

Shaktimaan : The Cultural Emergence of an Indian Super Hero

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Abstract: *The idea of superhero programs for children was pioneered by the Japanese and took shape with Astro Boy, aired first on New Year's Day, 1963. Its popularity skyrocketed in no time, making children's television superhero program a global phenomenon. This dissertation looks into the cultural aspects like nationalism of the Indian variety through the superhero program, that made its debut with Shaktimaan on September 13, 1997 following the trend set by American superhero programs aired previously on Indian television. The intention is also to throw a searching light onto Shaktimaan as a cultural product, with special emphasis on the socio-historical context, this is done through a comprehensive analysis of its motifs, taking Shaktimaan as a text.*

I. Introduction

Since the emergence of television after the Second World War, it has grown as a huge enterprise over a period of time. It became a global phenomenon with the advancement of technology. Television in India started with experimental telecast in Delhi on 15th September, 1959. Slowly television telecast were introduced in other parts of the country. Over the period of time it has grown as an industry specializing in production of wide variety of cultural products with various contents and meanings. The television industry created a fusion of art, technology, and economy.

In the late eighties we trace a shift in the television policies framed by the government. This can be related to the various socio-political reasons related to it. With liberalization, we see the advent of various American television programs being telecast on the national television channel, Doordarshan. This dissertation traces the emergence of the idea of Super Hero in the Indian Television and then finally the evolution of an Indian Super Hero, *Shaktimaan*. It further delves into the various cultural, social and political aspects like Hinduism, nationalism.

The dissertation traces the historical aspects of the Indian television, the various key ideas associated with it, the introduction of the Super Hero genre in the Indian Television and worldwide. It analyses the first Indian Superhero, Shaktimaan, textually and critically, the various themes which are represented, the motifs and the programme as an *ideal* children program. It also studies the possibility of whether these programs can be situated within the framework of nationalism.

Chapter 1:

Television in India & the Genre of Superhero

Expansion of TV in India:

Television popularly known as the idiot box is a magic box which became a part and parcel of everyday life and entertains people by its programs throughout the day. The television industry has been producing a huge employment opportunity and generating good amount of income, television has become an integral part of the major economic activity in almost all the countries including India.

Thus television set on a journey to conquer over the oriental world after making the western awestruck. When the world is having a slice of television on the platter, India was not reluctant and turned heads towards starting a new chapter of modern civilization.

15 September 1959, India enrolled its name in the history of television culture with the transmission of a program for barely thirty minutes, as an experiment measure, from Akashvani Bhavan, Delhi. A 500 watt transmitter was temporarily erected under an UNESCO guided scheme for introducing the pan Indian people with the face of television. In the initial stage the programs were broadcast for one hour each on Tuesday and Friday within a range of 25 kilometers around Delhi. The early programs on these experimental broadcasts were generally educational programs for school children and farmers. In the beginning television was basically concerned more with educational and informative aspects rather than providing a medium for entertainment, since the country did not welcome the emergence of television with the whole heart like it was there in case of cinema introduced a century ago. The economy related to television didn't see a growth as most of the people were reluctant to buy television sets because of the development guide nature of it and as it was not affordable. By the 1970s, television centers were opened in other parts of the country also. In 1976, Doordarshan, which

was All India Radio's television arm until then became a separate department. Several community television sets were distributed as a part of one of the important landmarks in the history of Indian television, under the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) between August 1975 and July 1976. Under this program, the Indian government used the American satellite ATS-6 to broadcast educational programs to Indian villages in six states. The programs were mainly produced by Doordarshan. The telecasts happened twice a day, in the morning and evening. Other than agricultural information, health and family planning were the other important topics dealt with in these programs. Entertainment was also included in these telecasts in the form of dance, music, drama, folk and rural art forms.

A major milestone in the history of Indian television was the coverage of the Ninth Asian Games in 1982. Doordarshan provided national coverage for the first time through the satellite INSAT 1A. Also, for the first time, the transmission was in colour. In addition to the domestic transmission, Doordarshan was also providing content for the broadcasters of many other countries. After 1982, there was a huge increase in the live coverage of sports by Doordarshan. Towards the end of 80s television became a familiar name for around 75 per cent of the population. Many of the programs of Doordarshan like *Hum Log*, *Buniyaad* and *Nukkad* were immensely popular.

In 1997, PrasarBharati, a statutory autonomous body was established to serve as the public service broadcaster of the country which would achieve its objectives through AIR and DD which were converted into government corporations under PrasarBharati Act(1999). Doordarshan includes Regional Language Satellite Channels, State Networks, International Channel and All India Channels like DD National, DD News, DD Sports, DD Gyandarshan, DD Bharati, Lok Sabha Channel and DD Urdu channels.

In the earlier days, Doordarshan had a monopoly as it was the only channel available to the Indian television audience as we find in the written materials available. The central government in 1991 undertook several economic and social reforms under Prime Minister Narashima Rao, under the new policies the government planned to allow private and foreign broadcasters to have a limited operation in India. The Hong Kong based STAR (Satellite Television Asian Region) entered into an agreement with an Indian company and Zee TV was born. It became the first privately owned Hindi satellite channel of India.

The Supreme Court ruling of 1995⁽ⁱ⁾ which stated that the airwaves are not the monopoly of the Indian government boosted their growth. Several regional channels also came into being during this period. Sun TV (Tamil), Asianet (Malayalam) and EenaduTV(Telegu) were a few of them. Today almost all major Indian languages have television channels. Apart from the regional channels, a host of international channels like CNN, BBC and Discovery are also available to the Indian television audience. With different categories of channels like 24 hour news channels, religious channels, cartoon channels and movie channels, there is something for everyone to watch.

Superhero Genre:

India, the land of mythology, worships the superheroes since time immemorial. Indian television does not stand as an exception. Doordarshan came up with the first ever superhero, *Shaktimaan*, for Indian household to recon on.

In very simple words a superhero is one who has "extraordinary or superhuman powers" and is dedicated to protecting the fellow human race. Superhero has certain stock characters in them. For example, they wear special costumes which help them to conceal their real identities, as they want to live a normal life as any one of us. Extraordinary powers and abilities, relevant skills and/or advanced equipment are the basic necessity for a superhero. They use their special powers to fight day to day crimes to serious threats to the earth and also to fight super villains whose motives are to destroy the earth. But sometimes superheroes are seen busy in combat with irregular threats such as aliens, magical entities, American war enemies like Nazism or communism, and godlike or demonic creatures. By default each superhero has an archenemy whose main motive is the death of the superhero and rule the world. However, some long running superheroes like Superman, Batman, Spider-Man, and Iron Man each have a gallery full of enemies. The superhero genre is the fiction originating and is most common to the American society, which has expanded through different forms of adaptations. They are popular figures, who are super heroes and have strong influence upon society, morality and politics. The superheroes are mythic figuration of several collective aspirations and fulfilment. The creation of *Captain America* in the 1940s, was essentially to strengthen the patriotic feelings among the people on USA during the World War II. He was shown fighting the Axis powers in order to aid USA win the World War.

The superhero concept took birth through comics in the USA holding the hand of the first ever superhero, Superman in 1938. Since then the trend followed and gave rise to a league of protectors of the world. Marvel comics launched the superhero concept in comics through Superman. Marvel Characters, Inc. and DC Comics share ownership of the United States trademark for the phrases "Super Hero" and "Super Heroes" and these two companies own the vast majority of the world's most famous and influential superheroes. Marvel

owns Spider-Man and Captain America and DC own Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Captain Marvel and Plastic Man. There have been significant heroes owned by others, especially since the 1990s when Image Comics and other companies that allowed creators to maintain trademark and editorial control over their characters developed. Hellboy and Spawn are some of them. There are some common aspects found in almost all the superheroes.

Costume

They are usually seen in costumes with underlined motif or theme which is an indicative of their name or their powers. For example, Batman wears a bat-themed costume, uses bat-themed gadgetry and equipment and operates at night; Spider-Man can shoot webs from his hands, has a spider web pattern on his costume. Similar conclusion can be drawn about Superman whose initial is patterned on his costume. But the superhero group like Fantastic Four eschews the fuss about privacy and enjoys celebrity status.

Place of operation

Their habitat or place of operation is usually not disclosed to the normal public, they are either some deserted place such as, Batman's Bat cave or places which less frequented by people.

Power

Usually a past is related to the motivation for serving the mass as a protector and this somehow says about the acquisition of the superpower. For example, in case of Spiderman, his uncle's death leads him into the emergence of the superhero instincts in him. Not necessarily all the superheroes have extra terrestrial powers. Some of them such as Batman, Iron man have mastered skills such as martial arts and forensic sciences to a highly remarkable degree.

