

**“Prime Time Television on Cable and Satellite Entertainment and News Channels – Do they conform to existing programme norms and are the proposed guidelines by Information and Broadcasting Ministry adequate to safeguard civil societies’ concerns?”**

## **Final Report Submitted to NCW**

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## a. Executive Summary

### Sample

Total No. of hours: 142 hours

TV News: 72 hours (includes crime shows on TV news channels)

TV Entertainment: 70 hours

### Sample Dates

TV news channels

14 August, 2006- 2 September, 2006  
23 October, 2006 –4 November, 2006

Entertainment

21 August, 2006 – 3 September, 2006  
6 November, 2006- 17 November, 2006

### Channels Monitored

News channels

Aaj Tak, Star News, Zee News & IBN-7

Entertainment channels

Star Plus, Sony, Zee, Sab, Doordarshan National

### Timings

News: 8 pm-12 pm & 12 noon-2 pm/  
3pm-6 pm

Entertainment: 8 pm-11 pm

## 1. TV News Bulletins

- 50 per cent of the TV news coverage is devoted to Crime, Entertainment, Cricket and the Supernatural
- Infotainment news is dominant – Cricket and Bollywood are the most dominant stories genres across news channels. News is now personality-based and tabloid in nature
- So dominant are these that they receive more coverage than 16 other categories of stories
- Very uneven distribution of coverage: Crime: receives more than 12 hours; Entertainment: approximately 10 hours; Cricket: approximately 10 hours (plus coverage of other sports). Out of 70 hours monitored sample, 32 hours were devoted to these categories.

- Politics receives far less coverage
- Development news of all kinds is a non-story, receiving minimal coverage
- ✓ ***Evening coverage has Specific programmes for different news***
  - ✦ News of the day (4 bulletins)
  - ✦ Bulletin on cinema/entertainment
  - ✦ Bulletin on sports
  - ✦ Bulletin on crime
  - ✦ Bulletin on metro news
- ✓ ***There is space in the evening prime band within the metro news segments for greater emphasis on civic and public interest reports***
  - ✦ There are noticeable differences between afternoon and evening coverage when we compare Zee News (afternoon) with Star News and Aaj Tak (evening). Evening news is more political oriented and topical – it is a mix of news of the day of any nature. The stories are in the nature of a recap of the day
  - ✦ Afternoon concentrates on breaking news, live coverage. As it progresses into the late afternoon, the stories are shorter. Here, the emphasis is on stories being reported as developments occur. Otherwise **space is devoted to stories that could make way for more ‘people’ oriented news.**

## 2. Crime Shows

- ✓ **Quantitative findings**
  - ✦ If we look at the overall picture, we find that **murder** and **crimes against women** are the two highest categories of crimes reported on crime shows. The high incidence of crime against women stories is across channels but higher on Star News and Zee News.
  - ✦ Out of total number of 32 stories of crimes against women a fairly significant number of reports are related to violence against young women who are below the age of 25.
  - ✦ Men have been quoted in stories at almost 3:1 ratio in relation to women.
  - ✦ Within this Institutional authority is the highest representation and overwhelmingly male.
  - ✦ Male point of view used to tell the story of a crime – at every level. Therefore, we find that authority is basically represented by males
  - ✦ Crime coverage is both in the metro cities and small towns but women related crimes and murders are more from the bigger cities.
  - ✦ Victims are generally from the weaker sections of society in metros or smaller towns. The one exception is dowry cases – here, most are members of richer families.

## ✓ Depiction of Crimes – Some Problematic Portrayals / Treatment

When we look at the manner in which crimes have been constructed and reported, we find that while the crime shows have done a singular service to viewers by devoting space and time to crimes that befall citizens all over India, there is evidence that portrayals need to improve. Here are some areas where we find problems.

- The victim of crimes, very often a woman, is shown on television, thus revealing her identity. Even when mosaic is used to hide the face, we can very often still see the victim. Also, there is a tendency to interview people in the same complex, village or neighbourhood making such identification very easy. Should victims, especially of sexual crimes such as rape be publicly identified?
- Since victims and their families are so often from the weaker sections of society and in many instances, neither fully literate or educated, their helplessness is exploited by the media who take advantage of their lack of legal knowledge – thus, victims willingly speak to camera and allow their families and themselves to be recorded by the camera.
- The alleged assailant or criminal, accused is almost always shown. Sometimes his or her face has been hidden by the police with a cloth but more often than person is shown. We have instances, where the accused speaks on camera. Is this a violation of privacy laws? Also, when the accused has not been proven, is it right to expose him?
- In the same vein, should victims' dead bodies or injured bodies be shown? These visuals can be very disturbing especially for children.
- Often crimes are reconstructed. As we have already pointed out above, this is problematic from the point of view of exposing alleged victims and assailants and also providing information on how to commit crimes. Also, if shows such as *Sansani* can show crimes and reconstruct actual events why are such reconstructions not allowed in films? There should be one law in this case.
- Most crime stories are framed within a very dramatic format with fast cuts on visuals and very loud, ominous sound effects. When this is combined with the dramatic manner of presentation by anchors and reporters as we have mentioned above, it makes for a highly sensational presentation. These are real crimes and not imagined ones. Should they not be treated in a far more practical and factual manner so that they are stark rather than entertaining?
- Equally questionable is the lack of facts in crime reporting. Most of the stories in our sample have very little supporting evidence beyond the alleged crime. Most is based on hearsay or accusations. Victims claim the crime is committed by the accused.

- Another area that needs to be considered is the portrayal of crimes that involve minors. We have listed seven instances, where a minor – most often a girl – is allegedly the victim of a crime. Often, the minor is shown either in a photograph or in reality which is unacceptable. Names are also revealed and they are interviewed. Even when they are traumatized. In at least one case, a minor was the main eyewitness to a crime.
- The emphasis on supernatural ‘crimes’ and shows devoted to them is a questionable practise. For example, crimes by ‘ghosts’, crimes of hypnotism, etc.: there is nothing to suggest that any allegation is true. Also, the nature of the crime is not clear. The fact that superstitious programmes also peddle beliefs (that if you pray to a crow things will be auspicious) only encourages beliefs in tantric puja.
- Crimes against women, and sex related crimes are the most popular crimes reported on crime shows. Whereas this does expose crimes against women and creates awareness about them, we have to wonder whether showing women as a victim is beneficial?
- The lack of legal or institutional intervention in the crimes reported is another area of concern. Crimes are reported to have been committed but we are seldom told the legal provisions that apply. Nor is there any information of how we should deal with such crimes – ie, if it is a question of rape, what does the victim have to do immediately? Medical information is seldom provided. No helpline or numbers to call – police, hospitals etc is not provided.
- Petty crimes, murder and sex related crimes dominate crime shows. We hear very little of other types of crimes- eg, corruption, economic, etc. Also, we notice that most crimes reported have no follow-up stories. Since the first story is so sketchy on details, and is based entirely on accusations, follow-ups would help establish the real facts of a case. We note that this practise is only followed in high profile cases, eg., Jessica Lal murder, Nihari killings, or when the channel feels it has contributed to the legal developments.

### **3. Serials**

- We find that 68 per cent of the evening entertainment sample is devoted to drama serials – mostly four times a week. Zee and Star Plus have 85 per cent of drama serials while Sony has 66 per cent. 3
- 32 per cent of the monitored sample consists of comedy, suspense, reality, supernatural/spiritual shows. Of this, the comedy section is the highest and most apparent on Sab and Doordarshan.
- There is a difference between drama and comedy in their profiles- dramas are much more about families while the sitcoms are based both at home and in professional locations. We will also find a difference in the nature of issues: drama

relates to family matters and business rivalries, the comedies are more involved in romantic entanglements and misunderstandings between the

### **A description of the dominant demographic characteristics of the drama serials**

- The setting is urban
- The characters fair, predominately within the 20-50 age group
- They live in joint families
- The men are mostly self-employed in business
- The women are homemakers although a significant percentage work primarily in professional capacities
- Just under 50 per cent are married and over one-third are single
- Overwhelmingly Hindu, from Gujarat and Maharashtra with a strong bias towards Mumbai
- Sab has a different profile than the other channels because it has more sitcoms than drama
- Doordarshan dramas reflect the same ethnographic features

### **Issues in family dramas**

The following **7 issues** were preeminent across serials and channels in our sample period:

- Family Matters (relating to relationships, family politics, events, celebrations, bereavements, illnesses in the family, individual's ambitions, feelings, etc)
- Romance, love, marriage, divorce
- Rivalry in the family
- Rivalry in business matters/crime/ values/brotherhood-sisterhood/parenting
- Another category of issues that occurs both as the main issue and often as the sub-issue at one time or another in serials is the social category: we find subjects such **trade unionism, surrogate motherhood, illiteracy, gender inequality, status of the girl child, religion, colour bias** occur in different serials. Zee has the most number of shows dealing with social and gender issues.
- The serials appear across channels and account for 50 % of the drama serials telecast across these channels
- **Violence:** Verbal violence and violence in sound effects is much higher than physical or mental violence. **Indeed, we found only 9 acts of physical violence across all channels**
- Almost no violence on DD and Sab – one of the explanations for this could be the fact that our sample contains more comedy than drama for these two channels.
- We have threatening dialogues as the most common form of verbal violence. **Other types include, eve-teasing, screaming, double meaning, abuse, arguments, anger, accusations, etc.**
- **If look at it from the point of view of figures, we find that 33 per cent of all the episodes in our sample had one form of violence or another.**
- Zee has the most violence – especially *Dulhan* and *Betiyaan* – while Sony has very little.

- The data indicates that most of the violence is woman-oriented: **more than 80 per cent of the violence is directed towards women. Of this 56 per cent is committed by family members. What is equally disturbing is that there is a high incidence of violence by women towards women (46 per cent of the violence).** Zee's serials have the highest incidence of woman-to-woman violence.
- In the family, the violence is perpetrated by almost all members.



## **b. News Programme -Analysis**

In this monitoring sample, we have chosen to concentrate on the three Hindi news channels that are considered the most popular according to A.C.Nielsen's TV viewership rating system. – Aaj Tak, Star News and Zee News. We have ignored English news channels because: they cater to a minority of viewers who live in the bigger cities whereas the Hindi news channels enjoy a much wider overall audience in the North, irrespective of class or economic distinctions.

The sample reflects news channel coverage during the prime time evening belt of 10-12 pm and 8-10 pm on Aaj Tak and Star News while Zee News sample has been taken from the afternoon between 12-2 pm and 3-6 pm. The latter was done to assess how different daytime coverage of news is from the evening. This was done over a period of four months. The first during August-September 2006, the second October –November 2006.

As will be seen from the break up of the sample below, news channels broadcast more than what used to be strictly considered news. The coverage falls into different types of programming covering a range of subjects. Thus, other than political and economic news, events of the day, considerable space is devoted to cricket, entertainment, crime, etc.

### **Dates:**

<b>14 August- 02 September</b>	<b>– Aaj Tak, Star News –10 pm –12am</b>
	<b>– IBN 7 –11 pm. – 11.30 pm</b>
<b>23 October –04 November</b>	<b>– Aaj Tak, Star News – 8 pm-10pm,</b>
	<b>– Zee News – 12 noon-2 pm and 3 pm –6 pm</b>

Here is the monitoring sample

**Total sample: 72 hours**

<b>Star News:</b>	<b>25 hours –</b>	<b>8pm.- 12 midnight</b>
<b>Aaj Tak:</b>	<b>25 hours –</b>	<b>8 pm. -12 midnight</b>
<b>Zee News:</b>	<b>20 hours –</b>	<b>12 noon –2 pm, 3 pm-6 pm</b>
<b>IBN 7:</b>	<b>02 hours –</b>	<b>11 pm – 11.30 pm</b>

Different types of news comprise these hours: a brief explanation:

### **NEWS BULLETINS – DIFFERENT SEGMENTS**

	Star News(25 hrs)	Aaj Tak(25 hrs)	Zee News (20 hrs)	IBN 7 (2 hrs)
News Bulletin 33 hour	12 hours • <i>National Reporter</i> • <i>Satyame Jayate</i> • <i>24 Ghante</i> • <i>Star News</i> )	11 hours • <i>Aaj Tak News</i> • <i>Primetime News</i> • <i>10 tak</i>	10 hours • <i>Hindustan Hamara</i>	
City News 6 hours	3 hours • <i>City 60</i>	3 hours • <i>Mumbai Metro</i>		
Crime shows 8.30 hours	2 hours • <i>Sansani</i>	2.30 hours • <i>Vardat</i> • <i>Jurm</i>	2 hours • <i>Crime Reporter</i>	2 hours • <i>Criminal</i>
Supernatural shows 3.30 hours	1 hour • <i>Kaun Hai</i>		2.30 hours • <i>Indrajal</i> • <i>Kaal Kapaat Mahakal</i> • <i>Honi Anboni</i> • <i>Masjid Baba ki Phoonk</i> (1 hrs)	
Cinema	3 hours • <i>Khabbar Filmi Hai</i>	2.30 hours • Special on Cinema	2.00 hours • <i>Li'l Champs</i> • <i>Shah Rukh's birthday</i> • <i>Ek Shyam Amitabh Ke Saath</i> • <i>Release of film Jaaneman</i>	
'Special' on cricket	2.30 hours	3 hours	30 minutes • <i>Cricket</i>	
Other Stories	30 minutes • <i>Poll Khol</i>  1 hour • <i>Benakaab: Kinnaron ka Clinic</i> (on eunuchs)	3 hours • <i>Visbesh</i> (News feature)	1 hour • <i>Indira Gandbi memorial</i>  2.30 hours • <i>Mughalon ka</i> • <i>Mujra, Kabin Garmi</i> • <i>Kabin Sardi</i> • <i>Aisa Bhi Hota Hai</i> • <i>Chbebre pe Chbebra</i> • <i>Jiski Bibi Lambi</i>	

## FINDINGS

### Categories of stories

There are four categories of stories in TV news coverage: (in descending order of importance)

#### Categories of news

- News item/report
- Feature
- Discussion
- News Analysis

#### Nature of coverage

- Outdoor Shoots
- Interviews
- Live feeds
- Studio Interviews/discussions
- Press Conference

### Comments

There is a distinct pattern to the coverage. Across news channels, news reports are completely dominant – as we would expect in a news bulletin. However, in a four-hour prime time feed you also expect a certain degree of analysis and discussion of the major events of the day, especially in the evening prime time band when the audience wants to know about the events of the day and understand their implications. The data indicates that this analysis takes the form of interviews, features or is then absent. Studio discussions/analysis are very few and far between.

The **nature of coverage** indicates that there is a greater emphasis on location shoots and **'live'** inputs from correspondents who interact with the anchor in the studio. They provide the factual events of the day, or background and analysis to stories through Q&As with anchors or interviews with people involved in the event.

**'Live'** coverage of events even as they occur is the buzzword. It is coupled with the phenomenon of 'Breaking News'. This on-the-spot style of reportage could be for anything – from a terrorist attack or festival shopping, press conference, etc. Such coverage has become the norm in the daytime.

There is also an attempt by all channels to provide exclusives. Thus, we find a high percentage of outdoor, live shoots with interviews. Conversely, studio interviews and discussions or press conferences receive far less space.

We should add that a channel like NDTV India, although not a part of our sample, has a different profile. It has more discussions in the studio. Similarly, the English news channels tend to combine live, outdoor coverage with studio discussions in the evening belt.

## Content

In terms of subjects covered in the news, we found four major subjects dominated our sample (in descending order of quantitative weightage given to each one)\*:

- Entertainment, Arts & Culture
- Religious matters
- Political
- Crime and violence

Whereas, we did quantify the content under different subject heads, we are not providing figures since the data had to be analysed not only in terms of subjects covered but the amount of time devoted to each category. Therefore, we have to judge coverage based on the number of times item occurs/duration of coverage/placement of item. According to our analysis of all variables.

If we tabulate the timings for the respective categories this is what we find:

- Crime; More than 12 hours
- Entertainment: approximately 10 hours
- Cricket: approximately 10 hours (plus coverage of other sports)

These figures are based on dedicated shows plus news items that were for 8 minutes and above. We have not added Supernatural shows (2.30 hours) and stories in news bulletins below 8 minutes. If we were to calculate on an approximate basis we would find that **Crime, Entertainment, Cricket and Supernatural** account for **50 per cent** or more of the coverage in our monitored sample.

The above four categories dominate the news coverage across the news channels. In fact, so dominant are these that they receive more coverage than 16 other categories of stories: **Sports, human interest, economic/business, health, terrorism, development, corruption, international/diplomacy, disaster, gender, national security, legal, science and technology, environment, weather, trivial items**, are the other categories of news.

The most compelling feature of these findings is the downgrading in importance accorded politics. That entertainment news and news on social subjects like the death of the Parsi community in Mumbai, or religious celebrations - Ganesh festival, Id and Chhat pooja - should take precedence over political issues such as the Office of Profit Bill or the OBC Reservations Bill, indicates how different the focus of news has become - it was not so even three years ago.

We will examine this further but the figures suggest that news is now increasingly associated with subjects that either concern the public – such as crime and violence and religious festivities – or subjects that interest them the most such as Bollywood news, gossip and sports. The latter is the fifth highest category of news, especially prominent on Aaj Tak in terms of number of stories but if we look at the time devoted to cricket, it will place almost as high as entertainment news

Here's a look at the top categories

## ENTERTAINMENT & ARTS, CULTURE

This category has registered the highest number of stories. Hindi news channels have increasingly turned to Bollywood for news to fill in time. Cinema is a popular subject and easy to feature because film footage is easily available from producers keen to get maximum coverage for their films. Film actors are very accessible to the media. Clearly, what passes for news is also entertainment and increasingly with high coverage for categories such as cinema, sports and crime, news channels are into making news entertaining.

The category is dominated by cinema stories especially Bollywood. There is also a fair number of TV-related stories. The latter category has risen in importance due to reality shows such as *Li'l Champs*, *Indian Idol*, *The Great Laughter Challenge Show*, etc. Also, since these shows appear on entertainment channels owned by Star TV and Zee TV, their news channels provide a cross-promo opportunity. Star News especially provides considerable news about TV and its programmes in dedicated shows such as *Saas-Babu Aur Saazish*. The news is in the form of updates on storylines, characters and developments in serials as well as personalized portraits of the TV stars.

All the news channels have a film-based dedicated slot in the prime time band. They also broadcast specials – such as *Ek Shyam Amitabh Bachchan ke Saath* on Zee TV – the occasion for the story was Xdelhi University conferring a PhD on him.

As far as Bollywood is concerned, anything goes as a subject matter for a story. It could be a film release, film music release, box office debut and film reviews, financial news about film budgets, the *mubarrat* of a film, film awards, ceremonies, birthdays, anniversaries, fashion, events, gossip about professional and personal lives of Bollywood stars (politics too) and any triviality about the industry and its personalities that news channels believe will interest the viewer.

Stories are so wide and the variety so infinite and inventive that is difficult to know what may be the next subject for coverage – for instance, there were stories on the weight of the *lehenga* worn by Aishwary Rai in *Umrao Jaan!* This emphasis on Bollywood-based news has paid off and is very viewer-friendly. Indeed, you could say that it is dictated by popularity – cinema, sports, crime are the highest viewed subjects on the news channels. And when sports and cinema come together, it's even better. eg., Brian Lara and Sachin Tendulkar make a guest appearance in a film (Star News).

In our monitored sample, there is news of Bollywood both in the main bulletins as well as in special news segments devoted to Bollywood, such as *Cinema* (20.30, Aaj Tak), *Khabbar Filmi Hai* (20.30, Star News). Zee News' afternoon sample does not have any dedicated segment although it often carries lengthy features on Bollywood – eg. *Ek Shyam Amitabh Bachchan ke Saath*.

