

CHAPTER V

Gender Sensitivity, All India Radio and Doodarshan

In the preceding chapters we have discussed how mass media functions as linkages for culture and other societal systems in both vertical and horizontal ways. They not only help to transform abstract patterns of ideas, values, and beliefs into patterns of action and artefacts or vertical linkages but they also help culture in acting as a generalised mediator between different systems of society, relating them to one another or horizontal linkages.¹ Because of the enormous role that the mass media plays in our lives today, scholars have termed that we are living in an “age of information revolution”.² This information society of today they believe and as we also traced in the previous chapters was however not the result of recent changes but rather the industrial progress and the increases in the speed of material processing traceable to the steam engine that had begun more than a century ago. The technological sophistication and up-gradation of hardware contributed massively not only to furthering the reach of mass media but also to the programme composition and production of both the radio and television.

The growth of technology had a definite impact on the growth of broadcasting by the second decade of the twentieth century in most of the countries in America and Europe and whatever the regimes, whatever the agency, whatever the period, infact, all broadcasting stations were offering programmes to a large unseen audience. But what is interesting to note is that countries across the globe for a variety of reasons largely historical, though using basically the same technology did not present the same range of programmes or in the same manner, but in all of them there was an operational division of labour, of producers, presenters, performers and engineers.³ With the gradual increase of broadcasting of varied programmes the profit making trend of radio soon came to the fore. Though radio in

¹ Sandra J, Ball-Rokeach and Muriel G. Canter(eds.), “Introduction” in Sandra J, Ball-Rokeach and Muriel G. Canter(eds.), *Media Audience and Social Structure*, in Karl Erik Rosengren “Linking Culture and Other Societal Systems”, New Delhi, 1986,p.91.

² M.H Syed, *Electronic Media*, New Delhi, 2006, p. xi

³ Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet*, Cambridge, 2005, p.181.

the early twentieth century was a major mass entertainment and information medium, but it soon began earning many millions of dollars in revenues annually through commercial sponsorship which became an important component of programme content. This commercial aspect of radio was brought about especially after 1920 by business entrepreneurs such as David Sarnoff, who created the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), and William S. Paley, who built Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS). These broadcasting (as opposed to narrowcasting) business organizations began to be called 'networks', because they consisted of loose chains of individual stations located in various cities. Some of these stations were owned by the networks, while others were owned by independent businessmen allied with the respective networks. By selling blocks of time to advertisers, the medium was able to quickly become profitable and offer its products to listeners for free, provided they invested in a radio receiver set. In the early radio age, content or programmes typically included a balance of comedy, drama, news, music and sports reporting.⁴ However by early 1950s, television eroded the popularity of radio comedy, drama and variety shows and radio broadcasting took on much the form it has today and were strongly focused on music, talk, news, sports, and drama.⁵ While commercial programmes made their inroads in radio programming, television programmes however consisted of more B-Grade western movies, live dramas, soap operas and social messages that were introduced over the decades and infact the half-hour prime-time radio comedy show moved to television as the half-hour situation comedy (sitcom).⁶ Soon television replaced the adventure programmes at first with live programming and filmed adventure and over the years gave way to animated cartoons in half-hour blocks on weekday afternoons and particularly Saturday mornings, where one cheaply made cartoon adventure followed another. But such programming was not above denigration especially those to do with children's programmes. But because television programmes produced high ratings, the television industry stood its ground against criticism of violence and sex. Other

⁴For details on the commercial aspect of radio refer, Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet*, Cambridge, 2005, pp.181-182.

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio_programming accessed on 8th June 2011.

⁶Irving Fang, *A History of Mass Communication: Six Information Revolution*, Boston, 1997, pp.158-160.

sitcoms followed in opening up controversial subjects that once were ignored by broadcasting. Irving Fang in his exhaustive work on the history of mass communication considers television's "enormous appetite for programming" responsible for telecasting of varied programmes and thinks it was an accomplishment by itself to fill all the available hours of television.⁷ From the above it seems apparent that since the inception of radio and later television the content of programmes formed an important component of entertainment through these mediums. Not only did radio and television become less cumbersome and more sophisticated with technological innovation but there seems to have been a slow and gradual evolution of programme content across radio and television networks.

Television and radio as we understand is a medium to provide information, entertainment and education to a large number of people. However being one of the most important mediums of mass communication we also require to gauge the changes in the programming content that have evolved with time and how efficiently it has been able to keep pace with the changing interest and life styles of the audiences. We need to analyse what are the specific issues that have been given thrust to in recent years. Have the concerns related to gender, the deeply entrenched patriarchal values, issues of male supremacy and male dominance, the socio-economic status of women, the deep seated decadent value system and attitudes been addressed in its effort to inform, educate and entertain the masses? How far the changed programme content in All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan (DD) been able to focus on these diverse problems can be understood by an analysis of the varied programmes broadcast over the years. If mass media is a facilitator and a contributor of social growth than it is crucial we also understand if this growth has kept women and their needs in sight and also how well has such growth been received by women themselves and affected social attitudes in particular. The speed at which technology progressed worldwide and its adoption by both AIR and DD has been underscored in the previous two chapters. While acknowledging this rapidity of technological up-gradation we would now in this chapter take up an analysis of the

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.160-161.

programmes under categories such as Agriculture, Health, Education and Women in both AIR and DD to understand the gender content of the programmes and also to gauge if the technological sophistication also impacted the quality of programmes to bring in new ideas of societal upliftment.

As on 30th November 2012 AIR has a total of 299 full-fledged stations, accessible to 99.19% of the population of the country and nearly 92% of the total area. Because of its large reach in terms of area, population and the vast number of programmes broadcast in 23 languages and 146 “dialects” (as mentioned in AIR documents accessed), catering to a vast spectrum of social, economic and culturally diverse populace it is considered a “broadcasting giant.”⁸ Both AIR and DD came under *Prasar Bharati* (the Broadcasting Corporation of India) on 23rd November 1997 with the mandate to organize and conduct public broadcasting services to inform, educate and entertain the public and to ensure balanced development of broadcasting in the country. The *Prasar Bharati* Corporation is governed by the *Prasar Bharati* Board and functions as the apex body ensuring formulation and implementation of the policies of the organisation and fulfilment of the mandate in terms of the *Prasar Bharati* Act, 1990. The Directorate General of AIR is the ‘Head of the Department’ and is responsible for the overall administration and supervision of the entire AIR network. In its organisational setup AIR has broad based sections including its Programme wing, Engineering wing, Administrative wing, Audience Research Wing, News Service Division, Staff Training Institute (Programme and Technical) etc.⁹ The phenomenal growth achieved by AIR through nine decades expanded gradually imbibing new technologies and programme production techniques and since 2002 has been laying emphasis on its digitisation programme.

Communication with the people as we understand is necessary in any society and in any form of government especially in the people backed democratic form of government. Communication being a two way process not only the people must be told about government plans, programmes, policies, successes and achievements but the reactions of the people to the policies and programmes must also reach the policy

⁸ *Annual Report, 2012-13, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting*, New Delhi, p.158, www.allindiaradio.org, accessed on 8th July 2012 at 10pm.

⁹ *Annual Report 2007-2008, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting*, pp.64-68.

makers and administrators to enable them to modify or change the programmes accordingly. The potential of radio and television as an effective medium of communication was also realised to extend broadcasting services within easy reach of the entire population. How much of this role to bring in social change and change in the mindset of the people has been achieved by AIR and DD the two public broadcasters of the country would be understood better after a study of its programmes produced.

In our effort to have a better understanding of the thrust areas of AIR programme content it is necessary that we look into the “objectives” as enlisted in the constitution of All India Radio.¹⁰ The listed objectives of All India Radio programme content are as follows.

- a) Uphold the unity of the country and the democratic values enshrined in the Constitution.
- b) Present a fair and balanced flow of information of national, regional local and international interest, including contrasting views, without advocating any opinion or ideology of its own.
- c) Promote the interest and concerns of the entire nation, being mindful of the need for harmony and understanding within the country and ensuring that the programmes reflect the varied elements which make the composite culture of India.
- d) Produce and transmit varied programmes designed to awaken, inform, enlighten, educate, entertain and enrich all sections of the people.
- e) Produce and transmit programmes relating to developmental activities in all their facets including extension work in agriculture, education, health and family welfare and science & technology.
- f) Serve the rural, illiterate and under-privileged population, keeping in mind the special needs and interest of the young, social and cultural minorities, the

¹⁰ *All India Radio 2007, Prasar Bharati Broadcasting Corporation of India, p.67.*

tribal population and those residing in border regions, backward or remote areas.

- g) Promote social justice and combat exploitation, inequality and such evils as untouchability and narrow parochial loyalties.
- h) Serve the rural population, minority communities, women, children, illiterates as well as other weaker and vulnerable sections of the society.
- i) Promote national integration.

The above objectives that find repeated reference in all official documents of AIR clearly indicates the policies adopted and abided by AIR and which naturally are implemented through their various broadcasting programmes. In keeping with the democratic ethos of the country it has enlisted its effort to preserve and promote a balance between flow of information and entertainment. The need to conserve and uphold the developmental activities of the country has been prioritised keeping in mind the sentiments of all communities and all regions of the country, both rural and urban. However women seem to find a low priority in such a development agenda. It not only finds a single word mention at the lowest rung of objectives but women have been seen as a category belonging to the “vulnerable section of the society.” This clearly indicates the general patriarchal apathy towards the concerns of women which finds a manifestation in the AIR objectives. There is no lucid mention of AIR’s position to social welfare and social justice.

We have to bear in mind that these guidelines acts as the key principles for the different AIR stations both at the National, Regional and Local level in their production and presentation of varied programmes though deviation at times takes place to suit local needs and concerns. A detailed analysis and study of some of the programmes at the National, Regional and Local level is being taken up to assess the gender content and gender sensitivity of the programmes and their contribution as a catalyst to social change.

An immediate difficulty that a researcher finds while reviewing AIR programmes is the lack of relevant archival material of programmes. AIR archives

though has been in the process of being digitised since 2001 but most of the recordings stored in the library or archives of AIR are those consisting of Music, Spoken word, Interviews with eminent persons, Radio Dramas and Radio Autobiographies of very important personalities from various walks of life. Other programmes based on social and current issues broadcast on an everyday basis have a brief shelf life and erased within a short span of time. As programmes are on current topics of short duration, therefore they lose out on repeat values. This was the explanation given by officials of AIR to the lack of archival materials of programmes.¹¹ Further there has been an extreme reluctance on the part of AIR officials to provide an access to the limited archival materials of programmes. The researcher was told on a number of times to access the websites of the Ministry or the individual stations to source information or to listen to the current programmes being broadcast as the format of the programmes with slight modifications have remained the same. Therefore the period of study for AIR programmes from the National to the Regional level is from its inception and the programmes reviewed under various categories for this study is mostly current programmes but having a long history of broadcasting. On the other hand the experience in accessing DDK archival materials have been a satisfying one both at the central archive Delhi as well as in the Regional *Kendras*. The support shown by the DDK officials towards the endeavour of this research has been commendable. In view of the above mentioned problem in sourcing AIR tapes the assessment of programmes are based mostly on oral history of personal interviews undertaken as well as the facts corroborated with the review of programmes on various categories from 2005 along with other documental primary sources. The study of AIR programmes in subsequent paragraphs is mostly based on current programmes but those that have a long history of transmission from the respective AIR Stations.

As discussed in earlier chapters, in its programming and other activities, AIR is guided by its motto "*Bahujana Hitaya; Bahujana Sukhaya*" a Sanskrit phrase, meaning 'the benefit and happiness of large sections of the people' and to achieve

¹¹ These details have been collected in the course of interviews with M.K Devburman, Assistant Director, AIR Guwahati, on 15th June 2011, Suman Agarwal Programme Executive (PEX) Woman's programme, AIR Delhi, Interview with Basudha Banerjee, PEX in charge Spoken word, Radio play, Women's programme, North Eastern Service of AIR Shillong.

this, AIR has evolved a three tier system of broadcasting at the National, Regional and Local level. Broadcasting of programmes includes News, Music, Spoken word, Talks, Discussions, Interviews, and other programmes to almost entire rural and urban population of the country.¹²

National Channel which forms the first stage of broadcasting in AIR began on 18th May 1988 and works as a night service from 6.50 pm to 6.10 am the next morning. It covers 65% area and about 76% of the population of the country, through its three Medium Wave (MW) Transmitters at Nagpur, Delhi and Kolkata with a Short Wave (SW) support which covers the entire country. National Channel serves in three languages of Hindi, Urdu and English with programmes on Science, Health, Sports, Literature, Humour, Current Social Issues, and Cultural Heritage besides other programmes. A few examples of programmes aired on the National Channel for a number of years include a programme called *Vividha*, a bi-lingual discussion programme both in English and Hindi. This programme takes up various issues on economics, science, sports, music, literature, health etc. Another fortnightly programme called 'Focus' takes up issues on career guidance, current affairs, and social issues. A senior citizen programme called *Aaj Ke Mehman* (today's guest) features eminent personalities from different fields. Education, culture and socio-economic issues are focused upon in a daily Urdu Magazine programme called *Manzar* (view). *Jai Jawan* a programme for the troops is an entertainment programme which is broadcast five days a week based on listeners phone calls and messages.¹³ Besides these and other programmes broadcast on the National Channel there are also programmes based on varied subjects such as series of talks on the recipients of Bharat Ratna and Paramveer Chakra Awards, serialised docu-drama on 1857 the first war of India's Independence, serials on ancient literature including Vedas, Puranas and Upanishads.¹⁴ Presently it broadcasts programmes of entertainment and music with hourly News Bulletins for the entire country from 6.50 PM in the evening to 6.12 AM in the morning.¹⁵ It may also be mentioned that this is the only radio channel available on the air waves after most of

¹² *All India Radio 2007, Prasar Bharati Broadcasting Corporation of India op.cit.*, p.69.

¹³ *Ibid.*,

¹⁴ *Ibid.*,

¹⁵ www.allindiaradio.org, accessed on 8th July 2012 at 10pm.

the stations close down their night transmission. A study of the programmes at the National Channel reflects the principle thrust of the programme content which clearly is indicative of the fact that it is based both on entertainment and information and cover a wide spectrum both in content and treatment. Being a National Channel there seem to be a clear endeavour to bring to the fore the rich and the wide Indian culture showcasing both its past and present glory. It lays importance on the amalgamation of different aspects of society from sports to literature and from current affairs to recollecting the wonders of the bygone years. These programmes are reflective of a generalised nature of programmes without prioritising any specific region or segment of society. There is no explicit programme that takes up women's issues.

