarshan in the Northeast been able to reach beyond available statistics and who have been 'susceptible' in real terms to the varied programmes targeted for their benefits can only be understood better if we make an in-depth study of the various programmes that Doordarshan telecasts in the Northeast. Scholars analysing the role and effects of the mass communication and especially that of television feel, that though television has been with the world for about six decades yet, in this short period it has firmly established itself as a powerful and popular medium of communication for information, ideas, values and skills. Despite the fact that this medium has been in use in the affluent and technologically advanced countries of the world several decades ago but ever since its introduction in the less developed countries it is well on its way to becoming the prime medium of news dissemination, entertainment and information leaving behind the older and more traditional media like the radio and the press. This is true in the case of India as well, because by its high reach in terms of area and population, the Doordarshan is considered to be one of the biggest public service broadcasters of the world. The secret of the power of television as a powerful medium is that it allows the public to actually witness any event as it unfolds rather than receiving a verbal or written account of it through the radio or the press and this in itself has the ability to bring to its viewers the actual texture, colour and the motion of an event and carrying an impact much deeper and more durable than any other known medium of communication.⁵⁶ Thus going by this 'power' that television has it is to be seen how far has it also been advanced by Doordarshan through their various programmes in creating new progressive knowledge by doing away with the old traditional and sometimes even pervasive and harmful patriarchal values and norms that women in particular are subjected to.

This recognition and realization of the power and potential of television as a medium of mass communication though has been somewhat slow in our country, but none the less has acquired a distinctive feature, personality, and character of its own.

⁵⁵ Om Gupta, *Media Society and Culture*, New Delhi, 2006, p.1.

⁵⁶ Aruna Zachariah, *Communication Media and Electronic Revolution*, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 140-141.

In India the DD has a vast content of programmes that is produced and telecast on an everyday basis and therefore the vital question that arises is the kind of role that these programmes are playing in creating and shaping consciousness about gender equality and gender justice. Being a Government controlled medium though it is now under the autonomous *Prasar Bharati* Corporation under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, what needs a further understanding is how restrictive or open in actual practice is this autonomy in terms of programme production. Is it only used as a tool of government mouth piece or is it at the same time also portraying and propagating the social reality as it exists through its various categories of programmes? Have its programmes only endeavoured to focus on the progress of the nation in the age of Modernization and Globalization or has it also focused on the several ills of society especially the restrictive boundary of societal values concerning women, and thereby helping to bring about a social change in the country?

With the booming growth of the mass media industry especially the television sector which has seen a phenomenal rise both in terms of its programmes as well as investments by major industrial companies through their advertisements and sponsorships, a lot of interests has been shown and studies have lately been taken up not only on the market dynamics of the media, but also on the media images specially on the portrayal of women in this spiralling industry. The subject of portrayal of women in the Indian media has drawn the attention of a number of media critiques in the present times. It has been felt by feminist writers and activists critiquing women's marginality and misrepresentation in media that women have been portrayed as men would like to see them, beautiful creatures, submissive, mothers of their children or efficient housekeepers. The positive side of their progress and their contribution for national development have not been adequately discussed in the media of communication it is felt.⁵⁷ There have been worrying trends especially on the "commodification of women's bodies"⁵⁸ and the "male-

⁵⁷ B.P. Mahesh Chandra Guru, "Women and Mass Media: Indian Scenario" *Third Concept*, Vol. 10, No 109, March 1996, p.49.

⁵⁸ Carolyn M. Byerly and Karen Ross in *Women and Media: A Critical Introduction*, Oxford, 2006, p. 37.