Modus Operandi

Usually superheroes like to work independently. However, teams like X-Men, Fantastic Four, and DNA agents are very rare who work in groups. There are even occasions when the independently working superheroes team up together to confront greater threats. DC Comic's Justice League and Marvel's Avengers are the examples of such kind of groups.

The perception of the people regarding the superheroes varies greatly even in the fictional world. Where Fantastic Four is treated as important civic leaders, Batman and Spiderman face the public skepticism and hostility. On the other hand, X-Men defend a special kind of populace which is unanimously misunderstood and despised of.

Superhero fictions are not limited in a single genre of fantasy or adventure. Batman, Punisher resemble crime fiction; Spawn, Specter are examples of horror genre and Green Lantern or X-Men stand as standard science fiction. Many of the earliest superheroes, such as The Sandman and The Clock, were rooted in the pulp fiction of their predecessors.

After conquering the world in print form, the superhero concept started venturing out other media like radio, novels, Television, Films.

Though the superhero league was largely dominated by the western world, "Astro Boy" broke the path. *Astro Boy* was the first superhero series originated in the oriental part of the world and gained huge success across boundaries. It originated as a Japanese manga series in 1952 by Osamu Tezuka. Very soon Astro Boy started mesmerizing the world giving appearances at the television sets. The story follows the adventures of a robot named AstroBoy. Tezuka used "Astro Boy" to entertain, in a 1950s perspective described by Schodt as "analog," a world where man and advanced technology coexist and the issues stemming from this fact. At the time, Japan did not have a reputation for science and technology that it had gained by 2002.

Astro Boy is set in a futuristic world where robots co-exist with humans. "Astro Boy" is a powerful robot created by the head of the Ministry of Science, Doctor Tenma and later reared by Professor Ochanomizu who was his legal guardian. Astro's journey begins after Professor Ochanomizu realizes his superior power and skills, as well as the ability to experience human emotions. Most of his enemies were robot-hating humans, robots gone berserk or alien invaders.

Astro Boy started its journey on paper and landed on the television screen to win millions of hearts. In 1960s and 1980s, Astro again appeared on paper but without the permission of the creator. Hence the versions were regarded pirated.

Shaktimaan the television superhero created by NirmalJani and produced by MukeshKhanna for Doordarshan, India's national television network, was first aired on September 13, 1997. Both the roles of Shaktimaan and his alter-ego PanditGangadharVidyadharMayadharOmkarnathShastri, a photographer for the newspaper *Aaj Ki Aawaz* was played by MukeshKhanna. The characterization of Shaktimaan and Gangadhar is inspired from Superman where the superhero lives and works in a city as a reporter Clark Kent. GeetaVishwas ,

his love interest is also a reporter in the series. The show aptly tagged as the first Indian television superhero by the press was a rage with the kids. The serial had a massive fan following, attested by the TRPs of the reruns, and the show created a benchmark for Indian television. This series preceded the saash-bahu soap dramas, but surely would have given them a run for their TRPs had the two co-existed.

The popularity of Shaktiman is such that Shaktiman could not help but make a come-back. The television series, which ruled in the Indian scenario in the late 90's, has now been recreated by six times Emmy award winning writer Jeffrey Scott. The show is currently being broadcast on Nick and soon to be distributed internationally. In his words of MukeshKhanna, who played the eponymous character:

"Shaktimaan in animation is nothing short of magic. It has retained all the right elements of Shaktimaan and yet has given it a face-lift for the modern day kids. I think this series has given Shaktimaan a status of immortality since that is the beauty of animation, Shaktimaan is now placed alongside its global counterparts like Superman, Spiderman, Batman in terms of scale and positioning."

The concept of superhero is not a new idea for the Indian audience, it had always been there. The Indian audience was always aware of the concept of a super human from ages. The famous Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have portrayals of such super human characters. It was in the 1980s, when commercials were introduced in the Indian television and soon followed the first soap opera *Hum Log* in 1984-85. Soap Opera an important genre in television originated in the US during the formative days. It spread quickly to the European countries and to South America. While the British and American programs were restricted to a certain segment of the society, the South American versions appealed to a larger section across class and gender divide. The British soaps were realistic compared to the American versions which took a melodramatic form. The Indian concepts of the Soap opera were borrowed from the US. *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, epic cum religious operas were first telecasted in 1987 and 1988 respectively. It was claimed then that *Mahabharata* could have a viewership of 300 million audiences for an hour every Sunday for a period of 20 months.

Ramayana and *Mahabharata* have many characters who possess super human abilities. Ram, the central character of the epic around whom the entire saga is built up, shows certain power throughout the story which we cannot associate with a ordinary human being. Breaking the divine bow to win Sita or rescuing Ahalya from the curse are very few examples of his super human abilities. The birth of the female protagonist Sita, was discovered in a furrow in a ploughed field, and for that reason is regarded as a daughter of Bhumi Devi, the goddess of earth, adopted and brought up by Janaka, king of Mithila, and his wife Sunayana. Tormented by the unjust world and her not so happy marriage, she once wished to seek refuge in the arms of her mother. The earth dramatically split open; Bhūmi appeared and took Sita away to a better world. These incidents advocates for her super human lineage.

Talking about *Mahabharata*, the first names that comes in our mind are Krishna and Bhishma. Though Krishna has been shown as a human with extra ordinary intellect or a great orator, yet, the evidences of him being a super human is spread throughout the epic and has been proved a pivotal point during certain situations. Bheeshma, the grandfather of the Pandavas and the Kauravas, has been portrayed as the upright man with a terrible vow of lifelong celibacy. He had the boon of wish long life and the grand scene of his death shows that no normal human being can endure so much of pain throughout the lifetime and even on death bed.

The popularity of these programs were such that virtually the whole country would come to standstill, whoever had an access to the television would leave every work to watch the televised versions of the epics. The Prime Minister of India of that period Rajiv Gandhi stated, *"Ramayana has stirred the imaginations of millions of viewers. It has imbibed the great Indian culture, tradition and normal values especially in the young."*

In spite of being immensely popular and successful still *Ramayana* had to face a lot of criticism for being slow in pacing, melodramatic and having poor production quality. The Indian television industry was highly influenced by the American television industry. Similarly like the American soap operas the Indian program were also more melodramatic than their British counterparts. The Indian industry was in the developing stage, hence lacked sophistication and high quality production facilities.

There were programs which were creating the base of a superhero genre in the Indian television. In the year 1985, there was *VikramAurBetaal*, a children's programme aired on DD National. The program was a conglomeration of stories from the Indian mythology with an aim to impart children the lessons of life with entertainment. It was about a semi legendary king Vikramaditya and Betaal, a vampire like being. It became the first fantasy on television. Special visual effects which was never tried before even in Bollywood, was tried with commendable success in *VikramBetaal*. Viewers were captivated by the camera gimmicks that showed an "urankhatola", a flying saucer, a submarine city, a dead body, coming to life etc. India Today wrote: *"The Sagar brothers have opened the bag of gimmicks on Indian Television" and the magazine went on to credit PremSagar with the achievement of unveiling the electronic era."*

Dada Dadikahaniyan was telecasted in 13 episodes on DD National in the year 1986. The programme was made keeping in mind the Indian joint family system and the bonding children share with their grandparents. The serial had different stories told by the grandparents to their grand children, which have a good moral. Legendary actor Ashok Kumar played the role of the grandfather in this series. The serial won the *Best Children Serial* in the *17TH FILMGOERS AWARD*.

After the huge success of the *Ramayana*, RamanandSagar along with Doordarshan came up with *AlifLaila*, a television series based on the stories from the Arabian Nights in 1994. *AlifLaila* was a compilation of the well-known and the lesser-known stories from the Arabian Nights like that of the Old Man and the Goat, the Fisherman, Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves and Alladin and the Wonderful Lamp. The program had won a huge popularity and appealed the old and the young alike; it had been a great success for the producer and the broadcaster. The programme was critically acclaimed and won the *Most Outstanding T.V. Serial* award by *India Cinegoers Academy*.

Chandrakanta which was telecast on DD channel in 1994 was partly based on DevakiNandanKhatrı's eponymous novel *Chandrakanta*. This fantasy enjoyed huge popularity and success. However the serial was pulled of air by Doordarshan due to a rift with its production team after some episodes.

India has formal diplomatic relations with most nations; it is the world's second most populous country, largest democracy and one of the fastest growing major economies. During the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961, India pursued close relations with both the US and the USSR, but refrained from joining any major power bloc and thus military alliances.