While there is no particular Women's programme on women's issues in the National Channel, however we do find a number of Women's programme broadcast from AIR Delhi. It becomes necessary to discuss a few of the Women's programme of AIR Delhi as we find a similar pattern of programme and issues taken up by the other Regional stations as well. The 'series' nature of programme is the main type of Women's programme which takes up issues, problems and achievements related to women and which are divided into episodes. It may be noted that there are two slots of programmes for the women, one for the urban listeners and the other for the rural listeners. The programmes for both the urban and the rural listeners are of sixty minutes duration broadcast five days a week on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday at all times in the afternoon 'time slot' of 12.05 pm to 1.05pm. Some of the important series includes *Maan ki Batein*, *Aparajita*, *Chule Asman*, *Vishwas ki Dor*, *Strijan*, *Hamara Athiti*, *Pehchan*, *Ananya* or *Sukanya*. These series are in the form of discussions, interviews, poetry recitations, dramas, features, interactive phone-in programme and addresses questions on health, psychological issues, legal matters, career, personality development, or even beauty and fashion with expert opinions by professionals in the respective fields. These 'series' highlights women achievers surmounting struggles such as careers in the Indian Army, Indian Air Force, success stories of woman entrepreneur owning a newspaper, lady traffic constable, women taxi drivers or women working in petrol pumps and in other male dominated avenues. The episodes range from portraying the

resilience of women such as a widow's struggle to become independent, a physically challenged woman's effort to find employment, to a poor woman's great endeavour to educate her children. The 'series' have also highlighted successful marital relationship between couples or even women in creative fields as writers, painters and artists. These series were based on entertainment and featured interviews with numerous television celebrities and dancers from several Indian classical dances. A mention may be made of women success stories that have been presented in the form of radio features such as a feature titled '*Bandh Kamro Me Ujle Phool*' based on the success of mushroom cultivation by a woman entrepreneur or another programme titled '*Diary ek Ladki ki*' which was a radio feature on eve-teasing. Both these programmes received the 'Akashvani Awards.'¹⁶ Akashvani Annual Awards were instituted in 1974 to promote professional excellence and to bring out the best from the staff working at various radio stations.¹⁷ Career opportunities for women, survival strategies for single mothers in cities, programmes addressing domestic violence, rapes, sexual abuse at working places, tips on procuring driving licences, or passports are also highlighted in these series.¹⁸

The Women's programmes for rural listeners are also of 'series' format though the topics are based more on agriculture, farming technologies, health, nutrition and family planning that find priority in series consisting of *Gramin Bahenon Ka Karikrem*, *Adha Akash Hamara*, *Parivar Kalyan*, *Maan ki Asha* and *Hamari Asha* through interviews, discussions, drama, interactive phone-in, poetry recitation and talks. These series are divided into episodes and are broadcast for sixty minutes in the afternoon hours between 12.05pm to 1.05pm every Wednesdays and Fridays of the week. These in-house as well as field based OB (Outdoor Broadcasting) programmes takes up issues on health and sanitation, family welfare, food and nutrition for both the summer and winter months, solar energy, animal

¹⁶ This information has been collected from the Interview with Lalita Chaturvedi, Programme Executive in-charge of Youth, Children, Women, Spoken Word and Senior Citizen programmes, AIR Delhi, Akashvani Bhawan, New Delhi, on 26.4.2011, at 3pm.

¹⁷ www.allindiaradio.org, accessed on 8th July 2012 at 10pm.

¹⁸ Interview with Suman Agarwal, Programme Executive in charge of Urban Women Section, AIR Delhi, at Akashvani Bhawan New Delhi, on 24.4.2011, at 11am.

¹⁸ Interview with Lalita Chaturvedi, *op.cit.*,

¹⁸ www.allindiaradio.org, accessed on 8th July 2012 at 10pm.

husbandry, bee keeping, fisheries, female infanticide, untouchability, domestic violence, health issues, mental health and issues on women's self reliance. Interestingly *Mahila Mandals* or women's clubs from villages are sometimes invited to perform in the storytelling, poetry recitation format of some episodes of the programme.¹⁹ Though there has been an endeavour to find innovative and interesting manner of programme presentation and the wide topics are selected after consultations with senior programme personal in the 'programme meeting' a trend in all AIR stations of the country held at the fixed timing of 10am, but there also seem to exist several lacunae in the topics selected for programmes. A noticeable feature that we found while analysing these programmes is that there is a clear demarcation of topics for the programmes targeted for the urban and the rural women listeners. Career opportunities, personality development, information on women's legal rights seem to be the topics for the 'urban' women listeners and agriculture, food and nutrition, domestication of animals and other farm based topics are for the 'rural' women listeners. Further what is interesting to note is that 'home management' seem to be the clear domain for women alone. For instance, if the topics are on "scientific home management" in the programmes for urban women listeners, than it is "family welfare" for the rural listeners. Relativity seems to be the only variation. This amply shows that the space given to women is not only restrictive as far as the afternoon broadcast time is concerned for both the urban and the rural Women's programme but it also appears that women have been segregated and shunned to the private. The topics taken up are of traditional nature that encourages women to remain in the domestic or the private. Radio is a cheap and easily available medium and can effortlessly be accessible to all even in the rural areas. This is its strong feature but so far it has not been harnessed to its full potential when it comes to sensitising the masses on gender issues. The very fact that such topics of social concern are set aside to be discussed and debated only in the category of "Women's programmes" is a highly patriarchal attitude and is an area of concern. Social taboos and other social evils are harmful to all sections of society. But presently there is a tendency to include concerns of social issues only in the 'Women category' of programmes. We

¹⁹Interview with Ravi Srikumar, Programme Executive (PEX) of Rural Women's programme, AIR Delhi, Akashvani Bhawan, on 26.4.2011 at 2.03pm.

have found no “men’s programme” category discussing social issues. If women need to be educated on the various traditional ills of society surely men should also be skilled on similar issues. Under such policies that encourages one sided channelizing of information on the ills and need of societal upliftment only in the “Women’s programme” AIR seem to uphold a patriarchal mindset and rationalise the existing gender divide in the society.

An examination of some urban and rural women’s programmes which are ‘series’ in nature have not only helped us in furthering our understanding of the programme content but at the same time also brought into light the changes that have been introduced over the years. What comes out significantly is the fact that issues not addressed before in AIR programmes are now being given primary importance. For instance earlier programmes were made exclusively for the house-wives and their concerns as well as those related to the joint family structure but now there is an increasing trend to take up topics and issues based on women’s upliftment, on nuclear family structure and working women. Discussions on controversial topics which were once considered taboos to even speak about are taken up periodically. The use of Hindi in the programmes has also been reduced so as to enable listeners from non-Hindi backgrounds to understand the programmes. Programmes are now both in English and Hindi. Infact this policy of broadcasting programmes mostly in the local language of the states has been a notable feature in the AIR programmes of Northeast as well. There is an increased effort to produce more ‘dial-in’ and ‘dial-out’ programmes which are of interactive phone-in nature. Programmes are now mounted for all categories of listeners. This is evident as during the months of February-March topics based on examination stress are taken up to make ‘mothers’ aware of the nuances to take care of their children preparing for board examinations. During the months of April-May information through programmes are also given on the various entrance exams so as to educate both students and parents on the different career opportunities.²⁰ The programme producers also elaborated that in order to make programmes more interesting and innovative the digital use of technology are increasingly being utilised for programme production to enhance

²⁰ Interview with Suman Agarwal and Lalita Chaturvedi, AIR Delhi, *op.cit.*,

sound clarity, special effects with improved editing features.²¹ While the understanding of these programmes have given us a better idea of the thrust and approach of programmes for women we have also found several similarities in the topics being taken up at AIR Delhi as well as those programmes in the Regional level of the Northeast. This will be further elaborated after we analyse the programmes from the various states of the Northeast. What can be mentioned here is that like the other Regional stations the success of programmes at AIR Delhi too is gauged by responses from listeners' letters, Emails, Short Messaging Service (SMS) and feedbacks of Audience Research Reports. While referring to several interesting narrative by the programme executives of AIR Delhi on listeners feedback we were told that once a sixteen year old boy called up to share his experience of improving his concentration on studies after listening to an episode of a 'psychological help line' in the series *Maan Ki Batein*. In another example of listeners' benefits of such programmes, it was recounted that a lady had called to narrate her experience of being in a state of depression after having lost her husband but could come out of it by listening to one of the counselling episode. In another interesting narrative on the impact of radio it was pointed out that during the early years of the eighties in remote poor villages in Haryana where even a simple clock or watch was a luxury, poor villagers timed their irrigation on their agricultural fields based on the radio timings! This kind of assessment of programmes guided by listener's letters or telephone calls during programmes is also an important and sometimes the only pattern of assessing the programme quality even in the other Regional stations. Further, the selection of topics for discussions and talks based on newspapers headlines is also an approach adopted in the Regional stations of the Northeast. While all such inclusion of issues and topic and the interactive 'dial in' and 'dial out' programmes reflects the changed life-styles of women that are being incorporated in various series and episodes as skits and discussions of Women's programmes to make programmes interesting but wider issues and concerns related not only to women but for the society as a whole finds scarce mention. As we understand that to bring in a real and perceivable social change especially to rid the various social ills, a change in mindset is of utmost importance and for this both men and women need to

²¹ *Ibid.*,

be informed and educated to bring in a real and perceivable progress of society. But there is a perception among scholars that the current trend of programmes in television and radio is more towards the commercial viability of higher revenue earnings that takes precedence in the ‘most popular’ tag in the programmes. The markets and the sponsors increasingly dominate and determine what narratives will sell best with the consumers of goods with little concern on highlighting the real issues of women.²² Featuring celebrities and prominent television and film personalities may increase Target Rating Point (TRP) and add to the glamour of a programme but glamour is definitely not the reality for most women. Discourses on women rights have focused on the absence of freedom, justice, dignity, equality for women that are essential for nation building. Scholars have laid bare the economic dimension of gender discrimination of lack of land rights, the environmental havocs wrought by construction of large dams and ecological disasters, the concerns of fishing rights in coastal waters, capitalistic economy that led to the creation of new instruments for hegemony, concerns of migrant labour and rural workers and many other limitations that demolished women’s rights and their roles.²³ It is therefore these real issues of bias and discrimination concerning women both urban and rural, their controlled rights, roles and participation in the society at large which are critical areas that need higher focus and a continued dialogue which seem to have been restrictive through the various ‘series’ format of AIR Delhi programmes.

As stated in the above paragraphs, AIR is largely guided by the “AIR objectives” in their programme formulation and presentation. This has been evident not only in the programmes of AIR Delhi but a similar pattern is also evident in the other Regional AIR stations of the Northeast which we next turn our focus to. As mentioned earlier the Primary or Regional stations constitute the second tier of broadcasting of AIR and are located mostly in the capitals of every state. As the study is specific to the Northeast we have selected several categories of AIR programmes emanating from the capital stations of the Northeast. The AIR stations

²² Uma Chakravarti, “ State, Market and Freedom of Expression: Women and the Electronic Media” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 35, number 18, 29th April to 5th May 2000, pp. 12-15.

²³ Indu Agnihotri and Vina Mazumdar, “Changing Terms of Political Discourse: Women’s Movement in India, 1970s-1990s, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 30, Number 29, July 29th to 5th August 1995, pp. 1869-1870, Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India*, New Delhi, 1995, p.2

in the Northeast were installed during the last five decades with the establishment of AIR Shillong as the first and the oldest AIR station in the Northeast in 1948 and the recent AIR station at Gangtok the capital of Sikkim established in 1982. In order to understand the thrust and approach of AIR programmes in the Northeast we have selected the programmes mostly from AIR Shillong, AIR Guwahati and AIR Kohima because they are the oldest stations and also have longer broadcasting duration. Selective programme analysis from other AIR stations of the Northeast has also been looked into. The programmes of AIR in the Northeast consist of Agriculture, Flagship, Farm and Home, Music, Spoken word, Environmental, Women's, Youth, News, Education and Children. These programmes can be in the form of talks, discussions, drama, features, documentaries and quiz. All India Radio Shillong being a Primary station of the state of Meghalaya, has a variety of programmes including the children's programme called *Na Lympung Ki Khyannah* (gathering of children), a weekly environment programme called *Na Ki Sawdong Sawkun* (from around the environment), Farm and Home programme called *Ki Saw Samoi* (the four seasons) broadcast on all seven days in the week and also a programme for the Women called *Nala Rympei* (from our own hearth).²⁴ The Children's programmes are designated for age group 5-7 years and 8-14 years and are based on issues of protection of child rights, prevention of child labour and are in the form of plays, short stories, features and choral singing. Children's programmes from AIR stations are mostly broadcast every Sunday afternoon. The objective of Environment programmes is to inform and educate the listeners both in the rural and urban areas, for creating environmental consciousness among them on preservation of environment through development of forests, forestation, social forestry and other related topics. In the Farm and Home (F&H) programme issues on rural development schemes, animal husbandry, fisheries, dry land and wasteland, employment schemes, loan and training facilities, sanitation, health, hygiene and nutrition are some of the basic topics taken up. Under AIR's F&H category of programme which is a hardcore agriculture programme includes a segment in the

²⁴ Winter Fixed Point Chart, All India Radio Shillong, effective from 2nd October, 2011.

programme for women farmers and their issues.²⁵ The other programmes are of general nature and are not segregated for any particular group of the population. Scholarly studies reveal that women's land owning rights are negligible in the entire country. The increasing penetration of market forces, inconsistent land ceiling rights which are discriminatory in nature have spread the patriarchal ideologies further affecting women's economic situation and their rights over land.²⁶ Bina Agarwal in her study on women's lack of property and land ownership rights has pointed out that there has been considerable shifts and erosion of women's rights in land, brought in either by the social division of labour, techniques of production or the state policies of land appropriation and regulation even in matrilineal Meghalaya.²⁷ These corruptions of women land rights are yet to find adequate space in the F&H programmes.

To understand the gender content of programmes it is necessary on our part to take a closer look at the exclusive Women's programme set aside for women listeners. This programme is not only meant for women listeners but it also raises women's issues on health, socio-economic development of women and "meant to raise the social consciousness of the country in regard to attitude towards women."²⁸ All stations of AIR broadcast programmes for urban and rural women in this category of programme. The Women's programme from AIR Shillong has a long history of broadcasting and caters to all the three major tribes of the state, the Khasi, Garo and Jaintia. There are three weekly Women's programmes that are broadcast from the station called '*Nala Rympei*' (from our own hearth) a thirty minutes composite programme in Khasi, '*Na Tyngkong Tyngbet*' (from the entrance) a thirty minutes composite Woman's programme in Jaintia and a Garo Woman's programme every Thursday of twenty five minutes duration. It may be of interest to note that the Jaintia Women's programme began its first broadcast on 5th October 1977 as a once in a week programme. Thus this programme too has a long broadcasting history of 35 years. '*Nala Rympei*' the woman's programme in Khasi has a history of being

²⁵ All India Radio Shillong, Winter Fixed Point Chart, effective from 2nd October 2011, Interview with Assistant Station Director (ASD) AIR Shillong on 12th October 2011, between 1.30- 3pm.

