Chapter Three

Doordarshan and the Emerging Television Landscape in India

"I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides, and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any one of them".

Words of Mahatma Gandhi at the entrance of Broadcasting House, New Delhi

The aim of this chapter is to investigate a set of television genres on Indian television, and to reach some conclusion about the role television can play in the broad cultural, social and political map of India. I start with the development of television because motivation to ask questions, and find possible answers, lies in the historical conjunction of a series of events focused around the development and state of Indian television today, and its present and potential relationship with a set of other elements in the Indian scenario.

3.1 Beginning of television in India

At independence, India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, placed the development of television as a crucial issue on the national agenda. Following this, the growth of television in India can be traced along two lines. First, there were technological innovations that may be experimental television possible, ultimately leading to the current form of broadcast that includes a combination of satellite connections, microwave links and colour broadcasts. At the same time there were refinements in the variety of programmes on television as it graduated from an educational medium of limited time to one that now includes a large range of programmes. In the process of development, there were two issues that were the focus of ongoing debate. The concern that the commercials on television would make
television a medium of entertainment rather than education and constant pressure to relieve Doordarshan of direct government control and provide a sense of autonomy to the broadcast institutions. The unresolved question of autonomy and state control suggests that television in India can play a major role. Clearly, the party in power recognises the role of television in impacting upon various aspects of life, from images of nation to the images of religion, and forging of a preferred national ideology. ¹

In mid-1960s, Dr. Vikram Sarabhai began arguing in policy-making circles that nation-wide television system could play a major role in promoting economic and social development. At his initiative, a national satellite communication group (NASCOM) was established in 1968. Based on its recommendations, the Indian government approved hybrid television broadcasting system consisting of communication satellite as well as ground-based microwave relay transmitters. The satellite component was envisaged to leapfrog India into state-of-the-art communication technology, speed up the development process, and take advantage of the lack of infrastructure. ²

Television was introduced in India in September 15, 1959 as an experimental educational service from Delhi under a grant of $20,000 and 180 free sets from UNESCO, equipment offered by Phillips, technical and other supports from Federal Republic of Germany and financial support for ten years from the Ford Foundation. Run by All India Radio and with a range of 25 kilometres, it telecast programme twice a week for an hour each. Daily transmission began in 1965 and by 1970, there were 22,000 sets in the country - all imported - besides those for community viewing.³ In 1972 TV services were extended to a second city Mumbai. By 1975 Calcutta, Chennai, Srinagar, Amritsar and Lucknow also had TV stations. In 1975-76 the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) brought television to 2,400 villages in most inaccessible and least developed areas for one year.
In 1982 a regular satellite link between Delhi and other transmitters were established to facilitate the introduction of the National Programme. With this the era of fast expansion of TV services through low power transmitters was also heralded.

The Asian Games of 1982 provided both the motivation and proper setting for the government to launch colour transmission. A regular satellite link between the Delhi Doordarshan and Doordarshan centres as also established. Two years later, a second channel called DD-2 was launched and services were later extended to Mumbai, Calcutta and Chennai. As the four metropolitan cities were linked and channel was christened the Metro Channel and it is generally described as an entertainment channel. It took Doordarshan 13 years to launch a third channel, the ill-fated DD-3, which declared to be an infotainment channel on November 14, 1995. By then official media had already come under pressures of competitions from the private cable and satellite channels. Cable television was spreading very fast, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas of the country and private and foreign channels had made their appearances on the Indian scene.

It is in this scenario that Doordarshan decided to introduce Movie Club as part of its effort to compete with Zee Television which had launched a separate movie service called Zee Cinema. The launch of DD- India, an international channel, consisting of best of programming from Doordarshan followed soon after on hired foreign satellite, PS-4. By November 1996, Doordarshan realised it was not possible to bear the high cost of running two low-earning channels and Movie Club was merged with DD-3. But the DD-3 experiment, often dubbed as elitist channel, could attract neither enough audience nor advertisement to sustain itself. A desperate effort by the government to indirectly influence cable distribution in favour Doordarshan through the cable law did not help save DD-3. The cable law specifies that cable operators will have to show at least two of the
Doordarshan's channels. Most of the cable operators showed DD-1, the national channel and DD-2 but ignored Movie Club and DD-3. But cable operators have been showing Doordarshan's regional language channels due to pressure from customers speaking diverse languages. DD-3 was ultimately closed down in January 1998.

