Portrayal of Police Torture
In Hindi Films and Television Serials
And its impact on children

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1999

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Introduction

What is Torture?

Before commencing the study on the "Portrayal of police torture in Hindi cinema and TV serials and its impact on children", let us have a look on the term 'Torture' as widely used.

World Medical Association, in its Tokyo Declaration in 1975, has defined torture as the 'deliberate, systematic or wanton infliction of physical or mental suffering by one or more persons acting alone or on the orders of any authority, to yield information, to make a confession, or for any other reason.'

Thus the following points have been explicit in this definition:

INTENTIONAL: Torture causes physical or mental suffering to the victim deliberately.

SYSTEMATIC OR WANTON: The infliction of suffering on the victim could be systemic and pre planned or it could be wanton and random.

ORDER OR NO ORDER: The definition also makes it clear that even if a person is ordered to torture by a higher authority, this does not justify his/her actions and s/he would be called a torturer.

PURPOSE: There should be a purpose for the torture. It may be to get information, to force a person to confess to the crime or to sign a written statement or for any other reason.

PHYSICAL OR MENTAL SUFFERING: The definition of torture clearly mentions that physical as well as mental suffering should be thought of while examining an individual to see whether s/he was tortured or not.

In the given definition of torture we find certain objectives behind the torture. These are (a) To obtain information (b) To force a confession (c) To get a testimony incriminating others (d) To take revenge (e) To spread terror in the community (f) To destroy the personality.

Torture can be physical, psychological and sexual using different tools of torture. Beating with sticks, cables, whips, iron rods, chains, belts or any other instruments is common. Punching with fists and kicking with feet are also considered severe beating. Other types of torture are: Severe beating on the sole of the feet; Finger torture; Suspension; Cold torture; Heat torture; Irritant torture; Made to walk or sit on sharp objects; Dental torture;

Ear torture; Hair torture; Scratching with knife; Tied down; Forced position; Chepuwa; Twisting of body parts and poking.

In the same way, mental and sexual torture, cause endless trauma for the victim. Ironically, Law forbids use of violence but the law-keepers themselves have been the biggest violators. Most of those taken to police custody in one case or the other are invariably subject to torture. So much so that the use of third degree methods have become part of crime investigation for the police.

And this is not only the story of ' Real' life. There is a striking similarity between the 'real' and 'reel' life and the image of police we see in our life, is reinforced by the mainstream media – Cinema and Television. The average spectator perceives the acts of torture portrayed on the screen by the characters in the role of police as reality and sometimes as a solution to the larger than life problems, which he or she faces. Further, when violence, corruption and torture are also seen as societal realities, it reinforces an individuals' dilemma with the value system and as a result, the spectator may start taking both screen violence and torture as well as its real-life manifestation as a routine method of solving problems. It is thus that films and serials, which portray scenes of brutal torture by the police, reinforce certain notions within the minds of the audience.

There is a basic dualism in the films. On the one hand the police are projected as corrupt, inefficient, toothless, and the judicial system as tardy and bureaucratic. However, by defining and articulating the problem within the discourse of "law and order", the films emphasise the primacy and indispensability of these institution which they apparently attack. (Fareeduddin Kazmi, "The secret politics of our desires". Pp. 150)

Thus, some of the truisms regarding portrayal of torture in the movies are:

a) A strong police force is the moral necessity of the society.
b) The police as an Institution can never do any wrong.
c) Society should be run with the help of a police force.

Fear is thus given a positive connotation. By using dramatic elements, films and serials use characters to reinforce the stereotype and conventional value system. In Hindi films, rich and powerful characters are in the mainstream. The peripheral world comprises of the backward, the dalits, the women and the minorities. So, they are the natural victims of the police or the characters representing the patriarchal and often oppressive system.

The Contemporary Scenario

In the age of rapid globalisation, media violence threatens to swamp the entire childhood of today's younger generation. So much so that almost 90 per cent of 12-year old school children are acquainted with violent action characters like *Terminator* and *Rambo*, according to a global study in 23 countries (Groebel in Carlsson and Feilitzen, ed. 1998).

In the early 90's India and other south Asian countries could not and in fact did not escape this onslaught of media violence. Yet in Hindi region, which include Nepal also (because Nepal is one of the largest market for Hindi movies and television software) this phenomenon has taken a local hue. Unlike many other developing countries or emerging economies, where American media conglomerates remain the main exporter of all forms of media violence, we in India, with some influence from the west, have been successful in concocting a local brew, which is as lethal as its global counterparts. Popular films and television serials have emerged as important vehicles of this violence.

It is not within the scope of this study to examine the entire gamut of issues raised by media violence. Instead, this study attempts in a small way to examine the structure of police torture in Hindi Cinema and television serials and through this tries to look at its impact on children and find out what kind of behavioural and attitudinal changes occur in their personality.

India produces on an average 200 Hindi films every year. The principal catchment area of these films is the so-called Hindi belt, comprising the northern states of Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. The neighbouring countries, especially Nepal, are also major consumers of these films. In fact Nepali producers tend to copy from Hindi movies and in Nepali cinema halls more Hindi movies happen to be running than their Nepali counterparts. Kathmandu and other major cities like Pokhara, Dharan and boarder town of Terai, consume more of Indian feature films and television programmes than Nepali products. Hence, the study equally concerns India and Nepal.

These Hindi films and serials are mostly produced in Mumbai and watched by millions of people in India and Nepal. In fact the same satellite channels are watched in Nepal too.

Television, which is largely a medium of entertainment in India, is dependent on Hindi films to fulfil its software needs. Apart from the plethora of films and film-based programmes shown daily on various channels, the television soap operas or serials share many common aspects with the Hindi Cinema. It is not only that actors, actresses, scriptwriters and directors keep shuttling between the small and the large screen (one of the highest-paid actors of today's Mumbai film industry started his carrier in television serials), there is a striking similarity of plots, story lines, characterisation and presentation between the two.

According to the latest US survey, the average child aged two to five spends a third or more of his total waking hours watching the screen. The average American watches more than 1,200 hours a year, and reads books for less than five hours a year. Although there is more TV viewing in the US than in probably any other country, these figures give some indication of the degree to which television can become a part of our lives, and the degree to which it may influence our picture of the world, and thus shape our actions. (Sex, Violence and Media: Maurice Temple Smith: P: 19)

Objective of the Study:

The objective of this study is to investigate the portrayal of police torture in Hindi films and television serials and its impact on children (In the age group of 4 to 14)

The methodology of the study includes:

- Review of the historical changes in Hindi films and television serials.
- Content analysis of Hindi films and serials from the perspective of the portrayal of torture by the police.
- Conducting an impact assessment of this portrayal on children.

Following the method of simple stratified random sampling, 108 interviews were conducted with children in February 1999 in Delhi. The areas included a slum, DDA housing localities, and relatively affluent Group Housing Cooperative Societies in Delhi. Children interviewed were in the age group of 5 – 15 and belonged to three income groups: lower, middle and upper-middle. The class division was done on the basis of metropolitan standard of living on an average of up to RS 5000 for lower income group, upto RS 15000 for middle income group and up to RS 25000 for upper middle income group. They were further grouped on the basis of sex and education.

Chapter 1
Hindi Cinema: Historical Perspective

Hindi Cinema remained the only source of entertainment until the small screen took the Indian people by storm in the early eighties. From the era of silent movies to the highly technical wonders of today, Hindi cinema has come a long way. In the thirties, mythological and historical films with melodramatic theatricality were the mainstays of Hindi films. The late thirties and the early forties witnessed a string of patriotic films, in tune with the emergence of Indian nationalism.

It was only in the post-Independence era that the Hindi cinema started developing an identity of its own. A new class of audience was emerging with some money to spare and with aspirations that mirrored those of their counterparts in the more developed nations. This was the time when producers like Raj Kapoor ventured into film making with films like *Shree 420*, *Awaraa* and *Jaagte Raho*. One can say with certain amount of conviction that from this point the Hindi Cinema started portraying the politics of the common wo/man's desires. It started showing a realistic picture of the problems faced by the common man but insisted on suggesting a dream-like solution to these difficulties and frustrations. This was also the era of Nehru's utopian socialistic dreams and it was difficult for Hindi cinema to escape from this Utopia. Thus, the early sixties witnessed, on the one hand, making of soft romantic films and, on the other, films with political messages. But by the end of same decade, the dream had gone sour and the resultant disillusionment was bound to rear its head in the context of Hindi cinema sooner or later.

"From the mythologicals, to the historicals, to the socials, to the romantics and then to the post 70s films the changes in the conventional films have closely followed and reflected the changes in Indian society itself. However, amidst all these changes, one thing that has always remained central in all these different genres has been some motion of injustice, of exploitation, of suffering, always shown from the perspective of the victim cutting across genres and crossing the time barriers, this is the one consistent thread which provides a continuity in Hindi conventional films. . . If the success of a film depends upon the extent to which it has been able to interpellate the audience, it is obvious that higher the level of interpalletation the greater its chances of succeeding. This explains why there is always a multiplicity of interpellations contained within the structure of almost every conventional film. (Fareed Kazmi: The Politics of India's conventional cinema, 1999)

Zanjeer was the first film from where violence became a sort of official trend in the Hindi Cinema. With the films of Amitabh Bachchan, Hindi cinema brushed aside all questions of morality and ethics and started presenting 'revenge' as a primeval value. Violence was projected as a necessary instrument for achieving power and survival of the hero. Film after film churned out in the late seventies and throughout the eighties focussed on the

individual, whose only substantive motivation was 'revenge'. This new character in Hindi cinema created space for various types of violence – actual physical violence or torture by police being a major portrayal.

In Zanzeer, the hero as a ruthless smuggler, capable of cold blooded murder, was taken as a fact of everyday life. The anger and violence of the hero were read psychologically by many as a consequence of the hero's childhood trauma, but the latent message of the movie was something else. It was anger at the failure of the system to deliver justice. (Iqbal Masud as quoted in 'secret politics of our desire')

"In any case, by the mid-1970s film making itself had become a different kind of enterprise in Bombay. About the same time Bobby was released came another film called Zanzeer, starring an struggling, awkwardly tall, young actor, Amitabh Bachchan. The film was a harbinger of things to come in more ways than one. The entry of the "angry young man" was not merely a new trend in film; it portended a different kind of Indian where political events had by now begun to move at a faster pace... By this time the character of the hero and the nature of the villainy had both begun to change radically in popular film. Gradually the difference between the hero and the villain became notional, both seemed to symbolise gross violence and revenge; both seemed perfectly comfortable with the increasingly violent Indian political scene. From Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984 to the growing frequency of communal riots and caste conflicts, violence had become a part of everyday existence, at least in urban India. Earlier core concerns of the Indian polity, such as poverty, were already becoming non-issues in public life. (Rajani Bakshi: Secret Politics of desire. Pp. 122)

One sees a striking similarity of concepts and images in majority of Hindi films. Whatever be their relationship, physical assault and mental violence form an integral part of development of characters in Hindi films. They are usually seen shouting at people, threatening, pushing or slapping one another. The overwhelming presence of the underworld mafia, politicians and police is inevitable in every second Hindi film. Similarly, police torture, more often than not in the most brutal manner, is also there in most of these films. Either the hero, who represents the aspirations of the masses, is beaten in the lock up or characters from lower classes are beaten up ostensibly to teach them a lesson or two. Policemen subject women to sexual violence. They use all kinds of violence – physical, mental and verbal, almost endlessly.

In the post-70s films there have been two dominant images of the hero which, at least at the overt level, appear to be opposed. The first is that of a simpleton, naïve, almost comic, imaged in films like Namak Halal (1982), Beta (1992), Anari (1993), Aankhen (1993), Coolie No. 1 (1995) and Deewana Mastana (1997). The other, which is called "angry young man" has held survey since its inception in Zanzeer (1973) till today. Zanzeer helped in constructing the persona of the angry young man which attained dizzy hights of popularity in the '70s and early '80s, especially when enacted by Amitabh Bachchan. The specific conditions of the '70's provided a fertile ground for the evolution of this kind of a hero. By then the euphoria of the post independence period had

evaporated. The political contradictions had become quite evident and Congress was unable to manage these contradictions any more and as a result of this broke down. The majority of the states in 1967 opted for non-congress governments. The legitimacy of the state and its agencies was fast getting eroded.