²⁶ Indu Agnihotri and Vina Mazumdar, *op.cit.*,

²⁷ For details of women's land rights in matrilineal societies see, Bina Agarwal, *a Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*, Cambridge, 1994.

²⁸ *Annual Report 2007-2008, Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India)*, New Delhi, p. 64.

broadcast from AIR Shillong for over a period of forty years since April 1970. Apart from some minor changes of its timings, the format of the programme being a composite one has remained the same. Being a composite programme it consists of songs, straight talk for five to ten minutes, interviews with flourishing women entrepreneurs, women leaders and successful educationists. Discussion which is also a part of the programme takes up issues consisting of women's problems, social issues, legal information for women and topics on health care of mother and child, immunization, family welfare, food and nutrition, scientific home management, women entrepreneurship, education, including adult education targeting both rural and urban women. It is interesting to look into some of the topics taken up in this programme.

The content review of *Nala Rympei* over the last nine years has revealed these topics being taken up in the form of talks and discussions both in Khasi and English in the programme. They include "balancing the family budget"²⁹, "*Jing Kynshew iba rit liarap bad kyrshen ki jingeh li leh ban wan lynshap ha ka jingim jong ngi*" (small savings shapes big planning in future),³⁰ "discipline, training and education the best investment for our children"³¹, "educated mother a boon for the family"³², "security through love is the need of today's children"³³, "women and their role in the society"³⁴, "common ailments of children and their preventive measures"³⁵, "how to take care of our skin in winter"³⁶, "to properly train a child is the mother's first duty"³⁷, "preparation of liquid diet for aged and ailing people"³⁸ and "women in building human resources."³⁹ To give a fillip to current topics and debates the programme content is often chalked out along with inputs from the State Women's Commission and other Non Governmental Organization working towards women's issues. The programme is partly recorded and partly a live presentation

²⁹ SHCD-172, Broadcast on 19/8/2005, Library material AIR Shillong, accessed on 4/4/2011.

³⁰ SHCD-320, Broadcast on 18/10/2005, Library material AIR Shillong, accessed on 4/4/2011.

³¹ SHCD-556, Broadcast on 4/11/2005, Library material AIR Shillong, accessed on 4/4/2011.

³² SHCD-227, Broadcast on 30/9/2005, Library material AIR Shillong, accessed on 4/4/2011.

³³ SHCD-229, Broadcast on 29/7/2005, Library material AIR Shillong, accessed on 4/4/2011.

³⁴ SHCD-1069, Broadcast on 7/4/2006, Library material AIR Shillong, accessed on 4/4/2011.

³⁵ SHCD-565, Broadcast on 22/11/2005, Library material AIR Shillong, accessed on 4/4/2011.

³⁶ SHCD-560, Broadcast on 20/11/2006, Library material AIR Shillong, accessed on 4/4/2011.

³⁷ SHCD-230, Broadcast on 8/7/2005, Library material AIR Shillong, accessed on 4/4/2011.

³⁸ SHCD-5944, Broadcast on 9/3/2012, library material AIR Shillong accessed on 5/4/2011.

³⁹ SHCD-2522 (KW), Broadcast on 4/3/2011, library material AIR Shillong accessed on 5/4/2011.

along with an anchor playing selected songs and who also reads out ‘tit bits of information’ from the playback studio. The broadcasting time of 7.20 pm in the evening has been fixed as the producers feel most women would either be in the kitchen for the preparation of dinner or back home from their work and therefore would be able to listen to the programme.⁴⁰ This rationale given regarding the fixation of time of the programme reflects the attitudinal bias towards women. Further the implicit fact that women would be “in the kitchen to be able to listen to the programme” as informed by the producer of the programme also reveals the judgemental nature of AIR programme functionaries. Topics and issues are either based on current and social needs of women or selected based from the ‘Programme Calendar’ which is a pre-set format of ‘programme guide’ on an all India basis from the AIR Directorate, New Delhi, which however can sometimes be deviated depending on some specific local needs.⁴¹

The topics of *Nala Rympei* mentioned above goes to show that there is portrayal of women’s role as hearth keepers and catering to the needs of the family comfort. This stereotypical attitude mirrors a patriarchal mindset from the level of the policy makers’ right down to the implementers of such lop-sided guidelines that rationalises a predetermined role and space for women and which finds ample manifestation in the programmes mounted. Women’s role has been typified as the one who cares for the children and the aged, who is responsible to maintain the family budget, and the one who is completely in-charge of the wellbeing of the family. Though there have been topics on women’s education and her role in the society but this need for a woman’s education is again linked to the family’s welfare and very little for her own career or freedom. Though *Nala Rympei* is considered to have evolved over the years but we do not find a radical change in the programme content as women’s role as a home maker has continued to be show-cased from the inception of the programme to this day.

Like AIR Delhi the popularity of the programme and its usefulness to the listeners in AIR Shillong station is also assessed from feed backs through telephone

⁴⁰ Interview with Producer In charge of Women’s programme, AIR Shillong, on 12th October 2011.

⁴¹ Interview with Programme Executive, All India Radio Shillong, Kamenshella Budon, on 12th October 2011, at 1.30 pm, Meena Chetri, Programme Executive, All India Radio Shillong on 12th October 2011, at 12.30 pm.

calls from listeners and survey by the Audience Research Cell of AIR which forms an integral part of both AIR and DD to assist in providing feedbacks and research support to the programmes broadcast from the various stations located across the country.⁴² Apart from such feedbacks another important form of gauging a programme is through listener's letters which still seem to play a vital role in the assessment of any AIR programme. Though diverse topics and issues are taken up in 'Nala Rympei' but what seems a glaring lack is such vital issues concerning women and their wellbeing are show-cased only once in week and that too for a short duration of thirty minutes including songs which are also packed in every edition of the programme to make it more entertaining. Further the means and the ways adopted to assess the usefulness of the programme to the targeted listeners is only through a few letters, telephone calls and a once in a year departmental survey which can be insufficient to authenticate the role of such programmes. A comprehensive assessment taken up on a regular basis can bring about a more complete contribution of such programmes towards women's knowledge and their empowerment. The programmes most times are studio-based recordings. But considering the diverse issues concerning women that need comprehensive focus, can only studio-based recorded programmes be sufficient? Field-based and interactive programmes enable the concerns of grass root women and their problems and achievements to be highlighted. This is an area that has been inadequately addressed.

Another pertinent point to be noted is related to the topics and issues of women based programmes. Though women's topics related to socio-economic development of women, health and family welfare, food and nutrition, scientific home management, women entrepreneurship, education, including adult education, gender issues, rights and privileges taken up in Women's programme are most definitely required and would go a long way in educating women, but our analysis of programmes for women have not found discussions and analysis of patriarchy and its strong leaning to the perpetuation of male power and male dominance, issues that would aid the removal of social discrimination facing women. Patriarchy as underscored by scholars is not only male domination within the family but also the

⁴² Annual Report 2007-2008, *op.cit.*, pp.68-69.

subordination of women experienced in their daily lives across all cultures. It not only is the oppression and violence faced by women both within and outside the home but also discrimination and exploitation at the place of work in society.⁴³ If it is important to address the “socio-economic”⁴⁴ status of women than it is equally necessary to address the subject of the value system and insensitive attitudes which are also well entrenched in the social-economic structure of society through this and other programmes. A case study of programmes of AIR Shillong has not only given us a closer look at the programmes but also a clearer understanding of the existing Women’s programmes. But while making a study of the existing programmes, what also came as a revelation is that most times all Women’s programmes are looked after by women producers themselves. Infact all three producers of Women’s programme in AIR Shillong during this study were found to be women themselves. Though it is true that women can have better understanding of issues concerning women’s welfare, but in saying so, it is also not true that a man should not be given the responsibility of producing and directing Women’s programme. To make AIR a more effective vehicle of social change, committed to social upliftment and development addressing the gender specifics becomes a responsibility of all programmers both women and men. The fact remains that programmes like *Nala Rympei* or any other special programmes that discusses issues exclusively of women alone have led to ghettoization of women segregating them further into a group isolated from the more dominant male section of society.

AIR Guwahati also has a variety of programmes and one of its important programmes is Spoken Word, Literary and School Broadcast programmes targeting the youth and the educated section of society. Educational programmes of AIR cover a wide spectrum of primary, secondary, tertiary and upto university levels. One such educational programme for the school students irrespective of any particular sexual category under the ‘Educational Broadcast Programme’ called *Bidyarthir Anushthan* (programme for students) is broadcast from AIR Guwahati since 1960. Under it the school broadcast is for twenty minutes duration on all days of the week except Sundays at 6.30am. The topics taken up in this programme are based on the syllabus

⁴³ Kamla Bhasin, *What is Patriarchy?* New Delhi, 1994, p.3.

⁴⁴ *Annual Report 2007-2008, op.cit.*, pp. 68-69.

of school textbooks of the State Education Board of Assam (SEBA) and as per the instructions of the Advisory Committee. The Committee consists of members from state school education board, NCERT, *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan* and others. Some of the topics include “*Paninir Haite Kalpanik Sakhkiatkar*,”⁴⁵ “*Bangsagati and Prakaran*” (Part 1, 2 and 3),⁴⁶ “Preparation for General Science,”⁴⁷ “*Chatrai Ganit Nubiyar Karan*,”⁴⁸ and “Global Warming.”⁴⁹ Besides the programmes based for the school students from classes one to twelve, programmes are also mounted for the lower primary, upper primary and higher secondary school teachers and they are broadcast every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 12.15 pm for fifteen minutes duration. Earlier these programmes were in the form of ‘straight talks’ on lessons and poems from school texts but now the lessons are dramatised in the form of musical feature incorporating drama, music, narration, sound effects and interviews wherever necessary. A phone-in section in the programme has been included though not a regular feature in view of the short duration of the programme but is more evident on special occasion especially before or during important examinations of students. The school broadcast programmes of AIR Guwahati gives evidence to a generalised format of programme based extensively on school syllabus for both the male and the female school students. We have not found any separate episode exclusively catering to the education need of the girl child. It is a fact that literacy levels as per census 2011 for females stands at 65.46% as against 82.14% for males⁵⁰ and female dropout rates are high amongst girls as they need to perform many domestic chores or labour to augment the family income. Economist Amartya Sen while looking into the close relationship of development and change in his work ‘*Development and Freedom*’ elucidates female literacy paradigm to economic, social and political development. He elaborates that women’s education and empowerment significantly helps the evolution of the value system, promotes social wellbeing and gives greater freedom to exercise in family decisions including matters of fertility

⁴⁵ GHR/D/B 10/6/06, Library material AIR Guwahati.

⁴⁶ GHR/11/0045, Date of Broadcast, 9/6/06, Library material AIR Guwahati.

⁴⁷ GHR/11/0082, Date of Broadcast, 11/7/07, Library material AIR Guwahati.

⁴⁸ GHR/11/221, Date of Broadcast, 23/3/12, Library material AIR Guwahati.

⁴⁹ GHR/11/232, Date of Broadcast, 4/6/12, Library material AIR Guwahati.

⁵⁰ *Census 2011*.

and childbirth.⁵¹ It is in the achievement of such multi-dimensional gains that women's education needs a greater focus and educational programmes of AIR can play a role in augmenting these gains by highlighting and channelizing such educational concerns.

Another notable programme for the students from AIR Guwahati is '*Gyan Vigyan*' earlier known '*Buddhidroom*' (tree of knowledge) broadcast since 2001. A literary programme known as '*Sahitya Chora*' (literary forum) of thirty minutes duration is broadcast from AIR Guwahati since 1940's at 9.30pm every Wednesday is segmented into three parts and includes presentation of short stories, new poems by illustrated and reputed authors and poets, essays, book reviews and literary news in the form of discussions or talks. In one such episode of the programme the famous litterateur of Assam Bishnu Rabha, was invited to the studios to make public for the first time his famous poem called '*Etiya Kiman Rati*.' A novel reading programme '*Upanyas Path*' broadcast since 1963 twice a week includes novel reading such as '*Agnipath*,' '*Thakur Barir Kanya*,' and Life history of Lakshmi Nath Bezbaruah. Interestingly in one of the episode of the programme, a novel written by a famous Assamese litterateur Nabakanta Barua called '*Koka Deutar Har*' based on the Indo-Chinese war received a Sahitya Award from the Government of India and was broadcast in 1970's for the first time from AIR Guwahati. '*Chiro Sundar Sanskriti*' a cultural magazine programme which mostly features talks and interviews with music directors, film actors, noted singers, film directors, '*Ei Mahar Athithi*' (guest of the month), '*Atit Madhuri*' (from the archives) includes the presentation of songs, features and poem recitation,⁵² '*Kathika*' (straight talk), '*Antorongo*' (intimate with the listeners), 'Doctor in line' a health programme are some of the other types of programmes broadcast from AIR Guwahati.⁵³ In trying to understand the focus of the other programmes broadcast we have found that in the literary and cultural

⁵¹ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, New York, 2000, pp. 191-200.

⁵² GHR/13/008, GHR/13/33, Date of Broadcast 4/6/13, GHR/13/31, Library material AIR Guwahati, accessed on 10.6.12.

⁵³ These information are based on the Interviews with programme executives K.M Saikia and Utpal Dutta, AIR Guwahati, on 6.6.2012 and 7.6.2012 at 3.53pm, Chandrima Sharma, Transmission Executive, Educational Broadcast programme, AIR Guwahati at 1.30 pm, Surya Das, Asst' Station Director, AIR Guwahati on the 6.6.12, at 4.40pm. The reference of programmes has been corroborated from the Log Book of AIR Guwahati.

programmes there was no gender content in them but consisted mostly of lessons based on the school or college curriculum of students or the glorification of arts and ethnic ethos of civilisations.

Besides all these programmes a Women's programme is also broadcast by AIR Guwahati. The woman's programme called '*Aiduer Buloni*' (women's forum), had started since the inception of AIR Guwahati in 1948 and is broadcast four days in a week on Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday at 12.30pm in the afternoon for thirty minutes duration. While making a review of this programme we found that the format is that of 'composite cultural magazine' consisting of discussion, skits, plays and songs divided into two parts. The first segment consists of a section 'for the women' of twenty minutes wherein issues pertaining for women are taken up and the second segment consists of a section 'by the woman' of ten minutes duration wherein the personal experiences of the invited guest in the programme are focused upon. A quarterly schedule of topics is prepared based on the current issues on newspaper items or topics based on the producer's discretion but after final approval from the Station Director. Various topics based on women's health, legal issues, social concerns, fashion and beauty tips, literary issues besides other topics are taken up in various episodes of the programme. Some of the topics of talks include '*Sisur bhibhino rog pratishadhak sitar bijabastha*' (vaccination against different kinds of diseases among children),⁵⁴ '*Grismakalat howa chalar bemar*' (skin diseases prevalent in summer)⁵⁵ or a drama '*Aie Dinto*' (this day),⁵⁶ interviews with women personalities such as Kamal Kumari Baruah, ex minister and freedom fighter,⁵⁷ and Runu Hazarika recipient of Bharat Jyoti Award.⁵⁸ Topics on health, diseases, culture, mother's role in child care, and interviews with eminent personalities are the subjects of this programme. In one of the episodes of '*Aiduer Buloni*' a celebrity from the Assamese film industry was invited in the studio to have an interaction with two house wives. The concept behind this as explained by the producer of the programme was "to portray the importance of housewives in society who are

⁵⁴ GHR 21-19/WC, Date of Broadcast, 31.3.2006.