The Sino-Indian and the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, resulted in considerable developments to foreign policy of the country which built a close relationship with the Soviet Union and India started receiving massive military equipment and financial assistance from the USSR. This had an adverse effect on the Indo-US relationship. The United States started considering Pakistan as a counterweight to pro-Soviet India and started assisted the then Pakistan with military forces. The Indo-US relationship suffered a considerable setback when the the Soviets took over Afghanistan and India overtly supported the Soviet Union. Since the end of the Cold War in the late 80s, the relationship between India and the US improved considerably. The Indian economy suffered a lot and went through a difficult phase during the Gulf War. The Government of India during this period adopted a liberalised economic system. In the late 80s after the breakup of the Soviet Union, India developed its diplomatic relations with the members of the NATO. The relation with USA also improved as both the democracies were large and had a growing trade relationship. The termination of the cold war called for as well as aided the introduction of multidimensional strategic content to Indo-USA relations. The change in the policies were not only restricted to the economic and political policies, there were changes in the television policies as well.

In the year 1991 DD National started broadcasting syndicated American animated programs for children's. The then available superhero programs which are mentioned were screened to create a base for the Indian audience.

The series *Batman* was based on the DC comics' character of the same name, who along with Robin fought against crime to protect and defend Gotham City. When the police was alerted of a crime, the commissioner would secretly send a message to Batman, prompting him to come and confront the criminals.

He-Man and the Masters of the Universe is an American animated television series produced by Filmation based on Mattel's successful toy line *Masters of the Universe*. The show, often referred to as simply *He-Man*, was one of the most popular animated children's shows of the 1980s, and has retained a heavy cult following to this day. The show takes place on the fictional planet of Eternia, a planet of magic, myth and fantasy. Its lead character is Prince Adam, the young son of Eternia's rulers, King Randor and Queen Marlena. Whenever Prince Adam uses the Power Sword, and when he holds it aloft and says the magic words "By the Power of Grayskull, I HAVE THE POWER", he is transformed into He-Man, the most powerful man in the universe. The mystic aspects entertained the children's during its run in India.

Knight Rider is an American television series, that originally ran from September 26, 1982, to August 8, 1986. The series was broadcast on NBC and stars DavidHasselhof as Michael Knight, a high-tech modern day knight fighting crime with the help of an advanced, artificially intelligent and nearly indestructible car.

Superboy was a action based television series based on the DC Comics character Superboy. *Superboy* was the first weekly television series produced at the MGM Studios. It ran from 1988 to 1992 in syndication. The program focused on Superboy and his alter ego Clark Kent, his childhood friend and love interest Lana Lang and his college room mate T.J. White, son of Daily Planet editor Perry White. Scott James Wells played Superboy's nemesis LexLuthor.

Following *Superboy*, the *Superman* television series was broadcasted in the year 1988 in the US. It came after the Superboy series. The action adventure genre animation was produced by Ruby Spear Production and Warner Bros. Television. The major characters Clark Kent as Superman, and

Lois Lane battled Lex Luthor, corrupt businessman. The series ran in episodes. The final four minutes of each Superman episode were devoted to a brief snapshot from the "Superman Family Album." These biographical segments deviated from the contemporary comics to have Clark have his powers fully developed since infancy as opposed to developing as he matured, which causes problems as in the earlier episodes he uses his powers whenever it suits him, and in the later episodes as he gets older he lessens the use of his Kryptonian superpowers, preferring to use his mind to solve problems first.

The 1994, *Spider-Man* animated series was made for the Fox Network, with Christopher Daniel Barnes providing the webslinger's voice. This series had a bigger budget and used a novel system of one large story arc every season developed by John Semper. As a result, each of the individual 65 episodes were called "chapters." This series more closely reflected the comic book as it focused on the personal conflict Peter Parker felt as Spider-Man, instead of following the action-oriented shows that preceded it. This was the longest Spider-Man series, with 65 episodes in five seasons.

Then came *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, an American animated television series produced by Murakami-Wolf-Swenson. The official run began on October 1, 1988. The series featured the Teenage mutant Ninja Turtles characters created in comic books form by Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird. The property was changed considerably from the darker-toned comic, to make it more suitable for children and the family.

The initial motivation behind the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* animated series was that, upon being approached to create a toy line, Playmate toys was uneasy with the comic book characters' small cult following. They requested that a television deal be acquired first, and after the initial five-episode series debuted, the California toy company released their first series of Ninja Turtles action figures in the summer of 1988. The two media would correspond in marketing style and popularity for many years to come. The storyline is about honourable ninja master Hamato Yoshi. Yoshi was banished from the Foot Clan in Japan after being deceived by the seditious Oroku Saki. While living in the sewers of New York he found four turtles one day. The turtles become full grown immediately after exposure to the mutagen. Yoshi adopts the four turtles as his sons and trains them in the art of ninjas. He names them after his favourite Italian renaissance artists: Leonardo Da Vinci (Leonardo), Donato Di Niccolo Di Betto Bardi (Donatello), Raffaello Sanzio (Raphael), and Michelangelo Di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni (Michaelangelo). The Turtles tend to go by nicknames *Leo*, *Donny*, *Ralph*, and *Mikey*, but in this version they are always addressed by their full names. Each Ninja Turtle wears a mask over his eyes with a distinctive colour, and is trained in the art of a distinct weapon. There were other television programs like *The Invisible Man*, *Thundercats*, *Superhuman Samurai Cyber-Squad* and *Tarzan*.

The American superhero programs of this genre were the first of its kind for the Indian audience. By 1991, Doordarshan's earlier mandate to aid in the process of social and economic development had clearly been diluted. Entertainment and commercial programs had begun to take centre stage in the organization's programming strategies and advertising had come to be Doordarshan's main source of funding. However, television in India was still a modest enterprise with most parts of the country getting just one channel except for the major cities which received two channels. But 1991 saw the beginnings of international satellite broadcasting in India and the government launched a major economic liberalization program. Both these events combined to change the country's television environment dramatically. All these programs acted as a base for the development of a very own Indian superhero. The audience of that time were aware of the super hero genre due to these kind of programs.

In the year 1997 we saw the emergence of the first Indian superhero *Shaktimaan*, a highly successful and phenomenally popular character produced by Mukesh Khanna and directed by Dinkar Jani.

Chapter 2:

Critical Overview of Emergence of Superhero

Television has left a huge effect on the societies around the world. It continues to be one of the intrinsic parts of the modern culture and one of the few forms of media that can reach millions of people at a time. It can be used to educate, inform, entertain, expose us to other people and cultures around the world, and even to babysit our children. Most people have tuned their daily routine according to their choice of programs. We can notice a drastic change in the bed timings, "the early to bed..." dictum have lost its meaning as late night TV viewing has become a norm in almost all houses. TV works on the psyche of the people; it affects their food habits, fashion, social relations. There is a huge cultural change that has come about over the years as a result of television viewing. Televisions are universalizing and homogenizing the thought process on the ways of normal living, and the local culture, traditions of a particular place is getting lost.

To understand how important television is, we can look at the variety of programs and valuable content it offers and the purposes it serves in daily life. The content in the television is very appealing as it is realistic and up to date. As TV is a medium that combines moving, color images and sound, it resembles real life, so the subjects can identify with what they see. This understanding is not inherent in our individuality, rather it is the

product of various social agencies we are subject of. All the subjects do not think in the same way or construct identical sense of their own identities, but each subject has something intrinsic that distinguishes them from subjects of other social system.

The emergence and popularity of television began in India from the year 1982, when the National telecast was introduced and the coloured television also started. In the initial period when television was introduced Doordarshan only aired educational and informative programs, with news being one of the most important aspects. In the mid eighties DD National started telecasting entertainment and commercial programs. The channel also had considerable amount of programs on educations by UGC and IGNOU and shows for kids sponsored by NCERT. The Indian government of that time was following the Soviet model of Socialism, and this was widely visible in the types of programs that were being telecasted. The logo of the National channel, Doordarshan followed the Soviet montage style developed by Eisenstein, and the tune of the song "SareJanhan Se Acha, Hindustan Humara..", was played in the background. The programs which were telecasted had the theme of a united nation. The whole scenario changed with the end of the Cold War, as the Soviet Union started to fall apart and America was the new superpower. The policies also changed as Indo-US relations started to become strong. American television programs were syndicated and run in the DD National. Various programs started with children as the target audience. The American superhero programs were produced by the Hollywood studios, and it was easier to get the license to run those programs here, than designing one, due to various technical shortcomings. The American society during the eighties saw great socio-economic changes, the production and wealth were migrating to newly industrializing economics. With economic liberalization many multinational corporations associated with the manufacturing industry relocated into Thailand, South Korea, China, Japan, and West Germany. United States adopted *laissez-faire* economic policies. In the 1980s American Culture was defined by a triumphant political and social conservatism. The Republican President vowed to revoke the so-called welfare state and reduce the size of the federal government. President Reagan's nostalgic appeal for a return to traditional values found a receptive audience, especially among middle-class Americans.