Their policies only accelerated the social crises resulting in the sharpening of socio political conflicts. Slums were widening in the metropolises, producing two cities within a city. The people displaced from their roots without any hope of reintegration into the city, turning into a peripheral existence. Only in this context the persona of the angry young man must be understood. He is one of the down and out, the marginalised.

Chapter 2
Television: Historical perspective

For decades after its introduction in India, Television remained a one-channel affair, i.e. Doordarshan, which was under the control of the government. It had its focus firmly set on education, information and entertainment although its inability to produce credible, in-house software made it dependent on films and film-based programmes. The dichotomy between entertainment and education continues till today. Fettered by governmental dictates and needs, the National Broadcaster fell short of many requirements. Its news, rarely if ever, ventured out of governmental precincts and consequently had little credibility. Programmes specifically directed towards different sections of society like women, children, agriculturists were confined to panel discussions and chat shows. Its sports coverage fell much below the International standards and its most popular programme was the weekly quota of Hindi films.

But all these changed dramatically with the advent of satellite channels in the early nineties. Dish antennae sprouted in exclusive clubs and five star hotels and gradually spread to middle class homes in urban areas. With cable TV networks tele-casting CNN and BBC, the concept of news underwent a dramatic change, especially during the Gulf war when Indian TV viewers could see what high technology can do with news. Initially, the spread of satellite television channels was restricted to English speaking upper classes while Doordarshan continued to hold sway over the majority of the viewers.

However, the scenario changed with the launching of the Zee channel in 1992. Zee targeted Hindi speaking viewers and consequently posed a serious challenge to Doordarshan. With the launching of Zee began the process of commercialisation of television in India. Zee had begun to cut into Doordarshan's hold over the Hindi-speaking viewers as well as its sponsors. And unlike Doordarshan, which had a self-imposed ban on showing advertisements of certain products like alcohol, Zee was able to rope in more sponsors.

The challenge posed by Zee made Doordarshan sit up. The national broadcaster hit back by floating the DD metro channel in 1993 to meet exclusively the demand for more entertainment. DD metro concentrated on serials, sports and film-based programmes. By 1995, with 16 private channels on air, the competition grew stiffer. Doordarshan by then had five channels. Besides, Sony, Discovery and several others had entered the arena. More news bulletins, more films, more serials – both indigenous and imported – were now available to the Indian viewer. A channel devoted entirely to music and another to sports were also being aired. By 1995 all private channels had gone commercial, with DD Metro trying to evolve a distinct personality, more because of the political need to cater to the demands of various pressure groups.

The uniformity of images, symbols and concepts in serials in all these channels is partly a consequence of the fact that the same directors and producers are active in all channels.

Another important factor is their perception of saleability. The television industry in India is yet to stand on its own feet and is held in psychological bondage by the film industry. This is manifested by the overwhelming number of film-based programmes, film songs or clippings on a theme or a star, strung together with a zany script and a natty presenter. Serials, too, closely follow the Bombay *masala* film formula of depicting the loves and losses of the elite. However, as serial lasts longer than a film, there is this need to keep the viewer hooked for week after week. Scriptwriters and producers have developed a formula to keep the viewers on tenterhooks till the next episode. Each episode ends either at a melodramatic moment leaving the viewer guessing whether the character concerned would or would not take a decisive step or with an act of violence where the viewer is made to wait till the next episode to know its repercussions. Violence is the mainstay of these serials and it takes various forms like Psychological violence (humiliating the weak); Verbal violence (use of abusive language, especially in serials depicting criminals); Physical violence (Beating, kicking and murder) and Sexual violence.

All forms of violence become necessary elements of a thematic whole with certain distinct ideological orientation. Presence of the state machinery is minimal in most of the serials excepting those dealing with police officers and criminals.

Usually following type of violence is seen in television and cinema both:

a.	Man to Man	b.	Master – Servant
c.	Hero-Villain	d.	Father – Son
e.	Father-in-law-son-in-law	f.	Brother – Brother
g.	Man-to-Woman	h.	Hero –Heroine
i.	Villain-Heroine	j.	Husband – wife
k.	Brother – Sister	l.	Master-maidservant
m.	Father-daughter	n.	Villain – vamp
o.	Villain-woman	p.	Son-mother
q.	Father-in-daughter-in law	r.	Mother-son
s.	Woman-to-woman	t.	Heroine-vamp
u.	Mother-in law- Daughter in law	v.	Mother-daughter
w.	Employer – maid servant	x.	Adult – child
y.	Police- Innocent	z.	Police/military – Accused/criminal

I did a random study of the Television programmes across the channels and it was found that violence, both physical and psychological are there in plenty on the small screen. These include threats, slapping, screaming, shouting, assaulting, expletives, pushing, clobbering, stabbing, mental torture, eerie sounds and threatening music. In fact these categories of violence account for over 50 per cent of the total actions shown in these serials. Much of the violence is explicit and graphic. Some depictions of violence include

torture in police lock up or verbal violence. Social dramas also have a large quantity of violence.

For example, **in one day's programme across the channels, I found 178 acts of violence** in one form or the other. While analysing the depiction of police torture in Hindi serials, the following areas of concern attract our attention:

- Programme schedules
- Violent promos
- Treatment and depiction
- Representation of child
- Glorification of violence

Programme Schedule

Inter-channel rivalry and competition has led to simultaneous scheduling of the most popular programmes. The prime time serials in the 8.30 p.m. and 9.30 p.m. slots are often the most violent and disturbing ones– especially for children. The following table presents a few programmes telecast on different channels during the prime time:

Time	Programme	Channel
8.30 p.m.	India's most wanted	Zee India
9.30 p.m.	Bhanwar	Sony
9.00 p.m.	Shapath	Zee
9.00 p.m.	Sea Hawks	DD Metro
9.30 p.m.	Hindusthani	DD Metro

Even those programmes, which are telecast late in the night, in an effort to reduce children's access to them, are repeated in the afternoon and early evenings. For instance, *India's Most Wanted* has repeat telecast at 4 p.m. and *Bhanwar* is repeated at 12 noon.

Violent promos

Violent scenes more than any other ingredients are used to sell and promote programmes. The promos place the camera in a specific angle to highlight the act of violence, be it family violence or police torture. The soundtracks while the torture/violence is being depicted add special effect to the scene and the dialogue. For example the promo of 'Hindustani' starts with a gun in 3D graphics and it is targeted at the audience. In the next shot the central character is seen bare body showing his muscles in a way which induce a feeling of terror. 'Bhanwar' has a promo with gory details of crime inducing a sense of insecurity and fear.

Treatment and Depiction

Certain serials take great care to avoid acts of physical violence but they repeatedly use eerie soundtracks, hallucinations, nightmares and paranoia etc. to create an atmosphere of fear and fright. But most of the serials show direct act of violence. In my random study of one day's TV programs across the channel, it was found that psychopathic behaviour

accounts for as high as 50 per cent on a given day and the rest is constituted other kinds of violence like blackmail, revenge, rivalry, aggression, underworld dealings, inter-generation conflict and police interrogation. Such serials are telecast at family viewing times. When violence is shown to be a fun, it is intended to lose its seriousness and children tend to imitate it in their play. However, there are successful thriller/suspense/detective serials in which there is a minimal use of any kind of violence e.g. '*Mohandas B.A..,L.L.B.'*, '*Saboo*t' and '*CID*'.

Representation of Child
A few serials have children involved in acts of violence either as victims, or, as participants. In one of the episodes of 'Shapath', on Z TV a child is shown witnessing the brutal murder of his father, then being kidnapped and taught how to handle a gun. This may lead children to imitate the same acts.

Glorification of Violence
Some serials glorify violence. *Hindusthani, Shakitman, Shapath* and *Sea Hawk* use the triumph of the good over the evil to justify use of violence and police torture. The police, the concept of the vigilante or the Superhero are used to sanction the use of violence. In the name of justice, police takes the law into its hands. A UNESCO study conducted in 1995 has emphasised that children tend to imitate super-heroes and imitate violent means to solve their problems because they have seen the same on the television. Violence and police are used to settle conflicts in most of the programmes. Patty Lac, Counsellor of the Columbia High School (USA) where the two students of the school gunned down 25 fellow students in April 1999, said that "Teenagers are great imitators…They often sustain their thinking on the basis of mimicry. There is a lot of imitation value to this kind of violence."

Role of Advertisers

Commercialisation of television has started a fierce competition among various channels for cornering more advertising revenue. The more popular a programme, the more advertisement and revenue it attracts. The advertisers, realising the significance of their role in keeping channels afloat, have begun to control the content of programmes. The competition for popular programmes tends to give rise to two kinds of responses among channels. One, every channel tries to evolve a distinct identity, which is then touted as exclusivity. Two, the moment a particular programme becomes popular on one channel, it is almost immediately copied by other channels with minor alterations and this tends to make all channels look similar. Thus the viewer is confronted with a situation where seemingly endless choices boil down to little or no choice.

Talk shows, quiz and serials dominate all channels and all serials seem to have a similar story line. Among these, serials exercise the greatest impact on the audience and have begun to set new standards of glamour with their portrayal of opulent life-styles of the rich. Lower-middle and working classes, which form the largest segment of viewers, are banished from the screen in most serials. They appear either in supporting roles or as

buffoons. The working class is restricted to its narrow space of domestic help, chauffeur and part of the crowd.

The advertisers enter the game of manipulating this situation by controlling the contents and presentation and even selection of programmes. But as words like 'control' and 'influence' is not accepted as politically correct in the era of liberalisation, this operation has attained a degree of sophistication. It is rarely explicit but to the discerning viewer a certain amount of 'control' is evident in the programmes of all channels. But this anxiety to please (or more correctly not to displease) the advertiser, who could also be the sponsor, is not evident with reference to the viewers. The self-discipline required to respect the sensibilities of different social groups and beam responsible programmes is conspicuous by absence.

The advertisers produce target-specific advertisements and choose the slots carefully to reach different target groups. Thus one can see a series of ads promoting automobiles, tyres, washing machines, chocolates, soft drinks etc. in prime time programmes as the whole family watches these. The afternoon programmes are dominated by ads on appliances for the housewife, who is the target audience in this case. Late afternoon and early evening programmes generally beamed to children are punctuated by ads on toys, chocolates and other food products. Serials like films are also not free from violence including police torture. But more importantly, it is the serials' ideology of consumerism, actively aided by violence in films that indirectly leads the television viewers to practice various forms of violence.

According to Annual report of Doordarshan (1996) 75.4 per cent of the urban population and 32.8 percent rural population watch television. It's reach is second only to that of radio and is much more than films and the print media. Naturally, it has the potential to influence attitudes, opinions and life-styles in a way that can not be achieved by any other medium of mass communication. The report also says that women watch television more than men and people in the lower income group spend more time in front of the small screen than those from the higher income groups do. Consequently TV is more likely to leave its impact on vulnerable groups – Women, children and people belonging to the lower income groups. Its influence may go to the extent of shaping the entire world-view of those sections of the society, which has little or no access to other sources of information and education. Global Media Report, 1998 (UNESCO) also pointed out that the greatest impact television has, is on children and teenagers. They form an important target group with several programs and advertisements specifically directed at them. It is important to note that children (0 – 14 years) constitute about 42 per cent of India's total population. (Census, 1991)

This seems to be a vicious circle where audience is trapped in a way that it can not come out. But the question is, why do people watch television inspite of outcries from educationists, parents and social activists?

