

## TELEVISION AND AGEING

Sumita Saha\*

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**Abstract:** Television has intervened into the lives of people immensely and elderly people have also been hugely implicated by this innovative technology. To ameliorate isolation and deal with social disengagement elderly people make use of television. In fact its use is found to be higher in the elderly compared to the younger generations. It is a very important source of information and entertainment for elderly who compensate it for the outside reality and also to be in touch with the real world. The imposed loneliness brought about by advancing old age is reduced by television viewing. For the purpose of this paper narrative analysis has been used. 40 respondents were included in the study. Several theories explain how television has become an important part of their lives and also suggest the ways in which television can assist them in extending company. Findings of this research paper suggest that information gathering and entertainment was considered most valuable by the elderly. Loneliness and withdrawal from social and other forms of activities made it necessary that they find an alternative way to engage themselves which is provided by television.

**Keywords:** Television, company, social disengagement, activity theory, entertainment, information, cultivation theory, Socialization Theory, Cultivation Hypothesis, utilization of time, soap operas, family, drama.

### INTRODUCTION

According to Aristotle, humans derive pleasure through art in the form of mimesis, and this form of art is imbibed during childhood days, as their earliest learning comes from imitation (Aristotle, 1996). This art in the modern age has evolved and makes its presence felt through television. In fact, television is a mimetic representation that humans experience of the factual and the real world. Any form of art like music, drama, etc., any news, or retelling of historical events or any form of sports that we watch on television is nothing but a mimetic expression of the real world. Just like the way some part of the reality is lost through mimicry as humans intervene with their creativity to maneuver it, television also does the same. The mores and morality spread across a culture finds its place in people's life through the television programs. It becomes more important when it does not tell, but show the appropriate behavior people are expected to adapt and the consequences that are likely to result from their unwanted actions. The arguments and discussion programs which are considered part of the 'serious' television are consumed as ideas which deals with correct ways of dealing in everyday life. Television is filled with ideas of moral importance that does not spread through instructions or through any formal education but rather is a very spontaneous and unconscious absorption. All other forms of art have still their importance but are made more dramatic or effective through their recreation on television with their audio-visual effects with longer

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\* Associate Professor, Presidency University, 86/1, College Street, Kolkata, West Bengal 700073

chances of being repeatedly being broadcast, never failing to entertain, amuse and distract or excite people (Dant, 2012).

Subjectively interpreting things to be creating the reality is the idea of the way how social construction of reality takes place. It is view of the “symbolic universes” which is legitimized by people (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). The way media constructs different scenes often instills the belief that it is a reflection of the real world which is authentic. The visual content therefore helps in developing the events. “The act of making news is the act of constructing reality rather than a picture of reality” (Tuchman, 1978). Framing the media stories of the elderly involves various news processes. Any construction of reality and to include that in a news means there has to be a particular story line in the news room discussion. Any news which covers the elderly which seems boring might not spark the interest of the journalists and hence might be left out. Also, research shows that more than extracting news elderly people draws entertainment out of the news (Bogart, 1980). News which has some dramatic action can draw the attention to be covered, which then leads to the social construction of reality. This in turn will also engage the viewers. Therefore, it depends on the news value of producers who involves in social construction of news which might distort the real story and add certain dramatic tones so as to make it more entertaining and worth watching (Hilt & Lipschultz, 2016).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted in Kolkata with 40 respondents. 27 were widowed and 8 were widowers and 5 of them were married. Narratives of the elderly people were recorded. 27 of the elderly people responded that they watch television primarily for entertainment purpose. The narratives were collected so that their feelings can be easily captured.

## **TELEVISION NEVER FAILS TO DISAPPOINT**

Although newspapers, radio, literature do provide immense information and amusement, television has gained a stronger ground making more strong impression in the minds of its audience. Across the world viewers consider television as the greatest source of news and entertainment as it is considered very authentic and credible, capable of providing balanced and relevant information to the public (Gunter, 2015). Besides such an array of usefulness television viewing is also a great source of company. In fact in Latin America, according to UNDP, television provides great emotional support and helps in getting rid of self-pity and also nurtures self-confidence (Fox & Waisbord, 2009).