Here are some of the stories in the main bulletin:

- Mallika Sherawat's birthday (Aaj Tak)
- Prince Andrew's fascination with Amitabh Bachchan (Zee News)
- The release of *Umrao Jaan* (Aaj Tak and Star News)
- Reviews of films (Aaj Tak)
- Shahid and Kareena's holiday plans (Star News)
- PIL on *Omkarra* (Star News)
- Shilpa Shetty being a judge on the TV reality show, *Jhalak Dikhlai Jaa* (Star News)
- Shah Rukh Khan's dancing at Lakshmi Mittal's son's wedding (Star News)

As far as the dedicated film programmes are concerned, Star's *Filmi Khabbar Hai*, carries a feature on one topic for the entire 30-minute length of the programme. Thus, one episode was devoted to Aishwarya Rai and Abhishek Bachchan spending Diwali together, another to the remake of *Sholay* and a third to *Sitaron Ke Shaadi* which is about celebrity weddings and films stars. Aaj Tak's *Cinema* in a similar vein, featured Mallika Sherawat, and Aishwarya's birthdays, and a special report on *Umrao Jaan* that compared the original with the remake. Although we did not find it in our sample, these specials can continue for even longer, in the evening prime time belt.

The fact that such items are given such lengthy coverage is a measure of how much the news has changed. And it is not only on Hindi news channels – English news channels like CNN-IBN and NDTV 24X7 also have dedicated film news/review shows which carry news and features on Bollywood first and then Hollywood. The fact that such dedicated programmes on the English channels are also broadcast prime time, attests to the popularity the channels believe such shows enjoy with the audience.

This suggests that news coverage of Bollywood is as much about the movies as about 'personalities' and gossip about their private or professional lives. This is the kind of news that has made people refer to the tabloid nature of TV news.

It demands that we question the definition of what constitutes news.

## ARTS & CULTURE

This category does not find much importance in the news. It doesn't have any dedicated slots either, like cinema. On the basis of the small sample we suggest that the stories that do receive coverage are of two kinds: personality-oriented or out of the ordinary. Thus, all the channels covered the death or last rites of shehnai maestro, Bismillah Khan and film director, Hrishikesh Mukherjee, respectively. After that the subjects differ: while Zee News felt it important to tell us that two horses were named Aishwarya and Kajol for the way they danced (Zee News) and that Ratan Tata inaugurated a painting exhibition 9Zee

News), Star News reported on how Ganesh idols are created while Aaj Tak visited Parliament for the installation of a spiritual leader's statue (Swami Vivekanand).

It seems such subjects receive greater importance and coverage in the afternoon schedule because we find a high number of arts and culture stories on Zee News which represents the afternoon slot in our sample.

## **RELIGIOUS & SOCIAL**

We have taken this as one category since the two are often so inextricably entwined however, the figures clearly indicate that, of the two, religion is predominant.

The fact that the category of religion has received fairly extensive coverage might come as a surprise. However, if we remember that these are Hindi news channels that cater to the Hindi heartland, it becomes easier to understand. Religious events are important in themselves and are often treated as social occasions. Thus, with the emphasis clearly on viewer-friendly news, this category has risen in importance.

Coverage is fairly eclectic:

- Religious festivals such as Id and Ganapati and Chhat pooja -all news channels monitored
- The death of four people in a stampede at Jagannath temple in Puri - all news channels
- Fatwa against life insurance and share bazaar (Aaj Tak)
- Rumour of Mary's tear in a statue in Mumbai (Aaj Tak)
- The face of Sai Baba seen on a wall at Surat (Star News)

While the Zee sample was not always contiguous with Star and Aaj Tak, we find that the Siddhi Vinayak gold roof was also covered by Aaj Tak and Star News as was the uproar after Sikh boys in Jaipur had their hair forcibly cut off.

Coverage of events such as Id, Chhat Pooja or Ganesh Chaturthi can be live and are often repeated, thus receiving more coverage. Also Id celebrations received coverage over three days.

If there is religion can superstition be far behind? Zee News had a story on how ashes were emerging from Sai Baba's photograph and a devotee of Lord Shiva jumps on a bed of thorns.

**Social issues** have not received comparable coverage – there is almost no coverage of social issues on Zee News or Aaj Tak. The social subjects covered on Star News include the death rites of Parsis and stories linking education to society – eg., 8<sup>th</sup> Standard Meerut students check Agra University papers, or Maharashtra government step in to make it mandatory for parents to give their children primary education.

There is an absence of any other kind of story on social issues, other than those linked to crime which have been covered in the Crime section.

## **POLITICS**

Although demoted, politics and politicians in particular do feature prominently in the news. We need not dwell too much on this category other than to mention the topics given prominent coverage:

- Central government cabinet reshuffle and expansion
- Vande Mataram controversy regarding the singing of the national song on its centenary celebrations
- Uma Bharati loses Lok Sabha seat
- Office of Profit, OBC Bill in Parliament (Parliament was in session during our monitoring period).
- The news is also at the regional level- eg. Municipal elections in UP, Sikh students hair cut, etc.

Much of the coverage related to live reports from correspondents and press conferences fall into this political category of news.

The paucity of political news from any part of the country, or major political party news is what stands out in this sample. Most of the news is related to issues concerning events surrounding Parliament. This emphasis on news from the national Capital is not unusual. In our previous studies related to news and elections, for instance, we found a similar bias towards news from Delhi – and the consequent lack of news from the states or regions. The fact that these are Hindi news channels seems to have ensured that news from the South is negligible. On Southern based news channels there is a similar bias towards news from the South. Which presents us with the interesting phenomenon: what is national news? Are we all watching different types of news?

## **CRIME AND VIOLENCE**

Although there are dedicated shows for this category, its importance and viewer-interest profile have seen it emerge as a top category in news bulletins, too. These crime reports in the news bulletins are often repeats of items in the crime shows such as *Vardaat* (Aaj Tak), *Sansani* (Star News).

They cover everything from terrorism to petty crimes, at the national, regional and local levels. For instance:

- Professor Sabharwal's murder in Ujjain– all channels
- Sikh students forcible haircut in Jaipur – all channels
- Tension between communities in Allahabad (Aaj Tak and Star News)

The other crimes stories relate primarily to murder and petty crimes – for instance, the robbery of a gold biscuit from a jeweller (Star News), Kaushalya Bhalla, senior citizen's murder in Delhi (Aaj Tak and Star News), MBBS student's murder in Patiala college, man



tries to kill wife after watching Kabhi Alvida Nahin Kehna, assailant Uzhar Patel killed while he was killing North East tourists at Gateway of India, Mumbai, a property dealer is murdered (Zee News), etc. Notice that all the stories are from different parts of India, although they have the common element of murder. The reasons for the murders also vary. What is noteworthy is that crime is one subject that receives coverage on an all India basis. Despite an urban bias, there is coverage of crimes in small cities and towns of India, too.

The fact that crimes find such widespread coverage in regular prime time news bulletins indicates that news channels in Hindi attach a great deal of importance to the coverage of crime. This has positive and negative fall outs: positive in the sense that crimes are now in the public domain and can serve as a warning to citizens or salutary deterrent to potential criminals, negative in the sense that crime is exploited to garner higher viewership and often receives sensational coverage.

## **SPORTS**

Alongwith entertainment, this is the major new news category that receives precedence over everything when India plays or there is any development related to Indian cricket. It is often 'Breaking News' and the top story of the evening, day. Even cricket matches that do not feature India, are high in the headlines – for instance, the recent Chappell-Hadlee tournament between Australia and New Zealand, was in the top three stories (20.2.2007). Or the controversy featuring Darryl Hair and the Pakistan ball tampering which featured extensively in our monitoring sample as well as the selection of Indian and Pakistani teams.

While Star News and Aaj Tak gave prominence to such stories, Zee News' coverage differed slightly in that it gave personal stories related to cricketers such as Dhoni playing football.

Cricket is the only sports that receives so much coverage. Indeed, the national obsession with cricket has seen the game become a television phenomenon. News channels have found that cricket, Bollywood and crime or unusual accidents, apart from politics attract high viewership. Also cricket generates high commercial returns in terms of advertising and sponsorships and is therefore, extremely lucrative for news channels who have stolen a march on sports channels by presenting more analysis, personality features and discussions than sports channels. Indeed, it can be argued that it is a case of over exposure.

## **HUMAN INTEREST/ACCIDENTS**

These were major stories of human interest on the natural elements such as torrential rain in Ujjain, Rajasthan floods with five people stranded on a car in midstream outside Jaipur who subsequently died because no one could rescue them in time – the latter received extensive coverage as a human interest tragedy.

Other stories in this category:

- Woman gives birth to kids in floods and survives
- Disabled person gets IAS job

- City hospital license cancelled
- Adverse impact of films on children.

This is one area where the public or average citizen receives coverage. We see and hear of their plight and from the point of the viewer, this could be the most effective type of news since, like crime, it directly affects citizens.

## **TERRORISM**

The stories in this category include

Mumbai blast inquiry

- Amsterdam plane case
- Terrorist attacks in Baghdad and Srinagar
- ISI agent caught in Indian army
- Bombs found in Mumbai

## **DEVELOPMENT**

The most significant finding here is that there is a paucity of stories on any aspect of development or infrastructure. In comparison to entertainment, religion, politics or even sport, development receives short shrift. This is not new: our earlier studies on elections and news channel coverage have shown that development is never a major concern for either politicians or the channels.

However, the figures are still very worrisome. The fact that day to day concerns of the lives of people – be it infrastructure, the environment, prices etc - receive so little importance, is an indication that news channels while trying to grab eyeballs with entertainment and cricket are still to realize the potential of civic issues as a way of augmenting viewership and enjoying a meaningful relationship with the viewer. Segments such as Metro News and City 60 do exist for coverage of events in metropolitan cities, there must be greater emphasis there on such issues.

Of the channels monitored, Zee News had the highest number of stories in this category. Is that because the sample is from an afternoon slot when there seems to be more time for such stories, in the absence of major round ups of the day's events? Perhaps.

Under development we find that of the few stories covered, infrastructure has the most stories – these are related to the power crisis in Delhi, road conditions in Mumbai, Delhi sealings. On the economic side, we have a rise in the price of onions and potatoes, and Congress has asked farmers to increase productivity There are also stories about pesticides in soft drinks, the Mumbai Municipal Commission introduces a fine on those who dirty the city while on the environment front there are stories on court notices to actors Amir Khan and Salman Khan for allegedly exploiting chinkaras.

Most of the stories are from Delhi or Mumbai. This is interesting: when we looked at crime and violence in crime shows, it was apparent that the stories emanated from different parts of the Hindi belt. So, it was possible for the news channels to collect development stories – there is no dearth of such stories in the heartland – from the interiors. The comparison suggests that the channels believe crime has a universal appeal while development is much more region specific.

Even more worrisome is the abysmal coverage given to health. We could record only two stories – one on dengue fever recurrence in Delhi and deaths in Gujarat due to a viral (hanta) epidemic due to floods. There are no stories on Zee concerning health. How is it possible that in a sample covering four different weeks, there were only two stories related to health?

## **GENDER**

Gender, or in this case, stories related to women are few although in comparison to health, it has significantly more. Zee News has the highest number of such stories - once again suggesting that there is more room in the afternoon for news on subjects other than entertainment, cricket and politics.

Most of the stories in this category, unfortunately, concern crimes against women. This ranges from sexual harassment and rape to a long delayed dowry case and the abduction of girls and possible transportation to Dubai. There were two important legal stories that concerned the lives of women – the Muslim Personal Law Board says that the ‘fatwa’ is a direction not legally binding, it is only a directive and Mumbai High Court says women can work night shifts. While the first story saw only men speaking on the subject, the second had women reacting positively to night shift work, although they expressed concern over their safety.

There is one story that is worth recording: this is a half hour special on an abandoned baby girl of seven days named Khushi. Star News did the feature and discussed at length the issue of abandoned children, especially girls from every angle and reflected different opinions.

A disabled lady getting a job in IAS cadre was another noteworthy story as it drew attention to the success of women in overcoming many handicaps.

## **OTHERS**

Here, the stories concern diverse topics – all kinds of prosaic and peculiar stories which seem to have been chosen because they are oddities or ‘personality’ based. It could be Rahul Mahajan’s wedding plans, Maharashtra politicians Patel and Deshpande becoming ‘*sambhins*’, a fashion week celebration, or how the police in Bihar are scared of their own police officers and Delhi University confers a PhD on Amitabh Bachchan.

There are strange items on a hotel named Hitler, a fraud journalist is caught, or that after studying his horoscope the pandit says Narendra Modi will rule Gujarat for another two terms; there's a Dhoni look-alike in Ahmedabad. And, there is an interesting story about how Dawood Ibrahim is afraid his wife! This story was covered by all the channels in great detail – why, it is not clear. All the channels also covered a train engine being stolen in Karachi, Pakistan. There were also stories on the adverse impact of films on children and how the little boy called Prince, who achieved fame by being stuck in a ditch for 48 hours before he could be rescued, was invited as chief guest to a function. (Zee News), dog owners protest against new pet rules in Chandigarh.

## VOICES

This section relates to the people who have been quoted, interviewed or participated in a discussion. It is to give us an idea of the kind of representation. Below are some of our findings:

Men far outnumber women:

In spite of there being fewer political stories, politicians are the most often quoted category of people:

- Politicians: 28 %
- Professionals: 16 %
- Common Man: 13 %
- Security personnel: 12 %
- Actors: 06 %
- Sportspersons: 04 %
- Others: 20% (President, V.President, bureaucrats, business, social activist, religious leaders, etc)

Most of these categories are self-evident: if we look at the category of story categories we will find that entertainment, cricket, politics and crime constitute the top four. That fact that there are so few cricketers and film stars in relation to the time and number of stories spent on them, indicates that the coverage in those two categories was based on footage and anchors comments rather than interviews.

In the category of politicians, Congress and UPA, followed by BJP and NDA dominate those quoted. Shiv Sena and RJD have a minimal representation. Unlike earlier studies on election coverage when we found that leading politicians from the Congress (Sonia Gandhi) and BJP (Advani, Vajpayee) were dominant amongst those quoted, we find that there is a much wider array of politicians in this sample. Apart from Prime Minister Dr.Manmohan Singh, Congress President Sonia Gandhi there are other spokespersons from the Congress including Pranab Mukherjee, Urban Affairs Minister Jaipal Reddy (because of sealings in Delhi) and Health Minister Ramodass. There is also RJD's Laloo Yadav, BJP's L.K.Advani. Other than that there are no prominent party spokespersons.

In the category of 'common man' we find public spokespersons in stories related to the sealing drive in Delhi, the price rise of essential commodities and the OBC reservation policy announced by the government.

## **LOCATION OF STORIES**

Our research indicates that an overwhelming number of stories are from the capital Delhi and then Mumbai. Together the two metropolitan cities account for approximately 60 per cent of the stories.

Delhi stories are more political and judicial given that there was a Cabinet reshuffle and that Parliament was in session and saw the OBC reservation Bill, a Black Day observed over fisticuffs, a discussion on the Bihar rape of Dalit women, Vande Mataram controversy, etc. The Supreme Court or Delhi High Court were involved in a number of cases during our study period, including the Delhi sealing drive, the Priyadarshini Matto case, Ram Jethmalani's decision to represent Manu Sharma, cancellation of 18 city hospitals, and the Supreme Court demanding an explanation from the Delhi Government on the power situation in the capital. Also there was lengthy coverage of India Fashion Show in Delhi

Mumbai stories relate to entertainment stories, Sensex stories, Lakme Fashion Week, the terrorist scare on an Air India flight from Amsterdam, the inquiry into the Mumbai blasts, Rahul Mahajan's wedding, film director, Hrishikesh Mukherjee's death, Chhat pooja, etc.

Stories from different parts of the country, basically in the North are related to crime and natural phenomenon (rains, floods, accidents) on Aaj Tak with some stories on sports, politics. On Star News the distribution is somewhat different with a greater emphasis on local political stories. Crime and sports, plus controversies over Vande Mataram and Shah Rukh Khan's comparison of milk with Coca Cola also figure along with crime and natural phenomenon such as rains and floods.

Zee's afternoon coverage is fairly similar and does not need much comment except that trivial pursuit stories such as horses named after Aishwarya and Kajol.

Thus we find that stories from other parts of the country, other than Delhi and Mumbai are essentially from the North. These stories relate to crime, violence, and then politics and sports. This is worrisome, since it means 'national' news is very little on prime time bulletins on Hindi news channels other than that from Delhi and Mumbai.

## **CITY SPECIFIC NEWS**

In our sample, we have two city specific news shows: *City 60* on Star News and *Mumbai Metro* on Aaj Tak.

While stories which are also in regular news bulletins feature in *City 60* such as Sikh boys forcible haircut in Delhi, or Ganapati Festival, Lakme Fashion show, Rahul Mahajan's wedding in Mumbai, there are also stories of public and civic interest. For instance:

- New Maharashtra government amendment that makes it mandatory to send children to school
- Delhi's MCD announces fine for dirtying city
- Mumbai High Court demands explanation on poor road maintenance

On Aaj Tak's *Mumbai Metro* we see a similar profile for the stories with space for public interest stories too:

- High tech taxis in Mumbai
- Mumbai High Court on roads
- Papier mache Ganapatis for environmental reasons
- Mumbai High Court rules that no adult films to be telecast on cable TV channels

**What we can surmise from this is that there is space in the evening prime band within these segments for greater emphasis on civic and public interest reports.**

#### **Afternoon and evening: a comparison**

There are noticeable differences between afternoon and evening coverage when we compare Zee News (afternoon) with Star News and Aaj Tak (afternoon).

Evening news is more political oriented and topical – it is a mix of news of the day of any nature. The stories are in the nature of a recap of the day

Afternoon concentrates on breaking news, live coverage. As it progresses into the late afternoon, the stories are shorter. Here, the emphasis is on stories being reported as developments occur eg., Reliance factory fire, threat to PM, announcement of ISI agent in Army by Defense Minister, Indira Gandhi's death anniversary, etc.. There is less dedicated programming with only Crime and Supernatural segments.

If there is no breaking news stories in the afternoon we have the unusual category of stories such as *Jiski Bivi Lambi, Kabni Garmi Kabhi Sardi, Jain Sadhvi* getting married (one entire bulletin was devoted to this on Zee News).

There are few development, economic or social and human interest stories. This was one slot that would have been ideal for such coverage but it is not utilized.

#### **EVENING COVERAGE HAS FAR MORE CATEGORIES: FOR STAR NEWS AND AAJ TAK THERE ARE DISCRETE SEGMENTS FOR THE EVENING:**

- News of the day (4 bulletins)
- Bulletin on cinema/entertainment,
- Bulletin on sports
- Bulletin on crime
- Bulletin on metro news

This roughly accounts for the break of the 4 hour sample we have take for the evening given that each bulletin/segment lasts for 30 minutes.

**Conclusions:**

- 50 per cent of the news coverage is on Crime, Entertainment, Cricket and the Supernatural
- Infotainment news is dominant
- Only Cabinet expansion receives high coverage in politics
- Development is a non-story
- Crime; More than 12 hours
- Entertainment: approximately 10 hours
- Cricket: approximately 10 hours (plus coverage of other sports)

## LENGHTHY STORIES

### Aaj Tak

One hour: *Li'l Champs* – just before the finals

30 minutes

- *Vishesh*: Life of Dawood Ibrahim, Mumbai's Underworld,
- 3 cricket stories relating to India-Australia, Do or Die for India.
- Big B's PhD.
- Cricket: ICC and Pakistan, Ball Tampering, Inzaman in trouble, Darryl Hair controversy, Phir Wah! Team Laya Hoon, Sachin ki Ketaab. Four and half hours of cricket!!!
- Discussion on Vande Mataram:
- Lakme Fashion show

### Aaj Tak

- 18 minutes: Life insurance and share business are illegal by a Fatwa
- 18 minutes; Cabinet reshuffle and expansion
- 17 minutes: Maut Ka Tamasha- on people stranded on top of a car in the floods of Rajasthan
- 15 minutes: Dravid and Yuvraj nominated for ICC awards
- 12 minutes: Violence in Parliament – RJD
- 12 minutes: Pakistan loose to South Africa
- 11 minutes: Doping scandal of Shoaib Akhtar
- 11 minutes: ICC Awards
- 10 minutes: Cricket Board shifted from Kolkata to Mumbai
- 09 minutes: Carpet Area will decide flat price in Mumbai
- 08 minutes: Mani Shankar Aiyar begs for money

### Star News

- 10 minutes: Lakme Fashion show
- 10 minutes: Vande Mataram
- 10 minutes: Hanta virus – health in Surat
- 10 minutes: 4 dead bodes found in Santro car
- 09 minutes: Indian cricket to take revenge



### **Zee News**

- 17 minutes: Oil Refinery Fire (Breaking story)
- 15 minutes: Oil Refinery (another story in another bulletin)
- 11 minutes: Uma Bharati election
- 10 minutes: UP civil body violence
- 10 minutes: Controversy about Rakhi Sawant
- 09 minutes: ISI hand in Mumbai blasts
- 09 minutes: Delhi sealings
- 08 minutes: Shiva Sena creates problem for Pakistan cricket team at Mohali

## c. Crime Programmes -Analysis

### MONITORED SAMPLE

The sample for crime programmes has been taken from Star News, Aaj Tak and Zee News and IBN 7 because they are the top Hindi news channels. These channels are the most popular in terms of all-Hindi viewership ratings.