3.1.1 Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE)

There were various events that marked a qualitative change in both state policy and the structure of television viewing in India: introduction of colour television, the implementation of the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE), commercialisation, the liberalisation of television imports, and the installation of the satellite 1-B. In 1969, based on NASCOM's feasibility studies, the Indian government approved a proposal for the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) using the United States' National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA's) Application Technology Satellite-6 (AT-6). SITE was a one-year pilot project undertaken in 1975-76; with an aim to experiment with television through satellite communication and broadcast special programmes to six rural clusters (which included a total of 2,400 villages and several million people). Its objectives were to improve rural primary school education, provide teacher training, improve agriculture, health, hygiene, and nutritional practices, and contribute to family planning and national integration. The structure and content of SITE reflected the dominant national credo of the 1960s and early 1970s: self-reliance, 'socialism', and progress through technological input.
3.1.2 Commercialisation of Indian Television

While SITE technology generated a large amount of academic research, the second development - the slow entry of commercials on television - went relatively unnoticed by academic researchers. Before 1976, policy makers in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting had been struggling with the question of commercialisation for a while. On the other hand television in India was sitting on the fence between the two poles of education and entertainment, rural and urban, with a slow but steady tilt towards the urban - entertainment dipole. This was leading to increasing costs. At the same time advertisers recognised that television would allow them to reach the more affluent urban audience. The argument in favour of commercialisation of television was only motivated by financial consideration. It was argued that television could earn adequate money to support itself, and finance its own expansion programmes. Finally, on January 1, 1976, the government introduced advertisements on television. In 1980 Doordarshan invited advertisers to sponsors TV programmes and finally, opened up the barrage of commercials during the 1982 Asian Games. This also meant that television would become increasingly an entertainment medium, aimed at more affluent urban sectors of India. Many researchers have regarded the state's strategy of going commercial with television as a dilution of its development goals. However, it is precisely this strategy that has maybe made possible the entry of the state into the familial space and, in the process, redefining viewers' relationship to both public and private spheres.

3.1.3 Introduction of colour transmission

In January 1980 then newly formed Indira Gandhi government addressed the question of introducing colour television in India. Along with the other
expansion plans, one major area of expansion was the adoption of the colour transmission facility for Indian television. The decision for the introduction of colour transmission was taken for three reasons. First, on an international level, there had been a rapid transfer of colour, thus reducing the availability of the obsolete black and white transmission and receiving technology. Secondly, other developing countries with similar per capita income had already converted to colour transmission. Finally, indigenous technology and technical know-how were available in India for transforming to colour broadcast.

The Asian Games and other significant developments such as introduction of commercials on television, SITE, launch of INSAT-1B, introduction of colour transmission determined some of the fundamental characteristics of the current state of television in India. First, television broadcasts are today available across the entire nation. Secondly, the original priority of education has been supplemented by an entertainment orientation aided by the commercial sponsors. Consequently, television is now established as primarily urban phenomenon. Thirdly, television is accepted as a quasi-commercial medium, as the advertisers recognise television’s potential of reaching the affluent urban audience of television. Fourth, television has emerged as a popular cultural form and a large number of people across the country now considers watching television a part of everyday material practices and activities.