"In viewing television, the grown-up, as well as the child, is taking advantage of an early available opportunity to withdraw from the world of activity into the realm of non doing, non thinking, indeed, temporary non existing. But viewers do not choose to watch soothing, relaxing programs on television, though their main purpose in watching is often to be soothed and relaxed. Instead they opt for frantic program filled with the most violent activities imaginable deaths, tortures, car crashes, all to the accompaniment of frenzied music. The screen is a madhouse of activity as the viewer sits back in a paradoxical state of perfect repose.

By choosing the most active programs possible, viewers are able to approximate a feeling of activity, with all the sensations of involvement, while enjoying the safety and security of total passivity. They are enjoying a simulation of activity in the hope that it will compensate for the actuality that they are involved in a passive, one way experience. (Marie Winn: The Plug –in Drug P: 102)

Chapter 3
The Power of Image

According to global media report (UNESCO, 1998), children world-wide spend an average of 3 hours daily in front of the television set. This is at least 50 per cent more than the time spent on any other out-of the-school activity including, home-work, being with the family or friends, or reading. According to this report, the behavioural pattern of children shows that by the time a child is 18, s/he would have seen more murders than one can read about in a lifetime. S/he becomes immune to all forms of violence – domestic, criminal or war. The relation between media violence and 'real' violence is of interactive nature: media can contribute to an aggressive culture; people who are already aggressive use the media to get further confirmation of their beliefs and attitudes, which in turn, are readily reinforced through media content.

After seeing violence dealt out day after day on television programs, viewers incorporate it into their reality, in spite of the fact that while they watch they know that the programs are fictional. The violent television world distorts viewers, perceptions of the real world, and their expectations of violence in life reflect their exposure to violence on television. (Marie Winn: Plug – in Drug P: 104).

A disturbing possibility exists that the television experience has not merely blurred the distinctions between the real and the unreal for steady viewers, but that by doing so it has dulled their sensitivities to real events. For when the reality of a situation is diminished, people are able to react to it less emotionally, more as spectators. (IBID, P: 105).

An environment surrounds many children where both 'real' and media experiences support the view that violence/torture is natural. Children want a caring social and family environment, and lacking in this, they seek role models, which offer compensation through power and aggression. How children/ teenagers conceive the impact? They watch certain acts in films and serials with the capacity of recalling it and when they are in a group, they use a cluster of different media contents to create a symbolic identity. They tend to consider violent actions like kicking a defenceless person, as being acceptable. For them, revenge becomes an acceptable reason for violence. Their norms and conceptions of violence relate more to the norms presented in media culture that is inherently violent. The youngsters explain their preferences for media heroes in terms of traits demonstrative of aggression and violence. In this context, film and television content (in our case portrayal of torture by police) seems to function as a model for the teenagers' preference for violence. When viewing a film on a VCR, many boys go back again and again to specific scenes of fights or beating or kicking. And when actually involved in street violence, even if it's a mock one among friends, they copy those scenes including the sounds and the grunts.

Once the attraction of screen violence is recognised as a compensation for the viewers enforced passivity, the gradual increase of violence on television within recent decades becomes understandable..

For during that period not only did television ownership increase enormously, but people begun to spend more of their time watching television...

Apparently, as television viewing increases in proportion to more active experiences in people's lives, their need for the pseudo-satisfactions of simulated activity on their television screen increases as well. (Marie Winn - The Plug –in Drug P:102).

There are many other claims for catharsis. The finding that aggressive people tend to watch a lot of violent programmes, has been explained in terms of their need to drain off aggressive impulses. (H.J. Eysenck & D.K.B. NIAS: Sex, Violence and Media P:62).

As they grow, young boys see a large amount of violence on the screen. They associate violence with their own experiences in reality. Several boys describe how they observed and imitated the techniques from different models – partly from films, partly from others in real life. Especially in the early teens, they imitate models from films. By watching models one learns behaviours connected with the expression of anger. It is the screen heroes who mostly supply attitudes and behavioural models. Also, the villain and the hero are not necessarily differentiated; - neither on the screen nor in the teenagers' imagination. Sholey's Gabbar Singh holds same interest as of the heroes of the film. Both symbolise gross violence and revenge, both seem perfectly comfortable with violence. Take any of the Hindi popular film of late 70's and one can find amusing symbiosis between hero and villain as far as the use of violence is concerned or the portrayal of torture by police is concerned. Whether the character of police is played by the hero; or by anybody else, both practice the same acts of torture.

Chapter 4
Structure of Police Torture in Hindi Films

Perhaps Hindi films are the best medium to understand the character of the state machinery, especially the police. Here, police exist in the extremes. On one hand it is a highly corrupt and good-for-nothing institution, and on the other, it displays exemplary guts and morals. Thus, it manages to emerge as an institution, which necessitates it's existence in the society as a moral force and without which order can not be maintained in the society. Sometimes policemen are shown as clowns - they do funny things, they react to a situation in a funny way - and are thus portrayed as non-serious elements in the film. But this attitude basically favours the police force because in reality they are not mocked, they are not funny and they cannot be made fool of. So, by projecting them as funny and clownish, the real face of police is somehow masked.

Basically, three types of police characters are found in Hindi films. Firstly, the top level officers, those belonging to the Indian Police Service, who are often portrayed as corrupt and play into the hands of the Mafia and the politicians. Secondly, the Inspector, the In-charge of a police station/chauki. And thirdly, the Havildar or the constable who is portrayed as a funny character and who more often than not, is mute witness to his senior's misdeeds. The fourth and the classical character, is the police officer as the protagonist. He is honest, daredevil and wants to clean the society. He pledges to destroy the Mafia, the landlord or the politician responsible for the exploitation of the people and finally discovers that this is the same man who had destroyed his own world too.

By the beginning of the 1980s the character of police had changed. The police, in popular film were now either helpless spectators of crime or a party to it. The psychopathic, sleek villain now took many forms, the most recurrent of which was the khadi clad politician . . .

The only possible response to this reality, show in film after film, was either to become a ruthless killer and beat the ungodly at their own game or to destroy the evil in a single, self-distructive, cataclymic act of violence. For instance, in Govind Nihlam's film, Ardha Satya, a frustrated honest police officer strangles the mafia don who had tormented him. (Rajani Bakshi: secret politics of our desire P: 122).

Whatever the character of police is there in Hindi films the use of violence is compulsory by them. The tools are always the same - sticks, boots, guns and other equipment of torture. So if the police is there in the story and in the film, it is bound to carry out third degree methods of torture either this way or that way.

The use of third degree methods by police being prevalent in the society, these scenes of torture by police in a film reinforce two notions in the minds of the audience, especially

the younger ones. Firstly, torture is a natural act, especially, if bad guys are beaten and secondly, flowing from the first, the legitimisation of the act of torture. Perhaps this is also one of the reasons why such acts of torture in police lock ups are never questioned in real life. Hindi cinema thus reinforces all kinds of stereotype relations and acts of violence in the society.

Armed with absolute powers, the police would then be in a position to wipe out the criminals, thereby ensuring law and order in society. By the same logic, these films argue that the judicial process should do away with the long drawn out trials of criminals, but should by way of instant justice, order them to be killed without insisting on evidence and witnesses.

By attacking liberal and democratic values, the ground is prepared for an authoritarian and powerful police state. In Ziddi (1997), the police officer seeks special powers to make policing effective: (These people (criminals) could be arrested without a warrant and even third degree torture used against them); and the chief minister immediately agrees. (Fareed Kazmi: The politics of India's conventional cinema, P:203).

In order to understand the portrayal of the character of police in Hindi cinema, a `few films have been reviewed followed by an audio visual presentation. An attempt has been made to cover all types of characters of police one sees in Hindi films. The films are (1) *Ardhyasatya,* (2) *Satyameva Jayate,* (3) *Khuddar,* (4) *Tejaswini,* (5) *Ânt,* (6) *Drohakaal* and (7) *Ghayal* .

(1) *Ardhasatya* (Govind Nihalani, 1991): Perhaps *Ardhysatya* was the first film in Hindi cinema, which tried to look at the social reality from the point of view of the police. The hero, played by Om Puri, is an honest police Inspector, who finds it difficult to perform his duties in a corrupt structure. He wants to serve the institution of Police honestly but at every step he is demoralised by his seniors who are in league with the local mafia don who humiliates him whenever confronted. The hero takes out his frustration by beating and torturing petty criminals. And finally, he breaks down when he comes to know that the medal, which he was to be awarded for his bravery and honesty, is going to his colleague. He sheds his anger on a petty thief and gets suspended in the process. He is advised to approach the same don to get his job back. Puri meets the don, who assures him that he can get his job back if he becomes a part of his league. After a moment of dithering, Puri kills don and; goes to surrender at the same police station where he had worked. The film does not offer a solution. Puri's frustration leads to violent actions, where beating petty criminals becomes an outlet for his anger. Violence is thus given a justification, though from a different perspective.

Now Ardhasatya deals with the police characters at three levels. There is one type of police officers who are in senior positions and have sold themselves in the hands of mafia who enjoys a strong support from the politicians. The other type is the mediocre ones, who do not mind keeping their eyes closed and taking privileges wherever they are coming from. They never confront either with heir seniors or the mafia. The third type is

the hero, who is honest, really wants to serve the institution i.e. people in his own perception, feels helpless while doing it.

The film discusses the dehumanisation of the police Institution. The scene of public meeting against police torture raises questions about citizen's role against custodial torture, deaths and rapes.

A strong nexus of mafia and senior police officers is also seen. When hero goes to arrest the don, the villain just makes a call to the commissioner and the next moment the control over the situation is in the hands of the don.

These kind of vulnerable and helpless situations come again and again in the working life of the hero. Already coming from a disturbed family, with high expectations of his father and experiencing mother's vulnerability since his childhood, the hero can not bear the burden of the circumstances. Every time, even after a little bit of humiliation, he pulls out his anger to vent his frustration, rather than anger. Before he starts his final beating up, he takes a drink to come out of his inhibitions. And who are the victims of his anger? Petty Suspects. The tools of beating the suspects are mainly his hands, legs and boots. Abusing is constant in outdoor beating and indoor torture. His helplessness comes to an end when he kills a petty thief and gets suspended and finally instead of surrendering before the don to save his job, kills him surrenders in the same police station. It is shown as his destiny in a system when honesty has very little scope to survive.

(2)   Droh Kaal: Govind Nihalani directed *Ardhasatya.* Three years later, in 1994, Nihalani directed another film *'Droh Kaal'* in which he again shown the helplessness of the armed forces, this time in the backdrop of Kashmir. In all of his films he questions the existing system and wants space for his characters, be it a military officer police officer or trade union leader. The question remains: does venting anger out of frustration on the common people leaves any positive impact on the masses? Nobody seems to be sure about it.

(3)   Satyameva Jayate (Raj Sippy, 1987): This too is the story of an honest police officer, the hero, who beats people at the slightest provocation. He is well known for his brutal methods of extracting confessions. He kills a young boy in the lock up (as the film progresses we are told that the hero had only beaten the boy but the mafia in connivance with a senior police officer got the boy killed and put the blame on the hero). He goes to jail and his girlfriend gets married to a corrupt lawyer, a member of the mafia. After many twists and turns the hero confronts the mafia and at the same time is able to win the trust of the lock-up victim's family. Throughout the film, the hero as the police inspector shouts at one person or the other and uses violent methods, for the simple reason that he wants to bring justice to all.

In this film there are three major scenes where hero beats the suspects. One in the custody, another inside a godown and the third one in the police van. The whole film moves around hero's innocence and honesty justifying his acts of torture. The tools of

torture are his hands, legs, boot, belt and a razor. His acts profess that torturing an innocent may be an error but torturing a goon is must.

The film gives the message that without using third degree methods confessions can not be extracted and the real culprits can not be brought into the folds of law. In this film also since hero is a honest officer, his senior officer in league with the mafia.