### PERIOD:

#### Star News, Aaj Tak and IBN 7

- 21 Aug - 3 Sept 2006

#### Zee News

- 25 Sept - 4 Nov 2006

**Timings:** At 11 pm. with a repeat at 4.30 p.m.

### Out of 75 reports

**No. of reports on crimes against women- 32-**

**No. of reports on Crimes where Women are affected and involved in committing crimes is 19-**

**No of reports on General Crimes-32-**

In the first category of crimes against women we find that sexual and physical violence accounts for 50% **of reports on crimes against women.** This includes alleged murder, assault, rape, sexual harassment, raids and ragging.

### Zee News – *Crime Reporter*

*Crime Reporter* (79%) on Zee and Star's *Sansani* (71 %) registered the highest number of stories on crimes related to women. *Vardaat* (Aaj Tak) carried one story on crimes by women. The remaining five stories were all on *Crime Reporter*.

If we look at the overall picture, we find that **murder** and **crimes against women** are the two highest categories of crimes reported on crime shows. The high incidence of crime against women stories is across channels but higher on Star News and Zee News.

**Murder:** The category with the highest number of crimes is murder which accounts for 27 across channels. Of these 4 fall into the category of crimes against women, 9 in the category of crimes where women were also affected and involved and 14 murders are in general category of general crimes.

Out of 32 stories, **Cities with higher incidence of Crime against women - Delhi – 6, Mumbai – 3, Lucknow – 3, Meerut – 2, Indore – 2**

**Out of 11 reports, *Cities with higher incidence of crimes where women are affected and involved are - Delhi-5, Lucknow-1, Mumbai-1, Bangalore-1, Jamshedpur-1, Nagpur-1, and Hyderabad-1***

**Out of 5 reports, *Crimes committed by women are largely in towns such as Bhopal, Kurukshetra, Nasik, Moga and Mumbai***

**Crimes involving Minors:** 9 stories - all the minors are victims of sexual crimes and death. In three cases, a boy is also the victim otherwise, they are girls. **Out of these 6 are from small towns and 3 from metro cities.** All the children belong to the lower income group.

**Stories:**

- Phoolondevi and her children – Madhopur
- Pooja (11 year old) witnessed her mother killing her father. – Meerut
- 2 year girl killed by her mother’s lover.- Hyderabad
- SC judgment on two sisters who killed 14 children.- Maharashtra
- Trafficking of 7 minor girls.- Meerut
- 2 stories about religious persons involved with minors: 1 Maulavi – Bijanore, and one Sadhu –Betur. Both sexually abuse minor girls
- 1 story about 2 friends ( age 16 and 22 ) who are missing from home and thought to be involved in a romantic relationship - Delhi
- Minor girl (14 year) kidnapped and raped by two gangster. - Bombay

**Table on Cities**

<i>Nature of Crime</i>		<i>No. of Stories</i>	<i>Cities</i>
<b>Violence Against Women - 32</b>			
<b>Dowry and domestic violence</b>		<b>6</b>	
▪ Domestic Violence	4		<i>Delhi, Bharatpur, Hyderabad, Lucknow</i>
▪ Dowry Death	2		<i>Hathras &amp; Indore</i>
<b>Sexual and Physical Violence</b>		<b>16</b>	
▪ Rape	7		<i>Delhi, Mumbai, Bijnore, Karnal, Raipur, Betur, Bikaner</i>
▪ Murder	2		<i>Delhi &amp; Indore</i>
▪ Assault	3		<i>Bangalore, Auraiya &amp; Madepura</i>
▪ Sexual Harassment	2		<i>Meerut &amp; Aligarh</i>
▪ Raid	1		<i>Lucknow</i>
▪ Ragging	1		<i>Mumbai</i>
<b>Trafficking</b>		<b>3</b>	
▪ Trafficking for sex	2		<i>Delhi &amp; Meerut</i>
▪ Missing girls	1		<i>Delhi</i>

<b>Bigamy/Matrimonial fraud</b>	<b>3</b>	<i>Delhi, Hoshiyarpur &amp; Ajmer</i>
<b>Cyber crime/Pornography</b>	<b>2</b>	<i>Lucknow &amp; Jhansi</i>
<b>Destitution</b>	<b>2</b>	<i>Mumbai &amp; Kolkata</i>

*Cities with higher incidence of Crime against women - Delhi – 6, Mumbai – 3, Lucknow – 3, Meerut – 2, Indore – 2*

<b>Crimes where Women were also affected and involved – 11</b>		
<b>Murder</b>	<b>6</b>	
▪ Senior citizen	2	<i>Delhi &amp; Lucknow</i>
▪ Other	4	<i>Delhi (2) , Hyderabad &amp; Jamshedpur</i>
<b>Assault</b>	<b>3</b>	<i>Delhi (2) Raibrelly</i>
<b>Cheating /Fraudulence</b>	<b>2</b>	<i>Mumbai &amp; Nagpur</i>

*Cities with higher incidence of crimes where women are involved and affected are-Delhi-5, Lucknow-1, Mumbai-1, Bangalore-1, Jamshedpur-1, Nagpur-1, Hyderabad-1*

<b>Court Judgment - 3</b>		<i>Delhi (2) &amp; Bangalore</i>
<b>Women Committed Crime – 5</b>		
<b>Robbery</b>	<b>2</b>	<i>Bhopal &amp; Kurukshetra</i>
<b>Murder</b>	<b>3</b>	<i>Mumbai, Nasik &amp; Moga,</i>

*Cities with higher incidence of Crimes committed by women are largely in towns such as Bhopal, Kurukshetra, Nasik, Moga and Mumbai*

<b>General Crime – 32</b>		
<b>Murder</b>	<b>14</b>	<i>Delhi (2), Gangtok, Hathras, Anand, Bijnore, Meerut, Khurja, Kolkata, Patna (2), Noida, Aligarh, Nagpur,</i>
<b>Fraud – Cheating – Theft</b>	<b>14</b>	<i>Delhi (2) , Meerut, Amritsar(2), Noida, Jodhpur, Noida, Patna, Kurukshetra, , Gaziabad &amp; Nagpur</i>
<b>Missing Person</b>	<b>2</b>	<i>Noida &amp; Patna</i>
<b>Ragging</b>	<b>1</b>	<i>Ragging</i>
<b>Group Clash</b>	<b>1</b>	<i>Allahabad</i>

*The above mentioned are also cities that figure almost in every category of crime. It is significant that a city like Patna only figures in the category of general crime.*

When we combine the figures of all murders – 25 – we discover that almost 70 per cent are crimes committed in bigger cities. Thus, there is a definite bias towards crimes

committed in bigger cities, especially the capital, Delhi. One reason for this is that three of the channels we have covered are based in Delhi – Aaj Tak, Zee News and IBN-7. Star News is Mumbai-based.

There are **seven** stories from **Delhi**

- In Delhi, a student was staying alone. She was raped by co student and then murdered. Family fought the case and got death sentenced for the murderer.
- In another case, model was staying alone and was murdered by lover.
- In another case, a man gets married a second time. The first wife has marriage photos and she claims that his family members have attended the wedding
- In another case two girls (age 16 and 21) disappear together, story hints at same sex relationship.
- For not bringing enough dowry, newly married girl was beaten up by husband and in- laws and as a result of which she lost her unborn child. She, with the help of her family is fighting the case but no arrest has been made, since the husband's family has political connections.
- In another story there is hint of supernatural 'saya' who comes to area at night and hammers nails in ladies heads. No arrest has been made.
- In another story, lady was pushing 20 year old into flesh trade. Through the intervention of earlier victim, police managed to arrest the pimp.

There are **two** stories from **Mumbai**

- In Mumbai, minor girl was kidnapped by gangsters and raped. When people caught them, they beat them up and handed them over to the police.
- In other story, a fresher was sexually harassed by senior students. She complained to college authorities and the police. The accused were suspended from college and arrested by police.

There are **three** stories from **Hyderabad**.

- Minor girl was murdered by mother's lover.
- In another story a suspicious husband makes wife look ugly by cutting her hair so that no one can look or talk to her.
- In other story criminal act of throwing acid on girl who spurns advances. Story is about HC judgment.

There is **one** story from **Raipur** about serial killer.

There are **two** stories from **Lucknow**.

- One story is about Cyber crime (pornography).
- Another story is about dowry and physical harassment.

## **Spokespersons**

Here we have tried to quantify the people quoted in the stories. This is important as it gives an indication of how the stories on crimes as constructed and are told from whose point of view.

### **Violence against Women – 32 Reports**

Police-21

Survivors-24

Relatives-11 (males-10-female-1)

Accused-9 (1 accused)

Social Activists-3 (Female-1)

Lawyer - 2

Journalist -1

College Authorities- 3

Students-3

General public-6 (1 female)

**Total-83**

### Spokespersons on Crime stories

<i>Nature of Crime</i>	<i>No. of Stories</i>	<i>Spokesperson</i>	
<b>Violence Against Women - 32</b>			
<b><i>Dowry and domestic violence (6)</i></b>			
▪ Domestic Violence	4	Police – Inspector, Station in Charge	4
		Survivor	4
		Relatives- Father, Father in Law	2
		Accused	1
▪ Dowry Death	2	Police – DSP	1
		Relatives –Brother	1
		Other - Social Activist	1
		Accused	2
<b>Sexual and Physical Violence (16)</b>			
▪ Rape	7	Police – DGP, SHO, Police Officer	3
		Survivor	3
		Relatives – Father (2), Brother in law	3
		Other - Social Activist, Common People (3)	4
		Accused	2
▪ Murder	2	Police - DSP, Sub Inspector, Constable,	3
		Other – Landlord	1
▪ Assault	3	Police – DSP, ASP	2
		Survivor	4
		Relatives – Husband	1
		Other – Common People(2)	2
▪ Sexual Harassment	2	Police – SP	1
		Survivor	4
		Other – Registrar AMU, Student Leader AMU	2
		Accused	1
▪ Raid	1	Police - Station in-charge,	1
		Relatives- Husband	1
		Accused	1
▪ Ragging	1	Survivor	1
		Other - Collage Director Student	2
<b>Trafficking (3)</b>			
▪ Trafficking for sex	2	Police – CO	1
		Survivor	3

		Others –Lawyer , Social Activist	2
▪ Missing girls	1	Relatives – Father, Mother	2
<b>Bigamy/Matrimonial fraud (3)</b>		Police – DSP, SSP, SP	3
		Survivor	3
		Others – Lawyer, Senior Journalist, Common People	3
		Accused	1
<b>Cyber crime/Pornography (2)</b>		Police - SSP,	1
		Survivor,	1
		Other- VC, Student	2
		Accused	1
<b>Destitution (2)</b>		Police - IG CID, Officer CCTV RPF Control (2)	3
		Survivor	3
<b>Crimes where Women were also affected and involved – 11</b>			
<b>Murder (6)</b>			
▪ Senior citizen	2	Police - Thana in- charge,	1
		Other – Neighbors	2
▪ Other	4	Police – DCP(2), SP, Inspector,	4
		Relative- Mother, Wife	2
		Other – Neighbor	1
		Accused	2
<b>Assault (3)</b>		Survivor	2
		Relatives – Grandson	1
		Other - Revenue Minister – UP Lawyer	
<b>Cheating /Fraudulence (2)</b>		Police - Senior police Inspector,	1
		Survivor	2
		Other – Friend	1
<b>Court Judgment - 3</b>		Survivor	1
		Relatives - Father (2)	2
		Others - Govt. Lawyer (2), Senior journalist, Common people(2)	5
<b>Women Committed Crime - 5</b>			
▪ Robbery	2	Police – DSP, DIG, SP	3
		Accused	1



▪ <b>Murder</b>	<b>3</b>	Police -DSP, Police inspector,	2
		Relatives – wife	1
		Other – Eyewitness	1
		Accused	1
		Survivor	3

**Crimes where Women were also affected and involved in– 19 Reports**

**Police- 11 (ifemale)**

**Survivors-7 (1male)**

**Relatives- 7 (3 men, 4 women)**

**Accused-3 (1-female)**

**Politician-1 (Minister-U.P.)**

**Lawyer-3**

**Journalist-1**

**Common people- 6 (1 female)**

**Total- 37**

<b>Murder (6)</b>			
▪ Senior citizen	2	Police - Thana in- charge,	1
		Other – Neighbors	2
▪ Other	4	Police - DCP(2), SP, Inspector,	4
		Relative- Mother, Wife	2
		Other – Neighbor	1
		Accused	2
<b>Assault (3)</b>		Survivor	2
		Relatives – Grandson	1
		Other - Revenue Minister – UP Lawyer	
<b>Cheating /Fraudulence (2)</b>		Police - Senior police Inspector,	1
		Survivor	2
		Other – Friend	1
<b>Court Judgment - 3</b>		Survivor	1

		Relatives - Father (2)	2
		Others - Govt. Lawyer (2), Senior journalist, Common people(2)	5
<b>Women Committed Crime - 5</b>			
▪ <b>Robbery</b>	<b>2</b>	Police - DSP, DIG, SP	3
		Accused	1
▪ <b>Murder</b>	<b>3</b>	Police -DSP, Police inspector,	2
		Relatives – wife	1
		Other – Eyewitness	1
		Accused	1

It is clear from the above tables that the dominant spokesperson-the police-account for nearly one-third of the total representation. Next in order of importance are the survivors and their relatives. While the former is largely women, the latter is predominantly male. What stands out is the poor and negligible representation given to professional spokespersons such as lawyers, human rights and social activists and concerned stakeholders. When it comes to missing voices, it is surprising that even in cases which are termed as medico-legal, we find there is no presence of doctor. Even when survivors are interviewed in hospital premises, we find that the doctor's views are not enlisted. The impact of this skewed representation is particularly evident when we analyse the treatment of these reports. We find that the reports focus more on establishing the crime and hence the police play a major role and very little attention is paid to legal aspects and the linkage of the incident with other day-to-day and social developments.

## QUALITATIVE COMMENTS:

Here, we have examined the crime stories and concentrated on different areas to see how the crimes were treated by the different channels/crime shows. We took into account audio and visual components, the roles of anchors/reports, the narrative discourse, etc. Since we were looking more closely at the issue of women and crimes – both because they are the dominant crime in these shows and women are the focus of this study - our remarks in this category are, in general, restricted to stories on crimes related to women. However, given that other crime stories were reported in a similar manner, these comments may apply to them as well.

Although much of the treatment in these shows may be problematic, they have also made a major and salutary contribution to exposing crime. Never before have crimes against women, for instance, been reported in such numbers or in such depth. In the stories, there has been an emphasis on government and administrative apathy as well as police negligence. This has highlighted the need for greater urgency being attached to the investigation of crimes.

The popularity of the TV crime show on Hindi news channels has exercised its influence on the coverage of news across channels. Crime shows attract the highest viewership on news channels. For example, *Sansani*, was Star News' most watched programme. As a result of this, crimes are reported as national headline news on a day-to-day basis on the electronic media and in the print media, too.

Owing to the popularity of the crime genre, and the competition with other channels, the coverage of crime has become more and more sensational. Dramatic effects have been added to make it as 'entertaining' as possible: music, sound effects, reconstructions, poetic flights of fancy, the supernatural, etc.

It would appear that ethical considerations have also been set aside in this attempt to create an aura of interest around each story. This can create problems as we will see below. There are questions about the right to privacy, the lack of factual substantiation to allegations, the reconstruction of crimes, etc.

We will look at some of the peculiarities we find in crimes shows. These can be related to the manner in which a crime is committed or to a category or crimes. For instance, we will deal with the issue of **reconstruction of crimes** because this is a major feature of crime shows and purportedly tells us how a crime has been committed. It is a problematic area.

We will also look at categories of crime in some depth, eg, **Crime and the Supernatural**, because this is another unusual feature of crime shows. It is problematic because it often could be interpreted as encouraging what it seeks to expose – superstition in our society.

Let us look at some of these areas.

## **How are the incidences of violence against women or violations against them treated by the media?**

First and foremost, a fairly strong effort is made to “expose the heinousness” of the act. This could be a case of dowry death or violent acts such as acid throwing. However, many of these reports are problematic because they do not contextualize the crime and weave in the basic and essential legal information.

In the case of dowry deaths, where the law puts the burden on the accused to prove their innocence, the exposure is even more dramatic. In one instance, the police are shown doing all the needful—lodging an FIR, registering the case under murder, arresting the accused and the media not only puts this out but even publicizes the public protest by the girl’s family against the accused.

Even in this case, what the report does not do is share the legal information. These are:

a) the strong legal deterrents under Section 498A, which makes it mandatory for the police to take strong and decisive action against any kind of dowry atrocity and specifically against a person/s involved/ associated with the death of a married woman within seven years of marriage.

b) To what extent such crimes can be prevented with the recent implementation of the Domestic Violence Law.

The lack of appreciation of legal information, in particular Section 498A is most evident in many of the reports on dowry harassment. In one instance, we find that despite the woman having filed a complaint of dowry harassment against her husband and in-laws the local police was reluctant to act and finally they filed the case only after the matter was taken up to the S.S.P and even after that no further action was taken. The Channel concluded by making the observation that it is the usual case of favouring the powerful. Again no effort was made to examine how in the wake of a law, such as section 498A the authorities can afford to act so tardily.

Moreover, the legal right of a woman to seek redressal before the criminal justice system in the event an FIR is not duly filed by the police and the legal redress available to a woman under the Indian Penal Code when she has an abortion as a consequence of an act of violence committed by a family member, is not explored.

Similarly, in the case of acid attack, the greater emphasis is on how the family brought it upon itself by the “encouragement” given to the boy by the girl’s family. Therefore, since the family virtually brought the crime upon themselves, the police at best can only do an efficient follow-up of the incident and investigate it properly. However, a passing reference is made to the fact that to deal with vulnerability of girls to such experiences and situations, “Operation Majnu” being launched by the police to take effective action against eve teasing and such incidents of violence. But the details and the protection available for a victim through such an Operation are missing. For instance, if harassed and “stalked” by “obsessive lover” then what kind of ‘protection’ can they seek from the law enforcement agencies and what other supportive services are available at universities,

work place etc. Therefore, it is imperative that the channels must talk about role of law enforcement and other agencies in the prevention of such crimes

Moreover, poor or disturbing visuals occur quite often: for instance, in *Tejaab ka Guldasta* (*Crime Reporter* 27 Oct) , Seema and her family, victims of an acid attack are shown with terrible burn marks on her arms, back and face.

In some instances, we find that the media, while exposing the inaction of the authorities or the lack of access to social justice for the less privileged, tend to sensationalize the crime, highlighting the “disproportionate power” of the alleged criminals and exposing the double standards of the system. Such reports have definite strengths but they also reveal certain flaws

In trying to expose the bias of the system, they often play up the evidence they have collected to reveal the extent to which people can be denied justice. While, this kind of reality checks do help to educate and inform people about the biases of the system, in the process they do not question the obligations of different authorities as defined in the legal framework or examine the working of a criminal justice system.

For instance, when one channel reported a horrific incident of five attempted murder in which one died and others grievously injured, they decided to focus more on exposing the anomalies of the system. However, they did not use it (like in the case of Jessica Lall) to campaign or even effectively advocate on the rights of the aggrieved. In fact, we find that a large part of the programme focused on how the woman was branded as a “*dayn*” or witch to prejudice the situation against her and hide the fact that the alleged killers had a criminal record. They also revealed the sheer helplessness of the family members affected by the crime and the indifference of the police. This was done to prove the point that justice delivery is highly biased and in some sense even unaccountable.

A similar kind of treatment was given in the case of a report on Ramphera from Rae Bareli. Having been declared dead in the official documents and her land seized on false grounds, the report focused on the degree of hoax the woman has experienced not only in the hands of people who had defrauded her but also the police. In fact, despite an assurance from the Minister that appropriate justice will be delivered to her, the Channel stated quite candidly that given the deteriorating law and order situation in U.P., it is not likely that Ramphera will get her share of justice.

