

Depiction of Violence on Television

Conducted By

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✌ INTRODUCTION

Conflict had become the mainstay of television programming by 1995. Whether it was fiction or non-fiction, the small screen was exploring new areas of inter-personal relationships and those between different social groups. No issues were sacrosanct and all conflicts were being projected on the media as never before.

By 1995, long-running serials like *Juno* and *Tara* were catching the imagination of the viewers with their different storylines and treatment of issues. *Juno*'s central female character Minnie, a businesswoman, was depicted as independent and taking her own decisions. In *Tara*, the serial makers explored the bonding between four women - how they come together and help each other during their difficult phases in life.

When we monitored the soaps across four channels between April and December 1995 at a time when soaps were consolidating the advertisers support we found that a high degree of violence was greatly contributing to its growing success.

Violence is very rampant on all soaps. Many of the soap promos actually include scenes of horrific violence to ensure audience attention. The most characteristic form of violence that is depicted on promos is deafening slaps.

Most of this violence has to do with another integral element of soap and that is the very high premium given to the conflict process. Set in the context of the 90s, this milieu is projected as acutely conflict-prone. So much so that it reveals an utter disregard for existing norms and if possible does away with it through unbridled violence, volatile passion and outright candidness.

However, when we started monitoring these soaps had developed various sub-plots and new characters or generations had come into the storyline. The conflicts in their lives and their resolution ensured the continuity of the soaps over longer durations and the scope for introducing twists in the story. In most cases conflicts, both in the private and work sphere, were resolved through violence.

In this process, violence started dominating the narrative and drama. This was most visible in the promos where the most violent sequences were showcased to draw viewer attention and hook on new audience.

Even in the non-fiction category, including news and current affairs, talk shows, conflicts were focussed on. Whether it was the conflict of interests between nations over territory or trade, between the different religious and social groups at the community level or the states over sharing resources, conflicts and their resolutions were always in news.

Similarly talk shows, in their bold attempt to explore the darker side of society, discussed topics like domestic and sexual violence, eve-teasing, marital relations, inter-generational problems and other areas of familial conflict which till then had remained untouched by the visual media.

Meanwhile it became necessary to distinguish between the two - conflict and violence - and look into the depiction of violence on television.

Violence has been a major concern for the Group from the very beginning. As we were looking at a cross-section of programmes: soaps, serials, game shows, film based, news and current affairs; it was necessary to look at the kind of violence, who are the victims and perpetrators, to what extent they were breaking stereotypes or reinforcing them, was the treatment balanced, informed and sensitive.

Apart from physical assaults, the use of abusive language in tele-serials is a major concern. Whatever be the relationship, characters can be seen shouting, threatening, pushing, and slapping each other. The presence of the underworld in some of the serials or crime fictions further heighten the tension.

Another concern is the mental harassment depicted in the serials where the viewer is not witnessing an act of violence but the characters are undergoing trauma all the same, anticipating the worst to happen.

Of the total 210 episodes of 45 serials monitored for the quantitative data, a total of 151 episodes showed instances of violence, accounting for over 72% of the episodes.

Within these 151 episodes, there were 351 acts of violence, including verbal abuse, psychological torture and physical assaults. However, some of the incidents comprised of more than one act of violence which added to 458 specific acts of violence. For instance, a character might verbally abuse another character and then slap him. This has been counted as two acts of violence.

Within this break-up of violence across serials, ***verbal abuse*** dominated the category with 138 instances, accounting for almost 30% of the violence. Characters took ***threatening postures*** even if they were not physically harming the other person. This accounted for about 24% of the incidents, that is about 108 cases.

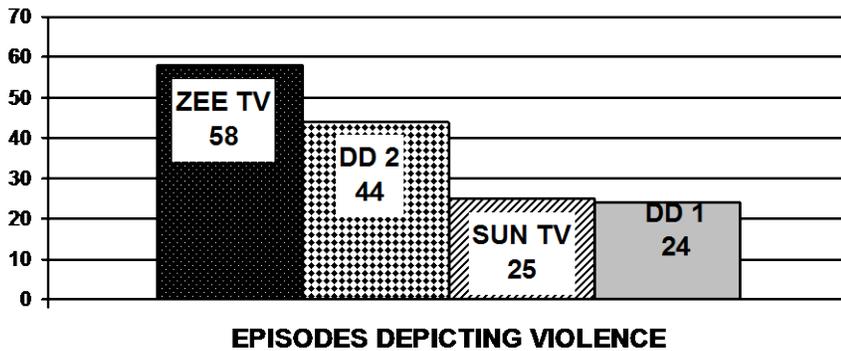
This was followed by ***psychological torture*** and ***push***, accounting for 12% each. ***Beating*** up characters was another form of violence perpetrated in the serials, amounting to about 8% (36 instances).

Characters also showed their frustration by ***slapping*** others (31 instances accounting for about seven per cent). Nineteen ***murders*** and four cases of ***kidnappings*** were depicted in the serials across channels during the period of monitoring.