ordered construction”⁵⁹ of women’s bodies thus maintaining gender inequalities in the media images. While studying and analysing women and the electronic media and the media images of women, in recent years it has been observed that the media has emerged in a big way as a major exploiter of women. Scholars feel that with changing times new ways of expressing social power have been fashioned which target the weaker components of the society and the most vulnerable target are women.⁶⁰ Images of women in the Indian media have been projected wrongly and unrealistically feel many scholars examining media roles and media effects. All mass media like newspapers, magazines, radio, televisions and films are not putting any concrete efforts to change the conventional image of Indian women it is argued. Instead these media are contributing for lowering the image of women by projecting superficial, physical and ornamental characteristics of women. The rise is more on either over glamorising and exploitation of female character in television and films or their under representation in vital issues which is cited as a major cause of concern for the present time so far as media representation of women is concerned.⁶¹ The argument is that though the responsibility of media in projecting women’s role in society is highly crucial and essential but the electronic media has been narrow and has presented women as essentially dependent and romantic. Some have even stated that the mass media have not been able to act as effective instrument to inform and prepare society about the role and importance of women in national development.⁶² It is argued that mass media in India is male centered, male dominated and male biased. It has not been able to ensure a judicious communicative space and time for the coverage of women’s issues and there has been a failure in identifying the problems of women, their needs overlooked and they have been discriminated upon.⁶³ Scholarly works on women and media have reflected how women are either portrayed in serials, soaps and advertisements as the submissive lot or as vibrant, happily buying or competently dealing with their lives even under what

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*,

⁶⁰ For more on the commodification of women in media see Carolyn M. Byerly and Karen Ross, pp. 37-55, Sharad Rajimwale, “Media and the Women’s Image: A New Subversive Site?” *Mainstream*, Vol. 42, No II, 6th March, 2004, p.11.

⁶¹ Satyanarayana Pattniak, “Media Images of Women: The Indian Scenario” *Third Concept*, Vol. 10, No 116-117, October- November 1996, p. 47.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁶³ B.P. Mahesh Chandra Guru, *op.cit.*, p.50.

might appear to be oppressive conditions. The real concerns of women seem to either be obliterated or at best decided by market forces and sponsoring companies who determine what narratives will sell best with the consumers of goods. In other words it is the power of money that determines what messages are to be put out.⁶⁴ This commercialisation of media services has also commoditised women, increasingly exploiting and projecting them as sex symbols than having objective discussions confronting the growth and development of women.⁶⁵ It is also felt that women are not associated with the decision making process in the media institutions both public and private and this has also led to the negligence of women's issues or interests in media institutions.⁶⁶ While these are some arguments brought forth by feminist writers who have analysed media's portrayal of women as being exploitative, discriminatory and unrealistic, the existing research on media studies and Doordarshan's programmes have been deliberated by others in terms of dividing and analysing Doordarshan programmes as pre-liberalisation and post-liberalisation periods. Divya C.Mcmillin while delving into the commodification of women also found it prevalent in Doordarshan programming. She has argued that the social reality of submissive and passive women in the post-colonial period also found its way in television programmes and advertisements. While critiquing the programmes she stated that the submissive, long suffering housewife confined to the private sphere, receives ample representation on television while the positive depiction of women as dynamic executives and business women in the public sphere are scarce. She argues that the decades of 1970's and 1980's, Doordarshan policy was that of 'two parts education and one-part entertainment' formula which gave way in the post-economic liberalisation period of the 1990's to hefty menus of film based programmes and variety of game shows across the networks to sustain the niche audiences for an increasing pool of local and multinational advertisers. The realization and the recognition of women as an important consumer pool in the post liberalisation period of 1990's saw women being depicted on television as progressive decision makers. This however she feels constituted a very small percentage of television programming and it was the market dynamics that played a

⁶⁴ Uma Chakravarti, "State, Market and Freedom of Expression: Women and Electronic Media" *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 35, No 18, 29th April - 5th May 2000, WS-15-WS-17.

⁶⁵ B.P. Mahesh Chandra Guru, *op.cit.*, p.51.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.49.