The visual content also makes the report on the five murders more disturbing: the children’s bandaged hands with fingers cut off, the woman’s injured face and her slashed chest/breast are repeatedly dwelt upon. The anchor’s opening comments are equally bad: he says this is the kind of story that will make your hair stand on edge. The reporter’s description which is repeated several times, is also very graphic: *“Ek bete ko tukre tukre kar mar diya; ek beti ki aankh nikaal di, ek beti ki ungli kaat di, Phoolon Devi ka sthan kaat diya.*

Again in the case of Ramphera, we see a tragic face, with an expression of such heartache that is difficult to look at. The comment of the reporter at end is equally dramatic and

heightens the woman's plight: "*Ramferi Mulayam sarkar ki sachchi tasvir hai. Vo bazaro mai ek hai. jo insaf ke liye dar dar bhatak rahi hai.*"

All this somewhat reinforces the impression that the less privileged are doomed to this fate and in some ways, strengthening the impression that even educating the people about the law is useless. In fact, in such situations, where the law is being blatantly manipulated, flouted and denied, the media must be encouraged to educate people about the law and their right to a fair criminal justice system. In the absence of this check, the report may end up in glorifying the "power of the criminals" or depicting them as invincible.

Again there are specific reports on trafficking of women and girls. On the basis of "tip-offs" the police raid and rescue young girls and women held against their wishes, most often in brothels or are in the process of being sold. Often the police partner with the NGOs working on anti-trafficking to advocate on the issue and the "survivors" of trafficking often share their personal experience and the role they have played in "busting" or undermining these practices. Hence, we find that with the emphasis on "rescue" and with the rescued persons sharing their experience about who trafficked her, in what context she got trafficked and the role the police have played in rescuing her, it becomes more like a human interest story where the focus is more on the kind of vulnerabilities that poor women face. It does not in any way reveal the manner in which the business of trafficking is done or for that matter explain to the viewer the legal framework on anti-trafficking.

## RECONSTRUCTION OF CRIMES

This is a frequent crime show feature. All crime shows report on crime and sometimes choose to reconstruct it in dramatic fashion. The reconstruction can take two forms: with actors playing the roles of the victims and accused; or with animation. Its usage is indiscriminate inasmuch as there is no particular kind of crime that receives this treatment.

For instance in the Priyadarshini Mattoo case, the reconstruction of the events leading up to the crime took the form of drawings on Zee's *Crime Reporter* (31.10.2006)

- Aaj Tak's *Vardaat* (31, August 2006) reconstructs how one Sandeep Kumar witnesses the murder of an ex-DIG in a train. This was done through animation.
- Star News' *Sansani* (25 August) reconstructed the sequence of events in which the accused Joseph allegedly threw acid on Hasina. This was done in a dramatic fashion.
- Star News' *Sansani* (27 August) showed how Tina was beaten up by Kabir and Hassan and subsequently died.
- IBN 7's *Criminal* (15 September) carried a story in which people were hypnotized on the road and then duped. This was done through a dramatic reconstruction.

- On the same episode, there was a story on how 'Sapna' (name changed) was forced into becoming a *kothewali*. Here, they show how girls in the *kotha* dress up and dance. This was also a dramatic reconstruction in front of male customers.

**Comments:** Reconstructions do allow the viewer to understand the sequence of events that occurred in a crime and appreciate the nature of the crime within a narrative format. To that extent it is a valid device. However, it does raise the questions of propriety: should news channels show how a crime/murder is *allegedly* committed in view of the fact that it might be (a) a false allegation, thus implicate an innocent person, and (b) could be imitated in subsequent crimes? Given that most stories are based on preliminary information, the reconstruction could be misleading. Further more, a visual depiction has far greater impact on the viewer than if it was to be merely reported – especially in dramatic reconstructions where sometimes the viewer may confuse the reconstruction with the actual crime. Since the victims are more often than not women, the reconstructions reinforce the impression of women as victims. This can make the woman viewer feel more vulnerable and scared.

We must also ask ourselves: How does the family of the victim and the accused feel about viewing such a reconstruction? What impact would this have on children who watch such shows fairly avidly?

Channels and programme producers must be very judicious in the use of reconstructions keeping mind its impact and possible audience response.

**Unusual crime stories:** There are in addition some crime stories that are in the realm of the highly unusual. For instance:

**Headless body story:** *Zee News Crime Reporter* (4 November) *Dilli Police Ko Diya Challenge*. The police receive a letter from a man who kills people in the same way and challenges the police to discover his identity.

**Minor/religious crime:** *Lotan baba ki mohabbat- Sansani – 26 August*: Betur-kidnapping of minor girl. The sadhu claims he married a young girl, Guddi. She says she has gone with him of her own volition. Lotan baba used to roll from one temple to another and allegedly kidnaps Guddi. Police say the girl is his fourth wife. We are shown visuals of Lotan baba rolling repeatedly, different photos of Lotan baba.

## CRIME AND THE SUPERNATURAL

One of the new features that has entered crime reporting on TV is the presence of the unknown. In this category, crime shows carry stories about alleged crimes that have, perhaps, a supernatural twist to them. Hindi news channels consider these kinds of stories so appealing to viewers that some channels have begun special programmes devoted to the 'supernatural'.

***Some examples of stories:***

Star News' *Sansani* (24 August), there was a story *Saaye ka atank*. According to people a 7-foot tall, unknown image moves around Karol Bagh, Delhi. He hates ladies and attacks them. He hammers nails into ladies' heads and disappears. People say authorities have done nothing to stop him. Residents are quoted and women who were attacked describe the man as someone with long hair who simply vanishes into thin air.

**Comment::** So there is **no factual evidence** in this story. The reporter says he has been out there in the locality where the crimes were reportedly committed in the middle of the night for 6 hours and nothing has happened, nor did he see the 'man'.

In the story on Hypnotism (*Criminal* 15 September) a hundred rupee note is waved in someone's face and later the victim discovers a robbery. The woman thinks she was hypnotized. Nobody has been able to identify criminal although several such case have been reported.

**Comment:** Once again, there is no factual information to substantiate this claim of hypnotism. It seems to be more a case of quicksilver theft.

Another story in *Criminal* (14 September), *Bhooton ke paathshaala* shows children learning how to perform strange religious tantric rites as a future profession. The parents actively encourage them hoping they will use these talents to be future bread-winners for the family.

Comment: The story delights in the children's exploits. There are no voices of dissent or of civil authorities who might not think so appreciately of the practise.

## **SUPERNATURAL SHOWS**

**Apart from 17 bulletins we monitored of Crime show, we also monitor few supernatural shows.**

**Zee News** telecasts the highest number of such shows: during our monitoring period (two and half hours), we found in the afternoon slot

- *Honee/ Anhonee* (21 October 30 minutes 3.30 pm).
- *Indrajal* (2 November 3.30 pm) was telecast in the same slot.
- *Kaal Kapath Mahakaal* (25 October 3.30 pm).
- On 4 November (1 pm, 1 hour) *Majid Baba ke Mantra*.

Zee is not the only channel to carry such shows. **Star News** (27 August, 11.30 pm, 30 minutes- it was repeated) telecast *Kaun Hai*.

It is important to note that in these shows and stories there is no comment – everything is simply reported. The fact that many times the claims might be false, is not examined. Once again this raises questions of propriety, truth and evidence.



Here are some instances of stories:

- *Zee's Honee Anhonee Akhand Deepak*: This is about an everlasting light of *diya*, burning for four years without any oil inside a glass container alongside a picture of Ma Bhagwati. It is placed near a shivling. People consider this as a miracle or God's blessing. Milk pours from banyan tree if you do a *puja*.
- In another story in the same episode, *Chitraharan of UP* dresses up as a woman because he believes, or is led to believe, that his not dressing up in women's clothes led to the death of five of his children. In order to save the remaining one boy, he has been told by the pandit to dress up as a lady.
- In *Indrajal*, the entire programme is devoted to the tantric rites for a crow. A 'guruji' is shown performing puja for the crow and reciting its many virtues. He tells the viewer that the puja will cure or ward off many evils. He extols its virtues. Detailed coverage of the puja is telecast.
- *Kaal Kapath Mahakaal* (25 October 3.30 pm) ran a *tantric puja* special for Deepavali. Again, its many virtues were proclaimed and the puja performed.
- *Majid Baba ke Mantra* claims that the 'baba' can cure people by simply blowing on them including cancer, blindness, asthma, deafness. He holds a workshop in Bareilly and people come from far away places to be 'cured' and some of them speak of their 'cures'. They all believe in the process. *Kaun Hai* features an old fort -haveli – which has been empty for the last 40 years: according to the villagers something bad happens here every year. People claim there is a treasure inside and try to obtain it but every time they do so, a harmful incident occurs. In reconstructed incidents we are shown men digging for the treasure and finding a ball of fire and then a man nailing the wall. That leads to an injury. Others claim they see a ghost hanging from the tree and when they approach it, they end up hanging there too. In a rare instance, the Star News reporter goes to the fort to verify these claims and finds no evidence to support them.

Stories on Star News have the reporter refuting the 'supernatural' claims. However, in none of the Zee stories/shows is this the case. The 'unknown' incidents or powers are merely shown and a commentary supplied by the 'guruji'. Infact, they are treated as commonplace and real. Such stories and reports propagate such beliefs or spread them. Instead of demystifying and discouraging superstition such reports give credence to them. News channels should be asked to either discontinue such reports/shows or provide factual disclaimers.

## **DEPICTION OF INSTITUTIONAL PEOPLE**

Institutional representation in crime stories is an important element. It represents the voice of authority which gives factual substance to allegations of crimes. We found that 70 or 39 % of people quote in stories were institutional figures. Out of this the overwhelming majority is the police: 78 per cent of all institutional figures who are quoted in the episodes.

**The police are male. There is only one female police officer out of 55 across all episodes monitored.** This is ironic given that so many of the crimes reported are perpetrated against women. The Women's Cell of the Police is not seen to be active in any of these. More often than not, the police are shown after the arrest of the accused or explaining the crime or sequence events that led up to the arrest. They are not shown in action.

By and large, the police are quote giving routine details of the crime. In some instances they give evidence that led to their discovery of the crime. However, that is rare.

What's interesting about the presence of institutional authorities is the lack of the medical profession in the episodes monitored. This is a lacunae: many crimes need medical verification to identify their nature. Without this it remains an accusation.

For instance, in the cases of rape. One of the possible reasons for this missing element is that most of the stories report crimes soon after they have been committed or when the arrest/complaint has been made. Follow ups are not seen often which would have included medical evidence.

Also, there are very few lawyers or judicial authorities government officials in these stories which could also be explained by the timing of the story.

## TREATMENT OF SEXUAL CRIME STORIES

In reporting on crimes, the most important aspect is always the treatment. In this respect, we mean the manner in which the story has been narrated in terms of visual and audio content. In the audio, we include anchor and reporters' comments, quotes from those interviewed, sound effects, and footage.

Aaj Tak's *Vardaat*, 31 August, *The height of brutality*: In itself the story is horrific. Neighbours believe Phoolon Devi is a 'dayan' – witch – and while her husband is away one evening, they assault her children and her.

Another example is in *Khooni Khel* (*Crime Reporter* 31 Oct-): this is particularly questionable because it involves a minor: The story is about an 11-year old daughter who witnesses her mother being strangled by her father. In the story, the daughter describes how mother killed father and enacts her father's acts. We are shown her reenactment of the crime. Should a young girl have been made to recall such a terrible crime before the camera?

Sometimes visuals combine with words to increase the horror: Star News' *Sansani*, 26 August carries a story entitled, *Dowry*: one Kamlesh claims she was kept locked up in a room with a goat by her husband and his family. The husband is arrested but his family manages to run away. The anchor describes the agony of the woman alongside repeated footage of Kamlesh looking disturbed: the greed for dowry, "her in laws treated her

worse than an animal. She was tortured so badly that simply hearing about it makes one's hair stand."

This is the anchor's introduction to the story, "*Shadi ke baad doli mai beth kar jab vo sasural pahochi to behad kush thi. Vo samajitithi ki pati ush par jamane bhar ka pyar denge. Lakin hua isse ulta. Dabej ki lalach mai patine unke saath janwarose bhi batthar saluk kiya. Sasural mai ase jurm uthay gaye ki sunkar kaisike bhi romte khade ho jaye.*"

Then Kamlesh says: "*Mere aadmi ne mujhe bakri wale kamre mein band kar diya thha- yehin mar jao- khana ab tere ko nabin doonga.*"

Her brother uses more colourful language: "*uske sir se keede gir rabe thbe- jaban bakriyan bandate thbe, uske latrine se milli...*"

In *Mein zinda hoon*,<sup>20</sup> September *Criminal*: we see an old woman who has been dispossessed of her land on the grounds that she is dead when actually she is alive, crying all the time. If we listen to what is said alone, we find that often the commentary is dramatic, colourful and used to sensationalise the crime.

*Crime Reporter* 25 October. A story on dowry: the story recounts the story of Kritika, a pregnant dowry victim. She describes her ordeal and how husband slept with the maid. "*Raat ko maine dekha ki vo nokarani ke saath soye hai – Halat dekhker mai heran ho gai – Maine sas sasur ko bataya kahene lage yaha asa chalta hai – asi choti choti baat ke liye hangama karneki jarurat nahi hai.*"

While the language is simple enough, you wonder whether or not it is necessary to have Kritika repeat the graphic details of her husband's misdemeanours when the anchor and reporter has already told us about it: "*raat ko maine dekha, ki who naukerani ke saath soye hain; haalath dekh kar mein hairaan ho gayi. Meine saas-sasur ko bataya, tho kehne lage, yahan aisedchalta hai, aise chhot- chhoti baat ke liye hungama karne ki zaroorat nabin hai.. (At night I saw him sleeping with the maid. I was horrified and told my in laws about it. My mother in law replied :such things happen here, don't create a fuss over such small things.*"

Do we need such personal testimonials?

Anchor's remark at the beginning: "*Pet mai palraha bachcha be maunt mara gaya hai.*" Dowry ke 5 lakh Rs. ke liye Kritika ki jaan lane ki koshish ho rahi thi – Kritika ko damki di jati thi ki usko mar ke fank bhi dage to bhi police unka kuch nahi karega kyonki Shaila Dixit ka legal adviser Sanjiv Mehra MIL ka bhai hai."

**Comment:** There is nothing to substantiate such an allegation.

Kritika was pregnant and one of her kids died while she was carrying twins. Again there is a very graphic account of the entire sorry episode. There is also the question of repetition. If the anchor/reporter recount the details is there need for the woman to repeat the details?

**HERE ARE SOME QUOTES FROM DIFFERENT CHANNELS AND ANCHORS/REPORTERS TO GIVE AN IDEA OF THE PRESENTATION**

**Sansani Star News Shrivardhen Trivedi- anchor**

*“Gunnah ke khilaf aapke bathiyar ka naam hai Sansani  
Gunah ke dunia ke alag alag chahere ko benakab karti hai Sansani  
Har roz ki tarah aapko karni khabardar aaj bhi phir hajir hai Sansani  
Magar sab se pahale headlines.”*

**Vardat Aaj Tak Sanjiv Chawhan - anchor**

*“Namaskar mai hui Sangiv Chawhan. Contemporary life yane ke aaj ke zamane samaj ke bich se bunejanewali kahaniya aur un per bani hui filme (sirf) ye nahi samjati ke kya hona chahiye yeh yeh dikhati hai ki kya ho reha hai.jiha, ham jis kirdar ki bat kar rabe hai vo kirdar Hamare aapke ird gird moujud hai. Jikera hai Munnabhai MBBS ka. Yeh ek nahi hai kahi hai. To miliye inse lakin agar aap ka vasta kahi in bhaiyose ho jaye to yeh mat kah dena ki ‘lage rabo Munnabhai”*

**Criminal IBN-7 Manodeepa Babli - anchor**

*“Crime ka koi vakta nahi hota aur criminal kahi bhi ho sakte hai. Chaliye suru karte hai aajka safer magar sab se pabele vo criminal jiske chehare aaj hoge benakab.”*

**Crime Reporter Zee News Manoj Raghuvanshi - anchor**

*“Chain se sona hai to aab jag jao. Aap ke chain aur sukun ke liye roz jagata hai Crime Reporter. Sab se pabele dekha aaj Crime Reporter bne kaun kaun se chahere dekhe.”*

**Vardat 31-Aug story Bigadi Aulad**

*Report’s comments at beginning – “Ragging ke nam pe patrakar ki ek college main sexual harresment ho raba hai. Ladki ne college prasasion aur apne senior ke khilaf morcha khol diya hai. Magar aaropi ke taver to dekhi ye –Jo karte bane kar lo hum nahi sudhe re ga.” In between, “Jab ladki ne shikayat ki to use ko sabak sikhane ke liye ladkone sab ke samene uneka yon shoshen kiya. Pabele to college authority ne kuch nahi kiya mager jab ladeki police station ki aur badhi authority ko gambhirta samaj mei aai aur sab ladekeko suspend kar diya.”At the*

**Criminal 20 – Sep - 06 Story Serial killer of Raipur**

*Anchor introducing story, “Vo Hamdard banke kisi auratke ghar jata tha – Uska dost bankar uske saath shyam bitata tha – Aur rate mai vo ban jata tha katil – Har subah ek karar har shyam ek jasna aur har rat ek katal – Dastan Raipur ki hai – Kaun tha vo? – Raipur police kabati hai vo hai serial killer.”*

**Visuals:** There is also the question of showing the victims of crimes. It does not matter what the nature of the crime is but more often than not, the victim is shown. Of course, there are efforts to hide the victim’s face with a blanking of mosaic but it is often inadequate and you can make out the features. Similarly, there is the case of female victims being seen and heard. This is a common practise and defies logic. And the rights of privacy. Of course permission may have been take before filming them.– however

many are from villages, and /or uneducated and have no idea how the story is being reported.

**WE NOW LOOK AT SOME STORIES WHERE THERE WERE FEATURES WHICH REPRESENT BOTH GOOD REPORTING AND THOSE WHICH ARE MORE DEBATABLE.**

**Citing legal codes:** *Tejaab ka guldasta: Zee, Crime Reporter, 27 October.* Although there are other misgivings with this story, it is one of the few that gives us the criminal section under which the police have booked the accused. Mahendra Rajput allegedly threw acid in the face of Seema, and her family. The police are quoted in the story giving the details:

*“Mahendra Rajput has done this – We have arrested him – Section against him are 324, 504, 506, 310 STS” - Vanraj Yadav DSP*

**Police evidence:** *Nishaan Gubaab Ke,* In another story in the same episode, the police are quoted giving reasons why they suspect a crime in what seemed a straightforward accident. They say the position of the dead woman in the car suggests foul play. In most stories there is no information provided as to why the police take action. We are simply told of the crime and an arrest. This story is unusual and should be the norm rather than the exception:

*“The way we found Neelam’s dead body, in sitting position, we are having doubt, that she was given tea or something with drug and she become unconscious. – thrn she was burnt – C.P.Singh, DSP*

**Police vigilance:** *Camera ka kamaal- 30 August- Aaj Tak’s Vardaat-* Police vigilance cameras installed after the Mumbai blasts find an old woman, Khurshid Bano, with daughter at a Mumbai railway station at the same spot for seven days. They discover she is debilitated and abandoned. They take her to an NGO, and she is treated for her ailments and has taken shelter at the NGO. The police have decided to take care of her treatment.

This is a heartening story, one of the few ‘happy ending’ ones in the crime shows. It is also important because, it shows the police in a good light, for a change. Such stories do require telling so that the public’s faith in institutions is restored.

**Well rounded story:** *Mere sasural wale mere dushman- Sansani 27 August.* Rajani, a national hockey player files a dowry case against her husband and in-laws. In this story, we first hear Rajani’s version of events and then from the police and finally, from her her-father in law. The police say they will make an arrest only after concrete proof.

This is one of the few well-rounded reports about an alleged crime. It gives different sides of the story and so we have the complete picture before us. Most of the time stories provide only the victim’s or the police account of the alleged crime. More reports should carry more than the victim’s version.