(4)   Khuddar (Iqbal Durrani, 1994): Girls are being raped and blackmailed in the city. A corrupt police Inspector gives shelter to the criminals. But the hero, who is also a police inspector, is honest and does not let anyone get away from him, be it the protesting people who dare the police to catch the murderer, the accused or his corrupt colleagues. The hero is perpetually boiling with anger and beats up people within the lock up and outside. For him, beating and torturing is panacea for all problems. In a meeting with high officials, he defends his actions quite confidently. He rescues the heroine from blackmailers and hides her at a safe place. His younger brother turns out to be a member of the blackmailer's gang. There are some twists in the plot and at the end the hero destroys the blackmailers.

Khuddar is such a film, which justifies police brutality as a necessity. The hero, being a police officer can not think of any other method to book the culprit or to teach a lesson to his corrupt colleague. He uses violence as a tool of vending his anger and anguish. Torture, in its strict terms may not be seen too much in the film, but hero is shown taking extra legal powers into his hands and justifies it in every of his heroic speech. Each of his speeches provides a superficial solution of the problem. Thus by attacking liberal and democratic values, the ground is prepared for an authoritarian and powerful police state.
We may take another example. A film GUPT (1997) though does not have any torture scenes but advocates brutality against the people. The protagonist, who is a police officer tells his superior, ' They hit us on the chest and we hit them on their feet. The government has made us sacrificial goats and left us in the market in front of the vultures. Give us the powers so that we can arrest and shoot anyone we want.

Similarly, in a film 'ZIDDI' (1997), the police officer seeks special powers to make policing effective: ' These people (criminals) could be arrested without a warrant and even third degree torture should be used against them.'

Khuddar echoes the same ideology.

(5)   Tejaswini (N.Chandra, 1994): *Tejaswini* is another movie, which glorifies the power of police. Here is a lady police officer, who is transferred to an area, which is ruled by a nexus of criminals, corrupt lawyers, politicians, officers and businessmen. She confront the evil men and fights them to finish as a macho man. She gets appreciated as 'mardaani' (macho).

The film has a lady police officer, honest, committed and always ready to fight, like a 'man'. She is not scared of anybody as the power of the police Institution is conferred to

her. So much so that wherever violence is not necessary, she is there to prove herself a true 'policeman' as if showing power and fighting with goons are the only signs of the police.

There is plenty of gratuitous violence in the film. There is only one torture scene in the movie where the lady officer beats a young man with lathi to extract the truth from him. Here is the purpose to show that women are no less than his male counterparts as far as she holds the power. At one point, the youth takes stick from her, her subordinates come forward to help her but she stops them and asks her stick back. Momentarily the boy seized the power from her and then he has to put it back. The message is people can't take power from the almighty system ad its representative police.

(6)   Ânt (Sanjay Khanna, 1997): Yet another movie, which has lots of police torture. But here the hero is the victim. An underground don and his son run the city. The don's son rapes hero's sister. The girl's boyfriend is caught on the charges of the rape and murder and beaten to death in the police custody. The hero wants to teach the Don's son a lesson. He beats him in the crowd and is able to stir the conscience of junior policemen. They together fight their corrupt officials and at the end (the film's name means 'the end') darkness gives birth to dawn.

'Ant' has different shades of custody life. Torture is there in its most brutal form resulting in custodial death. The innocent boy is beaten by sticks, rods, boot, hands and legs and finally hanged to death. The beating of the boy has been portrayed in such a manner that at one point audience is made to believe that he is guilty (of rape and murder). While protested by the hero, he also gets arrested and tortured.

The film has a verbal confrontation between a citizen and the police Inspector. He asks justice and is thrown out. Tortured psychologically he reacts bitterly, trapped in a helpless situation.

At one point in the film the Inspector slaps the hero. And he (the hero) slaps him back, as if hitting back at the system. He gets arrested and sent behind the bars. Hero breaks custody's wall and comes out. He is brought into other custody --- with a clear message that breaking the system is not easy. He is threatened by the police officer to be killed in the custody.

The cult of a Rambo like cop, who takes the law into his own violent hands to maintain law and order, has become popular and has acquired tremendous legitimacy. In India, this was brought into sharp focus in the debate which was triggered off by the alleged suicide committed by a SSP Ajit Singh Sandhu in Punjab (India) In 1997. He was charged of excesses on the accused and the prisoners. In an interview to a Doordarshan programme in India he said, ' I did nothing wrong, I fought for my country and if I have to suffer for it, I am prepared.' Doesn't it sound like a heroic speech of a popular Hindi movie?

(7) *Ghayal* (Raj Kumar Santoshi, 1990): An influential businessman kills hero's brother. He makes rounds of the police stations but, in vain. He is caught by the Police on false charges and is beaten up. Here he meets a few prisoners who want to help him in his mission. They break the jail, and take revenge.

In Ghayal, the police – mafia nexus is quite visible. The police is busy doing all nothings but its duty. One sequence shows the innocuous confrontation between a citizen and the police. Very soon the confrontation escalates. The confronted officer turns his anger on the next victim, a college boy.

Hero interferes and gives a heroic speech and offers a solution.

Later handcuffed in the van and in the lock up hero makes another speech. He vents his anger at the helplessness of the people who are forced to remain and face torture behind the bar. He gets beaten in the custody with the same tools as used in so many films.

What emerges from the above analysis is the horrifying truth about the police brutality in Hindi films.

Some of the facts are:

(a) Police torture is a common phenomenon in both commercial and parallel cinema. Only treatment of the issue is different in parallel cinema. Some use symbolic violence and some use stylised violence. Commercial cinema use gory details of violence and torture by police;

(b) Mainly petty criminals belonging to lower income groups are subjected to torture except in the case of the hero, who is supposed to fight and take revenge later. But at the end of the movie, climax scene in general portrays violence and torture involving hero, heroine, police and under world mafia.

Wherever the hero is the police officer, he also uses third degree methods on the henchmen of the Mafia. But in all these films the head of the Mafia or the don has not been subjected to torture by the police, although he is beaten by the hero in the climax;

Torture by the police is shown in a way as if there is no other option before police to bring the culprits to book. Police characters, good or bad, honest or corrupt, use the same method to extract confession, true or false. The aim is to inflict torture forcing a person to confess so s/he can be proven guilty, extract information or torture is inflicted as punishment.

Thus, what Fareed Kazmi points out, the cinematic discourse structured around the 'law and order' thematic actually complemented the hegemonic political discourse, which was articulated on the same theme. In both, the thrust was to evolve a long-term strategy

aimed at securing a new hegemony. Here, both the political and cinematic discourses follow a similar pattern and source all problems to a villain/s (terrorists, extremists, anti-nationals etc.). They show how vicious they are, and then let loose the entire state machinery to wipe them out, justify all murders, all massacres by one basic concept: the need to protect the country from disruptive and anti national elements. In other words, the supposed viciousness of the deviants provides the necessary justification for all kinds of authoritarian measures and state repression.

Chapter 5
Structure of Police Torture in Hindi TV Serials

The structures of cinema and television, which are innately different, determine the portrayal of police torture in these two different media. In a film, the story evolves around a central character (the hero in most of the films) and it has to reach the climax within the fixed time frame of three hours or less. The whole story is structured like a drama and all the masala elements including police torture are woven into it. These elements including torture by police are not necessarily included to develop the plot, but many a time to add a dimension to a character or a role model with which the audience can identify.

In television serials on the other hand, a story has a plot and sub-plots that goes on for, say, fifty or hundred hours during a year or two. That way it works minutely into the minds of the audience. Televisions, being a drawing room affair, the masala elements are woven into a serial in a rather subtle way than they are in a film.

For the purpose of understanding the structure of police torture in television serials, eight most popular serials, which deal with crime etc., have been reviewed. These serials are telecast on different channels on different days and have huge following including children and teenagers. The serials are: 1. *India's most wanted.* (Zee India). 2. *Bhanwar.* (Sony). 3. *CID.* (Sony). 4. *Shapath.* (Zee). 5.*Mahayagna.* (Sony). 6. *Sea Hawks.* (DD Metro). 7.*Saboot.* (Star Plus). And 8.*Hindusthani.* (DD Metro).

(1)   India's Most Wanted: Made on the pattern of BBC's C*rime Watch* and *America's Most Wanted*, *India's Most Wanted* is the most popular as well as controversial programme. Each episode takes an unresolved case of real crime and reconstructs it into fiction. What makes this programme unique is that it involves the police and at the same time guarantees audience participation. They ask the victims to send information about the accused. Police has an active role in the serial while the real hero is the anchor and the viewers. In some cases, on receiving information from viewers who have seen the reconstructed crime on television, police has been able to nab the accused. The presence of police and its power can be felt and although there are no torture scenes (because the story line usually does not permit such scenes), violence is there aplenty.

(2)   Bhanwar: Bhanwar has the same structure as *India's Most Wanted* but it does not involve the real police or audience. It takes the solved cases from the Police files and reconstructs them into neat little stories. In *Bhanwar* one sees both police and torture. The director of the serial claims that scenes of torture are only included if it was there in the real life incident in the first place. However, reconstruction has it own advantages or disadvantages. Sometimes, we see gory details of police torture in the name of the real life story.

(3)   CID: This is one of the few serials on television, which depict no violence or torture by police during the process of investigation. A crime is committed and the CID, as the title suggests, investigates the crime. The CID relies more on circumstantial evidences and motives than third degree methods of extracting confession. The suspects are called to their office and interrogated. This is good example of how a good detective or crime story can be successfully turned into a television serial without showing gory details of violence or torture.

(4)   Shapath: This is the story of two honest police officers – a male and a female – who pledge to banish crime from the society. In the course of their investigations, they come across different types of criminals. The male character (played by Kiran Kumar, who often plays the bad guy in Hindi films) is idealistic and aggressive. Frequently he takes the law into his hands, and shouts, beats and tortures people in and outside the police station. As justification of his actions we are told that he cannot bear the pain of living in a society full of criminals.

(5)   Mahayagna: Mahayagna is a story of rivalry between two politicians. Both of them use the police to further their interests. There is hardly any scene of violence or torture by the police, but the police are portrayed in such a way that it induces fear and apathy for the legal system. Thus, it is a good example of psychological torture.

(6)   Saboot: Saboot is yet another serial with a woman police officer as its central character, and does not show violence or torture by police. Here again the police officer relies on circumstantial evidences to solve murder mysteries. The woman Police Officer does not appear even in her uniform, and many a time is ignored as a vulnerable woman even by the accused. But slowly the situation changes as she unearths evidences. No violence, no tortures, no fear and only respect for lawful action.

(7)   Sea Hawk: Sea Hawk is a story about the naval forces' efforts to stop smuggling. Its canvas is as big as Cinema's. The focus is on the modus operandi of the mafia and the underworld and how the officers and men of the Navy fight them. Melodrama and action are there in plenty and so is torture by the police, but that is not the focal point.

(8)   Hindusthani: This serial is full of violence. It is the story of a retired Superintendent of Police, who is pained by the growing criminalisation of the society. He feels his job is not over yet and forms a group of young men, who have suffered in the hands of the mafia. They take pledge to banish crime from the society. They face many obstacles but eventually they emerge victorious. The thrust of the serial is that you can survive only if you have the power to attack. The retired officer, as the hero of the serial, is seen all the time either delivering lectures to provoke tough actions or himself thrashing someone.

All these serials are directly related to crime and police has a major role to play in them. In serials on social themes the presence of police is minimal but violence is a common phenomenon in television programmes. Torture by police has been taken as a part of that larger violence and not as a necessary ingredient like masala movies

However, the supremacy of 'law and order' prevails in the television to a great extent. In fact, unlike films, serials have less corrupt police officers and usually they perform par excellence. There seems to be a political message here. A film, under the pressure to get completed in two and half-hours or so, uses the main contradictions of the system quite sharp and too fast. In the serials there is lot of time to build a situation or character week after week. More so, television watching is not confined in a dark auditorium giving spectator more space to perceive the image. In television there is always a family environment surrounded. TV producers play safe game by not allowing too much direct torture or violence on small screen as it would invite criticism also. There is a cable Act in the offing and already there are some broadcast rules which pro• • hibit nudity, too much of violence, direct physical torture, slapping women in general and calling Dalits by derogatory cast references on the small screen. That may be the main reason for the producers not being too friendly with the rods and sticks in the serials.
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Chapter 6
Perceptions of Film and Serial Makers on Torture

Previous Chapters have made it clear that the scenes of police torture have become necessary in Hindi films and television serials. This makes its portrayal and its impact (in casof the present study, its impact on children) an important field of inquiry. For this study I talked to few of those practically involved in the making of such scenes (film directors, scriptwriters, producers and actors). Talking to them reveals a spectrum of views, rather than a unanimous consensus.