⁵⁵ GHB 4266/WC, Date of Broadcast, 9.5.2006.

⁵⁶ GHB 4266/WC, Date of Broadcast, 21.5.2006.

⁵⁷ GHR 21-9, Date of Broadcast, 25.01.2007.

⁵⁸ GHB 4206/WC, Date of Broadcast, 28.4.2006.

sometimes looked down upon and not given enough credit towards their major contribution both in the family and the society at large.”⁵⁹ Other topics taken up include ‘*Monor Gopon Gotha*’ (hidden feelings) related to psychological problems of women and ‘*Aijer Sahityot Mohilar Kontho Swor*’ (women’s voice in today’s literature) based on the experiences of women writers. The Sunday’s edition of ‘*Aiduer Buloni*’ has a special segment catering to replies of listener’s letters. Interesting like all AIR stations the success of the programme is judged based on listeners feedbacks received through letters and presently through emails and the survey data provided periodically by the Audience Research Cell of the station.

As far as the evolution of the programme is concerned, earlier it was a once a week programme which has now been increased to four days in a week. The common topics discussed in previous years were those on joint family and mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship, or domestic cookery discussed by women themselves. However though beauty, cooking, and familial topics are still taken up but it is along with the expert comments by resource persons from the specialised field of work. For example beauty tips are provided by dermatologists or cooking skills by chefs or nutritionists. Our review of ‘*Aiduer Buloni*’ brought to the fore the fixed time of broadcast of this programme at 12.30pm in the afternoon since 1948. On a query regarding its fixed nature of broadcast for the last 60 years contradictory views were expressed by the two male producers of this programme. While one agreed that the time slot of 12.30pm needs a shift to a more suitable and convenient time so that women in general can listen to this programme but another producer of the same programme expressed that since “housewives” are the main listeners of this programme who become “free” from their domestic chores of work only in the afternoon and therefore the timing of the programme have been fixed keeping their concern in mind. To the question of inconveniences of working women who may not be able to listen to the programme in the afternoon hours it was explained that there were many “other” programmes broadcast at various timings that the ‘modern

⁵⁹ Interview with Utpal Das, Producer Women’s programme AIR Guwahati on the 6.6.2012 at the Office of AIR Guwahati at 2.30pm.

working women' can listen to.⁶⁰ Such views once again affirm a typical patriarchal mindset of taking women for granted. The producers also expressed that the listenership of programmes could be affected if the time slot of this programme is changed as the listeners have become attuned to the knowledge of the fixed time and any deviation would probably affect the ease of the listeners who are used to the fixed time of programme. If this is the logic, than there should have been a scope for the targeted listeners to also have a role in this decision. Policies cannot be imposed from the top and hope that it would go well with the beneficiaries at the bottom. The question is why are these concerns taken up in the form of discussions, skits and talks if the information imparted is not heard by all segments of women for whose welfare they are meant? The topics taken up interestingly are not issues of housewives alone but also those related to the challenges of modern working women, like career opportunities, sexual harassment at work place and women empowerment, but the timing of the programme being in the afternoon hours may not allow all sections of women to listen to the information imparted through the programme.

A review of programmes from AIR Guwahati gives one the immediate sense of most programmes having a long broadcasting history. Though the topics and presentation style may have changed over the years but the format and the categorisation of these programmes have remained the same. In the 'Youth category' of programmes we however have found no special programme fixed exclusively for women listeners as has also been reiterated by the producer of the youth programme of AIR Guwahati. Excepting the scope to deviate from the strictly laid governmental norms and policies, the formats of other programmes have also not made a drastic change over the years. One of the changes that have come about through the years is that such programmes have become more varied touching upon different subjects and topics and more interactive in nature. Programmes that were previously talk based for a lengthy duration has now in order to sustain the interests of the listeners been reduced substantially. The prevalence of rigidity especially with regards to the

⁶⁰ Interviews with Programme Executives of 'Women's, Children, Spoken word and Senior citizen programmers' of AIR, Guwahati, on 6.6.2012, at 3.55pm on 7.6.2012 at 3.15pm, Interview with the Producers of Women's programme, AIR Guwahati, recorded on 6.6.2012 and 7.6..2012, from 1pm to 5pm at the Station premises.

timing of the programme brings to the fore the traditionalistic format of the programmes. What we understand is that the Women's programme of AIR Guwahati has a long history of broadcasting incorporating a change over the years in the topics taken up as well as in the style of presentation. It may be mentioned that AIR mounts legal literacy programmes as well as special programmes focusing on the status and importance of the girl child broadcast throughout the year from all its stations to create social awareness to welcome the birth of the girl child aimed at creating social consciousness about the rights and privileges of women and girls. These programmes are dramatized through the incorporation of traditional folk forms to make such programmes interesting and innovative.⁶¹ Such initiatives are no doubt encouraging, but it is also in the addressing of deep-rooted social norms and practices that can help raise perceptions that can help bring about the much needed social change in society.

AIR Kohima broadcasts a variety of programmes for 13 hours and 50 minutes weekly out of which the station originates its own programmes of 11 hours 50 minutes. English and Nagamese are the link languages of the station. The station also broadcasts a once a week 'Women's programme' every Saturday at 12.30pm consisting of 20 minutes duration. Topics taken up on this programme include women's empowerment, gender equality, health care, women's self sufficiency, personal grooming and other issues either as discussion in studios or OB based in locations concerned.⁶² Talks of short duration form an important part of Women's programmes. Some of the topics of talks include "Role of Women in Social Reformation" broadcast on 4th February 2003, "Women's place in the Country's Leadership" "let her Horizon Widen (Empowerment of Women)", "Better Status of Women-Better Society", "Status of Women in Present Naga Society" and "Status of women in Rural Areas" and other topics.⁶³ Programmes in *Kuki, Rengma, Sema, Lotha, Chakhesang, Ao, Angami, Nagamese, Sangtam, Yimchunger, Konyak*

⁶¹Interview with Ravi Srikumar, Programme Executive, Rural Women's programme, AIR Delhi, Akashvani Bhawan, on 26.4.2011, www.allindiaradio.org, accessed on 8th July 2012 at 10pm.

⁶²Interview with Programme Executive, in charge Women's programme, AIR Kohima, dated 21st October 2011, corroborated further from scripts provided by the writers of the women's programme.

⁶³ These topics are corroborated with the script writers of all these topics.

languages are also included in Music, Spoken word; Drama, Features and local events of the respective tribes broadcast for 30 minutes duration daily.⁶⁴ Programmes also include Naga music both Devotional, Folk, Western music, Sports Roundup, Weekly Roundup, Science Programme, Youth Forum, Women's programme and other programmes. An analysis of the programmes of AIR Kohima brings out the nature of the different categories of programmes and which seem to portray them as being representative of the ethos and the varied culture and tradition of the Naga people. However what stands out is the short duration of Women's programme. This inconsistency in both the afternoon timing of broadcast and added to it the once in a week slot of just twenty minutes hardly makes it a good policy decision to incorporate and highlight the varied problems and achievements of women. If AIR stands up for the rights of women and articulating them through the Women's programme than the short duration of such programme addressing the many tribes of Nagaland hardly seem adequate.

Farm and Home (F&H) programmes are broadcast by all stations of AIR. This programme directed at rural audience is designed to provide information about different aspects of agriculture, introduction of new techniques of farming and also create awareness about the ways and means of improving quality of farmers' lives. Programmes are designed based on the local day to day needs of the farming community incorporating latest information and technology for best agricultural output. It was in 1996 that the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation and the Farm and Home Units of AIR came together to provide relevant and problem-oriented technical information to the farming community of small homogeneous area with similarity of agro-climatic condition in selected AIR stations. This marked the beginning of farm broadcasting in the country.⁶⁵ Today under the Farm and Home programme AIR broadcasts mostly composite programmes from all the stations of the country.⁶⁶ Under F&H programme a once in a week edition of it is especially broadcast for rural women covering topics like women's education, vocational training, self-employment schemes, legal literacy, training facilities in agriculture,

⁶⁴ Interview with the Station Director AIR Kohima dated 22nd November 2010.

⁶⁵ D.S Mehta, *Mass Communication and Journalism in India*, New Delhi, 1997, p. 38.

⁶⁶ www.allindiaradio.org, accessed on 8th July 2012 at 10pm.

storage of grains at home, poultry rearing, kitchen gardening, health and hygiene, food and nutrition, mother and child care, women's cooperatives etc.

Under F&H category of programmes AIR Kohima broadcasts a programme called '*Bosti Manuhar Karne*' (for the rural listeners) in the Nagamese "dialect" for seven days a week from Monday to Sunday at 6.45 pm of twenty five minutes duration.⁶⁷ The concept of the programme is "from lab to field and field to lab" conveying messages of the experts to the farmers and feedbacks from the farmers. The programme is based on scripts written by experts from different fields of agriculture, and sometimes translated and read in Nagamese in the form of talks. Topics covered under this programme are on modern technologies for the farmers, and other related topics on agriculture.⁶⁸ Our study on the gender dimension of agriculture revealed that shifts and changes in technology and techniques in agricultural farming and production have had a profound impact on women cutting across all cultures and communities. Rehana Ghadially in her study on the status of women in Indian society has also deliberated this aspect and believes that the input of modern technology for accelerating growth have solved less and created more problems for women. While they may have increased employment opportunities for women but at the same time displaced them from the labour force, compelled them to migrate and dislocated them from their traditional works.⁶⁹ Further the monopoly of men over the permanent cultivation with the plough, the decline in *jhum* and forests has reduced women's access to forests produce and has also placed them into secondary roles to mere helpers to men in the fields. This also affected women's income from agricultural wages. The new farming technologies and practices are also in favour of men. Scholars have pointed out that knowledge of farming techniques are typically extended to men as women are not seen as worthy targets for agricultural extension work.⁷⁰ Though the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) data for 2009-2010 shows that only 62.8% of all rural workers in agriculture

⁶⁷ Winter Fixed Point Chart, AIR Kohima, dated 14th September 2011.

⁶⁸ Interview with Krowhel Kechu, Transmission Executive of F&H programme, AIR Kohima, on 2nd November 2011, at 12.30pm, Corroborated from the Summer Fixed Point Chart (FPC) of AIR Kohima, issued on 25th March, 2011, pp. 1-9, Winter FPC, issued on 14th September 2011, pp.1-6.

⁶⁹ Rehana Ghadially (ed.), *Women in Indian Society*, New Delhi, 1988, p.14.

⁷⁰ Bina Agarwal., *op.cit.*, pp.311-312.

are male and 79.4% of all rural workers in agriculture are female⁷¹ yet, women form the major chunk of agriculturist with little rights, authority and access to control over resources. Voicing his concern on lack of land ownership rights among women, Amartya Sen states that economic opportunities if given to women can play a decisive influence on the workings of the economy and the related social arrangement. The economic participation of women has a major power for social change in general he felt.⁷² So while looking into the gender dimensions within agriculture we also need an assessment on the economic role of women and how far women farmers have been benefited by technology. Such areas need vivid discourses by the AIR programmes as well. Current affairs programmes in the form of ‘News’ in various languages form a large chunk of AIR broadcasting programmes. It may be mentioned that the first news bulletin went on air on 23rd July 1927 from Bombay and today News Services Division, of All India Radio is one of the largest news organizations in Asia broadcasting 647 bulletins daily for a total duration of nearly 56 hours in about 90 “Languages/Dialects” in Home, Regional, External and DTH Services.⁷³ The Regional News Unit (RNU) in AIR Guwahati also broadcasts news in six languages including Assamese, Bodo, Karbi, Nepali, Bengali, Manipuri and Dimasa⁷⁴. Likewise seventeen News Bulletins of 10 minutes duration each are also put out daily in 14 Naga “dialects” by AIR Kohima.⁷⁵

Since the inception of AIR Imphal in 1963 programmes have been mounted on various categories. A platform for the talented youth to showcase their aptitude is provided in the thirty minutes daily composite youth programme titled “*Naharolgi Khonjel*” (voice of the youth) broadcast by AIR Imphal since its inception in 1963 on all seven days of the week. The topics taken up in this programme are not specific to either sex and includes both in-house or studio based and outdoor broadcasting (OB) recordings and varies from simple presentations of literary items written by the

⁷¹ *Data of the National Sample Survey, July 2009-June 2010*, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, New Delhi.

⁷² Amartya Sen, *op.cit.*, p.201.

⁷³ D.S Mehta, *Mass Communication and Journalism in India*, New Delhi, 1997, p. 35, www.allindiaradio.org, accessed on 8th July 2012 at 10pm.

⁷⁴ *All India Radio 2007, Prasar Bharati Broadcasting Corporation of India*, Directorate General, All India Radio, Audience Research Unit, New Delhi, pp. 84-93.

⁷⁵ *Prasar Bharati, All India Radio, 2007*, p. 110, Details corroborated from an Interview with the Station Director AIR Kohima, dated 22nd November 2010.

youth themselves to plays, quiz shows, talks, discussions, interviews and features. Though most of the topics are based on local needs but efforts are also made “to give the programmes a universal touch”.⁷⁶ Such programmes for the youth are taken up by all the other AIR stations of the Northeast in fixed timings either in English or the local vernacular language.