For instance, here are the anchor’s opening remark- *“Kbel ke maidanme Kabhi na thak ne*

wali vo mahila khaladi apni jindagi se thak gai hai. Vo is tarah toot chuki hai ki uski sansebbi us per boz ban gaye hai. Uska ilzam – Dabeh ke karan hi useke sasural wale ne uski jindagi babatar kar di. Aur ab vo apne sasural waloko dilana chahati hai Shakt se shakt saza.”

**Next comes the police version:**

“Usne sikayat darge kiya tha ki Vikash Patel aur uske ghar wale dabeh ko laker mansik aur sharirik rup se ushko tang kar rabe hai. Aur mukkadama panchi krut kiya gaya tha. Aur ye bhi hai ke kuch din pabele in do paksbo ke bhich mahila Samiti ke samane salah samjota hua tha. Samjota khat likha gaya tha. Uske bad kya parisitia hai vo janch karne ke bad ,evidence mil Jayega to giraftari kar lega.”

**Police inspector, Abdul salaam siddiqui**

Then we hear from the alleged victim:

“Unka man tha ki hame kaise bhi hata le yaha seaur vo dusari shadi kar le. Uske sare Parivar samil hai. Yeh saat sal hone ki wait kar rabe hai.Meri davarani kabeti thi yeh tumari wait kar rabe hai.Tum samazti nahi ho? Mere kapade kat dete the.Har tarase muje paresan karte the. Mera saman gayab kar tePhir bhi hum chahate aye hai. Uski dooseri shadi karana karana chahete hai ye log.”-

**Rajni Patel**

Finally, the father-in-law speaks out:

“ Uske husband ne bhi dekha ki vo doosere adamio ke sad moterbike per bathker ghoom rahi hai. Kamarmai hath dalke ghoom rahi hai. Ye koi aadmi bardast nahi karega. Chalo phir bhi thik hai, bardast karna tha. Uske bad bhi vo rat ko 11 baje 12 baje ghoomke aa rahi hai,cinema dekhake aa rahi hai.Aur aane ke bad bhi vo bilkul filmi style se gana goon goona rahi hai.Ye achcha nahi lagata.”

–**P. Verma, father in law.**

**Graphic description:** Aaj Tak’s *Vardaat*, 31 August, *Bigadee Aulad* : This is a story about sexual harassment in a Mumbai college. The girl’s description of how she was harassed in given in detail.

Report’s comments at beginning – “Ragging ke nam pe patrakar ki ek college main sexual harassment ho raha hai. Ladki ne college prasasion aur apne senior ke khalaf morcha khol diya hai. Magar aaropi ke taver to dekhi ye –Jo karte bane kar lo hum nahi sudhe re ga.”

Here is the girl’s description:

“Dakka diya .mere babot pas aaya phir pucha- `do you know meaning of ----?’.Phir sab private parts par hath lagane ko kaha. Mera hath khicha, mera hath pakada Mere shoulder pe mara. Mein aur meri friend thi. Main jitana bhi bahar nikalneki koshish kar rahi thi vo mujhe surround karnaki koshish kar rabe the. - **Namita, the alleged victim**

**Community Response:** *Crime Reporter 4 November* – Haadson ca shabar People’s action story: two men kidnapped and raped 14 year old girl- people caught and beat them up, half shaved their heads and moustaches, and paraded them in the area before handing them over to the police. This shows community initiative to prevent the crime occurring again. It acts as a disincentive. There are visuals of the two men with half-shaven faces and head as people parade them.

**Community response:** *Criminal- 19 September -Katil Se Kinara.* In this case of dowry death, people of the community say they will have nothing to do with the in-laws family who harassed the girl. They decide to boycott them. Focus of story is the activism of the community.

Both these reports are noteworthy because they show that civic sense does still prevail. Such stories should be telecast more often. Media activism linked with public response was one of the main features of 2006 with the Jessica Lal story. By telecasting more such stories, the media can encourage the public to come forward and speak out against crime. Such reports may also act as a deterrent if would-be criminals know that their neighbours may turn against them.

**Unsubstantiated reporting:** This is the norm in most reports. There is a lack of factual evidence and most reports are simply based on allegations. There are vague stories which carry no substantive proof of the crime or against the accused. Sometimes, you don't even know what they crime is. Since most stories are based on initial discoveries of crimes or arrests there are very few facts or evidence. This begs the question: suppose the arrest was the wrong one or that upon examination the police find the story to be very different? What then? Also, this leads to a great deal of sensational reporting: for instance in the Nikhari case where everything from cannibalism to body parts trafficking has been alleged.

Other instances: 14 September *Criminal* has a story on children learning how to summon up ghosts for a living. At no stage are we told what the crime is or why the story is being done except for sensational purposes.

Similarly, there were two stories which were difficult to understand. A man lost Rs.5 lakhs allegedly on a flight en route to USA. He doesn't know how and or does he accuse anyone. In the second, 13 deaths have occurred on private ship carriers (Jurm, 26 August). There is no mention of wrongdoing.

Vardaat's *Gabbar Maange Insaaf* (26 August), is a story about a young boy who returns to his village after missing for five years, claims he is Gabbar and his parents have been wrongly arrested for his death. He asks for their release. However, no one is quote in this story, there is no evidence that he is Gabbar or about his whereabouts for the last five years. What is the basis of the story with no substantive facts.

*Crime Reporter* 4 November, *Dilli Police ko diya challenge* has a story about the discovery of dead body by Delhi police. There is a phone call claiming that the man on the line has killed the man. However, the story provides no information about whether or not the man has been murdered or how he died.

*Sansani*, 26 August. A story about Kanchan and Chanchal friends who disappear at the same time from their homes. The manner of presentation of the story, suggests that the two were intimately involved and Kanchan is accused by Chanchal's parents of abducting their daughter. However, there is no reason to suspect a sexual involvement or an abduction. The two girls may have run away from home for a variety of reasons including distress or financial difficulties at home.

**Follow-up stories:** We find that since these stories are based on preliminary information, the whole thing is like an allegation. Worse, there are seldom any follow up stories, so we don't know what the outcome is in most cases. Was the accused tried, found guilty? What of the victims – what happened to them?

In our monitored sample we found very few such stories. There ought to be follow-ups because there is a need for the media to be interested in the story beyond the immediate sensational nature of the crime. And also make people accountable.

**Questionable quote: *Sansani 25 – Aug – 06 Story Haraniyat ki saza HC*** judgment. In this story, there is the issue of a woman being disfigured after acid is thrown at her. It is a tragic tale of a woman trying to rebuild her life and is told with a degree of sensitivity. However did we need this first of the quote from the lawyer, passing a value judgment on her looks?

*“There was the consideration of victim. She was beautiful before this incident and after this incident she looks very ugly. The accused is responsible for this act. So Andhra Pradesh HC frankly came to the conclusion that this is rarest of rare case of cruelty. – Found accuse guilty - Section 307 of IPC and sent him to life imprisonment.”* -Rudramani, Government Lawyer.

## **DEPICTION OF CRIMES- SOME PROBLEMATIC PORTRAYALS/TREATMENT**

When we look at the manner in which crimes have been constructed and reported, we find that while the crime shows have done a singular service to viewers by devoting space and time to crimes that befall citizens all over India, there is evidence that portrayals need to improve. Here are some areas where we find problems.

- The victim of crimes, very often a woman, is shown on television, thus revealing her identity. Even when mosaic is used to hide the face, we can very often still see the victim. Also, there is a tendency to interview people in the same complex, village or neighbourhood making such identification very easy. Should victims, especially of sexual crimes such as rape be publicly identified?
- Since victims and their families are so often from the weaker sections of society and in many instances, neither fully literate or educated, their helplessness is exploited by the media who take advantage of their lack of legal knowledge – thus, victims willingly speak to camera and allow their families and themselves to be recorded by the camera.
- The alleged assailant or criminal, accused is almost always shown. Sometimes his or her face has been hidden by the police with a cloth but more often than person is shown. We have instances, where the accused speaks on camera. Is this a violation of privacy laws? Also, when the accused has not been proven, is it right to expose him?



- In the same vein, should victims' dead bodies or injured bodies be shown? These visuals can be very disturbing especially for children.
- Often crimes are reconstructed. As we have already pointed out above, this is problematic from the point of view of exposing alleged victims and assailants and also providing information on how to commit crimes. Also, if shows such as *Sansani* can show crimes and reconstruct actual events why are such reconstructions not allowed in films? There should be one law in this case.
- Most crime stories are framed within a very dramatic format with fast cuts on visuals and very loud, ominous sound effects. When this is combined with the dramatic manner of presentation by anchors and reporters as we have mentioned above, it makes for a highly sensational presentation. These are real crimes and not imagined ones. Should they not be treated in a far more practical and factual manner so that they are stark rather than entertaining?
- Equally questionable is the lack of facts in crime reporting. Most of the stories in our sample have very little supporting evidence beyond the alleged crime. Most is based on hearsay or accusations. Victims claim the crime is committed by the accused.
- Another area that needs to be considered is the portrayal of crimes that involve minors. We have listed seven instances, where a minor – most often a girl – is allegedly the victim of a crime. Often, the minor is shown either in a photograph or in reality which is unacceptable. Names are also revealed and they are interviewed. Even when they are traumatized. In at least one case, a minor was the main eyewitness to a crime.
- The emphasis on supernatural 'crimes' and shows devoted to them is a questionable practise. For example, crimes by 'ghosts', crimes of hypnotism, etc.: there is nothing to suggest that any allegation is true. Also, the nature of the crime is not clear. The fact that superstitious programmes also peddle beliefs (that if you pray to a crow things will be auspicious) only encourages beliefs in tantric puja.
- Crimes against women, and sex related crimes are the most popular crimes reported on crime shows. Whereas this does expose crimes against women and creates awareness about them, we have to wonder whether showing women as a victim is beneficial?
- The lack of legal or institutional intervention in the crimes reported is another area of concern. Crimes are reported to have been committed but we are seldom told the legal provisions that apply. Nor is there any information of how we should deal with such crimes – ie, if it is a question of rape, what does the victim have to do immediately? Medical information is seldom provided. No helpline or numbers to call – police, hospitals etc is not provided.
- Petty crimes, murder and sex related crimes dominate crime shows. We hear very little of other types of crimes- eg, corruption, economic, etc. Also, we notice that most crimes reported have no follow-up stories. Since the first story is so sketchy on details, and is based entirely on accusations, follow-ups would help establish the real facts of a case. We note that this practise is only followed in high profile cases,

eg., Jessica Lal murder, Nihari killings, or when the channel feels it has contributed to the legal developments.

## **d. Entertainment Programmes - Analysis**

### **MONITORED SAMPLE**

The sample for fiction has been taken from Star Plus, Sony and Zee because they are the three top Hindi entertainment channels. Serials on these channels are the most popular in terms of all-Hindi viewership ratings.

**Sample:** 44 serials – 140 episodes = 70 hours

Star Plus: 13 programmes - episodes 40

Sony: 12 programmes - episodes 40 (one-hour slots have been calculated as two half an hour slots)

Zee: 7 programmes - episodes 40\*

Doordarshan: 8 programmes - episodes 10\*\*

Sab TV 5 programmes - episodes 10\*\*

**Timings:** 20.00 - 23.00 & Afternoon

**Days:** Monday - Sunday

**Dates:** 21 August 2006- 3 September 2006. 6 November – 17 November 2006

\* Zee's number of shows are fewer, although the same number of episodes, than Star Plus or Sony because it telecasts the same serials/shows all five day, whereas Star Plus telecasts different shows on Friday and Sony has a suspense belt every night which has a different serial every day.

\*\* Doordarshan and Sab TV have a smaller range of serials and episodes because they have been chosen to reflect a broader picture and to act as a comparison for the three main Hindi entertainment channels. Doordarshan, as the public service broadcaster, funded by the government, is regulated by the Prasar Bharati Board and has its own advertising and programme code. Therefore, its agenda is different from that of private satellite channels. It has stated objectives, checks and balances in place. We have taken a sample of DD serials in order to see if content on a regulated, non-commercial channel is any different from a private, commercial channel.

As for Sab, its prime time belt is devoted to situational comedies. We have taken a sample of its shows, in order to analyse the nature of comedies and see how different they are in profile from the drama serials that dominate the other channels - between them Star Plus, Sony and Zee telecast one situational comedy in the evening prime time schedule, that is *Shanno ki Shaadi* on Star Plus (Saturday).

This monitoring sample is largely of serials in the evening/night prime time belt. In order to reflect the afternoon schedule which broadcasts some serials that are exclusive to the afternoon we have taken a sample of six serials telecast at that time. These serials are from Star Plus and Sony since Zee has no afternoon serials – it telecasts a Hindi feature film.

### **Drama by channel**

#### **Evening Sample**

**Timing:** 20.00 -23.00

Most of these drama serials are 4 times a week, Monday to Thursday (Star Plus telecasts *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Babu Thbi*, *Kasautii Zindagi Ki* and *Vitrasat* 5 times week) and fall within the 30-minute segment. However, there are some shows such as *Vaidehi*, *Khauffnak*, *CID* and *Akela* on Sony that last one-hour (22.00 - 23.00 weekdays slot). These are suspense shows.

### **SAMPLE BY CHANNEL**

**Star Plus** 13 shows – of which 85 per cent are drama serials

Prime Time evening: *Antariksh*, *Kasauti Zindagi Kay*, *Viraasat*, *Karam Apna Apna*, *Kabani Ghar Ghar Ki*, *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Babu Thbi*, *Resham Dank*

Afternoon: *Kabiin To Hoga*, *Kumkum*, *Saarthi*

Fri - Sun: *Baa Babu aur Baby* and *Thodi Si Zameen*, *Thodi Si Aasmaan*, *Shano Ki Shaadi*

**Sony:** 12 shows of which 66 per cent are devoted to drama

Prime Time Evening: *Kaajal*, *Ek Ladki Anjaani Si*, *Aisa Desh Hai Mera*, *Thodi Khushi Thodi Gam Vaidehi*, *Khauffnak*, *CID*, *Akela*, *Man Mein Hai Vishwaas*

Afternoon: *Kabhi To Nazar Milao*, *Rishton ki Dor*, *Kaise Yeh Pyaar Hai*

**Zee:** 7 shows or 86 per cent of the shows are drama serials

*Banoo Mein Teri Dulhan*, *Jab Luv Hua*, *Kasamb Se*, *Saath Phere*, *Ghar Ki Lakshmi Betiyaan*. *Mamta* (19.00).

*Zee Cinestar ki Khoj*

**Sab:** 5 - 2 are drama shows

*Left Right Left, Twinkle Beauty Parlour, FIR, Isq Ki Ghanti, Ji Behnji*

**Doordarshan: 8 – 3 are drama serials**

*Sanskar, Hari Mirchi Lal Mirchi, Tu Tota Main Maina, Hum Hain Na, Sohni Mahiwal, Karam, The Detective, Kyon Apne Hue Paraye, Ek Kahani*

### **BREAK UP BY GENRE: 44 SERIALS**

In 2006, 68 per cent of the sample is drama: If we compare this figure with statistics of earlier studies conducted by CFAR we find the following:

- In 1997 CFAR report: 66 per cent of the monitored sample are drama shows -88 per cent on Zee, 86 per cent on Star Plus
- In 2000, Zee had the highest number of drama at 54 percent, Sony 44 per cent, Star Plus 22 per cent.
- In 2002, our study on the *Impact of Media Violence on Children*, one week's sample found that 50 per cent of prime time serials across five channels, were devoted to drama.

Thus, there has been something of an increase in the overall figures for drama in 2006

- **In 2006, 32 per cent** is comedy, suspense, reality, supernatural/spiritual. (comparative figures for 200?: 12 percent = comedy, 10 per cent horror, suspense and real crime).

### **BREAK-UP OF GENRES OTHER THAN DRAMA**

**Comedy:** 8 (**Star Plus:** *Shanno Ki Shaadi*; **Sab:** *FIR, Isq ki Ghanti, Je Bebenji*; **DD:** *Sohni Mahiwal, Tu Tota Main Maina, Lal Mirchi, Hari Mirchi, Hum Hain Na*)

- **Suspense:** 2 (*CID, Karan the Detective*)
- **Supernatural:** 2 (*Antariksh, Akela*)
- **Reality:** 1 (*Close Up Antakshari*)

- **Spiritual:** 1 (*Man Main Hai Vishwaas*)

## QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS: DRAMA/CHARACTER PROFILE

**By Channel: Total Number of characters- 312**

Chennel	Male	Female
Star	64	63
Zee	30	39
Sony	42	39
DD	10	9
Sab	6	10

**Representation by Age Group Aggregated Across Channels for drama**

Age Group	Representation (Aggregated across channels)	% of total number of characters (N= 312)
0-12	2	01
13-19	4	01
20-30	148	47
30-40	43	14
40-50	53	17
50-60	43	14
60 plus	19	06

## SUMMARY of Quantitative Findings:

If we collapse the figures, we find the following permutations:

47 % of the characters are in the 18-30 age group

31 % are in 30-50 age group

14 % are in 50-60 age group

6 % **senior** citizens above the age of 60

**Out of 312 characters, 49 percent are male and 51 per cent are female (152:160)**

Age group	Male - 152	Female - 160
18-40	63 % (96)	62 % (98)
40-60	33 % (50)	29 % (46)
Senior citizens	3 % (4)	09 % (14)

If we look at these figures from the perspective of individual channels, we will see there is very little variation.

The figures clearly indicate that drama serials are dominated by younger people of both sexes. One of the reasons for this youthful profile is that many serials, especially on Star Plus, have jumped generations and are peopled by a younger generation of characters, eg, *Kasauti Zindagi Kay*, *Kabani Ghar Ghar Ki*, *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Babu Thbi* and *Kumkum*. Another, is that the new serials on channels like Zee, such as *Dulhan*, *Beityaan Ghar Ki Lakshmi*, *Jab Luv Hua* have many young characters.

Young children or adolescents and grand parents have a negligible presence in the 2006 serial sample. And the reason senior citizens tend to be women is because we find more widows or elderly female relatives in shows such as *Beityaan*, *Kyunki*, etc.

If we compare this profile with CFAR's earlier study, *Towards Empowerment* for the Japan Foundation, which covered 13 drama serials across Star Plus, Sony and Zee, we find that then the age group break-up was fairly similar:

- 14- 21 age group = 6 %
- 22-30 age group = 52 %
- 31-50 age group = 23 %
- 50+ age group = 17 %

Adolescents and teenagers were in greater numbers and seem to have given away to characters in the 20-40 age group now.

**Representation of Marital Status (% of total no. of characters) across channels**

Marital Status	Representation (Aggregated Across Channels)	% of Total Number of Characters (Total Male Characters= 152; Total Female Characters= 160)
Married Males	72/152	47%
Married Females	72/160	45%
Unmarried Males	51/152	33%
Unmarried/ Single Females	72/160	34%

**Marital status not known                      16/160                      10%**

### **Representation of Marital Status Aggregated Across Channels**

Marital Status	Star Plus		Sony		Zee		DD		Sab	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Married	31	32	23	16	14	20	3	2	1	2
Unmarried	22	20	12	11	9	11	3	4	5	8

Given the age bracket of the characters, it is quite understandable that almost 50 per cent of them are married. For a similar reason, we find that upto 47 per cent are single. This include unmarried 54, widow- 10- separated and divorced 8. In Sony serials there is amore significant representation of widowed, divorced or separated women. For instance in *Ek Ladki Anjaani Si*, there are six female characters of which one is married, two are divorced/separated, two are single, and one is widowed. In *Kaajal*, out of three female characters one is married, two are single. In *Kabhi Nazar To Milao*, out of three female characters, two are single and one is married.

Compare these figures with our findings in *Towards Empowerment*: 55 per cent of the characters in that monitoring sample were married, 30 per cent single, 1 per cent divorced/separated, 7 per cent widowed. Once again, there is very little difference in the figures between the two periods, strongly suggesting that the profile of the characters in drama serials has not changed perceptibly.



## REPRESENTATION OF OCCUPATION

### Employment

#### Male Characters – Employed

Employed:	115	78 %
Self-employed:	74	50 %
Professional:	41	28 %

We must state that in many instances, we were unable to identify whether or not a character was employed, attended college, etc., because there were not indicators to go by. We have therefore, left them out of the calculation.