Americans infatuation with wealth and success, and a newfound pleasure in material possessions, promoted the consumerist boom of the 1980s. In the 1985, AIDS became a national concern for the people of America, as it became a topic of daily conversation and banner headlines, generating tremendous fear and uncertainty as the public, as well as the medical and scientific communities, who struggled to understand a virus that slowly devastated the human body before it became fatal and for which there was no known treatment. The plague of AIDS redefined conventions of behaviour throughout society, from the wealthiest neighbourhoods to the streets of the inner cities.

The use of Cocaine, homelessness, and child abuse affected large numbers of Americans in the 1980. In the early 1980s cocaine was very expensive and consequently was consumed mainly by upper-income people, frequently celebrities and often young urban professionals. Later when the price of cocaine dropped and was rendered smokable, it became widely available, the drug became a curse on inner cities, where the drug abuse became extensive homicides soared. Homelessness was also a dominant social problem in the 1980s, as increase in the numbers of unemployed Americans who lost their homes and found their society had neither means nor will to help them in times of crisis. Reports of child abuse soared through the decade, overwhelming social-service agencies and eventually leading officials to declare the problem of child abuse "a national emergency."

In the 1980s saw a boom in the technological world in America, video games were gaining immense popularity in this time with Nintendo's Famicom console. The personal computers experienced a huge growth during this period. IBM PC was launched toward the end of 1981, which instantly became a dominant computer for professionals. Commodore designed the most popular home computers of both 8-bit and 16-bit. Apple first introduced the Mackintosh computer in 1984. It was the first commercially successful personal computer to use a graphical user interface and mouse, which started to become general features in computers after the middle of the decade. Infact in television programs like *Small Wonder* in 1985 we have seen how the technological advancement occurs. In the serial we see that Ted Lawson's father could not accept V.I.C.I, as she was a robot, a computer device, and he lost his job because of computers. The companies were becoming capital intensive instead of being labour intensive, as a reason lots of people were unemployed.

By definition, a superhero is someone who is larger than life. Courageous, powerful, and seemingly able to overcome any obstacle with great physical prowess while doing great deeds at the same time are the quintessential properties that one looks for in a superhero. A superhero character is a stock character who is dedicated to the protection of the mass. They strictly do not require actual superhuman powers to be deemed superheroes.

Normally, superheroes use their powers to counter day-to-day crime while also combating threats against humanity by superviliains, who often turn out to be their arch enemy, their criminal counterparts. Superheroes also sometimes combat irregular threats as aliens magical or fantasy entities, American war

enemies such as Nazism or Communism, and godlike or demonic creatures.

The superhero concept came in the form of comics much before it appeared on television screen. Following the genesis of the superhero concept, we can see that superheroes reflect the history of the time it emerged. For example, the comics during 1938-1945 show the war front. In one cover depicts Batman and Robin on a giant eagle, pleading, "Buy war bonds and stamps!" ,by the 1950s, the heroes had turned their attention to the perceived threats of Communism and nuclear war, with side trips involving friends and foes from outer space and brief flirtations with romance. With change in economy after war, the economic status of the superheroes also started to change. The Fantastic Four made their debut in 1961, and Spider-Man in 1962. In both the cases the heroes belonged to a ground level background. Spiderman's private life was a mess, as he struggled to support his aunt and pay for school. Unlike Batman's alter ego, Bruce Wayne, Peter Parker was no millionaire bachelor. Stories from this era tackled racism, drug abuse and political corruption. The American super heroes were more technologically fascinating and their narratives had one very distinguishing important aspect the use of technology, where as in case of Indian super hero programs, they had a common thing in them, mythological aspects. The lack of mythological aspects made the American series different, but in case of the Indian audience, it is very easy for them to connect to the theme. Thus it was very important to have a program which could appeal to a larger section of the audience.

More recent developments continue to underline how superheroes reflect political realities, whether it's the Justice League's questioning President LexLuthor's decision to invade the fictional nation of Qurac in 2003 or the continuing schism among Marvel's heroes after being ordered to register their identities and abilities with the government.

Superheroes are much needed in the society. They provide the role model figure to us even in the time of crisis. The average human being however pushed around or caged in they may be, is unwilling to brave the dangers inherent to resolving the problems that plague them. Crime may overwhelm a city, but we do not care until it affects us personally; and even then we only usually worry about whatever facet of it has impact on our own life. We are inherently selfish creatures, and are possessed of a vile need to protect our own before, or even at the cost of, others. But a superhero is someone, who is willing to sacrifice his life for the good of others so that the fellow human can live in an improved world despite of knowing the danger awaiting for them. They are what we cling to when we face hardship or a difficult decision. A society which does not cater the superhero concept is a society sans hope where despair and misery alone are inflicted upon its members. Be it real or fictional, ideological or religious, every society needs a superhero figure to serve the purpose of a role model, somebody to pattern ourselves after. The American society was breaking and they needed superheroes who can assure the people of being an united nation and their symbolic presence and the deliverance.

The two epic serials *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* played a very important role in shaping the audience of the time. *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, the two epics from India are considered the greatest epics depicting human life and its intervention with the divine. They are not only epics of the land, rather have become an Alma matter for the people here. The social implications of these epics are immense. Still the Indian society is built around the values and teachings of these epics. The familial system and the folklore are the brightest examples of the influence these epics have on the people. Superheroes exists to be believed. Religion is the most mass appealing and crowd pleasing institution in India.

Ramayana is the story of Ram, and his exile of fourteen years from his family. This epic celebrates the purity and beauty of relationships: between father and son, between brothers, among brothers, among friends. Appearing in its present form about 400 century, the Mahabharata consists of a mass of mythological and didactic material arranged around a central heroic narrative that tells of the struggle for sovereignty between two groups of cousins, the Kauravas (sons of Dhritarashtra) and the Pandavas (sons of Pandu).

Indian cinema has a celebrated history of religion themed films. But *Ramayana* by RamanandSagar was the first Indian television series based on religious story. This serial inspired numerous production houses to create serials based on religious theme. Among them the most notable was B.R. Chopra's *Mahabharata* leading the trail of success stories like as "Vishwamitra", "Buddha", and Sagar's own *Luv Kush* and *Krishna, Om Namah Shivay*, Sanjay Khan's *Jai Hanuman*. Sagar's *Ramayana* also inspired the production of historical dramas such as "Chanakya" and ShyamBenegal's *Bharat Ek Khoj*.

The moderate success of *VikramaurBetaal* and *Dada-Dadi Ki Kahaniyan*, RamanandSagar produced *Ramayana* collaborating with Doordarshan in 1986. The idea was not readily entertained due to concerns that such a television series might lead to a rise in communalism. Finally, the show was indeed approved for 52 episodes and was given the unpopular time slot of Sunday morning at 9:30 a.m.

During its original broadcast, "Ramayana" was enormously popular, drawing over 100 million viewers. Although rising slowly at first, its popularity reached a point where the entire nation of India came to a virtual stop as nearly everyone who could gain access to a television stopped what they were doing to watch the televised adventures of Rama. The serial became such a phenomenon that religious services(Hindu and non-Hindu) were rescheduled to accommodate the show's broadcast; trains, buses, and inner-city trucks stopped

running when the show was on; and, in villages, hundreds of people would gather around a single television set to watch the show. The media even was not free from this. The newsmagazine India Today dubbed “Ramayana” fever.

Though *Ramayana* has the religious connotation but goes much beyond. It is mega entertainment. The story was told to groups of people in the family, village and in community meetings. It was also performed on the stage with drama, music and dance. The *Ramayana* speaks about the significance of the family and the sanctity of the society. The *Ramayana* teaches the importance of human values. It explains in detail the relationship between brothers, the father and the son, the preceptor and the disciple. It teaches philosophy, politics, the concepts and kinds of duties, morality and truth, in an easy and simplified manner. It expounds ideal behaviour and the ideal way of life. It emphasizes the sanctity of the spoken word, especially a promise made by anyone in a responsible position. It also highlights the strength of Hindu women, and the sacrifices that they are capable of. It has always taught concepts that are being spoken as modern ideas in management—of men, matters, resources and strategies. It fits all human emotions within a framework of Time, Space and Motion. Through the army of monkeys, i.e. Vanarsena, *Ramayana* encourages the friendly attitude towards the animal kingdom. *Ramayana* also teaches to travel light for more comfort which was the mantra of Indian railways during Laloo Prasad Yadav's regime as the Railway minister.