Responses to the trend of portraying police torture ranged from an appreciative justification of it as an accurate reflection of what happens in the society to the view that they are included because they are an essential ingredient for commercial success. In asserting the first view, director-writer Gulzar, for example, goes so far as to say that the torture or violence shown on the screen is far less than what prevails in society. Film producer Ramesh Sipppy, Television serial director S. Ilyasi and film director Ram Gopal Verma, share this view. Sanjay Roy Choudhury, director of *Bhanwar* serial on Sony television even claims that he does extensive research before writing the script to ensure that what is portrayed is as close as possible to what actually happens. For instance, there is nothing wrong in showing the fact that police take the law into its hands, he emphasises.

On the other hand, film producer-director Prakash Jha, television director Anil Choudhury and film and television actor Om Puri consider such scenes as being motivated largely by commercial considerations, or more precisely, as Om Puri puts it, as an ingredient of a successful drama.

Some also distinguish between context in which such scenes are justified and others in which they are mere sensational additions "done for the sheer thrill, which is the driving force in the market", as Anil Chowdhury says. He admits that some time torture is shown 'irrationally' and very little effort is made to check it for it sells in the market. While according to television actor Manohar Singh "irrelevant torture by anybody is not justifiable".

Anand Patwardhan, documentary film maker and media activist is more emphatic in seeing this as very unfortunate, since the showing of torture by police in films and serials leads to its being accepted as natural by the masses, "and somehow it gets justified in their minds". In contrast, film director Ram Gopal Varma feels that if we don't show police torture, people will think that the police is more democratic than it really is. He asserts that police torture is there in films because it is there in the society. "Why not show the real picture", he retorts. At the other extreme, Om Puri feels that there should not be any kind of violence shown in films and television.

This raises the question of whether showing of torture by police is reinforcing certain notions regarding the police in the minds of the viewers, including that of violence as justifiable, and once more the responses were varied. Gulzar, for instance, was clear that, in his films police torture is not shown with the intent of reinforcing stereotypes but to make the people aware of the situation they are facing in society. Moreover, as Sanjay Roy Choudhuri points out, viewer responses vary from person to person – on his or her family background, education, socio-cultural atmosphere etc.

But Anand Patwardhan was of the view that it *does* reinforce pre-existing notions and what is more unfortunate, provides role models to youngsters – a view with which Anil Chowdhury concurs saying that children in fact tend to imitate the same traits, which is alarming. Ramesh Sippy takes a more sanguine view. Agreeing that it does adversely affect the sensitivities of viewers to some extent, Sipppy would like to emphasise that "films always end with the victory of good over evil. Moreover, for some like Suhaib Ilyasi, director of *India's Most Wanted*, such reinforcement is not a bad thing, because it is true that the police is not performing its job well. Furthermore, as Manohar Singh points out, there are a thousand other things that reinforce stereotypes and create role models. So films and television are not really the villains. But Om Puri says that it does reinforce the trend of torture and feels that the only way is to sensitise the viewers. Ram Gopal Verma too agrees that it does reinforce stereotypes to some extent but then says that police torture is mostly shown relating to incidents of rape, dowry, violence etc. Curiously enough, Prakash Jha evaded this issue saying, "I don't see much movies. Why don't you ask action directors?"

Quite understandably, those who do not view the trend of such representations in a negative light do not regard a ban on such scenes to be of any relevance. But neither are those who are critical in favour of banning them. Instead, many were of the view that viewers, especially youngster, should be encouraged to view the media with a 'critical eye', as Gulzar suggests. Anand Patwardhan's suggestion was not to leave this task to the government (a policy of banning would only strengthen the state) but to change attitudes through a civil rights movement. Gulzar says that a ban would not prevent them from watching such scenes, in fact they would watch more of Hollywood films.

None saw banning as a solution.

Om Puri echoed the sentiments saying there should not be any ban in a democratic society. If you demand banning of such scenes, there will be demand to ban many more things. "Kya Kya ban Karoge", he retorts. Similarly, Ramesh Sippy asks, "kya kya nahin dikhaenge?" Moreover, as Manohar singh pointed out, there is already a kind of banning in the form of censorship. What Anil Chowdhury recommends instead is a kind of self-censorship on the part of both makers of films and serials and viewers. Ram Gopal Verma thinks that viewers themselves should be able to exercise the discretion – what should be watched and what should be rejected. Prakash Jha did not have a neat answer, instead he raised the question of context. He thought that it is a very complex question.

Given the general feeling that viewers need to be more aware of media and how it represents reality, it was pertinent to ask whether the respondents were in favour of film study being made a part of school curriculum. While the majority was overwhelmingly in support of the idea, (Some like Prakash Jha said they had been raising this issue for long). Others for example Sanjay Roychoudhury pointed out that it is the parents who are responsible for their children's growth, and also that we should not underestimate the children who are more aware of the difference between real life and reel life than what we think. Anand Patwardhan was of the opinion that more is needed than just media education in schools. What is more important is what he described as a people's awareness movement. Om Puri felt that such a programme would help children develop a critical view while S Ilyasi is not very sure about it. In contrast, he said, today's children are very critical. They know what they are doing and why. Anil Chowdhury is also not very sure. Instead, he suggests that more and more educational films be made and screened by film study groups. Anand Patwardhan is also of the view that there should be more and more positive and children oriented programmes. Manohar Singh who drew the attention to the fact that school children are already overburdened and this would overload them further also revealed an interesting dimension of the suggestion. Instead, the hundreds of institute and film study groups already existing and doing the same thing should be assessed for their impact first.

Another question suggesting a dialogue between producer-directors and viewers so that the former could suitably be sensitised on this issue was also met favourably by most. But how it could be practically realised appeared problematic. "Are there enough media activist groups in the country?" asked Gulzar. "Who will do it? Who has the time?'' asked Om Puri. Prakash Jha and Ram Gopal Verma are of the view that the film itself is the best dialogue with producers and directors. Sanjay Roychoudhury felt that if we get feed back it would help us develop a better understanding. Anil Chowdhury thought that communication between the three segments is really very difficult. There can not be one strategy for crores of people. Such a dialogue is possible through good issue oriented films and talk shows. He felt that ultimately it is the viewers who have to become conscious of these issues. Manohar Singh expressed similar views.

Exceptionally, however, Anand Patwardhan was totally opposed to the suggestion. "There should not be any dialogue with producers", he said, since "film producers are part of the Mafia. They cannot be sensitised. Only a strong people's rights movement can create some space for the viewers and more and more good programmes by committed people should be made".

It is worthwhile to point out here that, on 19th April 1999 the well-known script writer of Bombay film world, Mr. Nabedu Ghosh in an interview on DD Metro said that, about 40 years ago when Bimal Mitra made his film *Naukri* with Kishore Kumar in the lead role, the end of the film was changed. The change was demanded by the distributors, for they thought that it is too unhappy end and thereby would not be acceptable to audience.

What emerges from the above discussion in that there is concern for the emerging trend of depicting police torture and violence on film and television screens on the part of those involved in the actual making of films and serials. However, there seems to be a strong link between the social reality of this phenomenon and its depiction in the media – both as a reflection of society and as input. Commercial considerations are seen to encourage a less sensitive use of such elements, but solution is to be realised, through democratic means rather than authoritarian state measures. One such measure, that of media education of the young is viewed favourably, though it is not regarded as sufficient. The process of encouraging a dialogue between makers of media and the consumer is, with some exception, also regarded favourably, though the logistics of such exercise seem extremely difficult to execute, if not impossible in view of the extent of both the diversity of the viewers and the dimensions of the industry.

Chapter 7
Perceptions of Intelligentsia on Police Torture

The portrayal of violence on the screen has provoked the intelligentsia, as it did the makers of films and serials, to express its views on the impact of the media in various fora. The educationists, psychologists, media teachers and film critics were contacted to elicit their views in some detail, especially on the depiction of police torture in films and serials.

Analysing the class basis of commercial cinema, educationist Professor Krishna Kumar drew attention to the fact that since the victims of police torture in films are usually from the poor or deprived classes, while the class that is glorified by the media is usually the middle class with whom the audience by and large identifies, such scenes develop in the minds of the viewers a social distance from such occurrences in real life. There is a tendency to see police torture as something that happens to 'them' and not to 'us' and the creation of insensitivity towards the condition of the under-privileged. This in turn reflects the fact about, who the police really serve. The makers of the film do not create such scenes only due to market pressure, but also because s/he relates them to his/her own middle or upper class identity. Therefore, the filmmaker sees no harm in showing a poor man being beaten in the lock up.

Media teacher Farida Patel also views such scenes as conveying the message that the police (justifiably) serve the interests of the upper class in society and legitimises police brutality. In addition, noting that images work very minutely in the minds of the youngsters, she feels that when a child sees a police officer overpowering somebody she or he gets the image of a father figure in her/his mind "because in our family system, father represents male aggression". This in turn gives a role model to the child and such symbols find a place in his/her sub-conscious.

Analysing the impact of police and police torture on children portrayed in films and serials, media teacher and documentary film-maker, Anjali Monterio asserts that imitation is the most immediate reaction. Youngsters desire to imitate powerful figures. Both on screen and in their immediate real life surroundings it is the policeman in uniform who emerges as the most powerful figure. This in turn gives them a sense of security. They tend to think that police is necessary to maintain law and order in the society. Police successfully manages to instil a sense of fear and awe in them. Thus, violence/torture gets legitimised. She feels that violence is increasingly becoming the dominant method to vent anger and effect justice. She strongly feels that more than any thing else it is the "censorship of the market" that determines the amount of torture to be used in a particular film or serial.

Outlining adverse effects of violence on children of different age groups, psychologist Bindu Prasad says that children under ten with disturbed families suffer from anxiety, inability to sleep, vomiting, phobia and aggressive behaviour when they watch extensive violence and torture in films. However, children above ten and sixth standards have the tendency to imagine role models and develop insensitivity towards violence and torture. Children in this age group, having watched violence and police torture on screen, may cultivate the image of power holders for themselves and use it to hurt an adversary. Thus cultivating masculine gestures seems to be the natural corollary.

Brinda Subramaniam, another psychologist is of the opinion that growing incidence of rape by teenagers is indirect response to the media that constantly perpetuates macho image. She says those children who are extra-ordinarily intelligent and active or those who come from emotionally disturbed families are more receptive to violence and torture.

Professor D L Seth, sociologist thinks that watching television in a lonely environment is harmful in the formative years. He feels that imitation comes naturally to children. It is necessary that parents provide their children with proper role models. Media researcher and teacher Vijayluxmi Bose agrees with Professor Seth and points out the incident identical to the screen violence taking place in the big metros and says that police officials, off the record, admit that youngsters in remand homes have often confessed to being influenced by what they view in cinema halls or on television. She suggests that most of the overtly rude and aggressive behaviour displayed by conductors, cleaners and commuters, especially teenagers, that one comes across while travelling on buses in some metros could easily be attributed to small screen violence. She suggests that for every crime and horror serial the message "crime does not pay" be prominently displayed.