What do the figures of the present study indicate? As has been the case all along in soap operas, the working male is predominantly self-employed. Either, he is the head of a large business house or given the younger profile of the male characters, works in his family business – for example, Tulsi's grandchildren work in the Virani industries (*Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Babu Thhi*) and in *Kasamb Se* Jay Walia's nephews work for his business empire.

In the professional category we find considerable variety: lawyers in *Kasamb Se*, *Kyunki...* trade union leaders and factory workers in *Thodi Si Zameen Thoda Sa Aasmaan*, an insurance agent and actor in *Ba Babu aur Baby*, farmers in *Jab Luw Hua*, a musician in *Vaidehi*, a musician also in *Saath Phere*, theatre people in *Kaise Yeh Pyaar Hai*. The greater variety in characters occurs in serials which are not strictly *saas-bahu* soap operas, but serials located in alternative settings. This is also something of a departure from past serials which were cluttered with self-employed men.

In *Towards Empowerment*, there was a similar bias in favour of self-employed men and that is due to the fact that most drama serials, then and now, have characters who belong to family businesses. However, *Towards Empowerment* found a sizeable student population amongst the characters which is missing in the present sample, perhaps because the age sample reflects characters who have past the college going stage.

Students (male and female): 10 students

#### Female Characters- Employment

Total	45	31 %
Self-employed	13	9 %
Professional	32	22 %
Housemakers:	80	57 %

#### Total No of working women by channel

Sab	08
DD	03
Star	15
Zee	06
Sony	13

*Towards Empowerment* found more female characters working as professionals than in the self-employed category. One reason for the change could be that the present sample of serials especially on Sony and Zee, include shows that are not about business families – eg, *Jab Luv Hua* (Zee), *Ek Ladki Anjaani Si*, and *Kaisa Hai Yeh Pyar* (Sony).

The study indicates there are more women in professional jobs (22 per cent) than those who are self-employed (9 per cent). Female characters in *saas-bahu* shows, by and large, do not work in the family business unless it be Prerna in *Kasanti* or the women in *Kabani Ghar Ghar Ki* and Bani in *Kasamb Se*. Other serials see more professional women. In Sab TV, both the serials that fall into the drama category – *Twinkle Beauty Parlour* and *Left Right Left* - are located in professional situations, one a beauty parlour, the second in an army training college.

Other serials have professional women working in different capacities: *Thodi Si Zameean*, *Thoda Sa Aasmaan* features a model, a secretary, while the lead character, Uma, is a casual worker. *Kasamb Se* has all the girls in the family working in Mr. Walia's office. There are also teachers and media professionals in *Ek Ladki Anjaane Si*, there is a college lecturer and nurse in *Saat Pher*.

The employment of women is something of a trend now across all channels and shows. Serials on Sahara One or Star One, which are not part of our monitoring sample, also have women lead characters who are working – *Kittu Hai Sab Janti Hai*, is about a girl working at a TV channel, while *India Calling* was about a call centre where young people women work, including the lead characters.

Predictably, we find that there is a high percentage of women who are home-makers and do not work. (However, domesticity in serials is in name only because the majority of characters are seldom shown doing housework – they are perpetually involved in family squabbles and problems. This is an interesting portrayal – similar soap operas in other parts of the world (USA, Britain) show housewives working in the home while they sort out their family or personal affairs. Not so in Hindi soaps.) To be redrafted

## Regional representation of serials

Region	Representation (Aggregated Across Channels)	% of Total No. of Characters (N= 312)
Mumbai/Maharashtra	130	42%
Gujarat	62	20 %
Western India (Mumbai/Maharashtra AND Gujarat)	192	62%

The break up of regional characteristics indicates that, as was to be expected, most of the serials are based in Mumbai with Gujarati and Maharashtrian families. However, there are some serials that show an effort to reflect greater diversity in regional representation. These include:

<i>Kasauti Zindagi Kay</i>	Bengali
<i>Saat Phere</i>	Rajasthani
<i>Aisa Des Mera</i>	Punjabi
<i>Jab Luv Hua</i>	Hindi heartland (UP or Bihar)
<i>Banoongi Teri Dulhan</i>	Banaras/UP
<i>Viraasat/Kasmb Se</i>	Punjabi
<i>Twinkle Beauty Parlour</i>	Delhi

Although the serials are based in urban settings and often in cities such as Delhi or Mumbai, the majority of families are joint family households. Nuclear families are present in only a few serials such as *Jab Luv Hua*, *Ghar Ki Lakshmi Betiyaan*, *Kabhi to Nazar Milao*, *Shanno Ki Shaadi*. Sitcoms, more often than not, concentrate on couples living alone in the city.

More striking is the absence of serials with characters from different religious communities, castes or class. While the middle and lower middle class find some presence in serials such as *Thodi Si Zameen...* there are few characters from minority communities. There is also a definite colour band divide: all the characters with the exception of Saloni in *Saat Phere*, are extremely fair.

All of these are very worrying statistics: they indicate preferences and biases that reflect North Indian prejudices. Also, the lack of serials set in professional settings that deal with professional issues or other

## OVERALL SUMMARY OF CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

If we were to provide a brief description of the dominant demographic characteristics of the drama serials, it would be as follows:

- The setting is urban
- The characters fair, predominately within the 20-50 age group
- They live in joint families
- The men are mostly self-employed in business
- The women are homemakers although a significant percentage work primarily in professional capacities
- Just under 50 per cent are married and over one-third are single
- Overwhelmingly Hindu, from Gujarat and Maharashtra with a strong bias towards Mumbai
- Sab has a different profile than the other channels because it has more sitcoms than drama
- Doordarshan dramas reflect the same ethnographic features

## COMEDIES

Comedies are a scarce commodity on the entertainment channels and you can see why: the quality is so poor that what passes for being funny, is not even amusing. Indeed, most of the sitcoms have nothing to recommend them. This has been an old problem still dogging Indian TV. We do not have scriptwriters who can produce really witty dialogues and situations. We still live in the world of slapstick jokes – and poor ones at that.

Perhaps this is the reason why we find so few comedies across channels. For instance in our sample we found a total of 8 comedies out of 44 shows. The most were on Sab and then DD.

These are:

- Doordarshan: *Hari Mirchi Lal Mirchi, Tu Tota Main Maina, Hum Hain Na, Sohni Mahimal*
- Sab: *Ji Bebenji, FIR, Isq Ki Ghanti*

There is a distinct difference between the profiles of the two channels – whereas the national, public broadcaster has comedies dealing with the lives of young married couples (except for *Tu Tota Main Maina* which is about two men working in a domestic capacity), Sab comedies are located in professional circumstances: *Ji Bebenji* is about a woman social activist/crusader along the lines of *Rajni*, *FIR* is about a police station and *Isq Ki Ghanti*, follows the lives of three young men who run a gymnasium.

If we look at the overall profile of the characters we find that there is an emphasis on youth: 78 per cent of the characters fall within the 20-40 age bracket (M= 74%, F =84 %).

Unlike in the drama category, there are very few senior citizens – only 3 out of a total of 50. Just over 50 % of the characters are married – the figure is approximately the same for DD and Sab and a high percentage of women in Sab comedies are single (42 %). This can be explained by the fact that many of the female characters in Sab shows are young and are working women, whereas a higher percentage of female characters on DD are homemakers: 66% of women on DD are the latter while the figure for Sab is 47%.

## **DRAMA AND COMEDY**

We can therefore conclude that there is a difference between drama and comedy in their profiles- dramas are much more about families while the sitcoms are based both at home and in professional locations. We will also find a difference in the nature of issues – whereas in serials (discussed below), the drama relates to family matters and business rivalries, the comedies are more involved in romantic entanglements and misunderstandings between the genders.

It is interesting that Sab has a different profile to all the other channels\_ it deals with young and middle aged working people in both drama and comedy. No other channel has such a profile.

### **Themes**

The serials are to a great extent set in the thematic context of familial matters and related developments. Within this larger theme, the major sub-themes are relationship, events and ritualistic celebrations and last but not the least rights, entitlements and responsibilities.

### **Relationships**

Since the theme of relationship focuses on marital and familial ties, it highlights both conflicts and familial bonding and uses the theme to package many day-to-day happenings related to sibling rivalry, individual ambitions, family intrigues and even inter-generational conflict

If we have to quantitatively demonstrate its dominant presence, we will find that out of the 60 episodes that we qualitatively monitored to understand the construction of themes and issues, we found that a little over 50 % of the episodes focused on the theme of family. (give me me data for the entire sample) While some focus on conflict, there are others that highlight familial bonding and togetherness. The most widely represented dimension of familial conflict is the age-old conflict and stress between womenfolk in the family. This includes the co-sisters and aunt versus niece etc (and for a change not the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law). Equally pronounced is the theme of marital conflict. This is one sub-theme that is fleshed out in 11 episodes out of 35 episodes. This is followed by sibling rivalry, as it appears in 8 episodes (out of this 5 are between sisters and 3 between brothers). In addition, the theme of intra-family differences between sexes-male members versus female members-are reflected in 4 episodes.

Unlike in the past, this set of serials tended to break away from the stereotypical representation of mother-in-law and in nearly 14 episodes they were represented as supportive mother-in-laws. In another 6 episode, we find that the strong mother is made the symbol of unified and cohesive family. Some serials also explored the theme of close bonding between sisters. This theme is present in 4 episodes.

While this theme, continue to be reflected in all serials within our sample, the nature of familial conflict is no longer strictly between *saas-babu*. In fact it would not be too far-fetched to say that the *saas-babu* family soap has changed – while the theme surfaces in some of the soaps as a way of carrying forward the plot. In shows such as *Vaidehi*, *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham*, *Saat Phere*, *Jab Luw Hua*, there is little or no bad blood between daughters-in-law and the mothers-in-law in other shows. Indeed, in *Kabhi Khushi...* the mothers-in-law and her daughters-in-law are very close and their battle is with the men in the family, even their own husbands, who represent the patriarchal hegemony the women of the family battle against. This turns the *saas-babu* concept on its head.

Now conflicts occur between different members of the family. Given that many serials especially those on Star Plus have shifted generations, the family conflicts and issues within the family concern inter-generational issues also. Here we can cite the example of the K serials where protagonists like Perna in *Kasauti Zindagi Kay*, is pitted against her own son Prem.

## RITUALS

The family in most of these family dramas find themselves frequently involved in celebrations, anniversaries, puja, etc. This has become an integral part of the family dramas. Out of 60 episodes, there are 6 that depict celebrations and in particular those festivals and rituals, which are not only shown as popular and are even marketed as auspicious events, which celebrate the coming together of commerce and religion. This includes festivals such as Ganesh Chaturthi, Rakhi and Karva Chauth and within the family the birth of a son. (give me data for all 90)

The celebrations are often accompanied by long song and dance sequences, very much in the tradition of the Hindi film. In *Baa Babu Aur Baby*, Rakhi is celebrated over two episodes. This allows the producers and scriptwriters a breather and time to take forward the story. It is also used as a ritualistic reaffirmation of the family and its unity in moments of conflict and disarray. In our earlier work on domestic violence in family dramas (*Rape of the Family*, 2006) we found that family rituals are an integral part of the drama and is often used to heal wounds and re-emphasise the importance of traditional values in contemporary times of flux.

## ROMANCE AND LOVE

**Out of 60 episodes, nearly 30 episodes focus on young people's search for love and romantic relationship. Out of 316 characters depicted in the serials, nearly 30 of them fall in this category. Most of them are in search of a life partner. The only exception is a serial *Vaidehi*, where the protagonist is depicted as having an extra marital relationship because of the inability of husband to have an active sexual relationship with her.**

We have seen an increase in the number of serials that have jumped a generation especially in the K serials on Star Plus. Also, many serials of more recent vintage on Sony and Zee deal with younger, unmarried people especially young women – the serials often begin with the question of the girl getting married, *Dullhan*, or *Vaidehi*. This accounts for an emphasis on romance. For instance there is the love story of Ananya and Raghu, Bhola and Ananya's sister Isha in Zee's *Jab Luv Hua*. Similarly, in Star Plus, *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Babu Thi*, sees Krishna Tulsi and Laksh falling in love, as well as Bhoomi and Abeer. There's also *Kabhi To Nazar To Milao* where Sunaina, the blind protagonist finds that she is the object of three men's interest.

Love triangles are always present as they lend more drama. Thus *Kasauti...* has the Perna-Mr. Bajaj-Anurag is an eternal triangle; in *Kasam Se* we have the issue of an older man, Jai married to Bani but her sister Priya is also in love with Jai. The traditional theme of a rich-poor, urban-rural romance is relived in *Jab Luv Hua* where Ananya the city girl falls in love with Raghu the farmer.

Romance can also lead to marriage. Marriage festivities are often shown in the serials. It is also a useful device to consume a lot of time in the serial and connect with the cultural moorings of viewers in the Hindi.

## DISABILITY AND MARRIAGE

**Out of 45 serials that we monitored, 5 of them focus on the issue of disability and mental health. Out of 6 protagonists living with disability, only one is a woman. Of these 3 are mentally challenged and two are physically challenged. The woman is depicted as being polio affected.**

While conflict within marriage is a common ruse for narrative purposes, there is another element that has been revived, first seen in *Koshish Ek Aasha*. In that serial (date??), Varun Badola plays a man who has a mental disability and Sandhya Mridul is married to him without knowing of his disability. This K serial was a big hit. The issue of disability linked with marriage now finds itself in several serials such as *Vaidehi*, *Dulhan*, *Thoda Sa Zameen* *Thoda Sa Aasmaan*, we have young women married off to men with physical/mental disabilities or challenges. In *Vaidehi*, the boy's mother tries to prevent Vaidehi from marrying her son who is impotent which leads to severe mental and physical stress in him often resulting in violence. In *Dulhan*, the boy's parents write a letter to Vidya explaining their son's disability; however, she never manages to read the letter because it is washed away in the river. In *Thoda*, protagonist Uma marries Sudhanshu unaware that he has mental problems. In each case, the girl comes from a middle class background as opposed to the would-be husband who belongs to a rich business family. In one episode of *Baa, Bahu Aur Baby*, they also raised the issue of guaranteeing work for people affected by disability.

### Rights, Entitlements and Responsibilities

This theme that highlights various issues is present across the 60 episodes. In fact there are some episodes, where they depict more than one issue. Given its widespread representation, we find that many issues are explored. Within this discrimination against women and girl child is an issue that occurs in 17 episodes. Out of this the discrimination against the girl, child which is the theme of one leading serial gets depicted across all the episodes of that serial. It is interesting to note that the experiences of a widow woman and her daughter who were forced into servitude by her relatives became the central issue of daily prime time soap. Across seven episodes, they also explore the realities of woman forced to accept the status as the less favoured wife in a bigamous marriage.

The next most widely represented issue is familial conflict around property and much of this is spearheaded by women. This occurs in 16 episodes and highlights the point that woman are increasingly staking their claim to property in their varying capacity as sister, sister-in-law, as wife etc.

We find that there are 21 episodes which focus on young people and their concerns. This includes ten episodes, which deals with the young people's right to choose their own partner. While 5 episodes looked at the issue of substance abuse, another 5 episodes highlighted sexual harassment and one dealt with professional competition. Representing young people and their concerns, we find that there are ten episodes.



7 episodes deals with parents anxiety or desire to arrange marriages for their family and they ascertain the virtues of arranged marriage

Disability in 6 episodes- two are on mental health, mentally and physically challenged, visually impaired

Mostly, this has happened in serials that began 2005 onwards. They mark a departure from the older *saas-bahu* serials inasmuch as they are not about family politics alone.

**This is our major finding and one that singles out these serials.**

The serials appear across channels and account for 50 % of the drama serials telecast across these channels (Doordarshan is not being counted here for reasons explained above).

These are:

- Star Plus: *Thoda Sa Zameen Thoda Sa Aasman, Ba Bahu Aur Baby*
- Sony: *Vaidehi, Kabhi To Nazar Milao, Aisa Des Hai Mera, Thodi Khushi Thodi Gham*
- Zee: *Dulhan, Saat Phere, Kasam Se, Jab Luv Hua, Saat Phere, Betiyaan*
- Sab; *Left Right Left, Twinkle Beauty Parlour*

As you can see, the majority of these 14 serials are on Zee (6) and Sony (4). If we look at the major themes dealt with in these serials we find the following

***Thoda Sa Zameen:*** Trade Unionism, Property rights to a *chawl*, life of Working Woman, challenges faced by single woman and husband's disability

***Ba Bahu aur Baby:*** Disability

***Vaidehi:*** Impotency, Woman as Victim, Crime and violence of male

***Kabhi To Nazar Milao:*** Disability – protagonist is blind

***Aisa Des Hai Mera:*** Return to roots-depicting a woman's journey back to the country

***Thodi Khushi Thodi Gham:*** Gender inequality, Clash of sexes within a family

***Banu main teri Dulhan:*** Illiteracy, disability, widowhood, women-headed households, violence against single women

***Jab Luv Hua:*** Rural-urban divide,

***Saat Phere:*** Colour, Infertility, surrogate motherhood

**Betiyaan:** status of girl's in the family, preference for boy child, bigamy

**Left right left:** gender equality

**Twinkle Beauty Parlour:** Lives of professional women working in a beauty parlour

All these serials are telecast at prime time in the evening belt across the channels. If we look at these serials we shall find that disability is integral to serials across all channels. This disability is both physical and psychological. There are characters with physical challenges in *Ba Babu aur Baby* (Star Plus), *Kabin To Nazar Milao* (Sony), *Saat Phere* (Zee). Psychological challenges occur in *Ba Babu aur Baby*, *Thoda Sa Zameen Thoda Sa Aasmaan* (Star Plus), *Vaidehi* (Sony), *Saat Phere* (Zee), *Mein Banoo Teir Dulhan* (Zee). All these serials have begun in the last two years and show a shift in the trend of simple, family dramas. There is the recognition that family problems go beyond ones based on relationships. In the case of physical challenges we have Baby who is afflicted by polio; in *Ba Babu aur Baby*; in *Kabin to Nazar Milao* the lead female character is blind – Sunaina - while in *Saat Phere*, Saloni's brother Samar becomes blind after a cracker accident on Diwali. In the case of Baby and Sunaina, the portrayal depicts them as women who are coping admirably with their challenges. Baby is the center of the Thakkar family and leads a normal life inspite of polio. She uses crutches and is always in the thick of things.

Sunaina is a professional woman, a sculptor. She is shown to hold an exhibition of her work. She lives at home with her parents and younger sister. Once again, she is shown to be fully integrated in the family and society.

As for Samar in *Saat Phere*, he is helpless. Perhaps because his disability is of a more recent nature. Neither the family nor he make any concerted effort to cope with his temporary blindness. He has to be helped all the time and is shown to be completely dependent on others. *Saat Phere* also tackles the problem of infertility and surrogate motherhood in the case of Urvshi who is married to Brajesh, Saloni's brother-in-law.

*Vaidehi* sees the opposite problem of impotency. *Vaidehi* is married to Aryan who is impotent. *Vaidehi* is unaware of her husband's condition when they marry. However, after the wedding, she finds her mother-in-law is very sympathetic towards her but not her husband. He turns violent towards her and is almost demented in his responses and the suggestion is that his impotency has led to mental derangement (refer to the horrendous case of Surendra in the Nithari slaughters who has also claimed that he committed the sexual and murderous crimes because he is impotent.)

In the case of mental challenges, *Ba Baboo aur Baby* has Gattoo (Gopal) who is mentally slow. However, he holds down a job and is at the centre of all action and plays a very important role in the weekend show. The family revolves around him and often an incident involving him is the focus of attention. For instance, in our monitored sample, Gattoo visits his sister without informing the rest of his family. The latter is worried sick about him while Gattoo spends an enjoyable time at his sister's. The action of an entire episode is devoted to Gattoo.

*Ba Babu aur Baby* is one of the most sensitive and well-produced serials on TV. It deals with the issues of a joint family, physical and mental challenges in an integrated manner. The family's responses and responsibilities towards Baby and Gattoo are dealt with in a very natural manner so that the viewer feels that there is nothing that has been imposed on the serial or that the serial is trying to make a statement. The story progresses smoothly and the entire Thakkar clan is 'believable' – especially in their responses to Baby and Gattoo. Moreover, very serious matters are treated with a light touch – there is a gentle wry manner to the treatment that makes you smile and laugh along with the characters.