Television has intervened in our lives in a way that even cancer patients view this as a source of information as revealed by a study conducted on cancer patients. In this study 35% of patients were shown to rely on television as a relevant and

authentic information source (Slevin, et al., 1996). Along with all these usages, television has been able to cater to the needs of the elderly. One of the major social concerns is that where in a country like India, the total percentage share of the elderly is 8.6% (Elderly in India, 2016) families often fail to provide the much needed care to the aged. As a result they suffer from neglect and social isolation (Gaitz, Niederehe, & Wilson, 2012). We will later be able to see how this increases the rate of television viewing among this sector of the population.

### **THE GRIM REALITY OF THE ELDERLY**

The rapid growth of elderly population aged 60 and above means that there is an increased rate of dependent population for the retired age as is fixed at 60 by the government. This is a worldwide phenomenon which is a result of development of better medical facilities and welfare policies and increased life expectancy (Wilson, 2002).

India which has a history of traditional families is facing is slowly becoming obsolete because of the impacts of urbanization, globalization and industrialization. This leads to demographic transitions and other social, economic and political changes which in turn are resulting into individualistic mode of living (Maniar & Mehta, 2017). Elderly people face innumerable number of problems which makes adjustment difficult. Dealing with financial crisis to sustain themselves and the ones dependent on them is very serious (Saxena, 2006). One of the respondents, Prabhati Devi said, “When my husband was there, somehow the financial issues were properly addressed. After his death things became difficult. It becomes very hectic for me to understand the nitty-gritty of banking services. I know he has invested in lots of areas- like mutual funds, LIC, Fixed Deposits, etc, and have secured my future well in advance, but I somehow am not able to understand everything. I do have a son, but I don’t think he would be able to give time to me as he is settled elsewhere with his family. I am trying my level best. Let’s see how far I can manage. Only time will tell”.

**Exchange theory explains old age and its connection with television:** On the basis of an underlying norm which values reciprocity, some early researchers, like Homans (1974), Blau (1964) termed the process of social interaction as an exchange rewards in materialistic and psychological forms in between actors (Turner, 1986). According to this theory there is chance of balanced and reciprocal exchange if there are similarities in the dependence of the actors who are involved in the exchange. In case similarity does not exist then there will be issues with equity and development of a relationship of exchange based on power and dependency. This view has been extended by Dowd who has used the theory to explain the kind of relationship between elderly and adult children. He has also said that in this relationship because of decline in social resources and values there is a decrease in social interaction. With industrialization, aged people’s control over the resources which are valued,

declines, or the resources they have control over possess less value, leading to diminishment of the importance of the elderly where the young generation find it less important to be dependent on the older generations (Dowd, 1975). Exchange theory is very much helpful in providing insight into the understanding of the intergenerational support received by the elderly and their psychological health. With advancement of age, aged people start becoming dependent on the goodwill of their children for all kinds of help. Throughout the lifespan they keep on extending their hands to their children in different ways, thus establishing a social credit, so as to secure such supports later in life.

In ancient India as already mentioned in the above paragraphs that there was a tradition of joint family system and a presence of gerontocracy, where elderly people got respect for their wisdom. They had an unquestionable authority over the younger members of their community. Their ideas and judgments were valued immensely and they were believed to be an asset resourced with vast knowledge, with intense zeal in providing help to others, and as people who were the binding force of their community maintaining the much needed cohesion.

Situations have changed to a large extent. With changing times, the position of the elderly changed to a large extent. Industrialization, urbanization, growth of individualism and easy facilities in communication technologies all impacted the lives of the elderly. The rural habits are left behind with growing technological advancement and modernization which are breaking the emotional ties and traditional foundation. The shift to a more complicated place of stay leads to the development of anonymity and uncertainty where the old has no place. They no longer get the respect and care because of this different place of stay, and also because of change in attitudes and transformation of joint family systems to nuclear families where there are issues of accommodation. As a result of all these the elderly do not get the opportunity to stay with their children any longer as the children are the ones shifting to towns and cities for seeking better job opportunities and other facilities. This means that the elderly will have to stay in a different place where there will be no one to take their care and ultimately will pass their lives in poverty and bad health (Devi & Bagga, 2006). However, the theory suggests that receiving of care and extending of support both are psychologically satisfying to the elderly, but when they are in need of extensive support for their failing health conditions there can be a sense of guilt developing amongst the elderly who find it worrying to burden their children with the task of caring them (Kim & Rhee, 1999).