3.2 Doordarshan’s Dilemma: Rural-Urban and Education-Entertainment Debate

Experiments with television, which began with the scope of programmes which, were restricted to educational broadcasts for a limited area around Delhi. The conscious effort of these programmes were to supplement class
room education, programmes for farmers in the agricultural areas, notes on hygiene, methods of family planning and other instructional programmes. Television, at this initial phase was primarily a pedagogic tool. There were also 'entertainment' programmes to supplement these broadcasts which were limited and primarily based on Hindi feature films. But the role of television was to assist in social and developmental endeavours rather than to provide a popular cultural forum for entertainment. The government of India, through its reports of the Chanda Commission highlighted the clear educational and instructional thrusts of television and any other programmes were not important in the future plans of television. Consequently, educational television became the important area around which most media research developed. The educational and instructional thrusts of television led to the contradiction between television programming for rural and urban India and this contradiction has not been resolved, but it implicated the development of the medium in India.5

A source of tension around Indian television is the opposition between educational and entertainment programmes and its relation with the rural urban dichotomy. This contradiction had its roots in the way in which the early proponents of State-owned television answered policy questions. Exhibiting indecision about the format and purpose of television, the initial programmes included fair amount of programming that was considered to be entertainment. There was recognition that television could not remain just a channel for education but would include entertainment, although it was always made clear that entertainment would be the second priority. This is also highlighted in the Chanda Commission Report of 1964, which stated the same thing in their recommendations calling these programmes as 'programmes of entertainment'.

The period between 1972 and 1982 saw the rapid expansion of television in India. The proliferation of genres of programmes on television and rapid
development in the production and transmission technologies brought dramatic changes in this decade. What was initially an educational medium with set of standardised programmes were replaced with more imaginative use of talent to present similar material in more attractive formats. Simultaneously, there were advancements in the production and distribution technologies of television. There was an increase in the number of broadcast facilities as local television stations were set up in most metropolitan areas.

In this period, there was also a rapid growth in the indigenous manufacture of receivers. This was an area that was also regulated by the government in the sixties but, with the increasing liberalisation of licensing regulations, there was a boom in the commercial manufacturing of the television sets, and these were marketed primarily to the urban audience. One consequence of this expansion of the urban audience base was the recognition by the business houses in India that television was an excellent medium for advertising. This realisation coupled with the fact that government owned Doordarshan always needed money for its expansion led the initial move towards the commercialisation of television programmes in India. The commercialisation of television in India meant not that television is owned and operated by a commercial firm, but that certain businesses that can afford to, and are willing to pay price, can have limited access to the airwaves.

By this time, television had become a household artefact and began to play a central role in redefining domestic space and time. Given he centrality of the medium in the Indian household, it was often the focus of attention in the evenings when daily transmission would take place. Then emerged the concept of 'prime-time', the much sought after for the producers and the advertisers. Family viewing of television became increasingly popular.
The significance of these changes were in the proliferation and availability of telecasts across most of the country; the diversity of programmes on television leading to the possibility of identifying similar and conflicting sets of programmes; the introduction of commercials on television; the emergence of variety of secondary texts that discussed the television texts, for example magazines such as TV and Video World that appeared in the early 1980s, 'TV Guides' in newspapers, and reviews of television programmes. These trends along with the increasing presence of entertainment programmes and the developments in both broadcast and receiving technology brought dramatic changes to the state of television following 1982.

Following 1982, and the Asian Games in Delhi, television in India developed as a medium whose earlier 'educational' purpose and programming as increasingly supplemented by the growing presence of non-educational programmes. This corpus of programmes diversified from the earlier dependence on feature-film based programmes into television plays and the emergence of serials and soap operas. The variety of genres followed each other in specific patterns beginning with the early evening children's programmes, moving on to programming for youth and women, followed by news and then string of serialised programmes that occupied the 'prime-time' of Indian television - which is from eight in the evening till ten at night. National network went on the air around eight o'clock in the evening with Hindi news indicating the beginning of the prime time. Through these generic expression, the development of recognisable flow, and the emergence of specific programmes from Hum Log to Shanti, Doordarshan has developed its own set of cultural and signifying practices that are the specific to television in India.
In 1979, Delhi television had a mix of programmes that included news, instructional programmes for children, women, farmer's etc. Entertainment programmes included feature films broadcast on the weekends, film-based musical programmes and imported serials. The imported programmes were closer to the cultural proximity to the popular culture of educated urban India than rural India. The imported programmes were meant for privileged urban audience. Imported programmes included both educational/instructional and entertainment which mostly came from BBC, Russian Television, United States Information Services and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation - all in English. This is also when linguistic tension began to emerge.