*Thoda Sa Zameen Thoda Sa Aasmaan* sees the lead male character Sudhanshu suffering from psychological problems – we are told by the producers that it is schizophrenia. Uma, the main character, a chawl girl, marries the elder son of a rich business family – the very family that is trying to oust the tenants of the chawl she lives in so that they can build a factory there. She marries him without knowing that he has any mental challenges and his mother who proposes the match to her, deliberately does not inform her. In our sample, Sudhanshu has just been introduced into the serial. However, we know from subsequent developments that he has mood swings and can become very violent. Uma begins by being scared of him but eventually, she realises that with her assistance, he can become much more manageable.

The family treats him as a mad person who needs to be under strict control. They make statements like – “*woh pagal hai*”. They ignore him or treat him with disdain – even the mother. However, they are somewhat afraid of him because he can turn violent, although they also tease and instigate him to become violent. The sole exception is his sister-in-law who displays some sympathy for him and therefore, occasionally helps Uma who tries to cope with him. There is a suspicion that he is a step child to the rest but it is still unclear. However, that would partly explain the family attitude towards him.

Thus in contrast to *Ba Babu aur Baby*, we are shown how someone with mental challenges can be mistreated by the family.

If we look at *Banoo Mein Teri Dulhan*, we have a similar instance as in *Thoda..* somewhat differently treated. In the former show, Vidya is illiterate and mistreated at home by her chacha's family. The rich Thakur and his wife who live nearby to her family, like her enough to propose that she marry their only son. She agrees without meeting the man although his parents write her a letter informing her of his problems. The letter is washed up in the sea and she never reads it.

It is only after the wedding that she realizes her husband Saagar has mental challenges. It appears as though he, like Gattoo is mentally less developed. He is under the control his step-sisters – being the only son, the elder step sister wants to control the family fortunes upon the death of the father and so manipulates him against Vidya and her mother. She and her sisters treat him kindly in order to keep him under their control. Vidya is a *sati-savitri* wife and very dutiful towards her husband even if he has mental challenges and mistreats her. She accepts her fate and fights to wrest him from his sisters' dominance but does so in a very subdued manner unlike *Thoda's* aggressive Uma. Saagar's portrayal is of a

helpless man who is buffeted from his sisters to his wife and is never quite sure which side he is on. His behaviour is always childlike.

The serial has no space for institutional interventions in the form doctors or any medication. Indeed, it is striking that there is little institutional intervention of any kind. Not even in the form of counseling. We are not informed of the nature of the mental problem either. Given that mental problems can be tackled in a number of ways, the lack of any professional help for any of the characters is surprising.

### **OTHER SOCIAL ISSUES:**

While there is some exploration of the issue of mental and physical disabilities, the serials also explore many social issues as we have mentioned above. This marks another departure from the typical K or *saas-bahu* serials. Whereas the drama takes place within a family and centres around the women, the emphasis or focus is not only on the ties within the family but on these other concerns.

Sometimes, the serials have moved ahead of the issue they began with. However, it is important to understand that it was the choice of going with social issues that made these serials different. For instance, *Saat Pher*, began with the idea that Saloni was in some way handicapped because of the colour of her skin. By the time we recorded our sample, this was no longer the issue. She had married Nahar and the two of them are happy together. Her other qualities are more appreciated – her voice and good nature – and her colour no longer matters.

The serial did explore the prejudices in Indian society related to colour. We are shown how other people who come to see Saloni reject her as a daughter –in-law because she is dark. On the other hand, Nahar and his family see her other sterling qualities and they go ahead with the marriage.

We also find that in *Aisa Desh Mera* and *Thoda Sa Zameena*, *Thoda Sa Aasmaan*, there is a shift in focus as the serial progresses. *Aisa*...begins with Rusty in London who learns that her father is Indian and decides to visit him in small town Punjab to make contact with her family. So the story seems to be about a girl living abroad coming to India to seek her roots. However, by the time of our sample, Rusty has settled into her Indian home and the serial is much more about her love life and relations with her family.

*Thoda Sa*... tells the story of Uma. It begins with a realistic portrayal of a Maharashtrian family in a Mumbai chawl. This is a very believable depiction of both the family and life in the chawl. The serial also explores the question of a single professional woman who is 27 years old. Simultaneously, we have a much larger social issue – that of a company intent on the ouster of the inmates of the chawl in order to take over the land and erect a factory there instead. Uma's father and brother are trade union leaders in conflict with the business management. Eventually, Uma will marry into this business family – without

knowing which family she is marrying into - and be confronted with the question of her husband's mental challenges. The issue of the chawl continues to be important.

Other serials have so far continued with their original themes: take the case of *Jab Luw Hua* which began as a simple love story of Ananya the city girl, and Raghu the village farmer. To date, this has remained the central theme. Similarly *Ba Babu aur Baby* and *Thodi Khushi Thodi Gham* have remained faithful to their original ideas. They still deal with the questions of the Thakkar family, with Gatoos and Baby's challenges and a gender conflict, respectively.

Some of the newer serials deal with different types of issues: for example, *Dulhan* is not only about the mentally-challenged husband of Vidya. It also deals with the issue of Vidya and her mother being mistreated by Vidya's uncle and aunt in the absence of Vidya's father who had passed away before the serial began. There is the attendant issue of Vidya being illiterate and therefore being denied her fair rights to the property. However, the theme of female illiteracy is not pursued.

*Betiyaan*...has at the core of its drama, preference for the male child. The Goradia family consists of four girls from one wife and a boy from a second wife. The girls are discriminated against by the second wife who dominates her husband; the girls' mother is sidelined because she is the mother of girls. (interestingly, Star One also has a serial about a family of girls – *Betiyaan Paraya Dhan*).

We should add that these social issues have been treated sympathetically from the point of the underdog be it the women married to men with disabilities or the chawl inmates in *Thoda Sa Zameen*...

## PROFESSIONAL WOMEN

One of the other stand-out features is the fact that we see more professional women. Indeed, the two shows on Sab TV – *Left Right Left* and *Twinkle Beauty Parlour* - that have been included in our sample have working women at the centre of the action. In fact, the situation of the serials is in the workplace rather than the home. Whereas *Left Right Left* deals with student cadets at a training camp and the question of gender relations in a professional environment; *Twinkle*... as the name suggests, is about women who work at a beauty parlour, their personal and professional challenges.

What has been the public response to serials with issues and different storylines? Fairly positive. If we take the case of Zee, you will find that its evening line up – *Dulhan* (8 pm)... *Jab Luw Hua* (8.30 pm), *Kasamb Se* (9 pm), *Saath Phere* (9.30) and *Betiyaan*... (10 pm), is a well-balanced, varied mix of themes and characters. No two serials are the same although in production terms they might look similar. They are also produced by different companies. This line up is pitted against Star Plus which is dominated by the K serials beginning with *Kasauti Zindagi Kay* at 8.30pm. In the last year, Zee has been steadily gaining on Star Plus - and although the latter continues to lead the viewership stakes, its viewership has been on the decline. For instance in July 2006, the highest K serial was at

9.1 TVRs whereas in January 2007, it is down to 6 TVRs. Meanwhile, Zee's shows have shown increased viewership from almost zero in 2005 to 4 in Jan 2007.

What does this say? It indicates that Star Plus has little or no variation. Out 13 shows we monitored, 11 were family dramas (one a sci-fi, another a comedy) and told the story of joint business families where everything revolved around the conflicts and relationships between the family members. On Zee, out of seven serials, 6 were family dramas (one was a reality show) but each one had a different storyline and issues. Some of the serials were situated in non-metro locations such as *Jab Luv Hua (in a village)* and *Dulhan (Benares)*. Another distinguishing feature of Zee prime time is that the storylines in the serials develop and change constantly with new characters, making fast-paced. This adds to the variety and helps to rekindle interest. In comparison, serials on Star which have been telecast from 2000 onwards, have remained more faithful to their storylines, characters and although they have skipped several generations and advanced in years by decades, they have remained fairly static – for example, the main male character in *Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki*, Om was murdered almost two years ago and the serial has taken a 15 years leap but Parvati is still coming to terms with it and looking for Om's assailants. Even the Aggarwal house looks just as it was earlier.

Sony has a variety of programmes but the mix has not worked. Sony combines family dramas of a different kind from the K serials with suspense, reality and horror. However, this has not been all that successful a combination. It seems as if the viewing public is saying: give us drama that has variety, different storylines, locales and tackles many issues.

We should also point out that there has been a shift towards greater realism in at least some of the serials. This reflects the shift in the issues tackled. A serial such as *Jab Luv Hua* is far more natural than many of its more melodramatic counterparts. Similarly, *Ba Babu aur Baby* and *Thoda Sa Zameen...* are treated in a far more realistic matter. The portrayal of life in a chawl and the relationship between the inmates, as well as Uma's family are extremely natural.

In a sense, the serials seem to be growing out of the K factor. That formula, patented by Ekta Kapoor's Balaji Telefilms (producers of the highly popular and successful *Kyunki, Kahani, Kasauti*) is still popular but, as we have seen, serials are shifting away from the *saas-babu* formula. In a sense the serials of 2006-2007 are more like the serials 1994-95 when there were more working women, young single characters and issues concerned not only the home but professional and social matters too (eg *Taru* dealt with the lives of single professional, *Banegi Apni Baat* concerns a nuclear family headed by the mother with three single girls and deal with the issue of single parenthood, *Hasratein* is about a professional married woman coming from a traditional middle class who, leaves her husband to live with her boss while in *Imtihan*, Priya works to support the family. Interestingly, all these serials with the exception of *Imtihan* – telecast on DD – were on Zee which is also the chief agent of change now).

## VIOLENCE

One of our major concerns in relation to TV fiction has been the issue of violence. In previous CFAR studies, we found very high levels of violence, especially in terms of verbal and audio. Family dramas saw 50 per cent of the violence on television (*Impact of Media Violence*, 2002).

In this study too we have looked at the issue of violence. We find that verbal violence and violence in sound effects is much higher than physical or mental violence. **Indeed, we found only 9 acts of physical violence across all channels** – only one murder, two kidnappings and the rest in pushes, shoves, etc. We have to add that there is almost no violence on DD and Sab – one of the explanations for this could be the fact that our sample contains more comedy than drama for these two channels.

We have threatening dialogues as the most common form of verbal violence. **Other types include, eve-teasing, screaming, double meaning, abuse, arguments, anger, accusations. etc. If look at it from the point of view of figures, we find that 33 per cent of all the episodes in our sample had one form of violence or another.** If we consider it from the point view of channels, we find that Zee has the most violence – especially *Dulhan* and *Betiyaan* – while Sony has very little. The serial *Vaidehi* is extremely dark and violent as is *Viraasat* on Star. *Dulhan* has the most unacceptable forms of violence that include burning.

The data indicates that most of the violence is woman-oriented: **more than 80 per cent of the violence is directed towards women. Of this 56 per cent is committed by family members. What is equally disturbing is that there is a high incidence of violence by women towards women (46 per cent of the violence).** Zee's serials have the highest incidence of woman-to-woman violence.

In the family, the violence is perpetrated by almost all members, given that the stories take place predominantly in joint family homes. On Sony, for instance, all the violence in serials is by family members against one another.

The cause of violence is normal due to disagreements within the family over personal relationships, property and business. There is little dispute between couples and even less between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. The conflicts are between members of the extended joint who live together in the same house, or even brothers and brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. On Zee, in *Dulhan* the violence is perpetrated by the Chachi and her daughter on Vidya and her widowed mother.

This predominance of violence towards women needs to be considered seriously, especially in view of the fact that crime shows on TV news channels have also indicated that the portrayal of violence is largely aimed at women. There is nothing new in this. Our previous studies *Impact of media violence on children* and *Family at War* indicate that the level of violence towards women is always higher. Woman to woman violence in terms of conflicts, verbal clashes/abuses, have always been high and the crux of drama.

The question is not merely of acts of violence but the atmospherics surrounding them. The combination of special effects - loud (sometimes disturbing) music, repeated close-ups

- and the dramatic reactions of the characters plus the overall sense of foreboding add another dimension to the violence.



## **WOMEN PROFILE:**

We have found that as in the past, women are very aggressive, and the cause of conflict and violence. While the power struggle within the family continues to be a dominant factor, as it has been in previous years and serials, we find that there is a shift in emphasis also. We now see sister pitted against sister in a bid to take over control of husbands – there is Priya who wants to marry her sister Bani's husband Jai (*Kasamb Se*); there is Urvashi who wants to take the place of her sister Tara in Singh household and with her husband Brajesh (*Saat Pher*).

Also, now women are seeking power outside the house in professional capacities too – *Ek Ladki Anjaani Si* has Ayesha betray her best friend in order to take control of the husband's business empire. *Kaajal* has the eponymous heroine in trouble because of professional jealousies on the part of two female colleagues at the radio station.

## **YOUTH**

As our data reveals, there is an accent on youth. We have found a high number of characters, both male and female, who are young and fall into the 20-30 age group – 47 per cent of the characters in our sample belong to this category. This, as we have also mentioned, is to attract viewers in the 18-45 age group.

## **YOUTH AND ISSUES**

However, while there is certainly a youthful 'look' to the serials of 2006-07, the issues of youth are not really dealt with.

The only issue that repeatedly occurs is related to their romantic entanglements. Even here, we find a disappointing lack of joy in the love affairs. The passion and innocent happiness that young love brings with it, is almost totally missing in these serials. Love always seems to have a negative aspect or fallout and is more in the nature of an obsession than genuine love. For example, in *Kabhi To Nazar Milao*, Sunaina is the object of three young men's interest – one of whom obsessively desires her. In *Kasauti Zindagi Kay*, Prem loses his beloved Mukti and is emotionally so disturbed that Deviki (a lookalike of Mukti) is brought in from the village to rekindle his spirit. By the time he responds to her affections, she has run away. Blighted love, conflictual relationships between young men and women is the focus of these serials.

Other than that, the storylines continue in much the same vein as they did previously: the main theme even for younger people in serials is about families and their relationships. This is in spite of the shift of themes in many serials. For example, the younger generation in the K serials is involved in intra-family business wars, and family politics – *Kyunki...* sees the children of Karan, Gautam and Saahil, constantly at odds with one another. Krishna Tulsi is also the object of Lakshya and Eklavya romantic interest.

Since the majority of the serials deal with large business households, the tendency is to have the younger generation join the family business at the top management level. Most of the girls are unemployed and in a vacuum – often waiting to get married. Therefore, there is little depiction of the kind of problems young, educated people face in the employment market or work place. Nor is there ever a housing problem. Moreover, since they live in the family homes, they never face any domestic or financial problems that beset most young couples. There is no question of setting up their own homes and running them.

For the same reason, since these young people live in the same family homes, family issues continue to dominate their lives. So we do not find issues other than romance and rivalry surfacing amongst them. Only in a serial such as *Thodi Si Zameen...* do we see something of the problems that face young couples or single people, living in a metropolitan city. Life in the chawl and frustrations attendant upon unemployment or loss of their home and issues such as alcoholism, etc, is very much a concern for the younger people here. Also, finding jobs and supporting families is in the picture – for example, is a graduate who is constantly looking for a job in order to help support the family. In *Kaajal* we see something of the work place politics at a radio channel amongst the young employed and in *Kaise Hai Ye Pyar* we see the problems between two young couples.

Sab TVs *Left Right Left* and *Twinkle Beauty Parlour* deal with the life of young people in professional circumstances. In *Beauty Parlour*, we see what it is like to be a young working woman in Delhi – her professional life and love life. *Left Right Left*, as mentioned earlier is about young cadets at a Defense Academy.

There is none of the exuberance of youth, the laughter and joy of being young and enjoying life to the fullest – as we saw in a serial such as *Jassi Jaisi Koi Nahin*. The young are ambitious yes, especially young women in serials such as Ayesha in *Ek Ladki Anjaani Si* (who does not belong to a rich family), and ruthless in wanting to attain their goals – only *Jab Law Hua* has the gaiety and carefree attitude of youth. They seem to have no aspirations, nothing that they dream of or want for the future – nor anything outside the family – in terms of civic or social responsibilities or concerns. There is very little on friendship or relationships outside the family. One of the reasons for this is that there are very few students shown and therefore college life is hardly present unless it is to show how young men trouble young women.

In our earlier studies, we did find generational conflict as a major component of the family concerns. Although it is less of an issue here, it remains in the K serials. For example, in *Kum Kum*, the parents and their daughter cannot understand one another and the parents question the manner in which they brought up their young daughter. The rivalries are more likely to occur between siblings. Conversely, we find that the position of the ‘elders’ within the family is not what it used to be. Not only are they much younger and less plausible as in *Kyunki* – where Tulsi and Mihir are now masquerading as the grandparents, there are fewer in number. Serials such as *Saat Phere*, *Kasamb Se*, *Viraasat*, for example have only two generations in the story.

## e. Focus Group Discussions

### *We conducted 9 focus group discussions - 3 in Delhi and 2 each in Jaipur, Meerut and Pune*

**Sample**-We elicited feedback from senior citizens (3 groups) 20 to 40 years women from the less privileged strata (2) 20 to 40 years women from middle and upper middle class (4). This included both married and single, working women, homemakers and a few students

**Methodology**-We showed excerpts of serials, news and reality shows to get their feedback on the treatment of concerns relating to people living with disability, widows, poor women and senior citizens, depiction of children on crime programmes, violence, police brutality and superstition.

**Based on these clips, a discussion followed on:**

- Why do they watch TV? What motivates them to view it?
- Whether, some of the concerns of senior citizen, people living with disability, poor women and widows were treated adequately and sensitively?
- In the case of depiction of acts of violence against women, senior citizens and general public, on news and crime shows, to what extent should such brutal acts be shown?
- What is their view on the manner in which “superstition” has been depicted?
- What are their major concerns about the effect of TV on children?

### **Key Findings**

#### **General Observations**

It is clear from the discussion that most viewers find that they are highly habituated to watching TV.

They admit that TV is on almost all the time, except when they are sleeping. At the end of the discussion, when they weighed the pros and cons, they felt that TV news and current affairs programmes do play a useful role in informing citizens, exposing unjust acts and even preventing all forms of “excesses.”

In terms of the extent of violence that should be depicted, many respondents felt that nothing should be censored, as the media is only doing its job of informing and educating the public.

Many felt that what angered them most was not media depiction but government inaction. This kind of feelings, were particularly evident among senior citizens, poor women and people living with disability.

So, when it came to setting programme norms, they preferred to adopt a cautious approach. However, in terms of guidelines they were clear that some practices need to be regulated. This included less repetition of violent images and watershed timings for adult programmes and images.

## Delhi-Some Key Feedback

### *On Serials*

The senior citizens felt that serials were as if not more problematic than news programmes.

**“We cannot understand, why some characters and protagonists are constantly portrayed as suffering and being persecuted. Such characterization defeats all logic and purpose.”**

They also felt that many serials were being unduly prolonged and some of it had even become difficult to watch. However, many admit that they are prisoners of habit and having got into the terrible habit of viewing it, day after day they are not able to stop viewing it.

There were some who had gone to the other extreme and had completely stopped watching all serials. *“Till three years ago I used to watch serials very passionately and felt extremely involved in the story line. But soon the quality of serials deteriorated so much and it became so bad and so negative that I stopped watching it. I am not only one who has stopped watching it. There are many women who are not watching it. I only watch news and musical programmes.”*

The respondents admitted that they were exceptions. *“Some serials are good. This includes Baa, Bahu and Baby, Saibaba and Prithviraj Chauhan”*

### *On Crime Shows*

*At the time when the focus group discussions were being conducted, the incident around Uma Khurana, a teacher working in a government school was happening. She was allegedly trapped in a sting operation and accused of selling her students into prostitution. The Courts found the allegation unfounded and unsubstantiated and she was released from jail and the channel that conducted the sting came under official pressure and its telecast rights temporarily suspended.*

In Delhi, across the groups there was consternation among the viewers. Barring one respondent from the middle class group, all others believed what the channel had shown. There was not a shred of doubt in their mind that the channel had caught the teacher red-handed, while striking a bargain for one girl.

They were not only disturbed by the entire development but also felt that it was the tip of the iceberg

*“We have come to a stage when we cannot trust police or teachers.”*

*“After seeing the news on TV now we are afraid of sending our girls to school*

*The media has exposed the entire episode and that is necessary but it is equally necessary that they should show teachers who are good role models, so that our belief in them is not lost*

### ***On Depiction of Violence-lathi charge by police, sexual violence***

With the media constantly exposing all kinds of excesses including lathi charge by the police, we wanted to know whether they had any concerns about such depictions and representation of the people, especially the poor.