Commenting on the basics of the mainstream film industry in India, noted film critic and former professor of films at FTTI (Pune), Dr Satish Bahadur says that businessmen hire skilled technicians to make films as mass consumer goods as per a set formula. The excellence of the skill is expected to be expressed in the very fact that how well the films are made which in essence would be the same but different in surface details. The surface details revolve around: a) a plot without disturbing the status-quoist dominant value system; b) visual entertainment including the display of body and gory violence scenes; and c) aural details such as dialogue which has a recall value. This is how most of the commercial films are made where moneymaking is the principle driving force. This inevitably leads to films reinforcing the dominant value system. He says that portrayal of violence and police torture should be viewed against this background. The argument against the masala Hindi film is that it offers dream solutions which in turn takes the viewer from the real life problems. Thus the portrayal of violence and police torture reduces the viewers' ability to understand what the real problem is and what its practical implications are. As a result one watches scenes of police torture in the films, reads about them in the newspapers and witnesses in the real life and takes them as inevitable.

Analysing the relationship between the screen and the societal violence, Sociology teacher Neshat Quaiser goes into what he called the *diachronic* processes to understand the phenomenon. He says that violence in different forms has always been there in those societies which are sharply divided on class lines and our literature be it high/low, written/oral, too have been full of violent incidents. In a country like India feudal agrarian relations have predominantly been maintained through numerous means of violence. And at the same time, there have been open violent struggles to mitigate the agrarian relations of domination. Moreover, there have been numerous acts of not-so-visible oppositions, violent or otherwise, to feudal and capitalist domination. What is important to note is that earlier it was largely confined to the localised domains of society. There was a distinct distance between this violent society and masses in general, particularly the middle classes. But with the growing democratic movements and rapid growth and spread of electronic media, this has reached the great masses, especially to the safe enclaves of middle classes including most of the intelligentsia and has caused terrible disturbances in their otherwise peaceful and distanced existence. Along with these the hiatus between the state and the civil society rapidly increased. State could no longer keep the class related violence as a localised phenomenon. State intervened with its law and order machinery and judiciary to enforce the law of the land and tried to emerge as an effective mediator between the conflicting classes. Greater emphasis was laid on submitting to law and legal means to resolve all kinds of conflicts. This accounts for much of the class-related violence and police torture in films and television serials. Portrayal of such violence in films has undergone radical change in India since the films of early days of national reconstruction after 1947.

Our literary traditions, both written and oral, have been full of violent incidents. Children's stories are no exception. Grandmothers' stories have detailed descriptions of violence. Fights, wars, treachery, inflicting physical injury, abusive language, violent masculine gestures, violent incidents over property, land and women, forcible confinements and killings of siblings, parents and other rivals, violence of all types perpetrated by step-mothers, fathers and brothers, violent gender discriminations etc. have been essential components of children's stories. But what is important to note is that these elements were by and large in the shape of stories, socially remote and physically not so visible. There was a distance, both physical and mental, between these elements and listeners/narrators. But what has happened is that most of these elements have now become part of everyday social life and more importantly as lived through the screen. Portrayal of such elements on the screen with new dimensions is the key to the success of films and serials. It is now readily available and easily accessible. Even those elements, which are not otherwise part of one's life experience, are made available and tell how to practice them.

Chapter 8
Children's perception of Police Torture

Unlike in the case of intelligentsia and film and serial makers, I decided to conduct fieldwork to elicit children's perception on violence and police torture. Conducting fieldwork in order to obtain empirical data for research purpose is a rather old method. Various research techniques are employed in this regard. Universe is subjected to questions as per the requirement of the research topics and its orientation and responses are obtained. Assumption is that society must get reflected in the conclusions drawn (no matter what the size of the sample is) so that researcher's own biases, prejudices and subjective understanding do not influence the research outcome. Many debates have been generated on these questions and their merits and demerits thoroughly examined.

Fieldwork, debates notwithstanding, continues to be the principal source of empirical data. This is more so in case of impact studies, which have become almost an imperative especially for policy planners of all types. Such studies are generally done with future strategies in mind. Explicit purpose is to know the authentic views of those who have been affected by the phenomenon under study so that the nature and extent of effect could be recorded and measured. How authentic and true the responses are, largely depends on how well one links them with number of other factors. Whatever the case may be, fieldwork does yield data, which could be used gainfully.

Responses to questions relating to portrayal of police torture, as in case of violence in general, in films and television serials cannot be completely quantified. Any attempt to quantify such responses would run the risk of damaging the spirit of the responses. For, descriptive responses provide wider scope to understand the respondents' mind. However, quantification of data cannot be avoided altogether because it provides a clearer aggregate picture, as we shall see in this study.

In order to conduct the fieldwork, the method of simple stratified random sampling was used to select the respondents. A questionnaire was prepared to obtain responses. Below is the profile of the respondents and findings in tabular form and outline some of the special features of the findings.

The total sample consisted of 108 Children (average age 9.9 years) – 36 each from lower income group, middle income group and upper-middle income group. Of the 36 in each of these income groups, 18 were boys and 18 girls **(Table 1 & 1A).**

Barring one boy and one girl from lower income group, all of them attended school. The parents of all the children in middle and upper-middle income groups were literate, the

minimum education being secondary level. But in the lower income group, parents of 56 percent boys and 50 per cent girls were illiterate. Among the literate in this income group, the minimum education level was class VI. The number of family members corroborated this disparity in parents' literacy level. While the average number of family members in the middle and upper-middle income groups was a uniform four, in the lower income group the average figure was 4.5 for boys and 7.1 for girls. All of the respondents watched television; however, 61 per cent boys and 44 per cent girls in the lower income group had cable connection. For the middle and upper-middle income groups, the percentage of those having cable connection ranged from 78 to 83 percent.

Table 1: Data distributed over Income (Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage)

Questions	Responses	Lower Income		Middle Income		Upper-middle Income	
		Male N = 18	Female n = 18	Male n = 18	Female n = 18	Male n = 18	Female n = 18
Age Group		7- 13	8- 12	7-14	7-15	6-15	6- 15
Education	Studying	17 (94)	17 (94)	18 (100)	18 (100)	18 (100)	18 (100)
	Not Studying	1 (06)	1 (06)	0	0	0	0
Parent's Education	Literate	8 (44)	9 (50)	18 (100)	18(100)	18 (100)	18 (100)
	Illiterate	10 (56)	9 (50)	0	0	0	0
No. of Family Members		4.5	7.1	4	4	4	4
Watches television		18 (100)	18 (100)	18 (100)	18 (100)	18 (100)	18 (100)
Cable television	Yes	11 (61)	8 (44)	14 (78)	15 (83)	14 (78)	14 (78)
	No	7 (39)	10 (56)	4 (22)	3 (17)	4 (22)	4 (22)

Table 1A: Sex dis-aggregated data

	Male n = 54	Female n = 54	Total n= 108
Average Age	9.6 years	10. 2 years	9.9 years
School going	53 (98)	53 (98)	106 (98)
Not Studying	1 (2)	1 (2)	2 (2)
Parent Literate	44 (81)	45 (83)	89 (82)
Parent Illiterate	10 (19)	9 (17)	19 (18)
Cable yes	39 (72)	37 (69)	76 (70)
Cable no	15 (28)	17 (31)	32 (30)

Our first question was about the amount of time spent by the children in front of the TV set **(Table 2 & 2A).** Sex dis-aggregated data across all the income groups show that 44 per cent girls and 37 per cent boys spent one hour daily watching television, 31 per cent girls and 24 per cent boys two hours daily, 13 per cent girls and 20 per cent boys three hours daily, 9 per cent girls and 11 per cent boys four hours daily and 2 per cent girls and 7 per cent boys five hours daily. Income wise distribution of the same data reveals that

girls in all income groups generally get to see less television than boys do, but surprisingly 6 per cent girls in lower income group against none in the middle and upper-middle income groups claimed to watch television for five hours.

Table 2: Data distributed over Income

Questions	Responses	Lower Income		Middle Income		Upper-middle Income	
		Male n =18	Female n = 18	Male n = 18	Female n = 18	Male n = 18	Female n = 18
Time spent in front of TV	1 hour	3 (17)	10 (56)	8 (44)	7 (39)	9 (50)	7 (39)
	2 hours	8 (44)	3 (17)	3 (17)	5 (28)	2 (11)	9 (50)
	3 hours	4 (22)	2 (11)	2 (11)	4 (22)	5 (28)	1 (06)
	4 hours	2 (11)	2 (11)	3 (17)	2 (11)	1(06)	1 (06)
	5 hours	1 (05)	1 (06)	2 (11)	0	1 (06)	0
Choosing the Programme	Self	12 (66)	11 (61)	8 (44)	8 (44)	10 (56)	11 (61)
	Others @	6 (33)	7 (39)	10 (56)	10 (56)	8 (44)	7 (39)
Discussing the Serials	Yes	15 (83)	18 (100)	15 (83)	18 (100)	15 (88)	15 (83)
	No	3 (17)	0	3 (17)	0	3 (17)	3 (17)
Deciding about the Programme*	Self	13 (72)	8 (44)	7 (39)	6 (33)	5 (28)	7 (39)
	Others @	5 (28)	10 (66)	11 (61)	12 (67)	13 (72)	11 (61)

* The question was who decides when to see television?
@ Others include parents and elder brothers and sisters

Table 2A: Sex dis-aggregated data

		Male n= 54	Female n= 54	Total n = 108
Time Spent Before TV in hours	1	20 (37)	24 (44)	44 (41)
	2	13 (24)	17 (31)	30 (28)
	3	11 (20)	7 (13)	18 (17)
	4	6 (11)	5 (9)	11 (10)
	5	4 (7)	1 (2)	5 (5)
Choosing Programme	S	30 (56)	30 (56)	60 (56)
	o	24 (44)	24 (44)	48 (44)
Discussing Serials	Y	45 (83)	51 (94)	96 (89)
	n	9 (17)	3 (6)	12 (11)
Deciding Program*	S	25 (46)	21 (39)	46 (43)
	o	29 (54)	33 (61)	62 (57)

* The question was who decides when to see television?

The next question was who decides which programme to view? Here apparently, middle class boys and girls had less say in this matter than their lower and upper-middle class counterparts. 66 per cent boys and 61 per cent girls in the lower income group and 56 per cent boys and 61 girls in upper-middle income group choose their own programme mix

as compared to only 44 per cent boys and equal per cent of girls in the middle income group. Overall, across the income groups, 56 per cent boys and girls choose the programmes they wanted to see and for the rest their parents, elder brothers and sisters took this decision. When asked whether they discussed the programmes they watch with their family and friends, the data shows that irrespective of income groups, a large percentage of the respondents (ranging from 83 to 100 per cent) did discuss the programmes with peers and siblings. The next question about the decision on when to see television evoked varied responses. 72 per cent boys and 44 per cent girls in the lower income group themselves decide when they would see television. But this figure comes down drastically in the case of middle and upper-middle income groups. Only 39 per cent boys and 33 per cent girls in middle income group and 28 per cent boys and 39 per cent girls in upper-middle income families themselves decide about the timing and for the rest it is again the parents or elder brothers/sisters who decide. In sex-wise distribution, 46 per cent boys and 39 per cent girls decide for themselves but this figure is skewed upwards by the high percentage of respondents from lower income group who exercise their choice of viewing time.