Mahabharata is a powerful text that presents an awe-inspiring combination of cosmos and humanity in the form of an accessible narrative. The *Mahābhārata* is one of those creations of human language and spirit that has travelled far beyond the place of its original creation. *Mahabharata* is not a random collection of tales. *Mahabharata* enjoys an iconic status in the society. It is a vast collection of myths, adventure stories, fables and also philosophical teachings. Every digressive bit of the *Mahabharata* is there to shed light on a central story. The core event of that story is the great battle that was fought on the field of Kurukshetra between the five sons of King Pandu and their allies on the one side and the hundred sons of King Dhritarashtra, with their allies, on the other side. The battle was the culmination of a long history of struggle and diplomatic maneuvering, and it involved virtually every tribal king and every powerful city-state in Central and Northern India at the time. *Mahabharata* teaches us the lesson of unity. The five Pandavas could defeat hundred Kauravas as they stood united. Both *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* show cosmic importance. Not mere epics or religious texts, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* teach the basics of life. They still exert tremendous cultural influence throughout India and Southeast Asia.

The 1980s reforms proved particularly crucial in building the confidence of politicians regarding the ability of policy changes such as devaluation, trade liberalization, and delicensing of investments to spur growth without disruption. The reforms in the 1980s must be viewed as a precursor to those in the 1990s. The beginning of the 1980's saw widespread gloom in India's macroeconomic performance after the emergency was officially declared over in 1977. However, during the period 1980-90 the economy began to pick up and the rate of growth increased to 5.8 per cent and was exceeded by only eight out of 113 countries. Only after the growth accelerated in the 1980s, was there a significant downward trend in poverty.

Like any other industry, the television industry too experienced this boom in economic sector. Tracing out the genesis of the history of Indian television we see that television started becoming a part of Indian household only during this period. Terrestrial television in India started with the experimental telecast starting in Delhi on 15 September 1959 with a small transmitter and a makeshift studio. The regular daily transmission started in 1965 as a part of All India Radio. The television service was extended to Bombay (now Mumbai) and Amritsar in 1972. Up until 1975, only seven Indian cities had a television service. Television services were separated from radio in 1976. National telecasts were introduced in 1982. In the same year, colour TV was introduced in the Indian market. Indian small screen programming started off in the early 1980s. At that time there was only one national channel Doordarshan, which was government owned. The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* (both Indian spiritual & mythological epics) were the first major television series produced. This serial notched up the world record in viewership numbers for a single program. By the late 1980s more and more people started to own television sets. Though there was a single channel, television programming had reached saturation. Hence the government opened up another channel which had part national programming and part regional. This channel was known as DD 2 later DD Metro. Both channels were broadcast terrestrially. A dramatic change came in Indian Economy in 1991 with the shift toward capitalism. India's turn from socialism to capitalism, which culminated in 1991, wasn't voluntary. It was a consequence of severe economic and financial pressures. In the 1980s, persistent budget deficits forced the enactment of austerity policies. In 1991, a foreign-exchange crisis pushed the government to align spending with revenue and move away from fixed exchange rates. The rupee, which was overvalued and discouraged foreign investment, fell. Led by Dr. Manmohan Singh, the then finance minister and now the prime minister, the government also opened the door to foreign investment and Indian companies were allowed to borrow in foreign capital markets and invest abroad. High inflation was tamed. These new policies initiated the boom in information technology.

India is not much susceptible to easy change. With the culture which is heavily influenced by Hindu

philosophy and has evolved over millennia, the culture shows slow change and doesn't emphasize urgency. The law of karma and the concept of moksha are the soul mantras here. Hinduism also incorporates other forms of belief and worship. This creates a spirit of independence and a resistance to authority that makes it difficult for the government to enforce family planning and other policies. The chaos on Indian roads where cars, trucks, ox carts, bicycles, rickshaws, pedestrians and stray cows all compete for the right of way, is an illustration of this independent spirit.

The policy of Indian television which was inclined towards America due to its super power status quo, used to buy the American television series and those were telecasted on television. Among them, the series like "Small Wonder", "Fox Kids" with a variety of cartoon shows etc were among many. But the sudden gigantic leap in economy made India equipped enough to think and produce its own superhero figure. During the time when the society was at unrest, the figure of a superhero as a saviour somewhere became important. The growth in the decades of 80s has shown quite significant growth in television industry which the serials like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were produced which marks the golden era of Doordarshan. The 90s experienced the first ever superheroes on the small screen: Shaktimaan, captain vyom etc. Among them, Shaktimaan became a rage among the children. If anyone has lived through the late 90s and watched television at any point of time the one show he must have seen and remembers, even if only once in a blue moon, it would be our own Indian superhero, Shaktimaan.

Clad in the red, loose suit with heavy golden borders and the nuclear crest, Shaktimaan soon became a role model for children. Everything about the show, right from the protruding teeth of PanditGangadharVidyadharMayadharOmkar NathShastri to the incessant chants of "AndheraKayamRahe" by men clad in red and black hoods and the devilish long nails of TamrajKilvish, became a rage. Children gaped at the television screens in awe of the powers that Shaktimaan possessed. The evening games changed from cricket and football to playing Shaktimaan and Dr. Jackal. This phenomenon was not only observed in certain parts of the country. After "Mile surmeratumhara", if anything could bind the country together, it was Shaktimaan. Children all across the country, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, from Baroda to Guwahati were die heart fans of Shaktimaan.

Chapter 3:

Shaktimaan, The Superhero

Shaktimaan was considered to be a highly successful and possibly the most popular Indian superhero in the history of Indian television. The series was produced by MukeshKhanna and directed by DinkarJani. The series was first telecast on September 20, 1997 and around 400 episodes were aired on DD National. MukeshKhanna play the eponymous role of *Shaktimaan* and his alter ego *Pandit Gangadhar Vidyadhar Mayadhar Omkar Nath Shastri*, a photographer for the newspaper *Aaj Ki Aawaz*. Gita Viswas, his colleague at the news paper is shown to love him.

Shaktiman has superpower. He can fly high, has super strength and is invulnerable to a lot many things that the normal human beings are not. In short, the character of Shaktiman has been curved out of the three superheroes: Superman, Spiderman and Batman.

But unlike other superheroes, Shaktimaan has no magical power. He achieved all his super powers through the ignition of his own spiritual power with a continuous and devoted practice of Indian philosophical path such as Yogsadhana and meditation. Shaktimaan awoke the superpower 'lingam' inside his body in the seven chakras of Kundalini, through meditation. He believes in God and worships Him through the symbol of OM. His motto in life is being honest, just and truthful. At the very beginning of the daily soap, we saw the seven "gurus" training him and blessing him with "Yogic Shakti" which is a natural power. He is the chosen warrior against evil by the terrain called "SuryanshiSamuday" who worships Sun. Practicing Kundalini Yoga to awaken the seven spiritual chakras of the body was a part of the training. This gave him the super power in the most natural way. He even performed the ritual of death to live more in the skin of the new born "Shaktimaan" and to gain complete control over his power. This ritual did not cost him his life; instead in a manner, he became more alive than any other normal man. For this ritual, he performed a Yagna and entered into the fire. Yagna is a ceremony exclusive to the Indian culture which aims at sacrifice. Yet there are evidences in the sacred texts about yagna being performed in order to purify the environment. Then, the five elements of life, i.e. fire, wind, water, earth, sky was shown to revive his body and giving him special powers from them. Thus, after leaving his mortal body he was given a super human form to fight against the evil in the world as Shaktimaan. Shaktimaan has the power of telepathy and teleportation. He has X-ray vision and can shoot laser beams with his fingers and toes. He can even stretch his body to a great length. He excels in martial arts and is an expert fighter for his super skilled enemies. His only weakness is a crystal possessed by his arch enemy, TamrajKilvish.

TamrajKilvish is depicted as the King of Darkness (tama = darkness, raj = king). He has been living on the face of earth for 6000 years, and is the source of all evil in the world. His sole intention is to rule the world by spreading darkness, hatred, sin and evil. The source of his power is the "PaapPunj", the other half of Shakti

punj which was originally obtained by “Mahaguru”, the founder of “SuryavanshiSamuday”. The power of Paappunj is composed of the strength of all the evils committed by the people in this world.