role in the choices of programmes telecast.⁶⁷ But while these have been the general observations on the Doordarshan's role in the portrayal of women but the 'social responsibility' of the public broadcaster would mean that they perform as the real representative of all segments in society. Infact this social responsibility of Doordarshan as the public broadcaster of the country was also stressed by a number of Working Groups constituted to improve the functioning of Doordarshan as well as improve its programmes. These Working Groups in their recommendation had also suggested measures to improve programmes on women and related to women. A working group with the narrowly defined mandate to evaluate and make suggestions for programming on Doordarshan headed by P.C Joshi was formed in December 1982. It took 12 months for the Joshi Committee to complete its report and another 18 months for the government to present it in parliament. The committee sought to introduce a significant public service component into Doordarshan's programming.⁶⁸ Another Working Group was set up in 1985 to look into the software for Doordarshan. In its two volume reports better known as '*An Indian Personality for Television*', emphasised that the "women's dimension must form an integral part of all Doordarshan programmes and not merely confined to 'women's programmes', nor to isolated attempts to discuss women's issues."⁶⁹ The working group also noted the low priority accorded to the subject 'women' in all programmes. It underlined that existing woman's programmes represented women's roles in the homes as "decorative functions"⁷⁰ as wives and mothers. While highlighting such stereotypical representation of women, the Working Group pointed out that women were the neglected half and recommended a clear cut guideline regarding the positive portrayal of women on television and for Doordarshan to make women's dimension an integral part in all its programmes.⁷¹ It is while keeping this task of the DD in mind that we need to understand if DD has abided by these guidelines or has fallen into the trap of commodification of women. We need to understand if Doordarshan

⁶⁷ Divya C.Mcmillan, "Ideologies of Gender on Television in India" *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 9, No 1, January-June 2002, pp.2-3.

⁶⁸ Nikhil Sinha, India: Television and National Politics, in David Atkinson and Marc Raboy (eds.), *Public Broadcasting for the 21st Century*, UNESCO, 1997, P. 223.

⁶⁹ *An Indian Personality for Television, Report of the Working Group on Software on Doordarshan*, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Vol. 1, New Delhi, 1985, p. 140.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.141.

⁷¹ *An Indian Personality for Television, Report of the Working Group on Software on Doordarshan*, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Vol. II, New Delhi, 1985.

has risen above the norms prevalent in society to become an agency to social change and gender upliftment through its varied programmes. This will be reflected upon in the next chapter.

We have underscored the sizable volume of scholarship that considers mass media as a powerful tool in modern society for the overall development process. The relevance of mass communication they stressed comes mainly because of the multiple or mass production of programmes in the form of information, news and entertainment and the varied size of the audience that can be reached most times simultaneously. On the other hand works on gender and women find women as the marginalised group constituting the largest number among the illiterates and under privileged class of Indian society though they form the backbone of national development. Scholars have opined that there has been a “stoic stability in sexist media representation”⁷² that receives ample representation on television. This cultural continuity in the construction of women as chaste, passive, and vulnerable they felt are still preferred to be viewed by audiences who subscribe to the same ideological realism that television draws its codes from.⁷³ While this may be the reality, but media analysts also believes that with the recent television boom and increased numbers of channels and competition among networks, can bring newer opportunities for positive and realistic portrayals of women on Indian television.⁷⁴ We need to explore if this has been the drift with Doordarshan’s programming as well.

Doordarshan being the National television network of the country and one of the largest broadcasting services in the world with over 1415 transmitters across the country and 67 production studios is definitely an organisation that cannot be ignored specially in context of its role and responsibilities to the large area and population that it reaches. One of the objectives of Doordarshan is infact to highlight the need for social welfare measures including that of upliftment of women. If we are to probe this objective further it becomes necessary on our part to look into the varied programmes that DD telecasts all over the country. How far has the ‘social

⁷² Carolyn M. Byerly and Karen Ross, *op.cit.*, p.38.

⁷³ Divya C.Mcmillan, *op.cit.*, pp.2-21.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.9-22.

responsibility' been able to bring in changes to society and impacted gender relations in particular could be gauged better only if we analyse and study the many programmes being telecast over a period of time. This is what would be taken up in the succeeding chapter analysing some of the Doordarshan programmes specially with changing times and in the context of social change. Though discrimination against women in mass media and television have been emphasised by several authors it would however be interesting to study what has been the role of Doordarshan, the largest public broadcaster in the country in this regard. Are the programmes of Doordarshan a reflection of the existing patriarchal social setup or could the programmes break away from stereotypes to show case the progressiveness of the modern world of today. This is what we would try to look into when some of the programmes of AIR and DD both in the National and in the Regional level would be analysed to understand the gender content of the programmes especially programmes related to women.