For most viewers particularly from the less privileged segments, the media expose is essential. They felt that it is a daily travail that they experience in different ways. If the media depicted inhuman lathi charge by the police on defenseless old man, then it was only helping “poor people like them.”

Some views expressed by the respondents were:

Media should expose all kinds of misdeeds by the people in power, especially when the police go berserk and start beating up hapless people

We all see many such acts of high-handedness every day. Poor people are not in a position to resist or stop any excesses by the police. If we try to be defiant then they can impose cases on us. In these circumstances, it is only the media that can give us some respite. If there is a road accident and poor people are killed, we find that the rich get away.

In fact, when the media shows such images of an old man being beaten and kicked our bodies ache and in fact we feel extremely angry but at the same time we also realize that such situations abound in our areas. Even more than the media, what we need are local committees that act as a watchdog and protect the community from such unjustified acts.

*The feedback tells you that the community wants more than just expose, they are also actively looking for solutions. When we enquired about what they envisaged as the ultimate role of media, they made it clear that they want the media to support them in their efforts to find solutions for their problems.*

*Similarly they were very critical about the manner in which television channels treated a self-immolation incident in Punjab. Instead of trying to stop the person, the cameras caught the horrific incident on camera and telecast it. However, they were clear that the people also made no attempt to stop him and we cannot blame the media alone.*

When we asked how many of them think that electronic media is playing a responsible role nine out of ten respondents said they felt confident in the role that media is playing in

exposing unjust acts and only one respondent had doubt about the veracity of the reports and the intentions of the media.

**When asked if channels should show raw footage (like police beating and stamping on people) all of them felt that it should be shown but if possible not repetitively because that arouses in the viewing public uncontrolled anger and frustration.**

### ***Depiction of children on crime shows***

Every group felt uneasy about the manner in which children are being depicted on crime shows.

In one news item, an eight-year old child who killed three children including his three-year old sister was being compared with other hardcore serial killers. In another news item, they interviewed an eleven-year old girl who had witness her mother killing her father and asked her to enact the act.

*Reacting to a news clip on a child having committed a series of murders and being referred to as a “serial killer” all respondents felt that there were many ethical issues that were being violated.*

They all objected to this news item on two grounds. The primary objection was that it has done injustice to the child and second objection was its negative effect on other children.

On the second clip, they did not object to the child being interviewed, but felt that it was necessary to mosaic her face.

*The unanimous opinion of the respondents was that when a child commits an act of crime it cannot be treated in the same manner as a crime committed by an adult. Far more complex explanations have to be given as to why a child behaves in a particular fashion.*

### ***Depiction of Superstition***

When, the two news items were shown, one depicting a tantric priest performing *puja* at night and the second one of a village woman who was branded as *Dayan* and attacked d by neighbours, the unanimous reaction was that such news items should be critical. The media should educate people about not trusting every *baba* or *sadhu* and exposing the many fraudulent practices that such people were committing in the name of spirituality and religion.

On whether such incidents should be reported, they all felt that branding women as *dayan* and tormenting her “happens everyday in the villages.”

Even when they report on ghosts and do other kinds of eerie stories, they end up by increasing superstition, blind faith and fear and do not counter the beliefs with scientific and rational arguments.

### **Representation of Senior Citizens**

The focus group discussion that we conducted with special groups such as senior citizens, widows and people living with disability had far less illusions, about the impact that media was having on their issues and concerns

Responding to the news reports relating to senior citizens, especially those that dealt with the violence and crime, they felt that media was “only ending up by scaring us.” The channels are “neither informing and educating us about our rights and entitlements nor exerting the right kind of pressure on the government to address the needs of senior citizens.”

### **Representation of Widows**

In the case of widows, they felt that their concerns were very poorly represented on the media. “None of our day to day struggles like school admission for children or court cases against husband for adequate alimony and maintenance are reported,” they claimed

Given the high levels of corruption, they find that even wresting basic entitlements such as widow’s pension, was so difficult to ensure, that they were very keen that the channels should make an effort to highlight these issues.

When they were asked if whether in distress they would turn to the media for support, they were not quite confident about using such an option. “If we go the media, then we will be disgraced and ostracized by our neighbours. The boys of the locality will start harassing us,” they replied.

Then, when asked what should be role of media, they stated that the media should give us information about their rights, educate them about income-generation and skill development opportunities and raise issues concerning us.

## **Pune-Key Findings**

Two focus group discussions conducted with women from middle class and the less privileged group from age 23 to 50, consisting of both homemakers, employed women, person living with disability and widows gave us the following feedback:

### **Media Habits**

- When it comes to watching serials, they made it very clear that they prefer the serials on the Marathi Channel
- For news, they turn to Aaj Tak, NDTV and for those interested in stocks and shares, they tune into CNBC.
- One extremely unforgettable news item was that of “Prince”, the young boy who was rescued from a deep shaft.
- Doordarshan can prove to be very inconsiderate to viewers as it often discontinues serials and programmes, without warning the viewers.

- The most relaxing programmes are the musical shows like Indian Idol and Sa re ga ma pa

### ***Depiction of the Child as a Serial Killer***

All the respondents were extremely disturbed about the manner in which the channel reported on this news. They stated that, “children should not be treated as criminals.” They are not “criminal by nature.”

The media must explore the reasons for such behaviour and not treat it like any other crime story. If such an unusual story has to be reported then we have to deal with it in a very sensitive way, find out the factors responsible for such behaviour and even take a conscious decision on how much should be revealed to the viewers.

This is essential because since children can access such news programmes at any time of the day and it is difficult to monitor their viewing across the day. Hence, if such an incident has to be reported then it should be accompanied by an advisory to adults and children on how we should respond to such developments.

Articulating their concern, one respondent stated how once a boy, who was trying to show how to hang, lost his life before his sister could help him.

In another instance, two children locked themselves in a trunk while playing hide and seek. They find that children tend to do things they see on TV.

With some programs like Crime Diary detailing out how a crime is committed end up by educating people on the different aspects on crime. With children keenly watching such programs, there is a danger of them imitating such acts.

Moreover, in most instances, the incidences of crime are located in the slums and this also creates a social bias.

The respondents stated that in such reality shows, the Channels are only interested in showing what has happened and are not bothered about its consequences. They make it clear that it is up to the viewer to decide whether they take it in a good sense or wrong way.

There is no way one can prove that they had contributed to the crime. The media insists that they are doing their duty of informing and alerting people and the viewers cannot tell them to stop this business. Very often the situation gets complicated because gullible and innocent people tend to get misled by the media. In one instance “a school girl from the community eloped with a boy from another community.” In another instance, a person killed his friend because he was jealous of his prosperity.” All this indicates the not-do-helpful effect of the media

### ***Depiction of Women in Difficult Circumstances***



On the issue of trafficking of women, the news item focused on how the police came to the aid of a woman and her daughter who had been trafficked by people close to them. This was a positive report, which the women welcomed but also felt that it had oversimplified their realities. While feeling sympathetic towards the women, but from the standpoint of the report, the respondents felt that much more needed to be explained about the situation of the women. There was an overall sense of dissatisfaction with the manner in which the issue was treated.

While the police had helped them, some respondents were struck by the sheer helplessness of the women. Others felt that there were other dark realities that needed to be understood. They even suspected that the “mother was using the daughter to beg.”

Some felt that the channels should have got the police to share legal information with the viewers and also explored the legal redress that women with alcoholic partners and even children can take recourse to.

### ***Representation of Senior Citizens***

Reacting to a news item on enacting a law that penalizes children who neglect their parent, the respondents were clearly divided on the issue. While some argued for family care others defended the idea of institutional care.

It was clear that the respondents engaged with the issue in a highly personalized manner. They felt a great need to go beyond the legal framework, dialogue on the issue and also put forward the viewpoint of the children and the younger generation on their challenges and constraints. Media was perceived as a platform

In fact, on the depiction of violence faced by senior citizens there was a general feeling that such situations are more rampant in nuclear family. In such families, children are less “caring.” For some respondents there was also a sense of inevitability that such incidences are on the rise and would soon become a rule rather than an exception.

The respondents recollected the incidence that two old men from a good family from Solapur were abandoned near Vitthalwadi. They didn’t get food for three days. One of them died.

Yet there were some respondents, who felt that the situation was highly exaggerated. They observed that:

“There is season for every type of news. One tends to see in a particular phase the same types of stories in a particular period. If there is a bomb blast then there are bomb blasts everywhere.”

This, they felt does not happen with positive news. They are more competitive when it comes to tragic or negative news. “The channels even boast about how they got to the news first. Diana lost her life due to this fierce competition within the media.”

### ***Depiction of Superstition***

When the news clip relating to how women were being branded as “dayan” and ill-treated, was shown, it evoked fairly strong reactions. They were clear that for some other reason they were branding the woman as a “dayan” and tormenting her. But this did not imply that they were happy with media’s treatment of the story. They felt that the channels are not using such incidents to educate the community and instead by sensationalizing it, they would only end up by encouraging such practices. Similarly in the case of farmer’s suicides, they feel that by constantly drawing attention to it, they have only encouraged more suicides instead of focusing on the actual distress they are experiencing.

### ***Depiction of Widows***

By highlighting the impoverished plight of widows and the households dependent on her, the Channels have preferred to exploit the “entertainment” value rather than seriously address the problem. The Channels should link her up with organizations that can support her. Such information should be telecast in local channels.

Moreover, in such human-interest stories, it is important to follow-up the report and assess whether such news reports have a genuine impact on the concerned stakeholders

### ***Depiction of people living with Disability***

A news item, which represented a person living with disability in a positive manner was welcomed by the respondents. The report profiled an achiever, a person who despite all his disability mastered the computer.

The respondents found the report “inspiring.” They felt that the scenario is changing as far as the disabled are concerned. There is greater integration and acceptance of people living with disability. Their talents are getting recognized and many among them are realizing their potential as “achievers.” They recollected many such reports, where ordinary people with very modest means had achieved much despite being physically or visually challenged.

### ***Depiction of Police Violence***

All respondents felt that by exposing police brutality the channels were doing the right thing. Commenting on the clip where an old man was severely beaten, they said that: “Old people should not be beaten so hard.” They were clear that the police should not be vested with so much powers and such expose will help to keep them in check.

They also recollected another news item where a thief was badly beaten by the police, tied to a motorcycle and battered. By capturing such incidences the media was doing the right thing. In another instance, they found that the media exposed a fake encounter death by the media.

- 3 people have 50% trust

- 3 people have 80-90 % trust
- TV is the company when we are alone
- Life becomes bore without TV
- It entertains us
- We feel that some body is in the house when TV is on
- I Love to watch cricket - I do my all work earlier when there is cricket match
- But they exaggerate a lot, which they should not do. Some time they show how the children are treating their parents or how the daughter in law is treated badly. On some occasions they exaggerate this information.
- We get information from the news but as far as crime reports are concerned they should not keep repeating all through the day it has a bad effect on children.

#### **Any such repetition they recall**

- Richard Gere kissing Shilpa Shetty again and again
- Recently they show about police dragging the criminal ( Bhagalpur) – if Police is doing this whom can we trust – but media is doing good thing by informing us
- This kind of images are very cruel but it shows it happens in our country

#### **Reaction on the News Report –Attack on senior citizen**

- It keeps happening
- It does scare us but it alerts us.
- It makes us to think that if it happened to us what should be our reaction
- So we get prepared

#### **Reaction on the News Report – Police Violence**

- If it is truth is should be shown

- Government should take action against police
- Media should get full information, get the full story and then show.

#### **Media report on senior citizens bill**

- We got the information
- Media is not going to do anything for senior citizens
- Such kind of news come very rarely
- If any children get punishment by not looking after the old parents then media should show so that other children will look after the parents.
- Media gives us the information about the problem but they should also give solution. Media has never shown much about old people problems. They do not show any information about old age home.

#### **Reaction on news item of the Child Being Depicted as Serial Killer**

- Media never gives full story
- They should not give such headline for a child
- He does not look like a serial killer. He must be having some other problem.
- It is too much to call him a serial killer.
- It will have a bad effect on other children
- They should give it as news but not keep repeating again and again.
- The way they have shown the story is wrong.
- They should have talk about the circumstance and should have given us full information than the story will be helpful.

#### **How?**

If they could have shown the reason then we could have explain to our children

#### **On Depiction of Superstition**

- The news report only reinforces and increases blind beliefs

- Children get scared.

### **Credibility of Media**

- They exaggerate lot
- They make big thing out of a small news, even all the dowry cases, they show might not be true

### **Jaipur – Feedback from Middle Class Viewers-Age-25 to 45**

#### **Media Habits**

- I watch more serial then news
- I watch ACP Arjun – because it focuses on women
- I like watching Sting operations, serials and news
- I like all Zee TV serials
- They should not show children doing stunts – like eating glass, stunt on motorcycle – It has bad effect on children
- Programme on Supernatural is bad for children.
- One youngster was doing motorcycle stunt in Jaipur after watching Sabash India
- Life will be boring without TV
- One participant gave her experience – few years ago she went through severe depression. She could get sleep only by watching TV.
- Used to watch KBC. Now I do not miss Antarakshari and news bulletin
- I watch TV for entertainment – **(7 participants agreed)**
- For me it is time pass
- I watch because it gives knowledge. How to deal with children (program like Saheli)
- I am dancer, so I like dance programmes, musical and news

- Discovery is good Channel
- Through some serials, children learn how to respect elders (They could not remember any serial)
- I like fashion programs
- Children are learning few things from TV Channels such as Pogo
- There was a news report that showed how a doctor left towel in patient's stomach and then they showed the doctor taking it out. I did not like that (AIIMS story)
- But media should show such thing. It tells us that this is also happening
- But they should not show children performing stunts (Shabash India) as other children try to imitate them.
- But in serials there is no reality. After their death they are brought back.
- Some serial are good like Saibaba
- We like serials like Udaan (because it was story of women) – Siddhant , Teen Bahurania (shows respect to elders), Kasam Se (shows bond between sisters)
- They should not show marital rape.
- Story on Female feticide – gives us knowledge – then only people will learn

### ***Depiction of Police Violence***

- We loose trust in police
- Innocent people are victims
- Action should be taken against police
- They should show true story. In the case of Uma Khurana, last week they said something now they are saying something else. We feel bad
- But they should not keep on repeating such story
- Some news reports they keeping showing again and again. It has bad effect on children. When they see such incident again and again they get excited and begin to accept it as normal behaviour

### ***Feedback from Parents with children up to the age of 15-What do they feel disturbed by?***

- On one channel, they interviewed a young couple. They had eloped and got married. Instead, they should interview the parents.
- Media should not support such story – It has bad effect on children
- Media supports wrong things, like a son in law was beaten up, children are running away and getting married
- **These are family matter and media should not intrude into their personal lives**
- They should show atrocity being committed – whether on old people or on daughter in law
- Some time they exaggerate the story on dowry atrocity.

## **Meerut –Feedback from Special Group-Senior Citizen, Widows and Urban Poor**

### **Media Habits**

- We like to watch TV
- Through News we get to know what is happening in our country
- Sitting at home we get information
- In serials they show bad things like characters marrying four or five times
- This has a bad effect on children.
- TV is having a negative influence on society. Just recently they showed in the news that a 3-year old girl was raped. They should not show such thing
- Children always pick up bad things never good things.

### **Why are they watching TV?**

- It gives us knowledge
- Its gives us information and makes us aware of what Is happening outside
- We have enough time, we have nothing to do , TV entertains us.
- **They are watching TV from 6 in the morning to 11 at night. They watch it alone. They also watch TV with grandchildren. They watch religious programs, serials, children’s programs and News**

### ***DEPICTION OF POLICE VIOLENCE***

- They should show such stories so that we know what is happening in our country
- We feel scared and bad – The way they are beating an innocent old man, disturbs us.
- There should be some checks on the police.
- Police should enquire first but they always start beating first.



### ***Representation of Senior Citizens***

- When it comes to the issue of safety, we do not trust the police.
- No body is secure and safe
- We should look after our own security.
- But if such attacks happen to us we will have no option but to go to the police.
- What media is showing is good but there should be a follow-up and some action should be taken against such policemen.
- They should also show us the action that is taken against the police.

### **Does this kind of image scare them?**

- This doesn't scare us. But this can have bad effect on children
- Our Mohalla is like our family – we support each other
- In today life every body is scared and media is not showing us any thing, which gives us confidence and courage.

### ***Depiction of Superstition***

- The report shows blind faith
- These kinds of stories have an adverse influence on people.
- Other people will tend to do the same.
- When you see such story it destroys your truth in other people – even your neighbor.

### ***Depiction of Child as Serial Killer***

- They should show such programs
- We don't know what our children are doing today.
- When we are not at home children try to imitate

- We should show such stories to our children and explain them that they should not do such things.
- These kinds of stories can be good and bad because some children might try to experiment and then need to sit with them and explain to them about the consequences.

### **Are they happy with the TV Programming?**

- Yes
- We believe in what they see. - .
- We have full faith in media.
- TV cannot show anything wrong. Some times we do not trust print media. But we trust TV news.

### ***Meerut- Feedback from Middle Class Participants-Age-20 to 40***

#### **Media Habits**

- We watch serials and news
- In serial they exaggerate a lot. It is difficult to digest that a person can marry four or five times. After accident and subsequent plastic surgery they become very young. They talk of changing tradition or parampara for sons but not for girls. There should be some reflection of realities on TV.
- News programmes are okay. Program like Crime Reporter increases women's confidence.
- Two days ago there was story about a priest who was involved in a rape case. This kind of reports should be shown as it alerts us.
- We don't like it when sister try to kill brother – Dulhan
- Husband goes to sleep but I watch all the serials up to 11 at night
- Saas Bhi Kabi Bahu Thi and Kahani Ghar Ghar ki was good in the beginning but now it is nonsense
- The “babas” are bogus – fake. People are getting influence by them
- But it also makes us aware.

- Dresses in remix songs are not good – children are demanding such dresses
- They should not show rape scene in serials. It makes you uncomfortable when you are watching with children
- There is marital rape in Kahani Ghar.... Children start asking questions, they should not show such thing
- In news programmes they show children doing stunts – one child was eating glass – one child was surrounded by snakes. They should not show such things. It has a bad effect on other children. They try to imitate what they see on TV

**Seven respondents, who have children below 10-years old felt that they should not show such stunts for the following reasons:**

- My son tends to imitate stunts
- We are not with them all the time. They imitate when we are not there
- One mother said her 5-year old son jumped from the staircase. He was under treatment for 3 years and now he is 8 year old
- If they want to show such programmes they should telecast it when children are sleeping, at night
- In serial they show Suhag Raat – They should not show that
- Even when they are watching dance programmes, they asked embarrassing questions.

***Depiction of Police Violence***

- The media should show such things as it is reality
- We did not like the police beating an old man
- Every one agreed that such things should be shown
- Then they recollected other media reports, when the police lathi charged striking workers and media had shown that and the public became aware of it and ultimately the Government had to intervene

- But they should not show this again and again. If you see again and again you feel scared

**After discussion they came to conclusion that such reports should be shown on major news bulletins-4 times a day– morning, afternoon, evening and at night But they have no problem about such images being shown.**

### ***Depiction of a child as a serial killer***

- He became killer because he saw an adult doing it. It is possibly the effect of media images.
- They have shown well but information is not full. He must have done it under some compulsion. They should have explored the issue.
- Media should be clear about the reasons, so that in Bal Sudhar Kendra they keep reasons in mind.
- His life is ahead of him. He will never forget this incident.

**When question were asked if child should be shown like this they felt they should have investigated the report. Some of them showed concern about his future.**

- Some of them felt this is effect of what they see on TV
- Like one mother talked about her child and his cousin tried to kiss each other – children are 5 and 7 year old.
- Children talk among themselves about what is happening, talk about Suhag Raat –

**They have strong objection about rape, kissing on TV, anything to do with Sexuality - especially on serials. Reason being that children asked question and that it has bad effect on children. Otherwise, they have no objection about children watching any images.**

### **Depiction of Superstition**

- Educated people won't do this
- Uneducated people will be impacted by such images.
- It creates awareness among people