After being born as Shaktimaan, the protagonist sets out to destroy his archenemy Kilvish. But, the Mahaguru explained to him that Kilvish can only be defeated after evil is destroyed. Hence then onwards, Shaktimaan's mission became to destroy the sin within people, not the people who commit the sin. Shaktimaan continues with his work of persuing justice and saving people while on the other hand, TamrajKilvish along with his minions, never ceases to chalk out plans to destroy Shaktimaan.

The crystal, “PaapPunj”, possessed by TamrajKilvish is the only thing that can make Shaktimaan powerless as the crystal is filled with all the evils in the world and is the source of the black powers. If he is treated violently to the verge of death with the crystal placed in front of him, it can be fatal to him. However, he can regain his strength after the crystal is taken away from him. The ' PaapPunj' is very similar to the kryptonite, an ore form of a radioactive element, which makes Superman terribly weak.

Much later Shaktimaan came to know the he is the reincarnation of ShriSatya, only who can kill TamrajKilvish. 6000 years ago, ShriSatya had given the exact time of the child’s birth, who will be the reason of Kilvish’s death. Kilvish knew it himself and hence was scared upon arrival of Shaktimaan. As a defense mechanism, he killed Shaktimaan’s parents and his adoptive father, PanditVidyadharShastri. But he has always failed to kill Shaktimaan. In the television series, Kilvish is portrayed as the personification of darkness itself. In spite of being a human being once, the desire to be immortal made him to take means which made him very powerful and thus he committed many evil deeds. In an attempt to become immortal, he left his mortal body and took an ethereal body which is indestructible. But only if Shaktimaan can nullify all the evil in the world, Tamraj’s ethereal body will be destroyed. Kilvish's trademark quote is "AndheraKaayamRahe" (May Darkness Prevail), which is also used by his followers. Kilvish's character evolves as the series progresses. In the opening episodes of Shaktimaan, his face is never shown. But Later his face deforms to become a distorted wolf like countenance . His minions include Electric-man (who can shoot lightning bolts from his body), Stone-man (who can shoot stones from his body), Plastica (who can stretch any part of her body), Dr.Jaikal (an evil scientist) and many others. Among them, Dr.Jaikal is shown most skilled. Dr.Jaikal has helped Kilvish in his various schemes by cloning Shaktimaan and also by turning aliens against him.

Dr.Jaikal is an evil scientist who works for Kilvish. He has been shown as the most skilled among all who work for kilvish. His skills have beget him some power in the world of darkness. Being denied scholarship for research, he lost all hopes on the world and when Kilvish provided him with funds and labs, he becomes a supporter of Kilvish& an evil scientist. He is overall a brilliant scientist, and specializes in cloning and various energy rays. His created Kekda Man (a clone formed by fusing cells of Crab & human), JonkJonkaa (a clone using leech), an evil clone of Shaktimaan, Plastica, Lightman, 3D image, Super-heroine Sunanda and others in order to destroy Shaktimaan. He also invented a height control solution and fictional EC- rays.

As the target audience was mostly the children, Shaktimaan is shown to teach hygiene and moral values to the children. At the initial phase of Shaktimaan getting aired on Doordarshan, a lot of controversy stirred around Shaktimaan as the media reported that several children set themselves on fire or jumped off buildings hoping that Shaktimaan would save them. In an effort to promote responsible behavior among children, MukeshKhanna spent a substantial part of the airtime in explaining to the children that the stunts shown on television were not real and should not be tried at home.

The very opening title track speaks volumes about the theme of this serial. The song describes Shaktimaan as the face of indomitable courage, a savior of humanity. He is not an incarnation or a superhuman. He represents the awakening of the power within ourselves which can change the world. When we are aware of our full potential, able to awake our strength and channelize it towards the betterment of humanity, that is when, we bring out the Shaktimaan in ourselves.

Shaktimaan was one of the most influential, most popular and longest running television series made for children in Doordarshan. He has been featured in Wall Street Journal on the front page reflecting on Shaktimaan's (and hence Khanna's) positive influence on children. It was also in news that the then External Affairs Minister of India and the Prime minister of India, AtalVihariBajpayee praised the eponymous character. In the wake of the 2001 Gujarat Earthquake, MukeshKhanna toured the affected areas in character as Shaktimaan boosting hope and offering relief to the victims.

Shaktimaan shares a deep connection with the other superheroes of the same genre. As all the three other characters, who contributed to shape the character, Shaktimaan also sports an alter ego, PanditGangadharVidyadharMayadharOmkarnathShastri in order to avoid being an easy prey of TamrajKilvish. The character Gangadhar is completely opposite to that of Shaktimaan in all aspects e.g. appearance, intelligence and he speaks in pure Hindi. This phenomenon of dual but contrastive identity can be observed in Superman as Clark Kent, in Spiderman as Peter Parker and also in Batman as Bruce Wain. Like all other superheroes, he stays in the society as an ordinary man and gets knowledge about crime and law. He got a job of a photographer for the newspaper “Aaz Ki Awaaz” after being interviewed by GeetaVishwas, the reporter of

the newspaper. Through a series of incidents and the fact that he could never capture a photo of Shaktimaan, Geeta came to know about the dual identity of Shaktimaan. But he erased her memory about Shaktimaan as he was afraid of getting his identity revealed. She falls in love with Shaktimaan. In fact, Geeta was the one who named this anonymous saviour of the city as "Shaktimaan". After Aaz Ki Awaaz was shut down, Gangadhar became a Hindi professor at a junior college. Later, he left the college in order to work for a news channel KR TV with Geeta. She died in a crash at space planned by Dr. Jaikal. Shaktimaan too loved her and brought her back to life again using his power which resulted in losing his powers temporarily due to his action which are against the law of nature. Shaktimaan regained his power taking the vow not ever to misuse it again. With due course of time, Geeta came to know about the incident and also Shaktimaan's true identity. Unlike other times, Shaktimaan did not erase her memory because she promised to keep it a secret. To ensure that Shaktimaan maintains his vow, Geeta leaves the country. After one year, her colleagues at "AajkiAwaz", persuaded her to join them in publishing Shaktimaan comics. Later she joined KR TV as a news reporter along with Gangadhar while working simultaneously for the comics.

Shaktimaan is seen in the light of a kind hearted brave hero with a strong sense of justice, morality and righteousness. He adheres to the teachings of Bhagwad- Gita and leads life according to the teachings imbibed from there. He is a role model for the children and an example of a law abiding citizen.

The growth in the sale of the TV set can register for the increase in the viewership for television. Children are the most dedicated and enthusiastic viewers of television. Television screen seems to hold a special fascination for them. Now a day's children are spending more time in front of the television than on reading, creative hobbies and activities, homework and even meals. So much television watching by children can be considered as a significant developmental experience. Each child is affected by what is exposed to. TV viewing experience especially for our children is purely entertainment related. Television is the most influential of all media, apart from entertainments television also educates. Passivity can be induced by television, especially among very young children. TV does not demand any reaction, response, mental or physical exertion; it kills the thought process in a way. It has been found out in research that sometimes children consciously watch disturbing program containing violence or sex, and programs in the genre of horror or action adventure. Watching these disturbing programs is a part of a child's effort to grow up, to understand the adult's world, and to anticipate being a part of it. The most important aspect of children watching television is that it provides a resource for working through conscious and unconscious understanding of their identity, and their social positions in relations to adults. Family played an important part in a child's development of language and psyche, but now parents believe that young children will be benefited from giving attention to the television programs rather than interacting with real persons. Until the emergence of television era, young children's symbolic representation of reality was limited. Unable to read they entered the world of fantasy mainly by the way of stories told to them or read to them from books, but rarely did such experience take up significant role. Television programme for children requires an organizational structure. Children's television program should have certain aspects in them. It is very important to understand the basic skills or knowledge of the target audience and these programs should take into account their cognitive abilities. The age for the target audience is also a very important aspect in this case.

Shaktimaan, the first superhero in Indian television managed to leave a huge impact on the minds of the children across the country. The rise of a superhero called Shaktimaan from Diamond comics was sensational news all over India. The character of Shaktimaan was immensely famous. As a result, this superhero character was introduced as a full-fetched character in Television show named Shaktimaan telecast at National DD channel.

There isn't a child in our country who never got a goose bump seeing the novice photographer Gangadhar, who is actually the alter ego of Shaktimaan, turn into the power house Shaktimaan. Though the red colour of his costume reminds of Spiderman, yet shows a lot more differences than similarities. His red outfit makes him look energetic with the colour red standing as the symbol of power; love; passion and danger. He was very much capable of showing such characters from his action as well. The symbol of a shining sun on his chest symbolize that the truth and purity never dies even if it hidden for some time; very soon it will rise again. The transformation of the meek and shy Gangadhar into the smart superhero makes people believe that weakness can be converted into strength if one has a strong desire to fight back to the evil in one's life. Every episode of Shaktimaan revealed a new power. He could fly burn metal with his gaze, crush rocks with his bare hands, among many other awesome things.