Simultaneously and naturally there was also the growing concern that television was becoming an increasingly urban phenomenon. This was partly aided by the fact that the primary transmission centres were located in the urban areas, and the urban middle class population had the material resources to buy receivers more readily than the rural viewers did. While rural viewers were largely dependent on community television sets, urban middle class viewers watched television on personal sets in the comfort of their homes. With the increase in the entertainment programmes for urban viewers, firstly, the text of television was getting more complex and variegated. The dichotomy between education and entertainment was blurred. With the variety of texts on television, the potential meanings of the texts were multiplying too, changing the way in which television would become effective in the culture. Secondly, and television was becoming increasingly accessible, particularly to the affluent urban groups who could afford private receivers. It was getting incorporated within the urban audiences, who were beginning to link the practice of watching television with other social, cultural and domestic activities. Television was becoming a part of domestic life - a part of urban culture where as in the rural areas, television viewing was largely a community affair. Community TV viewing
caught on in India during the mid-1970s, when some 8,000-community television sets was installed in the 2,400 SITE villages. While most of these have now been phased out, certain state governments are pushing for community TV viewing by installing sets in public places.

### 3.3 Internal Contradictions of Doordarshan

Currently, the National Network of Doordarshan can re-image the country in a way that is informed by the ideology of the social bloc which has control of this non-autonomous medium. With the telecast of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* and the ongoing *Sri Krishna* serials, television in India was combined with a central Indian epic. What emerges is an image of India that is produced and reproduced by Doordarshan and circulated as the dominant and preferred one. Within the conjectural and articulated image of societies and nation, Doordarshan plays a crucial role in circulating an ideologically correct national Hindu image. Within popular culture, the articulation of *Ramayana, Mahabharata,* and *Sri Krishna* brought the Hindu heroes into the domesticity of nearly 90 per cent of Indian homes, re-emphasising the Hinduness of India and consequently, the un-Indianness of non-Hindus. In turn other practices and larger parts of the social arena are marginalised and, within the national image, these are produced as deviant and non-Indian, moving further away from the secular promises of the Constitution.

To promote ‘national integrity’ was one of the most important objectives of Doordarshan and in the wake of separatist and regionalist movements of the late seventies and eighties, in Punjab, Assam and other places, this aim became increasingly significant. The self-assertion of regional identities has been suppressed. Upheavals in Kashmir, Punjab, the North East have been treated by Doordarshan as threats to nation-state. So, the serials from
Sanjha Chulha and Gul Gulshan Gulfam in 1987 to Ajnabi in 1993 Doordarshan spread the view that insurgency was responsible for destroying the social, economic and familial fabric of the people's lives. Doordarshan has thus intensified the feelings of regionalism, the urban-rural contradictions and the rich and poor divide instead of being able to fashion a true consensus on the ideological, political and cultural justifications for the nation-state of India. As the Joshi Committee Report pointed out, Doordarshan remained Delhi-centric, and insistent on beaming a homogeneous central construct throughout the nation.

According to Information and Broadcasting ministry's recent publication Doordarshan 1997, the social objective of Doordarshan are (1) To act as a catalyst for social change, (2) To promote national integration, To stimulate scientific temper in the mind of the people, (3) To disseminate the message of family planning as a means of population control and family welfare, (4) To provide essential information and knowledge in order to stimulate greater agricultural production, (5) To promote and help preserve environment and ecological balance, (6) To highlight the need for social and welfare measures including welfare of women, children and less privileged, (7) To promote interest of games and sports, and (8) To create value of appraisal of art and cultural heritage. Long before, the introduction of the National Programming on August 15, 1982 as a result of improved technology and microwave links allowed Doordarshan to develop into a truly national network capable of fulfilling two of the objectives of television in India: ‘to promote national integration’ and ‘to stimulate appreciation of our artistic and cultural heritage’. Unfortunately, it has failed in both.