It is found in the research that if the elderly gives support and does not receive care then it is psychologically depressing for them. It is society's expectation from adult children that they will provide due respect and care to their elderly parents, and after a certain age they should provide care instead of expecting the same from their parents. But, when they fail it shows that they are probably not able to do so because they themselves are in trouble of taking care of themselves and therefore

still need the assistance of their parents. This a cause of heightened level distress both for the elderly and their children. A study in Korea showed that based on this exchange theory that when elderly both give support and exchange care, the score of life satisfaction is higher. The score is much less when it is seen that elderly are not part of any such exchange when compared to the ones who only receives care. The score is marginally lower for the ones who just extend support in comparison to the ones who do not receive any. In Korea therefore the study shows how a mutual exchange of reciprocal relationship can elevate the psychological well-being of the elderly and how detrimental effect it can have when there is just one-sided exchange or no exchange at all (Kim & Kim, 2003).

Well established individualistic culture gets intensified with exposure to television as it helps in portraying any form of inequality or problem faced by someone in any form, say for example racism, is the fault of the concerned person. They take away our understanding that there can be a crisis or deficiency at the system or institutional level. This “individualistic” ideology with support from messages from television programs does harm to the general minority groups against which such ideas have been strongly nurtured (Kiecolt & Sayles, 1988). Women as a minority is still being portrayed in this modern world, in traditional roles doing household works and changes in social climate could not have any such impact in changing the content of programs in television (Shanahan & Morgan, 2004). Also, in this group along with the poor and ethnic minorities elderly people can also be grouped together in “disadvantaged” category. It is said that for getting news and other important information people from this group largely depend on television rather than any other medium because it is an easy way to receive such contents. The costs other the television set is much less than even the magazines or newspapers. Also, some physical issues, like for example weak eyesight, can also create a trouble in reading, thus increasing the dependency on television (Chaffee & Wilson, 1975).

It has also been noted how income and gender is a causal factor in affecting types of programs being watched on television. Less affluent elderly males are more interested in primetime movies, programs on religions, and their affluent counterparts are interested in PBS shows, CNN, etc. Women also have such similar variations with less affluent elderly women watching more dramatic shows, soap operas, etc. (Nussbaum, Pecchioni, Robinson, & Thompson, 2013).

**Disengagement practice:** Another significant problem faced by the elderly is the gradual decline in health status (Saxena, 2006). According to Cumming and Henry (1961), as people grow old, they should be freed from the traditional roles in which they were previously involved. This theory is named as disengagement theory. This is so because, with increase in age, health declines. Frailty and illness make them dependent on others. It becomes highly problematic when they still continue to remain associated with these kinds of roles. According to the theory it becomes