Although during this period the monitors noticed only one instance of *rape*, there were references to this form of violence three times. In the Tamil serial *Surya* on Sun TV, Dinesh, who has an enmity with Kavitha, threatens “*I feel like raping you. Shall I?*” In another serial on the channel *Chinna Mummy ...*, Sethu tells his wife “*It is more exciting to deflower a girl forcibly than to do it the traditional way on the first night after marriage.*”

The rest of the depiction comprised one instance each of suicide, eve teasing, attempt to murder and blackmail.

Within this Zee TV serials recorded the highest incidents of violence in 58 episodes (38.4%), followed by the Doordarshan - Metro channel with 44 episodes (29.1%). Sun TV had 25 episodes (16.5%) with violence and Doordarshan primary channel with the lowest 24 episodes (15.8%).



The channel-wise distribution was further categorised according to serials. On Zee, *Tara* accounted for 15 episodes, followed by 10 episodes of *Andaz* and nine episodes of *Campus* depicting different forms of violence.

Tara, during the monitoring period, had moved to the second generation of characters. The female protagonist Devyani having entered the male-dominated business world faces professional rivalry and also employs similar tactics to resolve them.

In *Andaz*, also revolving around business families, the characters face similar predicaments and resolve their personal and professional conflicts through violence.

Andaz, is a love story interwoven with a revenge drama, one of the many that appeared on the Zee network. The story revolves around the family of Yash Thakur, a businessman. He is in love with his secretary, Pooja, but marries Urmila in accordance with the wishes of his parents and the honour of their *khandaan* in mind. Urmila, turns out to be a scheming vamp bent on destroying the *good name* of the family. Against the backdrop of this family problem, Yash and Pooja have an affair while Urmila tries to seduce every man she gets acquainted with, much to the dislike of her in-laws.

The other characters include Ajay Suri, a rival businessman, and his sister Priya. A common friend of Yash and Ajay, Anand, is another cog in the drama. He works for Ajay and is in love with the latter's secretary, Anjali. However, Priya also has a soft corner for him as he had once saved her from eve teasers. Anjali, on the other hand, loves Ajay Suri, her boss.

Meanwhile, Urmila also pursues Anand, inspite of his attempts to ward her off. She even goes to the extent of trying to poison Anjali at a party. Yash sees her pour poison into the drink she offers Anjali and starts slapping her violently in front of the guests. Urmila swears to avenge her insult. The host Ajay intervenes in the conflict even as Anjali, the person at the centre of the conflict, stands a silent spectator.

Anand swears to kill Urmila if she attempts to hurt Anjali. An irate Urmila runs down Anjali on the road leaving her injured. At the hospital, Anjali refuses to reveal the identity of the driver. Anand suspects Urmila's involvement and storms into her house to shoot her.

The serial is full of stereotypical characters and does not boast of any pathbreaking depiction or treatment. Violence however seems to be a vital ingredient of the storyline. This includes both verbal abuse and physical violence.

In a particular incident, businessman Ajay Suri is threatened by a hoodlum to give up his land or otherwise face the consequences. Threats, verbal abuse are part and parcel of the methods of doing business in this serial. All business dealings lead to problems for the rivals, whether they are rivals at work or in affection.

Instances of domestic violence also abound in the serial. The audience is treated to incidents where the daughter-in-law threatens the mother-in-law that any attempt at violence on her part will also be met with violence.

The feud between the daughter-in-law, Urmila, and her family takes on serious proportions when in the heat of an argument, she deliberately breaks her hand and calls the police on a complaint that she had been physically abused for dowry.

The love shared between Yash and Pooja is not without repercussions. Urmila spots the two in a restaurant and proceeds to abuse Pooja publicly.

Then there is an instance where Yash locks up his errant wife inside a cupboard because she vows to destroy the woman he loves, Pooja. He demonstrates what he is capable of doing anything if anybody tries to harm Pooja.

The stereotype of the macho male has been used very liberally throughout the serial. The physical strength of the male character is a vital ingredient to the plot. It is mainly expressed in the rivalry between two people or then between two families.

Yash and Ajay at the coaxing of Anand, their common friend, agree to meet each other to patch up their differences. Ajay tells them that he only understands the language of war, and friendship is not something that he associates with. This signals the continuation of the feud.

The head of the Thakur family, Yash's father, has an ongoing feud with another businessman, whom he insists on calling a "bastard" because he was born out of wedlock. The rival is incensed by this public humiliation and vows to avenge this insult.

He gets the opportunity when his son gets the daughter of the Thakur family pregnant and avoids marrying her. He actively encourages his son to carry on his association with the girl so that his rival tastes what it is like to have a "bastard" child in the family.

In another incident, Ajay's sister, Priya, is saved by Yash as eve teasers are harassing her. Ajay considers himself burdened by Yash's obligation and wants to repay as soon as possible.

Eve teasing is portrayed in another incident where the eve-teaser is handed over to the police by Ajay and he vows to take revenge.

In every episode, there is an element of adhering to the stereotype of the superior male providing the solution to the dilemmas. The relationships depicted in this serial lend itself to this continuing stereotype. The women do not progress beyond the role of the wife, mother, younger sister or the office secretary. The story depicts women as vamp or as a girl friend.