AIR Agartala has a number of Women’s programme both in the Kokborok language as well as in Bengali. A mention may be made of ‘*Nugul*’ a Kokborok Women’s programme every Monday and Saturday in the afternoon hours, ‘*Angana*’ and ‘*Mahila Mahal*’ in Bengali every Sunday and Thursday also at an afternoon ‘chunk.’ A rural Women’s programme from AIR Agartala called ‘*Manabi*’ is broadcast every Tuesday in the evening.⁷⁷ Children’s programmes forms a regular category of programme and are broadcast from all Regional and Local Radio Stations of AIR on weekly basis in their respective local languages. Special programmes for rural children are also broadcast from AIR stations. Plays, short stories, features, choral singing, interviews and stories from epics are part of these broadcasts. A Children’s programme called ‘*Kakoli*’ is broadcast every Sunday from AIR Agartala of thirty minutes duration. Environment programmes is an important category of AIR programmes. All the stations broadcasts programmes related to environment concerns on the basis of instructions and guidelines issued by the Directorate of All India Radio, New Delhi. These programmes are produced in the local languages in different formats like talks, discussions, features, news items, spots and serials.⁷⁸ In keeping with the Directorate guidelines a programme on environment is broadcast by AIR Agartala called ‘*Paribesh Bhavna*’ twice a month.⁷⁹ Other programmes of AIR Agartala include an F&H programme called ‘*Ghar Grihastirasar*’ broadcast six days of the week. Similar topics of F&H programmes from other AIR stations are also evident in AIR Agartala and include animal husbandry, fisheries, agriculture related activities, dry and wasteland management, agriculture schemes, loans, sanitation, training facilities, health and

⁷⁶ Interview with Programme Executive (PEX) of AIR Imphal, In-charge of Youth programme, dated 28th May 2012 at 11.30 am.

⁷⁷ <http://www.airagartala.org/> accessed on 18th June 2011.

⁷⁸ *Prasar Bharati Annual Report 2007-08*, New Delhi, p.62.

⁷⁹ Interview with Programme Executives of AIR Shillong and AIR Agartala dated 12th October 2011 and 17th November 2011 respectively.

hygiene and nutrition. All these programmes are produced in the local language and with the help of subject matter specialists.⁸⁰

In addition to the above mentioned programmes there are certain categories of programmes which are broadcast by all the AIR stations of the Northeast. One such category of programmes that form an important type of AIR programmes is Radio Dramas and Features which started way back in 1956 and are most times adaptation of outstanding novels, short stories and stage plays. 'Family dramas' are produced with the objective of eradicating deep rooted social evils and blind beliefs prevalent in society.⁸¹ Besides Radio Dramas, Features and Documentaries employ the entire range of audio formats in a single programme, including narration, music, drama, interviews, poetry and sound effects. The Radio Dramas are meant not just to provide entertainment but also to educate the society at large. Most AIR stations of the Northeast broadcasts Radio Dramas as part of their programmes. Health and Family Welfare programmes are another regular broadcast of All India Radio. All Regional and Local Radio Stations produce and broadcast these programmes in their respective local languages. Subjects covered in these programmes are based on the raise in marriage age; delay of the first child, space between two children, maternal care, child right, disability, T.B, leprosy and reproductive child health. Health campaigns on immunization, polio, eye donation, drug abuse, tobacco consumption, illicit trafficking, AIDS are published widely in these programmes. Recently however, this category of programme has been converted to a programme called '*Swasth Bharat*' (Healthy India) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Twenty nine AIR stations of the country have been selected in its first phase for this programme including almost all the Regional stations of Northeast India excepting Agartala.⁸² The above information on Health programme of AIR brings to the fore the stress given to the 'maternal' and 'reproductive' health of women through such programmes. But the question is, are women's worth determined only through her function of reproduction? Why are women's choices to ascertain their rights in family planning, decision to birth control methods and abortion rights which are

⁸⁰Interview with programme Executives of AIR Agartala on 17th November 2011 at 1.30pm and <http://www.airagartala.org/> accessed on 18th June 2011.

⁸¹ *Prasar Bharati Annual Report 2007-08*, New Delhi, p.66.

⁸² www.allindiaradio.org, accessed on 8th July 2012 at 10pm.

areas of continued struggle not focused adequately? And by not giving sufficient emphasis on lack of such choices is not AIR perpetuating patriarchy and strengthening the divide between private and public which is restrictive to women's mobility and growth? Perhaps a re-looking and re-thinking on some crucial policy decisions implemented through such 'Health programmes' and various other programmes broadcast on an everyday basis from all the AIR stations of the Northeast can answer many of the vital questions raised.

Besides AIR another communication medium is the audio-visual television constituent in the country known as Doodarshan (DD). Doodarshan like AIR is also a public service television organisation committed to "social upliftment, promote national integration and to cultivate scientific temper."⁸³ Considering the fact that it is one of the largest broadcasting organisations in the world in terms of coverage and infrastructure of studios and transmitters it can play the role of an important vehicle for social change through its variety of programme telecast by its *Kendras* spread all across the country. But how far this has been possible would be realised as we turn our focus in the succeeding paragraphs to the content of programmes telecast. Our discussion in the previous chapter has shown that television a fruit of high technology of the post-industrial societies has been the latest to arrive in the field of mass communication significantly impacting communication technology by combining both audio and visual effects and with the aid of satellite its area of influence has widened to almost limitless boundaries. It has been with the world for over six decades now and in this comparatively short period has firmly and clearly established itself as the most powerful and a popular medium of communication for information, ideas, values, and skills. Having the marvellous ability to bring to its viewers actual texture, colour, and motion of events, news, information and entertainment as it unfolds day and night right to the homes of people, television carries an impact much deeper and more durable than any known medium. Enormous amount of money, technological resources and manpower also go into news and programme production units. Television has been in India for over 50 years starting with its experimental telecast in the form of a UNESCO's pilot project

⁸³ *Doodarshan 2005-06, Prasar Bharati, New Delhi, p.2.*

in Delhi on 15th September 1959 and today has a network consisting of 67 studios for in-house programme production spread all over the country.⁸⁴ In spite of the growth of Doodarshan, scholars have pointed out that the great power and potential of television as a medium of communication has been somewhat slow, artificial, sectarian, highly unbalanced lacking a distinctive Indian personality, feature and character and there has been a general concern on the nature and content of programmes and on the role of television in a developing country like India. Questions are being raised on its influence in addressing the needs and aspirations of the people, its promotion of value-system and life-styles, its contribution to the cultural and informational enrichment, and its ability to enhance the skill of the masses to participate more effectively in the tasks of nation building and bringing in improvement to their lives.⁸⁵ Delving into the role of Doodarshan it has been opined that while sufficient importance is being given to technology and the hardware content of television but the same attention has not been given to the social content of communication or the software of programmes which are region-specific requiring unceasing innovation and creativity. P.C Joshi felt that paying attention to both the medium and the message is extremely important. He writes that creativity in programmes needs to cater to the tastes and requirement of large and diverse sections of society both in the urban and the rural areas.⁸⁶ This becomes all the more significant as scholars have reiterated that both tradition and modernity have been in India carriers of patriarchal ideologies, institutions and practices that are reinforced even today.⁸⁷ Feminist scholarship has stressed time and again that for real and perceivable change in society there is a need to change pernicious values and attitudes practiced and propagated which are detrimental to societal growth and towards building an egalitarian society for both women and men. These strong traditions and values existent in society need to be addressed and mass media like radio and television with its widespread prevalence can play a role in their

⁸⁴ Aruna Zachariah, "Social Dimension of Television" in Aruna Zachariah (ed.) *Communication Media and Electronic Revolution*, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 139-141, *Annual Report, 2012-13, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting*, New Delhi, p.134.

⁸⁵ Aruna Zachariah, *op.cit.*, pp. 140-142.

⁸⁶ P.C Joshi, *Culture Communication and Social Change*, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 190-197.

⁸⁷ Kum Kum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, "Recasting Women: An Introduction" in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds.), *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 18-19.

eradication. Scholars feel that the audio-visual mode of communication can become the potential instrument in providing information and promoting growth, “reawakening and activating” the rights of target groups and audiences.⁸⁸ To get a broad understanding of this, a content analysis of the various programmes telecast over the years from the National level to the Regional and Local *Kendras* of the Northeast would help furthering our knowledge of Doodarshan’s role as a vehicle of social change incorporating gender sensitivity in its various programmes.

Though there has been a definite policy shift by Doodarshan in favour of adopting new communication techniques to accelerate the technical advancement to bring an improvement in the quality of transmission and an expansion of area reached but being a public broadcaster of the country with a high level of social responsibility it is important to assess if this progression in technology have found a reflection in the quality of software or programmes produced and if such programmes have been gender sensitive with changing times. How much of this ‘reawakening’ was actually possible through Doodarshan’s programmes and how best it served as an ‘instrument of growth’ could be understood better by reviewing the content of some of the programmes at the National level from the early eighties and the variations if any that has evolved with changing times. In this regard a comparative review of programmes from the National to the Local level of the Northeast *Kendras* would also be undertaken to have a broader understanding of the similarity and the deviation from the National programmes.

Television broadcasting in India since the 1990’s saw a big transformation in the country with the coming in of the STAR TV networks in 1991 and the subsequent establishment of private transnational networks like Zee TV in 1992 and hoards of regional language channels in the satellite mode that began the cable TV era in the country. The coming of these networks by the end of the decade had a major impact on the television content to more film based programmes and variety game shows among all the networks each eager to establish and sustain audiences for

⁸⁸ P.C Joshi., *op.cit.*, pp. 190-197.

an increasing pool of local and multinational advertisers.⁸⁹ But preceding satellite cable era in the mid eighties was the sudden burst of sponsored ‘serials’ and ‘soap operas’ in Doodarshan which changed the nature of television in India. Most of the serials of that period were women oriented narratives of ‘family drama.’ It is important to take a re-look at these popular serials of the period to understand the thrust in content and their portrayal of women and the subsequent impact they had on the later programmes of the nineties in television.

One of the most popular serials of Doodarshan on the National Channel of DD1 in the mid eighties was ‘*Hum Log*’ spanning 156 episodes and spread over seventeen months during 1984-1985. ‘*Hum Log*’ was inspired by a Mexican soap opera in which the dramatised, fictional narrative reflected the dreams and anxieties of lower-middle class families struggling to find a foothold in urban India. The drama revolved around ‘*Basesar*’, a self employed and alcoholic carpenter, his aging parents, his long suffering wife and their five children. Every episode would end with drawing a moral of the story by popular Hindi film actor Ashok Kumar. Viewers’ identification with the story line was so strong that often the producer of the serial would receive hundreds of mails advising on how the story should develop.⁹⁰ Though the objectives of ‘*Hum Log*’ was to bring out the change in the status of women in India yet all the women characters of this serial were depicted unsympathetically. They were projected either as, greedy and lacking in common sense or as insensitive, docile, wilful, ruthless and completely marginalised within the family politics. ‘*Hum Log*’ thus reinforced patriarchal tradition and ideals within an extended family.⁹¹ Another serial of 1987 was ‘*Buniyaad*’ which was also a discourse on women and the family. The story revolved around *Haveliram* or *Masterji* a son of a wealthy family inclined towards anti-colonial struggles in the pre-partition days from Punjab who is disowned by his family after his decision to marry a widow *Lajoji*. The serial showcases *Haveliram’s* and *Lajoji’s* attempts to

⁸⁹ Divya C.McMillin in “Ideologies of Gender on Television in India” in *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 9, No 1, January-June 2002, pp.1-2.

⁹⁰ For further information see Purnima Mankekar, *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics: An Ethnography of Television, Womanhood and Nation*, London, 1999, pp. 110-118, Jyoti Punwani, “Portrayal of Women on Television” in Rehana Ghadially (ed.), *Women in Indian Society: A Reader*, New Delhi, 1988, p. 225.

⁹¹ Purnima Mankekar, *op.cit.*, pp.110-111.

hold their family together despite the turbulent times in which they lived. In this serial too women are depicted in a conservative manner of being docile, or the opposite extreme of being greedy, jealous, shrewish and responsible for the family disintegration.⁹² *'Khandan'* was another family drama serial of the period which depicted the modern stereotype of affluent and ambitious career women for whom marriage and children were obstacles to their success in life. Women were therefore depicted in their stereotypical and conventional roles either as the long suffering wife and mother, the rebellious and ambitious daughters and daughter-in-laws responsible for most of ills in the family. Though *'Buniyad'* gave women some status but this so called freedom too was also to be exercised within their families and confined to their homes. Though some women were depicted as educated yet were also shown being tamed after marriages harnessing their capacities to their homes and turning them into guardians of the family honour.⁹³

Close to the heels of *'Hum Log'* was a situation comedy (sitcom) series telecast in 1985 called *'Rajani'*, telecast every Sunday morning characterising the reformist efforts of an upper caste middle class woman *'Rajani'* who steps out of the confines of her home to fight corrupt bureaucrats, dishonest cab drivers and standing up for brutalised house wives. While being a social reformer *'Rajani'* was however also expected to be dutiful and traditional wife, daughter-in-law and mother. But the serial none the less "had a tremendous impact on the viewers; as in one occasion shortly after the episode featuring her fight against cheating cabbies was aired, taxi drivers in Bombay went on strike, alleging that the serial had libelled them."⁹⁴ Though *'Rajani'* represented the socially conscious new Indian women and made many to sit up to the portrayal of a single woman's fight against corruption and other ills in society but it also soon lost out on the viewership for its repetitive and predictable nature and in its later episodes even became a caricature.⁹⁵ The dilemma of many lower middle class families to permit daughters to seek employment for economic compulsions which could threaten existing setup of traditional family and therefore their anxieties to confine women within the private space of the home was

⁹² *op.cit.*, pp.110-113.

⁹³ Jyoti Punwani, *op.cit.*, pp. 225-227.

⁹⁴ Purnima Mankekar, *op.cit.*, p. 149.

⁹⁵ Purnima Mankekar and Rehana Ghadijally (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.111 and p. 228.

clearly reflected in many serials of the time. This complexity was highlighted in another popular serial of the time called '*Udaan*' which portrayed a father defying his extended family to educate his daughter '*Kalyani*' and for her to join the police force. Though '*Udaan*' tried to portray an emancipated woman yet the main hero in the serial was the father who retains his protective authority over his daughter and though '*Kalyani*' dons the "masculine" role yet she is also expected to remain the obedient and loyal daughter.⁹⁶

Other serials of the time like '*Yugantar*' emphasising on women's education, '*Kashmakash*' based on short stories written by women, '*Karamchand*' where *Kitty* the female secretary was portrayed as unintelligent with little wit of her own, '*Chehre*' showing women submitting to circumstances, '*Swayamsiddha*' depicting women's struggles to improve their condition were all women oriented narratives taking up issues of women's upliftment, dowry, child marriage, encouragement to women's formal education, the new Indian modern women using their energies to the service of the nation. But in all these serials women were either projected as the constant long suffering one, societal hostility towards women's collective effort, negative and even trivializing of feminist activists, restrictive efforts of women rising above circumstances, women's acceptance to their fate, pessimism over women's plight and other traditional approach to understanding women's role and position in society. Purnima Mankekar while comprehending the significance of these serials is of the view that "Doodarshan's advocacy of women's rights was constituted according to the political contingencies faced by the nation-state or by the regime of power."⁹⁷ Jyoti Punwani making a similar reference also felt '*Hum log*' was aimed at propagating the government's message of family planning.⁹⁸ Notwithstanding these viewpoints one thing that seem clear is that though women oriented serials were taken up by Doodarshan yet in all the popular serials of the eighties the female was depicted as the stereotype of helpless and weak individuals within the four walls of domesticity while those aspiring for power and ambitious were portrayed as meeting gloomy ends rarely leading a happy life. The question

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.119-121 and pp.226-227.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-156 and pp. 228-230.