difficult to contribute adequately when such roles are performed at this age. They believe that once old age approaches efforts should be made to make space for the younger ones to occupy these roles, and the aged must voluntarily retire from social and civic life and every other aspect of activities as well. This theory they believe is relevant because disengaging from such roles would benefit the society at large as new occupants would be more energetic and fresh to live up to the expectations these roles have of them. Not only is disengagement beneficial for the younger ones, it is also considered to benefit the old, as it is believed that with advancing age, the aged must not be involved with strenuous jobs. This solution would be more consistent with their age. Studies also have shown how elderly people feel happy and how they feel that there is an increase in their morale with this disengagement practice (Cumming & Henry, 1961). Our findings do reflect how elderly people wish they could spend their retired life in pleasure. Mr. Prabir Babu said, "I have worked for 60 years. During the last few years of my work life I was so desperate to retire. I started disliking the work environment as it changed a lot with entry of people of the new generation. Their view points and nature were so different from the senior officers. They were new and hence were able to adapt the new technologies better. I had an experience of more than 35 years, yet failed to show signs of adaptability as my eyes got weak. I could realize I'm taking more time to understand any new idea and change. My movements slowed down. I could also feel I was becoming forgetful. By this I mean I was having memory issues. I really wanted to leave my job everyday during the last 5 years. Finally, when the day arrived, I was extremely delighted. However, things are more gross than you expect them to be. Your sons live elsewhere and your wife is a housewife hardly aware about the complexities of the outside world. I have to handle everything, which is terribly tiring, yet I have no choice but to continue as I don't have the option to sit back and relax. Also, I am a bit scared of online transactions, which probably could have made everything simpler, but the recent cybercrimes have made me nervous. I don't want to risk my hard-earned money at all. My ill-health is making things really difficult. My sons believe I'm as active as I used to be, and do not acknowledge the hard time I'm going through. This phase of your life is hard, but I have to learn to make peace with it".

With the practice of disengagement both society and the aged person takes withdrawal from one another. This results in minimizing social interactions and therefore increases the risk of personal isolation. Now, when such a withdrawal finally gets accomplished, both society and the aged person try to find out a means of bringing about a social equilibrium. At this point, mass media often helps the elderly to deal with this kind of complete disengagement from society and establishes new set of social equilibrium which provides mutual satisfaction. They try to stay away from loneliness and feelings of alienation and incompetence through staying in touch with society and having a sense of belongingness through television (Schramm, 1969).

Also, with growing age, people's interest in the daily social issues gradually starts to shrink. The news received from television not only helps them to keep contact with the world outside but also serves them to achieve "adaptive functioning". This is in sharp contrast to what disengagement theory has to say. Disengagement from various aspects of society means their interest in television will also be absent, but in case of elderly their interest is quite high (Cassata, 1985). According to Atkin this interest in news and information is nothing but a way to substitute for the otherwise boring, mundane and stable world in which they live (Atkin, 1976). For Schramm (1969), this is how they forgo disengagement and maintain their association with society. It has been also found that those adults who have taken withdrawal from society voluntarily has shown decreasing signs of interest in media (Lowenthal & Bolar, 1965). On the other hand, the ones who have voluntarily disengaged themselves from media have shown to increase media usage. This is nothing but a substitute for the network of information that one once was a part during his or her work life. This retired life gives ample amount of leisure times which then increases the time of television viewing (Kubey, 1981). According to this substitution theory, when aged people will find it difficult to engage in interpersonal communication either because of its unavailability or absence then they will take resort to mass media (Bliese, 1982).

**Few other theories:** There is a theory known as activity theory (Lemon, Bengston, & Peterson, 1972) which says that through some kind of social impositions, elderly people are forced to take withdrawal from society where they find out alternative roles to fill in the gap created by the sudden loss of previous roles. The adjustment with this kind of disengagement can be successful only if an alternative role is located. For elderly people this alternative role is often accomplished through television viewing (Rahtz, Sirgy, & Meadow, 1989). Most of the respondents in my study were found to have dealt with this role easily. Although, there were some who found compensating the sudden loss of previous roles including the familial responsibilities with television, but with time they got adjusted, as they found it to be the best alternative available. Nirmala Devi, aged 66, said, "I used to be so busy with all works and everything that never thought time management would be an issue. My elder daughter got married few years back, and my younger one is settled abroad. My husband and I stay together. He does all the outside jobs and we have kept a maid to take care of the household works. So, I have hardly anything to do. Initially I used to slip into boredom and got irritated every now and then. I even joined the ladies club, but that is so not for me as I did not like gossiping around about every random person. Then I started watching television, and slowly got addicted to it. Now I am pretty much happy spending time with it. It brings you close to the outside world with such ease".

According to socialization theory it is believed that older people "like their younger counterparts can be socialized". It means that socialization is a never

ending process and continues throughout life where a person learns to adapt to changing conditions and experiences whenever required through learning new skills and adjusting to changing behavior, cognition and attitude. When old age arrives one has to withdraw from certain social roles and eventually face a contraction of life space whether he or she wishes or not. The contacts with whom he or she was previously in contact is lost, and therefore they take the assistance of mass media to achieve interpersonal learning as it provides the ultimate and most important source to provide them with that (Graney & Graney, 1974).