Table 3: Data distribution over Income

Questions	Responses	Lower Income		Middle Income		Upper Income	
		Male n = 18	Female n = 18	Male N = 18	Female n = 18	Male n = 18	Female n = 18
Favourite Serials	Hindusthani	0	15 (83)	10 (56)	5 (28)	5 (28)	4 (22)
	Sea hawk	6 (33)	15 (83)	13 (72)	14 (78)	4 (28)	5 (28)
	Bhanwar	7 (38)	5 (28)	2 (11)	14 (78)	4 (22)	4 (22)
	X Zone	0	2 (11)	7 (39)	3 (17)	7 (39)	8 (44)
	Shaktiman	6 (33)	2 (11)	1 (06)	0	1 (06)	0
	Others	8 (44)	10 (56)	11 (61)	18 (100)	15 (83)	20 (111)

Table 3A: Sex disaggregated data

Favourite Serials	Male n = 54	Female n= 54	Total n = 108
Hindustani	15 (28)	24 (44)	39 (36)
Sea Hawk	23 (43)	34 (63)	57 (53)
Bhanwar	13 (24)	23 (43)	36 (33)
X-Zone	14 (26)	13 (24)	27 (25)
Shaktimaan	8 (15)	2 (4)	10 (9)
Others	34 (63)	48 (89)	82 (76)

As **Tables 3 and 3A** show Seahawk (53%) and Hindusthani (36%), the action serials topped the chart of favourite serials for the children. Bhanwar, a serial based on real-life thrillers, is more popular with girls (43%) than the boys (24%) while the controversial serial Shakitmaan, a Hindi version of the Superman, is more popular with boys (15%) than girls (4%). Income-wise distribution of the same data made interesting revelations. For example, while none of the lower income group boys liked Hindusthani, 83 per cent

girls from the same income group liked the serial. In fact, girls from lower and middle income groups showed marked preference for action or suspense serials like Sea Hawk, Hindusthani and Bhanwar. Among the boys, those belonging to the middle class expressed preference for action serials like Hindustani (56%) and Sea Hawk (72%)

Table 4: Data distributed over Income

Questions	Responses	Lower Income		Middle Income		Upper-middle Income	
		Male n = 18	Female n= 18	Male n = 18	Female n = 18	Male n = 18	Female n = 18
Reaction on Seeing a Policeman	Positive	7 (38)	7 (39)	4 (22)	4 (22)	5 (28)	4 (33)
	Negative	4 (22)	11 (61)	7 (39)	12 (67)	5 (28)	6 (25)
	No feelings	7 (38)	0	7 (39)	2 (11)	8 (44)	8 (41)
Reaction on Seeing a Policeman Beating Someone	Feel good	4 (22)	4 (22)	4 (22)	1 (06)	4 (22)	1 (06)
	Feel bad	8 (44)	1 (6)	4 (22)	3 (17)	5 (28)	4 (16)
	Scared	6 (33)	10 (56)	3 (17)	9 (50)	1 (6)	1 (6)
	Others*	0	3 (17)	7 (39)	5 (28)	8 (47)	12 (67)
Recognising A Plainclothes Policeman	Yes	15(83)	8 (44)	7 (39)	6 (33)	6 (33)	5 (28)
	No	3 (16)	10 (56)	11 (61)	12 (67)	12 (67)	13 (72)
Is women Suitable for the Job of a Policeman	Yes	16 (88)	10 (56)	14 (78)	16 (89)	15 (83)	17 (94)
	No	2 (11)	8 (44)	4 (22)	2 (11)	3 (17)	1(6)
Are children of Policeman in an Advantageous Position	Yes	13 (72)	15 (82)	11 (61)	9 (50)	8 (44)	15 (83)
	No	5 (27)	3 (18)	7 (39)	9 (50)	10 (56)	3 (17)
Ambition	Teacher	3 (16)	6 (33)	1 (6)	2 (11)	0	0
	Doctor	3 (16)	9 (50)	3 (17)	3 (17)	0	5 (28)
	Policeman	1 (5)	2 (11)	1 (6)	3 (17)	0	1 (6)
	Businessman	0	0	0	0	2 (11)	0
	Govt Servant	4 (22)	0	5 (28)	5 (28)	4 (22)	1 (6)
	Others**	7 (38)	1 (6)	8 (44)	5 (28)	12 (66)	11 (61)

'Others' said that they feel good when police is beating a bad or villainous character but feel bad when police is beating an innocent person.
 ** 'Others' include professionals like lawyer, architect, actor and even a pilot.

How do the children react to the character of police in serials? The girls' reaction, across all income groups, was marginally more negative than that of the boys. 42 per cent children talked of a negative reaction, 28 per cent said they have a positive reaction and 30 per cent was indifferent **(Table 4 & 4A).** More girls (54%) reacted negatively to the character of police than boys (30%) but interestingly, more boys (40%) were indifferent to the character of a policeman than girls (18%). Income group wise analysis revealed, 61 and 67 per cent girls in lower and middle income group had a negative reaction while in

the upper-middle income bracket 44 per cent boys and 41 per cent girls had indifferent feelings to the character of policemen.

Table 4A: Sex dis-aggregated data

		Male n= 54	Female n = 54	Total n = 108
Reaction Seeing a Policeman	Positive	16 (30)	15 (28)	31 (28)
	Negative	16 (30)	29 (54)	45 (42)
	No feeling	22 (40)	10 (18)	32 (30)
Policeman Beating Someone	Feel good	12 (22)	6 (11)	18 (17)
	Feel bad	17 (31)	8 (15)	25 (23)
	Scared	10 (19)	20 (37)	30 (28)
	Others*	15 (28)	20 (37)	35 (32)
Recognise Plain-cloth Policeman	Yes	28 (52)	19 (35)	47 (44)
	No	26 (48)	35 (65)	61 (56)
Women As Police	Yes	45 (83)	43 (80)	88 (81)
	No	9 (17)	11 (20)	20 (19)
Advantage Child of Policeman	Yes	32 (59)	39 (72)	71 (66)
	No	22 (41)	15 (28)	37 (34)
Ambition	Teacher	4 (07)	8 (15)	12 (11)
	Doctor	6 (11)	17 (31)	23 (21)
	Policeman	2 (04)	6 (11)	8 (07)
	Business	2 (04)	0	2 (02)
	Govt service	13 (24)	6 (11)	19 (18)
	Others**	27 (50)	17 (31)	44 (41)

'Others' said that they feel good when police is beating a bad or villainous character but feel bad when police is beating an innocent person.
*** 'Others' include professionals like lawyer, architect, actor and even a pilot*

Our next question was about the children's reaction when they see policemen beating someone in a serial. Gender wise distribution of the data showed 22 per cent boys felt happy and 31 per cent boys felt uncomfortable. While 19 per cent boys were scared by such scenes and 28 per cent boys felt happy when they saw the police beating the bad guy, but felt bad when the police was beating innocent people. In the case of girls, 11 per cent felt good, 15 per cent felt uncomfortable, while 37 per cent were scared and an equal percentage felt good if police beat the bad guy but not so good when police beat the good guy. Income wise distribution of the same data makes interesting revelations. In the lower income group, the percentages of both boys and girls who either felt bad or were scared by such scenes were markedly higher than their counterparts in the other two income groups. On the other hand, in the middle and upper-middle income groups, a large percentage of boys and girls felt good when the police beat the bad guy and vice versa.

We asked the children whether they could recognise a policeman in plain clothes. 44 per cent said yes and 56 per cent said no. An interesting finding was that 83 per cent boys and 55 per cent girls in the lower income group, (compared to 39 per cent boys and 33 per cent girls in middle income bracket and 33 per cent boys and 28 per cent girls in the upper-middle income group) claimed that they could recognise a policeman in plain clothes. This of course reveals the level of exposure of the boys and girls belonging to the lower income group to the phenomenon of plain-clothes policemen in their everyday lives.

Do they think that women are suitable for a police job? 81 per cent felt yes while only 19 per cent felt that women are not suitable for such work. In both gender-wise and income-wise distribution, barring lower income group girls, (44 per cent of whom feel that women are not suitable for the job of police), the data show very little variation.

To our question, whether the children of Policeman are in an advantageous position, 66 per cent felt yes they are while 34 per cent felt that it does not matter. In this case too, the children belonging to the lower income group – 72 per cent boys and 82 per cent girls – overwhelmingly felt that children of policemen are in an advantageous position and this must again be based on the experience of their day to day life.

We also wanted to find out what these children want to become when they grow up. Data indicates that 11 per cent wanted a teacher's job, 21 per cent wanted to join the medical profession, while 7 per cent wanted to join the police force. Of the rest, 2 per cent dreamt of having their own business, 18 per cent felt government service is the best option while 41 per cent wanted to become professionals like Engineer, Media Person, Actor and even a Pilot. The girls were more conservative in their choices of profession with 31 per cent wanting to join the medical profession, 11 per cent government service and 11 per cent policewoman.

Our next set of questions related to films **(Table 5 & 5A).** All the respondents watched films. 39 per cent girls preferred comedy, 30 per cent romantic films, and 19 per cent violent or action films, and 9 per cent films based on social issues. In the case of boys, 50 per cent preferred action/violent films, 31 per cent comedy and 11 per cent romantic films.

The data when distributed over income groups show more or less the same trends. 69 per cent boys like violence in films as compared to only 15 per cent girls. Income wise, 72 per cent lower income group boys and 67 per cent middle and upper-middle income group boys liked violence in films. 72 per cent boys and 69 per cent girls reacted positively to the character of a policeman. Interestingly, while between 70 to 80 per cent boys and girls in lower and middle income groups reacted positively to the character of police in a film, only 50 per cent boys and 56 per cent girls in upper-middle income groups liked the character of police.

Table 5: Data distributed over income

Questions	Responses	Lower Income		Middle Income		Upper-middle Income	
		Male n=18	Female N=18	Male n=18	Female n=18	Male n=18	Female n=18
Watch Films	Yes	18 (100)	18 (100)	18 (100)	18 (100)	18 (100)	18 (100)
	No	0	0	0	0	0	0
What Kind Of films	Comedy	5 (28)	5 (28)	6 (33)	7 (39)	6 (33)	9 (50)
	Romantic	2 (11)	5 (28)	3 (17)	7 (39)	1 (06)	4 (22)
	Violence	10 (56)	4 (22)	7 (39)	2 (11)	10 (56)	4 (22)
	Simple	1	2 (11)	1 (06)	0	0	0
	Social	0	2 (11)	1 (06)	2 (11)	1 (06)	1 (06)
Like Violence In films	Yes	13 (72)	3 (17)	12 (67)	3 (17)	12 (67)	2 (12)
	No	5 (28)	15 (83)	6 (33)	15 (83)	6 (33)	16 (88)
Reaction To Police in films	Positive	15 (83)	13 (72)	15 (83)	14 (78)	9 (50)	10 (56)
	Negative	3 (17)	5 (28)	3 (17)	4 (22)	9 (50)	8 (44)
Films seen	KKHH	8 (44)	8 (44)	9 (50)	12 (67)	2 (11)	7 (39)
	China gate	2 (11)	4 (22)	6 (33)	3 (17)	1 (06)	1 (06)
	Coolie No. 1	1 (06)	3 (17)	5 (28)	4 (22)	0	0
	DTPH	0	2 (11)	3 (17)	8 (44)	1 (06)	0
	Kacche Dhage	3 (17)	0	8 (44)	2 (11)	0	0
	PKTDK	3 (17)	1 (06)	4 (22)	7 (39)	2 (11)	1 (06)
	Soldier	0	1 (06)	10 (56)	5 (18)	2 (11)	0
Scenes Remembered	Sad	1 (06)	4 (22)	0	1	1 (06)	1 (06)
	Songs	0	4 (22)	2 (11)	6 (33)	0	3 (17)
	Violent	5 (28)	0	9 (50)	0	3 (17)	1 (08)
	Romantic	2 (11)	2 (11)	2 (11)	6 (33)	0	2 (17)
	Comedy	2 (11)	6 (33)	5 (28)	1 (06)	1 (06)	7 (39)
	No recall	8 (44)	2 (11)	0	4 (22)	13 (76)	4 (33)
Discussing Films	Yes	16 (89)	14 (78)	14 (78)	17 (94)	14 (78)	16 (89)
	No	2 (11)	4 (22)	4 (22)	1 (06)	4 (22)	2 (11)
Scared by Police	Yes	10 (56)	8 (45)	8 (44)	10 (56)	2 (11)	13 (72)
	No	8 (44)	10 (55)	10 (56)	8 (44)	16 (89)	5 (28)

Among entertainment films - *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (KKHH) was the most favourite film for girls (50%) and the boys (35%). This is followed by *Kacche Dhage* (KD) (20% boys and 4% girls), *Soldier* (22% boys and 11% girls), *Pyar kiya to darna keya* (PKTDK) (17% boys and 17% girls). When we asked about the most remembered scenes from their favourite films, the responses were varied. 19 per cent girls recalled romantic scenes, 24 per cent song sequences, 26 per cent comedy scenes and 22 per cent did not have any recall. In the case of boys, 31 per cent remembered violent or action scenes, 15 per cent

comedy scenes, 7 per cent romantic scenes and 39 per cent did not have any recall. Income group wise, 50 percent middle class boys as compared to 28 per cent lower income group and 17 per cent upper-middle income group boys recalled violent scenes.