⁹⁸ Jyoti Punwani, *op.cit.*, p.225.

therefore arises did Doodarshan only give an insight to the existing social order of the time and reinforced the authority of the patriarchal family and the control of women's sexuality or did the serials also give an awareness to the requirement of gender equality in society and promote a positive ideology that is sensitive to women's need?

To understand this further we also need to survey some other programmes in the form of documentaries and serials of Doodarshan especially of the 1990's to the middle of 2000. One such documentary of the 1990's based on real life stories was '*Ghar Bahar*' which upheld the life and struggles of the physically challenged women. In one of the episodes of this series, based on personal interviews, a blind lady is shown working as a telephone operator prior to her starting a blind school for students. Her effort was even recognised by the Government of India who rewarded her with a President's medal. The programme shows her playing the sitar and taking care of her family like any other woman. The inspiring story tried to pass a message of social acceptability and a lesson to other physically challenged persons who could also rise above their circumstances.⁹⁹ In another documentary called '*Havva Ke Haath*' (Hands of Eve) a rural based programme brings to the fore real life success stories of those women involved in pottery, metallurgy, working in looms, chair making and cattle rearing. These women are shown doing the works which were earlier performed more by men, but now women working at par with men, some with babies on their backs or laps. Such illustrations tried to give a real life visual narrative depicting the actual effort of women as living examples encouraging women not to lag behind in any work or circumstances.¹⁰⁰ In another documentary produced by Nalini Singh titled '*Dowry? Wealth or Death*' depicts the social evil of dowry based on greed from both side of the groom and the bride's family with the girl being killed due to anomalies in the payment process. The documentary had an interview with a police officer who gives information on the total number of dowry cases and bride burning because of non fulfilment of deals. Through this documentary social consciousness of such evils in society that affects a woman's life

⁹⁹ Archive tape number, AR/DG/DVC/60/2894, accessed on 21st December 2009, at Doordarshan Archives, Akashvani Bhawan, New Delhi.

¹⁰⁰ Archive tape number, AR/DG/DVC/60/2908, accessed on 21st December 2009, at Doordarshan Archives, Akashvani Bhawan, New Delhi.

are tried to be raised to sensitise and make the people aware of laws against such practices.¹⁰¹

In a series called '*The Voice of Changes*' an interview based feature on women empowerment depicts women who are successful in their fields of life. One such episode showcases the life of the first woman member of parliament of Nagaland Rano Shaiza who speaks about her journey encouraging others to follow the path of hard work and sincerity.¹⁰² '*Adhikar*' a documentary based programme empowers women of their legal rights. In one episode a village school building is shown being misused by the rich and the wealthy to hold their personal ceremonial functions affecting the school students who miss out on their classes as the school often remains closed. The documentary further details the intervention of a brave village woman refusing to accept the situation and fighting out the might of the moneyed class. She not only educates herself on the law books but also contests the Panchayati elections. The documentary brings to the fore a confident woman who rises against the societal challenges to become self competent and meaningfully contribute to society.¹⁰³ Another tele-film based on violence against women '*Sangharsh*' of the same period takes up issues of women's rights. This film of forty five minutes duration in Hindi delves deep into the problem of violence perpetrated on women. In the film the victims narrates their personal experience and their trauma affecting their lives with a segment sensitising women on the laws available and the Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working in the field to alleviate women from such situations. Information is also given on the availability of shelter homes for battered women where legal aids and vocational trainings are given to help them become economically independent. Experts interviewed in the film felt knowledge of women's real issues should be kept in mind before the formulation of governmental plans and programmes. Social messages stressing on the importance of marriage at

¹⁰¹ Archive tape number, AR/DG/DVC/60/2373, accessed on 21st December 2009, at Doordarshan Archives, Akashvani Bhawan, New Delhi.

¹⁰² Archive tape number AR/DG/DVC/30/2860, accessed on 21st December 2009, at Doordarshan Archives, Akashvani Bhawan, New Delhi.

¹⁰³ Archive tape number AR/DG/DVC/30/1373, accessed on 21st December 2009, at Doordarshan Archives, Akashvani Bhawan, New Delhi.

the right age and inculcation of family values were also reiterated in the tele-film.¹⁰⁴ ‘*Kunti*’ another popular serial during the nineties takes up the issue of wrongful adoption procedures and a mother’s search through hardships for her child. The serial outlines the issue of haphazard adoption system and the societal norms and strictures that a woman is meted to in her search for her daughter.¹⁰⁵ ‘*Sampark*’ a documentary series was based on the socio-economic status of women from the entire country. For example in episode nineteen of the series, the lack of decision making rights of women from Kerala in spite of some communities in the state following the matrilineal system of society is highlighted and in this regard noted Bollywood film actor Hema Malini is interviewed to make known the complexities of women’s status in general. ‘*Sampark*’ was a composite series where on the one hand developmental activities of women’s achievements were taken up alongside the neglected areas where more focus ought to be given. Women train drivers in Mumbai, the success of macro women cooperative movement in Orissa which later provided income avenues to the small saving groups, the role of NGO’s in generating jobs for women and other such topics were also taken up in different episodes of this serial. This composite series mostly rural based tried to provide information through real life stories, struggles and achievements of women.¹⁰⁶

Another Women’s programme that was awarded with a DD award in 2003 was ‘*Kasturi Akash*’ (feminine sky). In one of the episode ‘*Jannat Bi*’ a woman attendant burning the dead as per Hindu rituals in a crematory is profiled. In a society where scriptures and rituals prohibit women performing funeral ceremonies *Jannat Bi* breaks all social strictures and is shown executing the odd job of burning the funeral pyres of countless dead bodies for over twelve years with ease. She even imparts the same skill to her daughters basing her philosophy in life when she says “one has to leave everything behind in this world.”¹⁰⁷ ‘*Sahiyaaro-Saat Sambhal*

¹⁰⁴ Archive tape number, AR/DG/DVC/45/440, accessed on 21st December 2009, at Doordarshan Archives, Akashvani Bhawan, New Delhi.

¹⁰⁵ Archive tape numbers ARDG/DVC-30/326, ARDG/DVC-30/327, ARDG/DVC-30/328, ARDC/DVC-30/329, ARDC/DVC-30/330, accessed on 21st and 22nd December 2009, at Doordarshan Archives, Akashvani Bhawan, New Delhi.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*,

¹⁰⁷ Archive tape number, ARDG/DVC/45/767 accessed on 19th April 2011, at Doordarshan Archives, Akashvani Bhawan, New Delhi.

Bahein’ a programme in 2003 through puppetry and folk music addresses the issue of female infanticide and the non acceptance of a girl child in Gujarati families, ‘*A Face in the Crowd*’ another programme profiling women achievers from various fields for instance, Ben Soans, associated with the plantation and afforestation movement in Maloore in Mangalore, Sister Cyrill linked with women’s education and their welfare, Jivananda Siriyal a poet by profession but closely connected with the ‘*Chipko Movement*’ in Garhwal, Himachal Pradesh or even Parbati Baruah the only woman elephant trainer in India who in spite of being a graduate decided to take up the profession of an elephant trainer in the dense jungles of West Bengal and Assam performing the task effortlessly and after retirement is still seen voluntarily involved in chasing rouge elephants, training forest officials, monitoring their work, and providing medical attention to the wounded and sick elephants. Her efforts were recognised by the United Nations who honoured her as an “environmentalist.”¹⁰⁸ ‘*Kyon Hota Hai Aise*’ a feature based programme took up the plight of the widows in Vrindavan through skit, interviews and background narration presenting the condition of the widows some of whom were living in the ashrams for over fourty years. These widows were depicted resigning themselves to their fate with most of them voicing their happiness in serving the Hindu goddess Lord Krishna.¹⁰⁹ ‘*She-Shivani*’ a composite magazine programme telecast for the last several years and continuing to this day showcases the aestheticism of women in the various segments of the programme such as beauty regimen, health and fitness through yoga, aerobics or other form of physical exercises. The programme also includes panel discussions on women oriented topics of career avenues, the contentious 33% women reservation in parliament, including inclusive nature of various governmental plans and policies that are discussed and focused into.¹¹⁰ A popular magazine format of show from DD1 Channel is the ‘Evening Live Show’ from 5pm to 6pm for one hour duration every day. The content of the programme is a mix of entertainment and

¹⁰⁸ Archive tape number, DDA-45/AMD/203, accessed on 19th April 2011, at Doordarshan Archives, Akashvani Bhawan, New Delhi.

¹⁰⁹ AR/DG/DVC/60/2373 accessed on 19th April 2011, at Doordarshan Archives, Akashvani Bhawan, New Delhi.

¹¹⁰ Archive tape numbers, ARDG/DVC/60/3565, ARDG/DVC/60/3566, ARDG/DVC/60/3578, accessed on 19th and 20th April 2011, at Doordarshan Archives, Akashvani Bhawan, New Delhi.

information with every Tuesday of the show reserved for women's issues and concern.

The above review of programmes in Doodarshan on the National DD1 Channel viewed all over the country between 1984 to the 2007 reveals continuity as well a change in the type and content of topics taken up with the thrust areas differing to some extent from the mid eighties. The nature of programmes have been segmented as the 'Sponsored', 'Commissioned' 'In-House' and 'Royalty' programmes. Talk-shows, serials, documentaries, frictions are covered more by the 'Sponsored' and 'Commissioned programmes', whereas discussions, talk-shows both live interactions and recorded programmes are taken up as 'In-House programmes' by the producers of respective Doodarshan *Kendras* and 'Royalty programmes' are those programmes acquired by Doodarshan from outside producers on payment of royalty for a single or multiple telecasts.¹¹¹ Though serials were also telecast in the years after the nineties but there was a definite move to more women oriented programmes, portraying them either as achievers, or bringing to the open their constraints and struggles in more real life situations which could be inspiring and thought provoking to the viewers at large. While serials based on family dramas some of them being over hundred episodes and other programmes showcasing achievements of women in challenging fields, their legal rights and other issues were taken up but what is significant is that issues not addressed openly before such as those of dowry deaths, female infanticides, violence against women, widowhood, adoption of girl child, women in challenging jobs such as working in crematoriums, elephant trainers were subjects which were boldly and consciously taken up in Doodarshan programmes. Women over the years were depicted less in their typical portrayals of the eighties as being docile and repressed but shown in their more active role contributing meaningfully to the upkeep and strengthening the society at large. We also find an increase in composite woman magazine programmes such as the one called '*She-Shivani*'. Infact this kind of composite programme that began in the 1990's continues upto this day from most *Kendras* of Doodarshan in the country.

¹¹¹ www.ddindia.gov.in accessed on 8th July 2012 and corroborated through an Interview with Geeta Bakshi, Senior Programme Executive, DDK Delhi, on 25th April 2011.

Technology of producing programmes has also changed since the eighties. Digitized production of programmes is in use now. This was reiterated by a senior Programme Executive of Doodarshan Delhi who stressed that the present day problems in society are different and therefore Doodarshan's focus of programmes has also changed over the years. Because of this factor the programmes recorded in the eighties cannot be telecast now.¹¹² The producers of various programmes interviewed in different *Kendras* have all voiced the opinion that media has played a major role in bringing change in society. They felt that women watching certain programmes can identify their problems and find solace that they are not the only one with similar problems and through the information given in the various programmes can find solutions to their problems. They however cautioned that media like DD and AIR is only one means to bring about change and it cannot be expected to be the sole agency in cleansing the ills of society as it needs to work along with other implementing agencies. However while aligning ourselves with this point of view it is also necessary to recognise that mass communication nurtures and sustains the values of the society. And therefore it is equally important to comprehend how DD is reflecting the prevalent social realities of values and attitudes towards women in society. The programme producers need to realise if they themselves have been able to shed their own patriarchal way of thinking and relate in a gender sensitive manner and whether the dominant stereotypical patriarchal mindset of the society is also being reflected in the projection of the DD programmes. Only then the programmes produced by them would be able to break the dominant stereotypical images of women and bring in a change to the prevalent moulds concerning women. It is in this aspect that Doordarshan's efforts to sensitise and create awareness through tele-films, documentaries, features, and magazine format of programmes have a crucial role to play. As mentioned earlier the format, topics and the categorisation of programmes at the national level finds a resonance in a lot of programmes especially in those of 'Women programme' at the regional level. This will become clear as we now take up the understanding of some programmes of the Primary stations of the Northeast in the succeeding paragraphs.

¹¹² Interview with Geeta Bakshi,

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. At present there are twelve DD stations in the Northeast located in all the state capitals and a few in selective district head-quarters to function essentially as a medium to inform, educate and entertain the masses.¹¹³ Like AIR the focus of Doordarshan is also towards socio-economic, cultural and scientific development for the farmers, youth, children, students, women and other groups in the society.¹¹⁴ Interestingly there is a special package for the Northeast, under which an exclusive focus is towards industrialisation, anti militancy, integrity, harnessing income level through horticulture, tourism food processing and other sectors.¹¹⁵ Mass media are that section of the media especially 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.¹¹⁶ How much of this 'large audience' the DD *Kendras* in the Northeast has been able to reach beyond available statistics of 92% coverage and 93% of its population¹¹⁷ and how 'susceptible' have the audience especially women been in real terms to the varied programmes targeted for their benefits can only be understood better if we make an in-depth study of some of the programmes under various categories that Doordarshan telecasts in Northeast India.

As noted above there has been evidence of some change towards the portrayal of women as reflected in some women oriented documentaries and serials of Doodarshan especially of the 1990's to the middle of 2000 that reveal a trend where the programmes tried to elevate consciousness of social evils in society that affects women's lives. Though entertainment based sponsored programmes increased but we also find the production of composite women's magazine programmes encompassing various segments of beauty, health and fitness, panel discussions on women oriented topics, career avenues and current issues which grew

¹¹³ *Doordarshan Kendras of North-East (At a Glance)*, DDK Guwahati, 2008, pp. 1-61.

¹¹⁴ *Doordarshan India, 2005-06, Prasar Bharati*, New Delhi, p.2.

¹¹⁵ *Annual Report, 2007-2008, op.cit.*, pp.93-94.

¹¹⁶ Om Gupta, *Media Society and Culture*, New Delhi, 2006, p.1.