According to cultivation hypothesis, with increase in television viewing there might be an increase in cultivation of beliefs which are unrealistic about the people around them and their overall surroundings. There are many television programs where aged people are being shown as physically weak with ill-health, experiencing financial crisis. They also place elderly in a very vulnerable position where they are shown to be victims to crimes. Therefore, more television viewing would mean that such stereotypes would become stronger where the elderly would be more concerned about their security, health and all kinds of well-beings. Elderly people who are more oriented towards television viewing, would be more concerned about all these aspects than the ones who are not (Doob & MacDonald, 1979). Also, such a heavy television viewing where they regularly get exposed to such stereotypes would also lead to reinforcement of the belief that others do not have much respect for the elderly people (Rahtz, Sirgy, & Meadow, 1989).

**Other Chill wind faced by the elderly:** Heavy television viewing sometimes is also associated with decreasing happiness when compared to moderate viewers or non-viewers. This can be because the socialization role played by the media raises the materialistic expectations of the elderly (Richins, 1987) who gives it more credibility and value (Westley & Severin, 1964).

Research also shows that since aged people are not able to do much work, they keep themselves occupied with television, because this is one of the things they are able to do. Disability or physical issues and ill-health are often the causes why they fail to do certain tasks and therefore get more leisure time. When being old sometimes means taking leave from one set of activities, it also means opening up of another different set of activities, and a new kind of a lifestyle with changed meaning and purpose (Gilleard & Higgs, 2005). Talcott Parsons more than 50 years ago developed the concept of “sick role” where he very finely defined the role expectations of a society from a sick person. He said that an ill person is expected to withdraw himself from all social obligations so that he can follow a medical professional’s prescribed medications in word to recover. It is only after recovery that he is expected to resume his daily roles (Parsons, 1951). Therefore, the aged people who have health troubles find difficulty to maintain their other social obligations find out ways to involve themselves to overcome their boredom. And, television is often the solution. However, even when these health issues



are controlled statistically the rate of television by elderly people remains high compared to the young ones. Elderly people who are less mobile and have more health issues are the ones who view television more than those who are mobile and healthy (Rubin, 1986).

There is another very important problem faced by the aged people, and that is utilization of time. (Saxena, 2006). As a result of sudden loss of job, or because of children settling elsewhere, elderly people especially women do not understand how to pass their time. As family responsibilities reduce, they find more time for themselves. However, most of them find it difficult to utilize. My findings suggest that women especially those who are widowed, feel lonely and socially inactive. They have however, found out a way to overcome their boredom. These women say that the best way how they utilize their time is watching television. Kamala Devi, aged 67 years and a widow said, "When my husband and children were there, time flew by even before you knew it. After his demise and after my children went abroad my only company is this television set. Not all the programs I watch are good, but I do watch them for it is a good time-pass. I am a big viewer of the soap operas".

Research shows that there has been a huge rise in people watching soap operas and this reinforces the traditional and stereotypical gender roles. This gets stronger with heavy television viewing (Lindsey, 2015). Morgan (1982) tried to analyze a relationship between children watching television and how it affected their concept about gender roles. He found that when children watching television increased their views about the stereotypical roles of gender got more strengthened (Morgan, 1982). Also literature review shows that these gender stereotypical roles are indeed dominant in the television programs, where there is a sharp distinction between who are 'good' women and who all are 'bad women'. 'Good' women are portrayed in a much submissive role and are confined within the domestic spheres of their houses, sensitive and dominated by the male members. 'Bad' women on the other hand, are found to rebel and are independent and therefore selfish. Men on the other hand are portrayed as aggressive and strong in nature, and also competitive in attitude (Meehan, 1983). This was found in my findings as well. Also, findings show that women enjoy such reinforcements and in fact one of them said that that's the most exciting part of the serials as it reflects how the real world should be like. The present change in gender roles where women have started to work and have become economically productive is not acceptable to most of the respondents. In fact one of them said, "It is a fact that daughter-in-laws are working and hence paying less attention to the household works. Household works are their primary jobs and everything else is secondary. She doesn't spend any time with me. My son is an IT engineer. He comes late from office. On the top of that, I lost my husband 4 years back, therefore I don't have any option but to sit back and watch television. I watch those cooking shows and game shows. I have participated in one of them. Not that I do not enjoy watching them, but I expect my daughter-in-law to be my company