The nation-wide beaming of Network Programmes on Doordarshan was often rejected in some areas of the country because it was seen as a vehicle for imposing Hindi and treating non-Hindi programmes as secondary text on the linguistically diverse states. The National Programmes were seen as the
centre's attempt to establish Hindi and North Indian culture as the genuine articulation of Indian identity and was rejected. Consequently, Doordarshan had no option but to set up its language channels of which 15 are on air today, beaming out educational and entertainment programmes, including those dubbed into the regional languages from the original Hindi serials.

Till a few years back, the most common complaint regarding Doordarshan among its viewers was that its news and current affairs programmes were both dull and propagandist. The quality of news coverage has always been a political issue with opposition parties demanding just fair coverage but at the same time also de-linking the broadcast media from the government. This is what led to the move towards granting autonomy to Doordarshan and the first non-Congress government in New Delhi in 1977 floated the concept of Prasar Bharati. Debate on autonomy have centred so far on the more overt and explicit use to serve political purposes, and have more or less overlooked the development and educational component of State-run broadcasting. Nevertheless, The quest for autonomy has been long and relentless.

The most obvious manifestation of Doordarshan's inability to address diversity is in its consistent attempt to impose a narrow political vision on the country. Thus, Doordarshan instead of becoming a medium by which a true national consensus can be created and disseminated. Doordarshan has itself become a symbol of the exclusionary nature of the national narrative. Instead of manufacturing consent, Doordarshan has often manufactured dissent. If we examine the situation in the context of today's discourse, it is the other way now. The process has reversed. The all-powerful government of India is helpless, and far from having any control over it, is unable to arrest the negative features of dissemination of the messages from the sky. Perhaps, a more disturbing aspect of the government controlled electronic
media is that it has entered the rat race of the market forces in the name of commercialism and subordination of cultural values we claim to preserve.

Finally, to sum up, there is an overlapping of at least three agendas in the constitution of Doordarshan as an institution. Three different agendas which are not easily reconciled with each other are presented through this medium: the informative and educational objectives laid out by welfare state, the consumerist agenda set forth through commercials, and thirdly, the ideological and often normative formulations of values through programmes themselves.⁷

### 3.4 Under threat: Public Service Broadcasting in India.

Globally, public service broadcasting is in decline. Deregulation and competition from the new players is rapidly eroding the public service ethic in television. Worldwide, outside news and current affairs, factual programming is disappearing from the prime-time slot. In the developing world particularly public service television is equated with government propaganda. Technological changes, such as the growth of broadcasting from satellite and cable television, are eroding the dominant position of the public service broadcaster.⁸

The entry of cable and satellite television, as else where in the world, has led to proliferation of market-driven television channels whose main concern is to earn as much profit as possible. Today, Doordarshan is caught in a dilemma as how to compete with private channels and also to perform its role as a public service broadcaster. Yet, clearly the need for socially committed television in India has not withered away. The Verghese Working Group Report (1978) asserted that the priority of broadcasting has to change from urban elitist moorings to the rural and semi-urban areas and
to the urban poor. It should also work towards filling the rural-urban
tradition-modernity gap. The recent Supreme Court Judgement on freedom
of Airwaves by Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy is noteworthy. According to the
judgement:

"... Diversity of opinions, views, ideas and ideologies are
essential to enable the citizens to arrive at informed judgement
on all issues touching them. This can not be provided by a
medium controlled by a monopoly- whether the monopoly is of
the state or any other individual, group or organisation. As a
matter of fact, private broadcasting stations may perhaps be
more prejudicial to the free speech right of the citizen than the
government controlled media. The broadcasting media should
be under the control of the public as distinct from the
government. This is the command implicit in Article 19(1)(a).
Airwaves being public property, it is the duty of the state to see
that airwaves are so utilised as to advance the free speech right
of the citizens, which is served by ensuring plurality and
diversity of views, opinions and ideas. The airwaves or
frequencies are public property. Their use has to be controlled
and regulated by public authority in the interests of the public
and prevent the invasion of their rights." 9