¹¹⁷ *Annual Report, 2007-2008, op.cit.*, p. 93.

during this period.¹¹⁸ The composite nature of programmes that began at the National level in the 1990's also saw similar format of Women's programme from most *Kendras* of Northeast. This is evident in the content of a Women's programme from Doodarshan Guwahati telecast for over two decades under various names but presently known as *Manashi* a thirty minutes composite magazine programme every Sunday from 5pm to 5.30pm. The various segments of this programme endeavours to make it entertaining and informative related to women's rights highlighting the various social issues portrayed most times in the form of skits. In recent times some of the topics have also been taken up in a serial and tele-film format. They are based on social issues and include topics such as '*Eti Saponor Pom Khedi*' (a serial on child molestation)¹¹⁹, '*Ekanta Prohar*' (a tele-film on witchcraft and superstition)¹²⁰, '*Etiya Puhor Hol*' (a serial on women's education and superstition)¹²¹, '*Ekajoli Rod*' (a serial on Domestic violence).¹²² Interestingly *Manashi* is presented by women artists alone excepting the segments on '*Jyotishman*' (horoscope) or '*Ashorghor*' (interviews with celebrities) where men are invited to speak.¹²³ Though *Manashi* is a sponsored programme and rated as one of the most credible programme of DDK Guwahati with high revenue earnings yet the fact that women themselves are presenters of this programme gives one a sense that women alone are the upholders of their own rights and this brings out the attitudinal bias that the problems of social evils in society are a concern of women alone. Further the fact that the only Women's programme from DDK Guwahati that addresses women's issues finds a space of just 30 minutes in the entire week shows the lack of sincerity and the half hearted attempt on the part of the policy makers to sufficiently discourse on the multi faceted areas of a woman's life that sets her standards in the larger social contexts.

¹¹⁸ Archive tape numbers, ARDG/DVC/60/3565, ARDG/DVC/60/3566, ARDG/DVC/60/3578, accessed on 19th and 20th April 2011, at Doordarshan Archives, Akashvani Bhawan, New Delhi.

¹¹⁹ DVC/60/5915, DVC/60/5925, DVC/60/5954, accessed on 8th June 2011.

¹²⁰ DVC/60/5959, DVC/60/4040, accessed on 8th June 2011.

¹²¹ DVC/30/4916, DVC/30/937, DVC/30/6215, accessed on 9th June 2011.

¹²² DVC/60/4703, DVC/60/4120, DVC/60/2787, accessed on 9th June 2011.

¹²³ Interview with Ajanta Das Programme Executive, Women's Programme, DDK Guwahati, Interview with Minoti Choudhury, Retired Programme Executive, Women's programme DDK Guwahati, on 7th June 2011.

The composite magazine format of programmes is also reflected in a woman's programme from DD Agartala telecast since 1996 in the Bengali language called '*Onggonar Onggone*' (Women's Platform) every Thursday at 7.30pm and '*Nukung Hukung*' a Women's programme in Kokborok telecasts every Friday at 5.30pm. Songs, interviews with eminent women personalities, discussions, and Cookery segments are some of the major segments of these programmes. Burning issues of the society especially that of dowry deaths, domestic violence, education for girls and other topics are especially taken up in this programme. '*Kalyani*' (now renamed as '*Healthy India*') is a health series programme that takes up issues on women and reproductive health. This programme finds a chunk of 30 minutes every Monday from 6.30pm to 7.00 pm with a repeat telecast every Tuesday. '*Jana Manch*' (Public Platform) a Current Affairs programme is also telecast in Bengali every first Thursday of the month and every second Saturday in Kokborok.¹²⁴ While making a study of media's role in social change, Anita Anand felt that since the "birth" of Doodarshan and All India Radio programming has been about development messages, with the long term goal of getting millions of adult women and men to participate in the democratic process.¹²⁵ This seem apparent in DDK Agartala under '*Bharat Nirman*' the Flagship programme of Government of India launched in 2005 that gives information on various schemes related to Rural housing, Roads, Drinking water, Irrigation, Mid-day Meals for school children, Drinking water, and many other plans of the Union Government to the beneficiaries in a 30 minutes programme telecast twice a week. *Bharat Nirman* programmes are also evident in other *Kendras* of the Northeast. This magazine format of programme from DD Agartala incorporates drama, street play, short feature, documentaries, and field reporting. To give information to the people on the various schemes of the Government and to also have direct interaction with beneficiaries and the experts from various departments '*Bharat Nirman Chetna Melas*' are held four times a year in collaboration with the various media units of the state. These programmes no doubt facilitate in forwarding valuable information to the rural population on the

¹²⁴ Interview In-charge Alpana Das of Women's programme and Ram Krishna Nag, Producer, Flagship programme, DDK Agartala, recorded on 17th November 2011 at the Doordarshan Agartala premises.

¹²⁵ Anita Anand, "Watch Me as I Change: Social Change and Media", *Social Action*, Vol. 48, No (3), July-September 1998, p.279.

various developmental schemes of the Government of India which the people can take benefits of but the fact that specific ‘flagship programmes’ are part of Doodarshan programming also goes to establish once again that both AIR and DD in spite of being autonomous bodies under the ‘Prasar Bharati Corporation’ are still Government mouth-pieces aimed at publicizing the various policies to the advantage of whichever power at the centre. Interestingly most of the programmes of DDK Agartala related to Agriculture, Film based, Youth, Children, News, or Entertainment programmes are telecast both in Bengali and Kokborok languages.¹²⁶ A survey of programmes of DDK Agartala reveals that except the thirty minutes twice a week Women’s programme most programmes are for the viewership of all irrespective of sex. DD Agartala covering geographical and population coverage of 93.5% is devoid of Audience Research Cell and therefore the popularity of these programmes is only judged based on audiences’ letters. But the question that arises is can this means alone be sufficient to gauge the roles of the programmes in creating awareness to bringing meaningful transformation in society? Surprisingly DDK Agartala like other *Kendras* of the Northeast has no local programme transmission hours on Sunday except 15 minutes News in Bengali and Kokborok. The reason cited for this is the “policy decision” of the Ministry. Producers on anonymity however considered this lack as one of the major constraint of limited and short programmes as most programmes they felt need to be crammed on the rest six days a week. The programme personnel of DDK Agartala without wanting to be identified also lamented on the outdated infrastructure, lack of post production facilities, paucity of funds, and shortage of manpower and other lacks that hinders the production of more mass based quality programmes.¹²⁷ Similar fund crunch and outdated infrastructure problems have also been expressed by most programme personnel of DD *Kendras* in the Northeast which they felt is a handicap towards the production of quality programmes. Infact these grievances have also been frequently cited in the confidential correspondences of the various DDK’s to the Deputy Director General’s Office Guwahati. A review of the Woman’s programme of DDK

¹²⁶ Interview In-charge Alpana Das of Women’s programme and Ram Krishna Nag, Producer, Flagship programme, DDK Agartala, *op.cit.*, Winter Fixed Chart of DDK Agartala of DDK Agartala, ‘Profile of Doordarshan Kendra Agartala’, Records from the Deputy Director General’s Office, Guwahati.

¹²⁷ Interviews, programme personnel DDK Guwahati, *op.cit.*,

Agartala again underpins Doordarshan's bias towards projecting the stereotypical role of a woman as a homemaker. Though issues on dowry, domestic violence and education of girl child taken up would go a long way in the removal of social disabilities facing women however the improvement in the socio-economic status of women would depend to a large extent on the social change in the value system, attitudes, and the social organization prevalent in the society. It is in the sustained focus on these practices, bias and prejudices that would bring in the much needed change in the social structure.

Like the other *Kendras* of the Northeast DDK Shillong also features women's issues in its exclusive programme called '*Ka Rympei*' (the hearth) which is telecast every Wednesday at 6.30 pm for thirty minutes duration. It was in the year 1997 that '*Ka Rympei*' was for the first time telecast and thus to this day has a history of seventeen years. The programme is primarily in Khasi though some episodes of the programmes are also presented in English. The format of the programme is largely interview and discussion-based relating to issues which are "women-centric." Eminent women personalities are invited to take part in the programme to share their view on the various topics chosen by the producer concerned or the anchors themselves. The topics covered are related to health of women, home management especially in view of today's stressful environment, workings of various Non Governmental Organization, role of women in politics, education of women and the girl child, domestic violence, discipline in schools, counseling in educational institutions, portrayal of women by the media and functioning of various schemes in government offices which can enable women. All these topics were in a discussion format with eminent women from various walks of life. '*Ka Rympei*' is also occasionally based on interviews with rural women on issues relating to health, budgeting of the household, programmes on anniversaries with topics chalked out by the *Kendra* and other current topics. The target audience of this programme is largely women and "women being the heart of a home, the whole household are also the beneficiary of such programmes" as observed by the

producer of this programme.¹²⁸ ‘*Ka Rympei*’ is mostly a studio based programme; however field based episodes are at times taken up at a pre-arranged venue. Functions relating to women topics are covered by such outdoor programmes. The timing of the programme which was earlier every Monday has now been shifted to an available time-slot and is telecast every Wednesday at 6.30pm. Though there has not been much of an evolution so far as the format of the programme is concerned however newer topics concerning ‘working parents and how it affects the family,’ ‘Career opportunities for women,’ ‘Unsung heroes: women’s contribution to society,’ ‘Women and self employment,’ How divorce affects family, and ‘Women and self employment’ are the other topics also being included.¹²⁹ The producer of the programme stressed that topics concerning mothers and children especially teenage behaviour, depression, rebellion and other issues has been taken up with the passage of time.¹³⁰ The total telecast time of all programmes from Doodarshan Shillong on a weekly basis is seventeen hours and thirty minutes out of which an exclusive Women’s programme consists of thirty minutes, thus making it a mere 2.86% of the total duration of programmes devoted to women and their concerns on a weekly basis.

Though Women’s programme is being telecast from DDK Shillong for a period of a decade and a half but what needs to be questioned is if a chunk of mere thirty minutes that too only once in a week sufficient enough to take up the multi-faceted issues and concerns of women? Surely women’s problems and role in society cannot be highlighted and explored within such short time span. While discussion based studio programmes have been taken up but what needs to be also understood is the focus of these discussions. Health of women, home management, role of women in politics, education of women and the girl child, domestic violence and other issues are important components of such Women’s programmes but what we need to reflect is, whether the Patriarchal mindset and its established values and norms which tends to delimit women’s role and participation in politics, religion and other decision

¹²⁸ Interview with Producer Women’s programme, DDK Shillong, Doordarshan *Kendra* Shillong premises, on 20th October 2011.

¹²⁹ DDK/SHG/D9/64/08/09/289, DDK/SHG/64/492, DDK/SHG/64/355, DDK/SHG/DS/64/487, DDK/SHG/104/85, DDK/SHG/64/473, accessed on 21st and 22nd October, 2011

¹³⁰ Interview with Producer Women’s programme DDK Shillong, *op.cit.*,

making sphere in a matrilineal Khasi-Jaintia society and other core issues affecting women's position, rights and liberties have been addressed through such programmes. Scholars have stressed that "Mass media has far reaching consequences and can be effective vehicle for social change."¹³¹ Therefore to bring this social change through information and awareness addressing women at the grass root and bringing to the fore their problems sometimes through interactive sessions of programmes would be beneficial for many women seeking authentic information. Women as per census 2011 constitute 48.5% of the country's population and a holistic approach to empower this large segment promoting their social and economic development is a core concern of developmental programme. Mainstreaming gender concerns, creating awareness about their rights and facilitating institutional and legislative support for enabling women to achieve their full potential has been accorded as one of the mission for the Ministry of Women and Child Development.¹³² It is the galvanizing of such efforts along with the largest mass media of the country that can hasten the process of gender sensitivity in society. Cozy studio based discussion is no doubt pleasing to the eyes but the grim reality of women weighed under disparity, discrimination and displacement are definitely not the most comfortable lot. Such quantum of concerns needs analytical programming. Field based interactive thread-bare exposition of issues both in the rural and urban contexts can bring out the urgent and essential matter to the right authorities and assuage such concerns to a large extent. As we understand that in order to gauge the extent and quality of listening viewership of each programme that could ideally form the basis of policy decisions by planners for making programmes effective and appealing, a regular feedback from the targeted audience is crucial, but an absence of such mechanism in the form of an Audience Research Cell that acts as a watch dog of programmes providing feedbacks and research support to the programmes telecast ascertaining the response and the impacts of all programmes to the targeted audience is an area of huge lacunae that DDK Shillong like most other *Kendras* of the Northeast currently faces.

¹³¹ Indrani Mukherjee, *Indian Society: Signs of Disorder*, New Delhi, 1995, p.307.

¹³² *Annual Report 2011-12*, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, p.3.

DDK Shillong has a total of 90 hours of local transmission per month transmitting terrestrially DD1 TV signals on Very High Frequency (VHF) Channel. It also has a variety of other In-House programmes telecast both in weekdays and on its weekend transmission hours.¹³³ The *Kendra* has taken up issues related to women partly in ‘*Kalyani*’ a health series programme launched in May 2002 in the country under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare wherein besides other issues, the reproductive and child care and other health related problems of women catering to both the urban and the rural population of the state are taken up. ‘Narrowcasting’, a centrally sponsored project of mass media under the Ministry of Agriculture has also been initiated to give support to Agriculture programmes and provide area specific information on agriculture to women farmers as well.¹³⁴ Even in these categories of programmes we find a division of women between the private and the public. Reproductive and child care finds one of the top priorities in the Health category of programmes. Though this focus would educate women on their health issues but in focusing on the ‘reproductive and child care’ DD not only becomes a mouth piece of publicizing the ever changing governmental agenda but also pushes through the masculinist image type-casting a women with nature, as the giver of birth and protector of her children. The exclusivity of a category within a programme also encourages controlled dissemination of knowledge instead of inclusive approach within the common body of information imparted to all irrespective of their sex.

DD Kohima which has a total of 2 hours and 30 minutes transmission also telecasts a programme for women entitled ‘*Women’s World*’ of 30 minutes every first, second, third and fifth Tuesday of the month.¹³⁵ Various issues concerning women in the form of talks, discussions, interviews are taken up in the programme. One of the core programmes of DDK Kohima that is being telecast since 1993 initially for 15 minutes but since 2004 increased to 30 minutes five days a week is the programme on Agriculture called *Krishi Darshan* entitled *Loubuk Naikei Panglash* (let us go towards the field). The format of the programme which is either a documentary, interview based or even a feature, report or phone-in type of

¹³³ ‘*Profile of Doordarshan Kendra Shillong*’, Records from the Deputy Director General’s (Northeast Region) Office, Guwahati, accessed on 15th June 2011.

¹³⁴ *Prasar Bharati Annual Report 2008-2009*, p.109.

¹³⁵ Summer Fixed Point Chart, DDK Kohima, 4th April 2010.

programme is targeted for agriculturists including the fishing community, dairy cattlemen and other farming communities educating them on various methods of agriculture, increasing production yields through a variety of farm techniques. The topics are selected based on the importance, relevancy and suitability of the farming community after due consultation with an expert committee consisting of members from various departments of Agriculture, Horticulture and other farm sectors.¹³⁶ Women's role and contribution in agricultural production are taken up occasionally in this programme. This seems a very casual approach towards the needs and concerns of the women farmers. A variety of programmes including Developmental, Flagship, Magazine, Science, Environment, Health, Entertainment programmes form the other categories of programmes from DDK Kohima.