now. How long will I continue to take this burden? But since that's never going to happen I find peace in watching television. It has become my companion now". This statement has been supported by research in the following paragraphs.

**Elderly have embraced the television:** Older adults on an average view more television than the younger ones, and that's why they are also known as the "embracers" of television. Research shows that there are ample reasons which are provided to support this high rate. One reason given is that they feel lonely and hence use television to provide company. As an aged lady said she watches TV because she loves to and that she doesn't need anyone's company. Soma Devi aged 71, said, "I like the serials like goyenda ginni, kusumdola, andormohol, rani rashmoni, kundo fuller mala, milon tithee, jamai raja, baksho bodol, radha, bikele bhor er fool, odbhuture. I even watch Hindi serials. It is nice to see how today generation treats their elder counterparts. I feel it very much reflects upon the real world. My son's wife should watch "goyenda ginni" as it teaches in a very nice way how women can handle housework as well as their jobs. This is how a woman should be like. Nowadays women give excuses about their work. Then how come this lady in "Goyenda Ginni" is able to handle everything? It is just that they don't want to. Women can do everything if they are really willing enough. Sayan's (her son) wife deliberately tried to portray that household works are difficult in front of him. I did everything all by myself all this while. Nobody helped me. Getting up early, preparing Tiffin and lunch, washing clothes, cleaning dishes, mopping the floors and then during the entire night preparing dinner and cleaning the utensils, everything was done by me. But, look at the girls from today's generation. If you ask them to cook even once in a while, then also they would react in a way as if they have been asked to consume poison. Then the next weapon is to lecture you about gender equality. What for did they get married then if they don't do any household work? If you are there in a family you are supposed to contribute as well. Men contribute financially and women put in emotions and care and play the domestic roles. The other roles are the supportive ones. What if you have a baby? Who will take its care? You will have to leave your job then for its proper growth. How much you talk about equality men and women will remain unequal. Nothing you can do about it. Men are by birth meant to do the tough jobs. Let it remain their job. You shout about modernity, but this is breaking our families and doing more harm than good".

Research says that elderly people often watch quiz shows and news channels because they feel that it has educational content which is a defense against those who blame that television viewing is a time waste. Compared to young people elderly population tends to be viewers of the prime-time news. Also as per research this trend of watching news channel hasn't changed over the years. In fact it falls under their favorite show. Another interesting finding is although the second best favorite program for elderly men is sports channel, for women it is any educational

program. Elderly women's third favorite was drama and least favorite was any sports program. Reasons given by the elderly for watching these were however primarily entertainment and then was attaining information, but the first motivating factor was so dominating that all other factors were merely visible (Goodman, 1990). Number of hours contributed to television was more than 3 hours a day for more than 75% of elderly women and 50% of elderly men. Even if impairment or disability is taken into consideration, then also just a slight difference in number of hours devoted to television viewing can be noted with 3 hours 30 minutes time on an average being viewed by the disabled elderly and 3 hours 25 minutes of time contributed by the elderly who are physically not disabled (Kausler & Kausler, 2001). My respondents also showed similar trends. Although most of them were physically active, they hardly showed any difference when compared to the ones not active enough in terms of television viewing. Almost all of them spend 4 hours on an average daily irrespective of their health concerns.

In my survey, I found out how the findings of Goodman (1990) were true. Women on an average spend 1.5 hours of their time to view news channels. The most popular news channel was Star Ananda followed by ETV news. They were of the opinion that this is the easiest platform to get news and best way to retain for a longer period of time for its audio-visual effects.