A controversy stirred against the popular serial when the children committing suicide hoping for Shaktimaan to rescue them dominated the media. Doordarshan, which gave the serial a permit for 150 days, sent a notice to take it off the air after receiving several reports that it allegedly 'inspired' several children to attempt suicide in the hope the superhero would rescue them. However, the matter soon got solved and Shaktimaan continued to rule over the minds of the children of the country. Even though it was not telecasted in the prime time slot, yet, Shaktimaan managed to vacate the roads and made children finish their chores by 12 on every

Sunday. This huge popularity was seen only in case of the B. R. Chopra's Ramayana and Mahabharata.

After the controversy of the children death, Shaktimaan started devoting substantial time to make children understand that the character of Shaktimaan is purely fictitious and any sort of imitation might lead to accident. His sole purpose of existence is not just victory of good over evil. He is concerned in creating good citizens for the country. He does not have unnatural superpower. He has gained this power in the most natural way. With the help of Yoga, he has awakened the latent vital power "kundalinishakti" and attained immense power. Thus the empowered, Shaktimaan protects innocents from oppression, transforms the hearts of many criminals and through his own example, inspires millions to become better individuals.

The accidents and deaths provoked the makers of Shaktimaan to add a value based session. And that is how "Sorry Shaktimaan" happened. At the end of every episode, Shaktimaan would teach the kids not to do something, and tell them the reason. *Tehero!* (Stop), was another highlight. Kids used to trust him, and take up the values shared in those episodes.

In the sections called "chotichotimagarmotibaatein" and "Sorry Shaktimaan!", he put emphasis on inculcating good behaviors and morals in children. As a superhero, Shaktimaan has a certain responsibility which is expressed through messages at the end of each episode. After every episode, he advises children on different subjects – like switching off fans and lights before leaving the room. He even addresses the issues of the teen age problems and the issues such as drinking problem and their attitude towards the world. In one episode, Shaktimaan was seen all decked up with flowers and leaves in order to celebrate "Van Mahotsava" which intends to build awareness towards environmental issues. In another episode, Shaktimaan sets the birds in a cage free. This teaches the children the value of life and freedom. One very important aspect of Shaktimaan is that most of the villains like 'Plasticman', 'Kitanuman', 'Radiationman' spread awareness among the children against these practices.

Shaktimaan also taught the children the lesson of patriotism. In his teachings he showed what makes us the greatest nation in the world in spite of the problems like poverty, terrorism, illiteracy etc. He also tried to teach the children the good values which equip the nation to fight back the problems. In a word, Shaktimaan taught the kids in India the Indian culture.

Chapter 4:

Conclusion

In the year 1997 when the first telecast of *Shaktimaan* was happened on the television, the country was stuck amidst a serious political turmoil. After the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992, the whole nation was rocked by a series of riots in all the major cities like Bombay, Surat, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, Delhi and several other cities. The Bombay riots in December, 1992 and January, 1993 took a huge shape, taking innumerable lives, destructions of properties. An estimated property of approximately ₹ 10,000 Crore was damaged. This incident attracted international criticism. The violence was not only restricted to the cities of India, Hindu's were attacked and temples and government buildings were demolished in Pakistan and Bangladesh. However, the movement for the creation of a "Ram Janmabhoomi" temple by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bharatiya Janata Party under the leadership of L.K. Advani started a long time back in 1984. A sense of communal strife between the Hindus and the Muslims can be traced in the history of the Indian subcontinent. After the partition, India has witnessed large-scale violence sparked the tensions between these communities. These problems also have its roots in the ideologies of Hindu Nationalism versus Islamic Extremism. However, since then India has attempted to maintain a constitutional commitment to secularism.

The country was amidst a political crisis during the period when *Shaktimaan* was made. When the Indian National Congress lost the election in 1996, the Bharatiya Janata Party came to power, but it could stay only for thirteen days. Then the H.D. Deve Gowda government and the I.K. Gujral government, both lasted for one year each. A stable government to look into various issues regarding, economic and political situations, was the demand of the situation.

Shaktimaan, tried to play a very important role at this juncture. It was very important at this time to hold the citizens of the nation together. The etymological meaning of Shaktimaan is a person who possesses all the 'Shakti' or powers. In the very first episode, the narration makes us aware of the situation prevailing in the world, which is full of violence and various evil things. The world is full of darkness, and to save mankind from that we see the birth of a superhero, a messiah. He is shown almost a prophet like figure, who has come to the earth for the uplifting of our morals enabling us to fight the darker side of the civilization. Shaktimaan appears on the television screen as a fighter who is ready to fight till death in favour of truth and justice. At the time when nation was suffering from a fall in moral, Shaktimaan entered the household through the so called "idiot box" which I would better like to term as "Magic Box".

Shaktimaan crossed the threshold when the political turmoil in the country was at its peak and the society was suffering from the threatening of the wrong deeds that might prove harmful for its members. The depiction of the problems on screen was a replica of reality that prevailed through the time. Dealing with issues

like terrorism, Shaktimaan always tried to boost the humanitarian side of us, even those of them who have been misled and fell pawn to the dirty game of destruction. Thus the human side of Shaktimaan received a mass appeal. While fighting, he was always trying to change the minds of the people involved in the act thus stopping the awaiting danger without any sort of loss of precious life force. This aspect in Shaktimaan's character really won the heart of the parents who were tensed regarding the juvenile attraction towards violence. Shaktimaan propagating the message of peace and not showing violence in any form relieved the parental concern.

Shaktimaan also propagates social awareness through the story of his adventures. In certain episodes, he was shown to deal with problems such as drug addiction, alcoholism and environmental issues. Shaktimaan was a great influence among the children. To gain a "Shaktimaanke dost" certificate, numerous children left at least one bad habit.

It can be hardly denied that Shaktimaan was somehow influenced by the political and religious inclination of its makers. It shows MukeshKhanna, alias Shaktimaan, chanting Gayatri mantra in front of the yagya fire, which is a Hindu sacrificial act. Shaktimaan is born out of the ray from the foreheads of seven rishis (sages) who were Suryanshis. After the death of his parents, Shaktimaan, alias Gangadhar was adopted by a Hindu Brahmin family. When Gangadhar went to the Suryanshis for his training and education, he was depicted performing Hindu rituals like meditation and yagna. He gained his power with awaking the seven chakras i.e. the kundalinishakti, which is again an important part of Hindu philosophy.

Hinduism, in Shaktimaan, has been portrayed as the other name of humanism. In many respects, it is more than a religion; it is a way of life. It is not a man made religion, founded or created by any prophet. It has no origin and therefore has no end either. Hinduism has never been imposed on anybody at anytime. It is a religion of freedom and, unlike most other religions; it allows absolute freedom of one's faith and mode of worship. Indeed, it is the only religion in the world, which respects the right of people to realize the Almighty by their own free will. The history of Hinduism has proved that it is a living force. Both hostile rulers and foreign aggressors could not banish it because it is a religion of self-experience and self-realization. It is not based on any dogmas or set of rules to be accepted with blind faith. Being a non monolithic doctrine, Hinduism does not require its adherents to accept any one idea. It is thus cultural, not creedal, with a history contemporaneous with the peoples with which it is associated.

Hinduism, in the strict sense, cannot be described as a religion. In fact, it is much more complex. It is the sum and substance of the life from time immemorial up to the present. Hinduism is different from the semiotic religions like Christianity or Islam in the sense that there is no single founder and no single doctrine which should be adhered to. Hindus believe that the Absolute Truth is one but it is called by different names and that all paths will ultimately lead to God if followed with faith.

Hindus believe it is more important to live one's life righteously than the form of God one chooses to worship. To achieve this end Hindus have codes of behavior for different people, various rituals and practices for different stages of life etc. Only by living and practicing these teachings every day can one truly come to a realization of the Supreme. Hinduism gives more importance to the way one leads life rather than the form of worship. For example, Hinduism recommends Ahimsa (Non-Violence) and a vegetarian diet. If Hinduism was a typical religion, then it would say that you would go to hell if you ate meat. But Hinduism doesn't say that. It may cater certain notions, but never bans any. Eating non vegetarian food is not a problem in Hinduism. So, in a nutshell, Hinduism is all about lifestyle choices, and not religion in strict sense.