According to the Clause 12 of the Prasar Bharati Act of 1990, The
Corporations primary duty is to "Organise and conduct public service
broadcasting services to inform, educate and entertain the public." Apart
from "safeguarding the citizen's right to be informed freely, truthfully and
objectively on all matters of public interest, Prasar Bharati would have
special commitments as a public service broadcaster. These would include
"paying special attention" to fields that commercial broadcasters ignore,
such as education, agriculture, rural development, health and family

78
welfare. The Corporation will also have to meet the needs of regional audiences, minorities and people of India’s Scheduled Tribes. The Act gives Prasar Bharati an activist agenda, mandating among other things that it “promote social justice” and combat “evils of untouchability”, work for “safeguarding the rights of the working class” and stimulate “national consciousness on the status and problems of women”. It reiterated that broadcasting should be ‘conducted as a public service’. The Sengupta Committee on Prasar Bharati points out that in the wake of large influx of alien entertainment, directed to the top crusts, the minority with growing purchasing power and propensity to spend, the significance of public service broadcasting needs no overemphasis today.

A report by Delhi based *Forum for Independent Film and Video* suggests a broadcasting that has three parallel streams. Commercial platform(s) where programming is geared to the needs of the advertiser. Official platforms, reflecting government policies and programmes, concerns and initiatives, managed and staffed by government officials. Public service broadcasting service with its own structures of administration and programming. Such service is sought be guided by three essential values: Autonomy, from direct political or commercial interests; Access, that works for an expanding production base - that gives access to wide spectrum of society, by interfacing social initiatives with technology and specialised creative means to express them and works against monopolistic control; and Plurality which is committed to the free expression of diverse and contending ideas, both dominant and marginal which provides space for experimentation and innovation, and act as a laboratory towards the creation for a new diversity of visual language, styles and genres. These emphases are derived from a wide ranging survey of similar parallel public broadcasting initiatives elsewhere in the world, especially with reference to CHI (UK), PBXs (USA), ZDF (Germany) and recent initiatives in South Africa.
The interpretation of the concept of national interest or national consensus is a complex and controversial issue in the field of public service broadcasting. In a society like India communities with different and competing ideas of their interest and identity consensus may not exist or at least can not be taken for granted. Difficult questions of diversity arise because the accommodation of different views and objectivity in the presentation of them. In a society like India, where there is wide spread illiteracy, television is a key medium in shaping consensus around ideas and in driving the processes that constitute civil society. The report by *Forum for Independent Film and Video* concludes by saying:

"We live in a society that is hungry for communication, for dialogue and for self expression. Independently produced documentaries have been steadily gaining global recognition, not only for their concerns, but also for their ability to provide us with evocative and stimulating images and sounds that speak of our lives. These are joined by other spirited initiatives, thousands of NGOs and activists who are producing and distributing films. All it lacks is the will to make it happen".12

Ostensibly committed for many years to objectives and principles of public service broadcasting, the government in the mid-1990s not only looked benignly at the mushrooming of commercial radio and television, but also became an active participant in the commercialisation process. In this period of transition from a state dominated to market driven economy, Indian television will have to struggle to establish and preserve, if not public broadcasting, at least broadcasting in the public interest.
3.5 Doordarshan and New Media Market

The massive growth of television in India in the last decade and half has also been due to Operationalisation of the INSAT satellite system in 1982, liberalisation of economic policy and lack of curbs on the reception of transnational foreign satellite programmes, aided by the enterprising Indians to provide access to the channels at affordable rates. The governance of Indian mass media can be divided into three different periods for narrative simplicity. The first period begins with the 1885 Telegraph Act and concludes in mid-1983, when Indira Gandhi’s government undertook the creation of a pan-Indian infrastructure for broadcasting television. During the second period, the approximately 1983 to 1991, the central government continued to hold a monopoly over both television hardware and programming. Victoria L. Farmer observes:

“This period represented a rare, and perhaps unique, situation in which the ruling party of a thriving post-colonial democracy held sway over the airwaves of a phenomenally diverse country, facing the difficulties of broadcasting to an audience characterised by great diversities in language, cultural practice, religion, and living standards. Unlike government-run television infrastructures in industrialised societies the legitimacy of Indian government’s monopoly was predicted on its use to promote socio-economic development; and, unlike national television systems in more homogeneous societies, the cultural link between programming and its audience was not clear. Instead the television naturally reflecting a relatively homogeneous national culture, Indian programming was specifically designed to create an identity.”13
The third period under discussion dates from 1991-2, when the Government of India effectively lost its monopolistic control of the airwaves through the advent of transnational satellite television. Satellite television became more lucrative, numerous and heavily capitalised after the popular demand for satellite news coverage of bombing of Iraq during the Gulf War.

Today, Doordarshan has a network of 750 terrestrial transmitters with studios in 40 cities of the country. It has 17 channels, which include the national channel, which is a terrestrial service, and satellite channels, which include DD-2 and regional language channels. It puts out 1,400 hours of programme every week. The terrestrial signals of Doordarshan can reach 87 per cent of the country's 950 million. In terms of assets, it has valued at Rs. 55,000 crores. Doordarshan uses four India made satellites, INSAT 1D, INSAT 2A, and INSAT 2B and, INSAT 2C to distribute 16 channels while DD-India is distributed by PS4. DD-1 uses two satellites, INSAT 1D and, INSAT 2C, besides 82 high powered transmitters and 596 low powered transmitters to distribute satellite feed to length and breadth of India. DD-2 uses INSAT 2C, 6 high powered transmitters and 37 low powered transmitters. DD-1 claims a total viewership of 448 million while DD-2 claims that 112 million people view it. Among the regional channels, the highest viewership of 28 million is claimed by DD-8, the channel distributes programme feed in both Telegu and Punjabi languages. DD-5 and DD-7, the Tamil and Bengali channels, which claim the viewership of over 27 million, follow this. The other major regional channels are the Kannada channels, called DD-9, which claim audience size of 20 million followed by DD-4, the Malayalam channel that claims a viewership of 12 million. The number of programme production centres in 1980 was 10 and in 1998 it had gone up to 45.14 Indirectly it enables Doordarshan to produce more programmes to cater to varied needs specific to particular language, culture or region.
According to Doordarshan'97, the number of satellite households was 14.2 million. Doordarshan'98 indicates that there are 18.4 million cable and satellite (C&S) households. Some other estimates have indicated that this number may be about 20 million. Doordarshan '96 has quoted the national Readership Survey (NRS) 1995 study regarding the comparative reach of different channels. The primary channel of Doordarshan National (DD 1) reaches all the television households. The DD 2 channel reaches 44.9 per cent of the households, Zee TV reach is 29.3 per cent, STAR Plus 28.1 per cent and Sun TV 7.0 per cent.

Despite all the limitations of Doordarshan, when it comes to the television content, it remains to be praise worthy. To understand the same, the supply of television content from foreign satellite channels is to be seen as an addition to Doordarshan primary channel (DD 1). As already indicated, all of the television households receive DD 1 programmes. Doordarshan has defined for itself a social philosophy which insists that Doordarshan programmes work as a catalyst for social change, stimulate scientific temper, aim towards social welfare of women, children and the less privileged, create values of appreciation of art and cultural heritage along with entertainment. This means that whether programmes transmitted are of Indian origin or foreign origin, they have to conform to social objectives. Doordarshan devotes almost 36 hours per week for educational programmes.