Krishna aged 74, said, "I feel updated when I watch news. When I meet my other friends, it becomes easy to communicate. I go for evening walks, and there we generally discuss of any serious news that has been shown. It becomes an interesting area to talk about. Dramas and music shows are my next favorites. We share our opinions on those as well. For example, in *Kusum Dola*, whether the way Imon, the female lead talks to her in-laws is right or wrong, whether she at all should talk that way, or is the behavior of her in-laws family appropriate, etc. See, we do not have anything else to do. I go and ask my maid to prepare dishes. My husband passed away many years back. My daughter has her own family. Therefore, I need someone or something to spend time with. Television provides me that company".

News channels, soap operas and religious television all played equally important roles in their lives as we will see in the next two paragraphs:

Elderly people also love watching religious programs. It has been found that the viewers who are considered heavy viewers in general are the ones who are also heavy viewers of religious shows. Gratifications that they derive from watching religious programs is not derived from gaining some sort of a knowledge or through awareness of some social issues, in fact it is derived from the fact that such shows revolve around one's private life. They feel entertained and inspired. Sometimes they feel that watching of such shows lead to spiritual growth, and sometimes they simply learn the worship or the music that is being shown. Sometimes these religious shows have some political agendas or some other agenda for which they involve in fund raising. Viewers also feel that watching such programs is important because it

takes them close to what is actually happening in the world and some believe that it imparts important lessons on both moral and social aspects. It has also been noted that with increase in watching of religious programs, there has been a decrease in number of people physically visiting the religious places (Wuthnow, 1987).

Television programs such as soap operas are watched more by college girls as found in a research where their percentage share is 91% and elderly women watching soap operas is 60%, which is also a huge percentage. Also, another finding is any television program viewing by a particular age cohort depends upon the age of the characters depicted in the concerned program. A particular program can be very famous amongst the public, but its maximum audience will belong to that particular age group which is present in the same (Mundorf & Brownell, 1990).

As we can see that throughout my study respondents though had mixed lists of favorites, they were mostly fascinated by soap operas. We shall see why is it so interesting for them.

**Family is always important:** Elderly people are inclined towards watching shows which are family oriented and which values their age and shows them in a positive light. This is one of the reasons why the very famous, *The Andy Griffith Show*, an American comedy and some other similar ones were rerun (Kausler & Kausler, 2001). The personalities shown in the television are seen as a substitute for the ones who are not available to them any longer. Therefore, watching television means being in touch with them for the aged people who are living alone they experience an illusion as if they live in a world full of people (Hess, 1974). According to one of my respondents, she loves watching serials because she feels it makes her miss her family a little less. Parul, aged 81, said, “My children are settled abroad. They send me money monthly and feel that’s all I need. I told them how badly I need their company, but then for that they won’t be leaving their hard earned job I understand. Initially it was very difficult but now I have come to terms with it and have made the television characters part of my life. When they do something in a particular serial I feel that as if I’m doing it. The senior characters in the serials do their roles with utmost sincerity and it reflects their wisdom. The way they are the binding force of their families and yet sometimes are not given the due importance is exactly what I feel about my life. Sometimes they are shown in a very positive light where it is shown that the entire family depends on their decisions which is nothing but some sort of an exaggeration. I know it is not true because children of today’s generation feel they are smart enough to take important decisions in their lives. I have friends who feel the same. Hardly our children allow us to be a part of the major decisions in their lives even when sometimes we might get affected by it. Still then when you see such programs you feel happy as if you have gotten that respect. I start imagining myself in that role and feel good about it. I predict about the upcoming episodes and sometimes challenge my maid about it. I find this entire thing is very constructive in helping me to remain busy and happy”.

## CONCLUSION

This research was conducted to focus on the trajectory in which they used television to serve as a mechanism to escape from social abandonment. Information gathering, drama, quizzes and game shows, religious channels political news, were all that seemed to attract them the most. However, Drama and news channels were in the top of their priority list. Loneliness is no longer an issue, although initially it was. However, for most of them it seems that elderly people still crave for the physical presence of their family members, and have stated that television is a forced substitute which can never replace their place.

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