Shaktimaan preaches hinduism as a tradition of ever growing knowledge. It has taught scientific truths centuries before the advent of science in other countries. Hinduism does not separate science from religion. The tantric literature of Hinduism deals with all sorts of science. For example, the Hindu way of life says that it's beneficial to mix cow dung in the water while cleaning the house and the surrounding. Science has proved the anti bacterial properties of cow dung which keeps germs away. Further, the institution puts an emphasis upon eco friendly concepts.

Hinduism gives due respect to each and every creature and to everything in the world. The aspects of nature like earth, sky, mountains, rivers and living beings like animals, plants are considered sacred according to the Hindu philosophy. Thus it creates environmental awareness among people. Yoga, the ancient Hindu system of meditation and self-discipline, is known and practiced virtually all over the world. It teaches the correct way of diet, exercise and other breathing exercise which help in detoxicating our body. In short, Hinduism should not be misinterpreted with the popular religious practices that the lay man name as Hindu practice. Hinduism liberates, does not bind by rules and regulations. Hinduism teaches one about the duties of life. Self realization and leading a healthy life is the main mantra of Hinduism.

The term "Shaktimaan" itself originates from Sanskrit which means "man with power". The names of characters in the serial also were quite indianised. For example, the leading lady was GeetaVishwas and Shaktimaan's sater ego's name was Gangadhar. Further, no character was seen in the serial bearing a name indicating of any other religion.

Time travel is an issue taken up in this serial. Shaktimaan was seen travelling through time along with GeetaViswas and a young boy named Dwij. He travelled through a far off time to meet the person whom he is an incarnation of. The time he travelled indicated of the Vedic time with the appropriate settings around. All these aspects and his preaching about a beautiful nation could be a minor attempt to inculcate the notion of nationalism in children from a very young age.

Hindu mythology has always supported the idea of incarnation which is meant to save human from disaster and establish peace on land. With a clear memory of the phenomenal serial *Mahabharata*, the nation could easily connect with Shaktimaan as their superhero at the hour of crisis.

Structuralism has always sought after finding a universal narrative structure which can be equivalent to language itself. It showed that the different narratives have a lot in common and they need to be studied in terms of their relationship to others. Structuralism has sorted out this issue with the study of myth. Levi Strauss and Barthes's works regarding mythic narratives are quite insightful. Both of them suggest that myth making is a universal cultural phenomenon. For Levi Strauss myths are anxiety reducing mechanism that deals with irresolvable contradiction in a culture and provides imaginative ways to live with them. The transition decade of 90s also clung on to the mythical concept holding the hands of the first ever superhero of Indian television, Shaktimaan. As mentioned earlier, at the time of unrest in the country, Shaktimaan could connect more with the Indian minds habituated to mythology from the time of its inception. Obeying the theoretical construct of mythic narrative, Shaktimaan also showed the binary oppositions as large abstract generalizations such as good: evil, nature: culture, humankind: superhuman. This led the concepts from an abstract level to a concrete level through morphological transformation. The tussle between truth and lie, light and dark has always been carried out by the superhero Shaktimaan and the super villain TamrajKilvish. The metamorphological transformation makes the smart, attractive, intelligent, handsome superhero Shaktimaan into his alter ego, Gangadhar, who is shown as a shy, timid, sports rabbit teeth and speaks only in Hindi. The hero works here as a mediator, as embodied resolutions of conflict between the forces of order and those of disorder.

Though subtle, gender bias exists in every aspect of society - from the workplace to the political arena."Gender stereotypes occur with frequency on daytime soap operas; women are often shown as hopeless individuals, unable to solve problems without assistance."(Basow, 1992)

The soap operas have always been tagged as women's' program. Brown, pointed out some generic characteristics of soap operas. Soap operas are telecasted in a serial form without encouraging the narrative closure and involve multiple characters and plots. The notion of parallel time is an important feature of soap operas which often lead to abrupt segmentation. The emphasis lies on dialogue, problem solving and intimate conversation. The male characters shown in the soaps are shown very sensitive. And the last but not the least, a soap opera always has a house as the setting for the show. The soap opera never shows a state of equilibrium. The dream of a happy state is constantly present at the background, but is never achieved. A soap opera marriage is always disrupted, always at stake, always at the verge of breaking. This is because a happy and unthreatened plotline is not potent enough to catch attention of the viewers for a longer period of time.

Television has always represented the woman as a "stupid, unattractive, insecure little household drudge who spends her martyred, mindless, boring days dreaming of love--and plotting nasty revenge against her husband"(Fisk,182). Thus television demarks the gender division between male and female by dividing the genre of the programs targeted to each gender. The soap operas have always been written for women. The detective and cop thriller tended to fit most securely within the action-oriented, goal-driven narrative form assumed to be compatible with stereotypes of masculine characteristics. It is because most comedy shows focused on the family, women were mainly seen as wives, mothers, and daughters. Within that context, the programs might centre on the value of the mother's nurturance and work or marginalize her in decision making about the family's resources and children.

Davis , argues that soap opera sexuality is concerned with seduction and emotion in case of women and the men are more concerned about achievement and climax. The body of a woman is shown as a weapon against all the odd situations. In a daily soap, a woman's sexual power goes hand in hand with her economic or positional power. This aspect is a significant reversal of conventional gender ascriptions. But Indian television is not so open when the male identity and patriarchy is in question. Hence in Indian television, women are always represented with respect to a male character: as a wife, daughter, mother etc. The conventional role of "angel of the house" is what Indian audience assumes from the characters portrayed. The villains here are usually females. The imposed sexuality has always been ascertained to the women with a negative shade. Most females on nighttime television are young, attractive, thin, and ornamental. Most female characters in the central role are either under 35 or over 50. Middle-aged women are rare. Females are consistently placed in situations where looks count more than brains, and helpless and incompetent behaviors are expected. The cultural and social construct has imposed the difference between a male and a female gender and no matter up to what extent the physical differences may be mobilized in order to neutralize the gap, the natural difference between the sexes

can never be nullified. The inferior and weak characteristics of the feminine are exhibited in the male psyche which is a culture generated phenomenon incepted right from birth.

Shaktimaan is a typical male hero who as a part of the narrative closure rejects Geeta Viswas, the bold newspaper editor for whom he has fallen. Each time the brash young Shaktimaan rescued the gallant girl reporter from peril, he outwardly admonished her recklessness, but inwardly admired her spunk and courage. His sentiment has been considered to be a distraction from the work he has been assigned to. Rejection of the woman is the narrative excription of the feminine questions the actual role of masculinity which advocates for un-contradictory notions of power and independence. Though he was careful enough not to go weak in the face of love, yet he could not resist himself when Geeta was killed by Kilvish in a combat where Kilvish laid the trap to kill Shaktimaan. Unable to bear that, Shaktimaan imparted exploited his power to give back Geeta her life discarding the law of nature. The masculine aspect in them, which forbids a superhero to have a family of his or restricts to fall in love could not tolerate this. Shaktimaan had to pay a heavy price for the deed. He lost all his powers and got transformed into a mere mortal. However, with time he could regain all his power but it again meant the loss of the love of his life. Geeta had already decided to leave the country in order to avoid any such situation.

The word marriage is another taboo in a superhero's life. During the 1970s and 1980s, women's liberalisation and the sexual revolution may have loosened the shackles on ladies in the real world, and with the advancing new century, ladies were more empowered during 90s. But still the superheroes maintained an arm's length from the ladies who tried to intervene in their lives. Hence Shaktimaan, in spite of the repeated proposal for marriage from Geeta for numerous times, could not help but rejecting her. Instead he married his duty to serve the mass.

An intervention between masculine ideology and male social reality is observed when the social males desire both to possess the female and still continue in the society in which both genders get their rightful place. But the ideology of masculinity demands a rejection at the level of representation which contradicts with the social materiality.

Shaktimaan, at that time became the symbol of deliverance. In that changing socio-political scenario, *Shaktimaan* was what the populace wanted to believe in, a new lifestyle mascot.

II. Notes

- i) The Supreme Court judgement delivered by Justice P.B. Sawant and Justice S. Mohan on Feb 9, 1995 in the case between the Union of India & Cricket Association of Bengal. The judgement:
 - (i) The airwaves or frequencies are a public property. Their use has to be controlled and regulated by a public authority in the interests of the public and to prevent the invasion of their rights. Since the electronic media involves the use of the airwaves, this factor creates an in-built restriction on its use as in the case of any other public property.
 - (ii) The right to impart and receive information is a species of the right to freedom of speech and expression guaranteed by Article 19 (1)(a) of the Constitution. A citizen has a fundamental right to use the best means of imparting and receiving information and as such to have an access to telecasting for the purpose.

For more information look in <http://www.indiatogether.org/campaigns/freeinfo/sc95.html>.

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