DDK Aizawl presently has a total transmission of two hours and thirty minutes local programmes on all seven days a week on terrestrial and satellite modes. Except Hindi Lessons and Hindi Songs the rest of the programmes broadcast are primarily in Mizo with a few programmes in Hmar and Chakma. Woman's programme of thirty minutes duration finds a place only on Sundays from 5pm to 5.30pm. Though we found the *Kendra* having a number of 'live' phone based interactive programmes for farmers, with eminent persons, in festivals times, or even a live programme called '*Feedback Time*' wherein replies to viewers queries are given, however no such initiative is evident in Women's programmes to help address several urgent and important issues concerning women and society. Such an exercise besides making the programme interactive could have helped gauge the programme's popularity and impact as well. Devotional songs, Instrumental music, Folk songs, Cultural dances, Health education, Rural development, Literary magazine, Protection of environment, Composite programmes for Children, Youth, Request programmes for music, Senior citizens and Quiz programmes besides a daily Regional News in Mizo are the other programmes telecasts from the *Kendra*. Narrowcasting Agriculture programmers of thirty minutes duration is telecast on all weekdays from Monday to Friday from DDK Aizawl. This stress is probably of the high rural area of 20,761 square kilometers and shifting cultivation being the

¹³⁶ Interview with, Assucance Raikhan, Producer Agriculture programme, DDK Kohima on 12th June 2012.

primary occupation of the people. Statistically Public Service programmes account for about 60.67% of the *Kendra's* local programmes, Entertainment programmes account for 24.84%, News and Current Affairs constitute 14.49% of the total transmission. It is also note worthy that programmes of DDK Aizawl are carried by all Cable TV Networks spread across Mizoram.¹³⁷ However we also came across a number of short-comings mentioned in some official documents of the *Kendra's* profile like the remote location of the *Kendra* on the outskirts of Aizawl towns leading to transportation difficulty especially for the artists, the short duration of local programmes and the lack of flexibility to counter the growing popularity of western channels in the Cable TV mode and lack of man-power at the senior level. These shortcomings can be regarded not only as bottlenecks of the *Kendra* but also an aspect that can have a spiraling impact on the quality of programmes produced as well.

The programmes of DDK Imphal include programmes on several categories including Environment, Science, Youth, Health, Women and Children. A number of the *Kendra's* programmes have been awarded with the DD Annual Awards including '*Known unto God*' a teleplay in (2002) '*Thoibi*' (2003) and '*Awangbha Chingi Thel*' (2003), '*Eshei Nachom*' (2002) in music category and '*Basanta Raas*' (2003) in dance.¹³⁸ DDK Itanagar is a fairly young *Kendra* commissioned on 5th February 1996 and like all other *Kendras* of the Northeast has evening local programme transmission for 2 hours 30 minutes on all seven days of the week. Its programmes include cookery, music, issues of teenage, features and a news based programme called '*Arunachal ees Hapte.*' The *Kendra* also relays programmes on Agriculture, Flagship and Commissioned programmes and News from DD1 and DDK Guwahati.¹³⁹ There is no programme for women under the 'Woman's programme category from this *Kendra*. In view of DDK Itanagar being a relatively new *Kendra* with limited programmes telecast we have not taken up any of its programmes for gender analysis.

¹³⁷ '*Profile of Doordarshan Kendra Aizawl*', Records from the Deputy Director General's (North-East Region) Office, Guwahati accessed on 15th June 2011, Summer Fixed Point Chart DDK Aizawl accessed on 17th February 2011.

¹³⁸ *Doordarshan Kendras of North-East (At a Glance)*, op.cit., pp.39-42.

¹³⁹ Fixed Point Chart of Doordarshan Itanagar dated 3/4/2011.

A study of programmes of both All India Radio and Doodarshan has not only given us a clearer understanding of the existing programme content from the stage of conceptualization to the final production of programmes under various categories but also the evolution of programmes from the eighties to those of recent years, the various themes taken up then and the thrust areas of the subject matter now. Topics taken up are from the fields of agriculture, health, education, youth and issues on women empowerment. The topics that were even a few years back considered a taboo to be taken up in public domain especially by a Government medium are being regarded essential and a necessity to be spoken about and given more information to the audiences at large as also vouched by the producers of programmes themselves. But a pertinent point to be noted is that though topics and issues related to socio-economic life of women, health and family welfare, food and nutrition, scientific home management, women entrepreneurship, education, including adult education, gender issues, rights and privileges taken up in Women's programme are unquestionably vital and would go a long way in providing information to the people and women in particular to various government schemes and policies and the removal of social discrimination facing women, but what also needs to be analyzed is the focus of such programmes and if they have also included within its ambit of priority the immediate problems of women in our changing societies especially patriarchy and its strong leaning to the perpetuation of male supremacy and male authority. As patriarchy is the prime form of social structure, sexual inequality and sexual discrimination have become essential components of such structures and we need to understand if programmes also underscored the existence of inequality in a gender biased society and taken up issues of socio-economic status of women, a change in the value system, attitudes and social structure prevailing in society through their various programmes. Our study of the programmes in both AIR stations and DD *Kendras* of the Northeast has revealed that there exist similar categories of programmes in both these organizations. The categorizations of programmes be it Agriculture, Health, Youth, Women, or Children's programme are almost identical. Difference if any is essentially with regard to the names of programmes. For example if its 'Agriculture or Narrowcasting programme' in DD than under the same category the programme in AIR is called 'Farm and Home'

programme. The format of presentation is almost analogous. In radio medium we hear only the voice with special effects of audio to make it sound more realistic while the television medium encompasses both sound and picture. But in both the medium the programmes are discussion, feature, docu-feature or documentary format. Further the topics taken up in both AIR and DD in the different categories of programmes are also similar. For instance if the topics of AIR Shillong in Women's programmes are on "mother and child care", "food and nutrition" or "scientific home management" along with interaction with successful educationists we find comparable topics on "women's health", "personal grooming", "legal literacy" taken up in AIR Guwahati or AIR Kohima as well. If interviews with celebrities are a topic in one of the 'series' of woman's programme from AIR Delhi than there is a similar segment in the Woman's programme from AIR or DD Guwahati too. One of the primary reasons for topics being identical to each other is because both AIR and DD follow a 'Programme Calendar' issued from both the AIR and DD Directorate New-Delhi which acts as a 'programme guide' to all the AIR stations and DD *Kendras* of the country. Further an analysis of programmes has also revealed that programmes of Women are most times presented by women artists alone and this is amply evident in '*Manashi*' a highly rated Women's programme of DDK Guwahati. This gives a sense that women themselves should be the harbinger of their own roles and rights. If both AIR and DD are committed to 'social responsibility' of upliftment and development in society, as declared in the objectives of the *Prasar Bharati* Corporation then by addressing the all round issues of both women and men, the largest electronic media of the country can certainly become a more effective vehicle of progress and social change in the country. While undertaking a study of the existing programmes, what also came as a revelation is that most times all Women's programmes are looked after by women producers themselves. Sensitive programmes on women's issues particularly exposition of gender ideologies can materialize only if such concerns are expounded by both the male and the female producers of programmes as well. While this is important another feature is the gender sensitivity of the producers themselves. Are the producers themselves sensitive to women's issues? Women particularly are said to have internalized much of the patriarchal norms and values leaving little room for self improvement or to

seek for a future of emancipation and progress. It is important that the women producers of AIR and DD have been able to align themselves to the gender concerns of today and which gets manifested in the various programmes produced by them.

Most of the Women's programmes of AIR and DD are once a week with a maximum duration of thirty minutes but how far such short and spaced out programmes could take up the multi-faceted issues and concerns of women is a question that needs to be answered. People to people contact are the new paradigm that is increasingly being stressed for developmental policies to reach the targeted beneficiaries and for a more meaningful working of democratic setups. This infact also becomes true in the case of programmes and their popularity to the mass audiences at large. Not only can field based programmes bring to the open the real issues concerning the people and their welfare but interactive sessions of programmes between the experts and the listeners can help generate more interests among the public with their concerns and problems having a platform to be tackled first hand. Such interactive programmes exist in both AIR and DD but they are more in regard to Narrowcasting, Flagship and Health categories of programmes. None of the programmes that strictly fall in the 'Women category' of programme are phone-based with live interactive sessions which could help address several crucial issues of women in a more interesting and comprehensive manner. No doubt propped up studio based programmes are colourful but interactive ones can tackle grass root problems and make programmes more attractive, motivating the audiences to speak as well as to hear and participate with their concerns to the panel of experts to help bring about true change in society. Further though 'magazine' format of programmes have been included in most Women's programmes but what is crucial is that these do not become replicas of the programming patterns of other Regional stations but focus on local issues that could be acceptable and identifiable by the people watching or listening to programmes. Though in AIR Delhi we have seen an upsurge of women oriented serials but it is important to also realize that women are being portrayed within the traditional framework and the unquestioning acceptance of this role has only reinforced the traditional stereotype of women. An enquiry into this has revealed that AIR and DD have also been highlighting the motherly and nurturing roles of women. No doubt development oriented topics not addressed before are

being deliberated but they are not the only means that can address the several narrow societal strictures that impacts women most. Information is power and in a democratic society like ours, public opinion influences public life and governance. It is in this aspect that mass media can serve as a change-agent in bringing about social transformation and positive change in society.¹⁴⁰ Women's programme in both AIR and DD has a specific time of broadcast and on most occasions in the afternoon hours. This again scholars have felt are based on the assumptions that women are not interested in the general issues and therefore there is a special "enclaves" set aside away from the general issues.¹⁴¹ A query on this assumption to AIR officials finds a response that is close to the above held view as it was expressed that 'Women's programmes' have been kept in the afternoon hours mostly as it was thought that "house wives" would be more free to watch or listen to programmes after completing their house chores. This patriarchal assumption of most women being house wives than working women is neither rational nor acceptable given the fact that most women of today have to balance both the home and their work place.

Existent scholarships on the role of mass media have seen mass communication in our country as a weapon of the weak, in aid of the disadvantaged and a voice of the powerless, a means of value reorientation and ideological re-moulding both of the middle class and the masses. They have envisaged its role as instruments to change the mindset of the people and to create a climate for modernization and development through centralized economic planning, large scale industrialization and the expansion of basic communication infrastructure.¹⁴² P.C Joshi feels that though this may have been the vision of communication but this in the present era has not been the case. Rather media today is the voice serving the interests of the elites, the rich and the powerful who have "furiously engaged" in tapping the communication revolution for a life of glamour and of uncontrolled

¹⁴⁰ J.S Yadava and Pradeep Mathur (eds.), *Issues in Mass Communication* Vol. 1, New Delhi, 1998, pp.34-35.

¹⁴¹ Afsan Bano, *Women and Social Change*, New Delhi, 2003, p. 284.

¹⁴² J.S Yadava and Pradeep Mathur (eds.) *Issues in Mass Communication* Vol.1, R. N Acharya, *Television in India*, Delhi, 1987, P.C Chatterjee, *Broadcasting in India*, New Delhi, 1991, Arvind Singhal and Rogers M Everett, *India's Information Revolution*, New Delhi, 1989, Kanchan Kumar, "Mixed Signals: Radio Broadcasting Policy in India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Number 22, Vol. 38, 31st May to 6th June, 2003.

sensuous gratification.¹⁴³ Though AIR and DD are considered “Public Broadcasters” with the programmes designed to “awaken, inform, enlighten, educate, entertain and enrich” all sections of the people but there is a worry over the increasing “commercialization and homogenization” of media content that is thwarting its public service function feels Kanchan Kumar. The programmes need to question and reflect not only the economic opportunity, or the political developments, but also the lack of freedom in the social order dominated by rigid hierarchy and oppressive patriarchy.¹⁴⁴ Government plans and programmes for the welfare of the people can succeed when the people are made aware of their rights and obligations and Kamlesh Mahajan regards the vast potential of the mass media especially the electronic media that can play a role in elucidating the plans for women’s development including education, employment, health, laws protecting women’s rights and sense of equality among women and men. The software for television needs to be planned thoroughly and purposively in relation to women’s issues and there is a need for a more realistic account of the plight and struggles of Indian women. The scholar however is of the opinion that there is tardiness in this regard and much more study need to be made on the role and direction of television, “the most powerful medium of mass communication” in women’s development.¹⁴⁵

Mass media can play a significant role in reflecting on existing values, strengthen and reinforce traditional ideas or play a positive role of being a forceful motivator of social change. Though AIR and DD through their programmes on Women and other programmes have been taking up various issues concerning women and their welfare but there seems to be an absence of continued effort to address the social norms, attitudes, and values sustained through deeply entrenched stereotypical characteristics inherent in the social structure. In none of the programme we reviewed did we find a threadbare, open and fearless discussion on the patriarchal control existent in the society. Women’s day to day concerns, their roles in challenging fields, their accomplishments and their plight in certain

¹⁴³ P.C Joshi, “Communication: the Emerging Scenario”, *Mainstream*, Vol. 41, Number 40, 11th October 2003, pp-13-14.

¹⁴⁴ Kanchan Kumar, *op.cit.*, p. 2173.

¹⁴⁵ Kamlesh Mahajan, “Mass Media and Women’s Development: The Case of Television in India” in Kamlesh Mahajan, *Communication and Society*, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 183-194.

situations are no doubt being depicted and reflected upon but apart from programmes taking up more women oriented issues either in 'series' or 'magazine' format of programmes and sometimes some special editions of programmes exclusively for the women target audiences in 'Health' and 'Agriculture' categories of programmes but the paradigm of patriarchy encompassing every segment of society and the gender implication of such harsh reality is yet to become the key topic of programmes. There is more a balancing approach of playing safe in the AIR and DD programmes. We do not say that the democratic parameters of the country's ethos should be set aside in programming but when it comes to addressing age old rooted believes and customs that rules the mentality and functionality of large segments of society than surely a large media organization like AIR and DD has a more dominant role to play in uprooting ideologies and dogmas that have been institutionalized. If patriarchy and the key constituents of male authority and male dominance in society are not addressed by the various programmes of both AIR and DD then can we really call these two medium as the vehicle of social change and gender equality in society? The mass media of communication can most definitely play an effective role in the eradication of these deep-rooted values inimical to women. Having increased its reach to more areas and people with new technologies introduced in the last few years, what AIR and DD can adopt is a comprehensive and inclusive approach to its programming content. It needs a mind of its own rising above governmental hegemony to communicate extensively researched and articulated issues in its varied content broadcast every single day to the large segment of the population and play a definite role to bring in a conscious change in gender ideologies and gender relations in society.