84 per cent children (81 per cent boys and 87 per cent girls) discussed these films with peers and siblings.57 per cent girls and 37 per cent boys said they are scared of police. Distributed over income, the data revealed that 56 per cent boys and 45 per cent girls in lower income group and 44 per cent boys and 56 girls in middle income group are afraid of police. But in the upper-middle income group, 11 per cent boys and 72 per cent girls are scared of the police.

Table 5A: Sex dis-aggregated data

		Male n=54	Female n=54	Total n= 108
Watch Films	Yes	54 (100)	54 (100)	108 (100)
	No	0	0	0
What Kind Of Films	Comedy	17 (31)	21 (39)	38 (35)
	Romantic	6 (11)	16 (30)	22 (20)
	Violent	27 (50)	10 (19)	37 (34)
	Simple	2 (4)	2 (4)	4 (4)
	Social	2 (4)	5 (9)	7 (6)
Violence In films	Yes	37 (67)	8 (15)	45 (42)
	No	17 (33)	46 (85)	63 (58)
Reaction to police In films	Positive	39 (72)	37 (69)	76 (70)
	Negative	15 (18)	17 (31)	32 (30)
Films Seen	KKHH	19 (35)	27 (50)	46 (43)
	China gate	9 (17)	8 (15)	17 (16)
	Coolie no1	6 (11)	7 (13)	13 (12)
	DTPH	4 (7)	10 (19)	14 (13)
	K D	11 (20)	2 (4)	13 (12)
	PKTDK	9 (17)	9 (17)	18 (17)
	Soldier	12 (22)	6 (11)	18 (17)
Scenes Recall	Sad	2 (4)	6 (11)	8 (7)
	Songs	2 (4)	13 (24)	15 (14)
	Violent	17 (31)	1 (2)	18 (17)
	Romantic	4 (7)	10 (19)	14 (13)
	Comedy	8 (15)	14 (26)	22 (20)
	No recall	21 (39)	12 (22)	33 (31)
Discussing The films	Yes	44 (81)	47 (87)	91 (84)
	No	10 (19)	7 (13)	17 (16)
Scared of The police	Yes	20 (37)	31 (57)	51 (47)
	No	34 (63)	23 (43)	57 (53)

What becomes clear from the above that even if the sample size is small, the findings by and large corroborate many of the stereotypes discussed in the previous chapters. Children belonging to lower income groups spent more time watching television than their counterparts from the middle and upper-middle classes. More boys than girls, especially from the lower income groups, can choose the programmes they want to see or

decide about when to watch television. Again, it is the children from the lower income group who feel bad or are scared by scenes of police torture because they can relate such scenes easily to their day-to-day experiences. Girls, across all income groups, were less fond of the character of police or scenes of police torture than their male counterparts. Among entertainment films, interestingly, the most popular one for both boys and girls, was *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai,* which had the least amount of violence in it. Although films like *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (*Hum Aap ke Hai Kaun*, *Dilwale Dulhania le Jayenge*), which are full of song and dance and little or no violence have proved to be very popular in recent years, it is too early to identify this as a definite trend. For, film with a lot of gory violence (like *Satya)* have been equally popular during the same period.

One interesting finding should be taken into consideration. Middle and upper class children feel good when they see police beating a 'bad' guy, perhaps it is a result of their relatively safe position in the society as was seen by Prof. Krishna Kumar of Delhi University (See Chapter 7: ' Intelligentsia's perception')

Another Interesting finding revealed that children from lower income group like the character of police in Hindi cinema. Perhaps this is because they relate police with power. And deprivation of power in real life leads them to enter an imaginary world where they are the mighty – like POLICE.

Chapter 9
Alternative Perspective

Portrayal of police torture in films and serials and its impact on children has evoked considerable concern in the thinking citizens of the world. It is evident also from the concerns expressed in this Report as well by those involved in the making of films and serials and intelligentsia (See Chapters 7 & 8). Various international and national groups, governmental and non-governmental organisations and individuals seem to be actively involved in grappling with the issue. Parents have expressed grave concerns over children being adversely influenced by violent scenes of police torture (See also Chapters 4 & 5 in this Report). However, responses to police torture significantly vary in terms of income and particularly in terms of gender. (See, for example, Tables 4 & 4A, 5 & 5A in Chapter 8 in this Report).

There seems to be no consensus on what type of violence on screen is not harmful for children. But one thing is clear to all concerned that many more children are spending much more time in front of television than in school or on other activities (See also Chapter 3 & Tables 2 & 2A in Chapter 8 in this Report). UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in its meeting on Child and Media held in October 1996 made special reference among other pressing issues, to the image of the child given by the media. I would like to point out that due attention also be paid to the images of adults, violence and police torture that children derive from the media and how they relate themselves with these images. In this Report I have tried to raise some of these issues (See Chapters 2, 6 & 7). Concerns have also been expressed on the increasing penetration of market forces into media, adversely affecting children (See Chapters 6 & 7 in this Report).

Various **corrective measures** have been suggested by various quarters. In the light of the discussion in the preceding chapters and general debate on the issue, I present a few recommendations in the spirit of developing an alternative perspective to tackle the portrayal of police torture in Hindi films and television Serials. However, these recommendations may be divided into Short term and Long term goals.

Short term goals:

Public debate and 'common ground' talk should be initiated with politicians, producers and teachers.

Media Activist Groups in consultation with other concerned organisations should develop professional codes of conduct for the Producers and Directors and negotiate with them.

Innovative form of media education should be developed to create competent and critical media users.

Parents could help children to cope with upsetting experiences, and to learn about television in general. Parents could model and create coping strategies – although could be much more effective in this respect if they were seen to take an active interest in their children's viewing, rather than simply acting as censors. For this regular workshops for the parents should be organised by Media activist groups.

Children may be very distressed by watching incidents of police torture and sufferings in the films and serials, which they cannot understand. This is not to say that such material should not be shown, although there is a case for taking great care – and particularly for attempting to ensure that children are better informed about such incidents by the parents instead of keeping them in the darkness.

Long Term Goals:

The debate about children's relations with media should not become narrowly pre-occupied with negative concerns – our responsibility towards children as an audience need to be clearly defined, not merely in terms of prevention and control, but also in terms of the positive provision that is made for them. We need to ensure that children are well served in this new multi-channel environment, not only in terms of quality, but also in terms of the range and quality of programmes made especially for them.

Media education, both for parents and for children, should be regarded as a major priority.

Educational policy makers must recognise the role of media in children's lives, and find ways of enabling them to cope with an increasingly media- saturated environment.

The media has to recognise its power and be responsible and accountable. Children are being subjected to contradictory value systems. While school takes on a moral crusade, the media depicts philistine lifestyles, accompanied by violence and a breakdown of moral values. Neither of these is balanced or realistic and results in children becoming 'schizophrenic'.

Improve and develop the critical skills of students as viewers of media. The basic skills required in assessing media content is not being developed among children. The ability to process images will enable them to distance themselves from the medium and interpret the underlying message instead of being carried away by the content. School could include media education in their curriculum, such education should concentrate on developing these skills instead of focussing on current images that are negative since these images will ever be changing.

Parents need to influence, monitor and control their own viewing habits with those of their children. The parents do influence viewing habits of children – since they themselves like to view certain programmes, the children view them as well.

Peer pressure on children with regard to television viewing needs to be recognised by parents. Parents must establish a friendly relation with their children so that they don't watch indiscriminately what their friends watch or what is popular and must be watched.

Public interest groups need to examine why some kind of entertainment programme become more popular, on the basis of which we should understand the mindset of producers.

Media regulatory mechanism needs to be evolved through public participation and consumer movements. In the meantime, existing laws related to media need to be used wherever necessary.

There is an urgent need to organise and make viewers' opinions be known so as to remove the bias against gender, class, caste and others discriminations in media.

Needless to say implementation of the above recommendations depends on a number of factors. Political will of the government to do so, and critical awareness among people in general are the most crucial factors.

Conclusions

Media violence was taken up as a subject of serious study in the United States of America in the sixties and became fashionable through the seventies and the eighties. Perturbed by increasing societal violence, the American Academia, especially sociologists, social anthropologists and communication experts started looking for linkages between scenes of violence depicted in the media, particularly films and television, and violence in real life. Culture-specific as they are, majority of these studies had little relevance in the Indian or South Asian context. Moreover, in India, media violence i.e. violence shown on film and television gained noticeable notoriety only in the early nineties during the heady years of structural reforms and launching of satellite television. But what is really remarkable is the tremendous amount of Indianisation, this process has undergone within a very short span of time. We do have our versions of *Rambo* and *Superman*, but most of the violence one comes across in films and television has an Indian flavour to it. One may, with the benefit of hindsight, attribute the emergence of this very *swadeshi* media violence to what was pointed out, prevalence of violent incidents in our literary traditions, written as well as oral (Chapter 7).

There have been attempts to study the impact of media violence on children, particularly in the Indian context, by media experts and NGOs like the Media Advocacy Group and the Centre for Media Studies. Unlike many of them, the scope of the present study was limited in as much as that it attempts to study only 'the portrayal of police torture in films and television serials and its impact on children'. The narrowing down of the scope of this study to 'Police Torture', leaving aside other manifestations of societal violence, adds to the importance of this study in two major ways. Firstly, while most studies on

media violence treat 'violence' as an umbrella term and loose sight of the specific nature of violence, this study by focusing solely on police torture aims to contribute to our understanding of this form of violence as portrayed in Hindi films and serials. Such a thrust becomes also significant when we found that most of the films and serial makers and even the intelligentsia have not paid much attention to this specific form of violence. Secondly, torture by police, within the precincts of the Police Station or without, is an experience not unfamiliar to many Indians and Nepalis, particularly those belonging to the poorer section of the society. Police, 'the most potent sign of state's masculine power", often take recourse to very brutal and violent means to suppress social conflicts and to protect the class interests of the elite.

This state of affair was bound to be reflected in the Hindi Cinema, which was never under the control of the State, yet toed the official line of national reconstruction in the early years of Independence. The turning point came with Prakash Mehra's *Zanjeer* (1974), where for the first time a police officer was shown as adopting violent, extra-legal means to deliver *justice* (Chapter 1).

Indian television, on the other hand, remained under the control of the State for a long time but for entertainment software was mostly dependent on Hindi films. There were dramatic changes in the Indian television scene with the advent of satellite channels and cable television in the early nineties – for one thing it was now heavily commercialised – yet it remained beholden to Hindi films (Chapter 2). Thus Hindi films, which for a long time remained the only source of entertainment for the Indian masses, were now joined by television. And following in the footsteps of Hindi film, scenes of police torture or brutality started appearing in television serials too. Consequently, a situation has now arisen where the average Indian children are inundated with an overwhelming dose of media violence and for them the distinction between the 'real' and media experience is slowly getting blurred (Chapters 3).

A review of popular Hindi films and television serials revealed that scenes of police torture are very common in both films and serials and in most cases it is the marginalized section of the society which bears the brunt of this torture. Even in films and/or serials where the protagonist is a police officer, s/he often uses third degree methods, creating the impression that there is no other option before the police to bring the culprits to book (Chapter 4 & 5). It is not that no one is aware of the gravity of the situation. The parents are concerned, the film and serial makers plead helplessness before the market forces while the intelligentsia are visibly agitated. But the children continue to merrily watch more and more of synthetic violence. It is high time to make concerted effort before we get to see a *swadeshi* version of Columbine School massacre.

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