The various satellite channels too have their own sets of values and agenda, which determines their programme content. For instance, Discovery is a niche channel, devoted to environment, culture, science, wildlife etc. and works as enrichment channel. BBC World, CNN, STAR News are devoted news and current affairs channels. They also strive for profit but work within the boundaries defined for them. The specific goals of private satellite channels, especially the foreign channels are different from those of
Doordarshan. Most importantly, private cable and satellite channels are guided by the profit motive. In addition to the mainstream channels like Doordarshan and foreign satellite channels in India, there are provisions for specialised development communication programmes, which are either run as a specific development communication project or mandated through the philosophy of Doordarshan.  

On the one hand, private satellite channels are trying to follow the agenda set by Doordarshan, on the other hand, commercially sponsored entertainment programmes are shown at the “prime-time” which is actually the time when people are watching television. Doordarshan is caught in a dilemma as to how to compete with private channels and also perform its role as a public broadcasting service. The market forces are compelling Doordarshan to show more of what people want to see rather than what they ought to see. The Working Group on Doordarshan Software strengthens this view when it says:

“Doordarshan is not in the business of television for raking in the maximum revenue from commercials, advertisements are incidental to its essentially educative role as a publicly owned mass medium”.  

The media environment in India has witnessed a dramatic change over the last couple of decades. New developments in the broadcasting industry have been breathtaking in their scope and in the challenges that they present to broadcasters – both public and private. But for more so for a government-run public broadcasting service. For unlike private broadcasters, public broadcasting is bound by its mandate to offer programming that is not just commercially driven, but one that “educates, informs and entertains” the majority of the people. However noble its intentions, a public broadcaster has ultimately to operate in an industry that becomes aggressively
competitive, even as government funding becomes more and more inaccessible. So it faces the twin challenges of offering programming that has to meet "public interest" objective while competing for resources with private broadcasters who are not bound by any such "public-oriented" motives.\textsuperscript{17}

Doordarshan has taken several steps to meet this challenge. It now encourages a large number of private producers to contribute to programming. Even news and current affairs programme, till sometime back a monopoly of the state-owned channel, and were given out to private producers. Doordarshan has started several specialised channels. Through regional and national networking it meets local or regional and national needs. The qualities of programmes have also improved. Doordarshan has tried to meet the new challenges by revamping its programmes of both and involving the talent and resources of private producers. The viewer preference for entertainment oriented shows have been "respected" by Doordarshan.\textsuperscript{18} In short, this is clearly a case where influx of commercial enterprises has improved the quality of public service sphere. But the public sphere in India leaves a great deal to be desired. Doordarshan has a great deal to achieve to ensure what the Joshi Working Group on Software has stated, i.e.: "authentic and appealing programmes based on intimate interaction with the people". Further according to this report Doordarshan programmes must reflect "the changing life pattern and problems of the basic social categories of the Indian society, the village-dwelling working peasants, artisans and labourers, the town classes and the intelligentsia, women with real problems, conflicts and aspirations; the Tribals of different parts of India with their colourful heritage but their insecure future of Indian children embodying the hope and promise of India's future."\textsuperscript{19}
Doordarshan completed forty years of its existence on September 15, 1999. For most of these forty years, television in India has been synonymous with Doordarshan. Though for much of its existence, Doordarshan has tried hard not to generate enough excitement in its viewers, as an organisation it has consistently made news that has been watched and criticised Doordarshan and its programmes have not been able to make the expected difference in spreading education, furthering development, spreading social awareness. Development-oriented programmes have often gone un-comprehended by their target audience. Today it is going through another of its periodic cycles of rejuvenation. Doordarshan is trying to hard sell, new channels are being added, new deals struck. Doordarshan currently appears to be more pre-occupied with keeping up with the competition with other private channels in urban markets. The moves towards atomisation that are now going on may end up pushing it further in this direction, rather than establishing an independent broadcasting authority free from compulsions of both state and private commercial interest.
Endnotes

6 Ibid. p. 32.
10 Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Act, 1990.