The female character is limited to being a side kick in all situations, including where her own life is being decided. Anjali's father and her friend, Anand, decide that she loves Anand, hence she should marry him. Anand tells Ajay in the same episode that he knows Anjali is in love with him and will marry him, though Anjali is not aware of it.

When Anjali tries to clear Anand's misunderstanding, Anand threatens to kill her and any man who comes in contact with her. He orders her to get ready for their marriage in a week's time.

Anjali goes to Ajay, the man she loves, who is also Anand's boss and tells him of the misunderstanding. While Ajay is comforting her, Anand enters the room and finds Anjali in Ajay's arms. He slaps and abuses Ajay. Ajay also tries to hit back and as Anand leaves he swears to take revenge for the betrayal.

Anjali tries to clear Anand's misunderstanding but he blames Ajay for betraying him while absolving her. He proceeds to cut himself up with a knife to prove his love. She rejects him saying love could not be forced. Anand plots to ruin Ajay's sister Priya, who he knows has developed a soft corner for him.

He calls Priya to his place, marries her and consummates the marriage. Then he takes her back to her brother's house and leaves her there. He wants her to suffer the humiliation of being married but staying at her brother's place while Ajay remains a silent spectator of her sufferings unable to do anything.

The identity of the male as a "thinking individual" is completely submerged under the concept of the "macho male". This becomes more apparent in the relationship between the

male characters. As in the above example, though Anand and Ajay are good friends, they turn into rivals at the slightest pretext and want to ruin each other.

Anand and Anjali's father decide on the marriage without the consent of the girl or giving her a chance to speak out her mind. Without trying to understand her predicament, Anand threatens to kill her and the man she wants to marry. Another display of his image as a macho male, who would not like anyone else to have his girl if he cannot have her.

He does not even listen to Anjali's arguments that love cannot be thrust on someone and cuts himself with a knife to proclaim his undying love for her. He is illogical in his thinking and keeps blaming Ajay for betraying him and becoming his rival in love without making an attempt to listen to Anjali.

Again as display of his macho image, Anand marries Priya and impregnates her. This is his way of taking revenge on Ajay by destroying the family honour. A married girl staying at her brother's place rather than her husband's brings dishonour to the family.

Banegi Apni Baat and *Dastaan* had six episodes each depicting some form of violence, with *Shayad* and *Parvarish* with five episodes each and *Hasratein* with the least number of two episodes during the period of monitoring.

Banegi Apni Baat, although a family drama, weaves the story around the dilemmas of young people in their private life and work place. Just before we started monitoring the episodes, a young fashion designer from the upper middle class is raped by her colleague during a business trip. Although the actual act of violence is not shown in the subsequent episodes, the character hallucinates about the rapist and is mentally traumatised. The serial looks into the post-rape trauma and the way the single mother-headed family copes with the problem and finally gets her married to a family friend who proposes to do so.

Dastaan again revolves around business rivalries. *Shayad* was one of the horror serials on air and the episodes monitored dealt with how by putting a pin on the photograph, a mentally unstable girl killed people she disliked. Subsequently she murders her sister's colleagues.

On Doordarshan Metro channel, *Aankhein* had the most number of five episodes depicting violence. The story revolved around the girl who possessed the extraordinary ability to visualise murders before they actually take place. She sees the murder of her close friends and tries to warn them about the impending incident.

Shriman Shrimati, although a comedy, had five episodes with violence. The prime time soap *Imtihaan*, revolving around business rivalry, had five episodes depicting violence. *Imtihaan* was shifted between the primary and the metro channel during this period.

Serials like *Zameen Aasman* and crime thriller *Shaque* had three episodes each depicting some form of violence. Other serials on the entertainment channel like *Virasat*, *Dard*, *Arzoo*, *Vijay*, *Vansh* and *Gumraah* had two episodes each of violence.

On the primary channel of Doordarshan, the afternoon soap *Swabhiman* had the highest number of three episodes depicting violence, followed by the other afternoon soap *Shanti* with two episodes. *Kanoon* and *Lifeline* depicted violence in one episode each.

Among the programmes monitored on the Doordarshan primary channel in Bangalore, *Vasantham Colony* and *Mel Madi Gali* had five episodes depicting violence followed by *Irrutala The..* with three episodes and *Horlicks Pen Manam* with two episodes.

On Sun Tv, *Surya* had six episodes with violence followed by *Nila Penn* and *Chinna Mummy* with five episodes each. *Raghuvamsam* had four episodes depicting violence while *Kai Alavu Manasu* and *Vidhutralai* with two episodes.

Pattern of aggressor and victim as depicted in the serials:

AGGRESSOR	VICTIM	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Male	Male	154	43.8
Male	Female	121	34.4
Female	Female	42	11.9
Female	Male	33	9.4
		350	

Out of the total of 351 cases of violence depicted on the small screen, one was a suicide.

As the table indicates, the confrontation between males dominated the violence on television during this period of monitoring with almost 44% of the incidents showing a male aggressor and male victim. This stems from the fact that most of the serials revolve around business families and their machinations.

Another interesting feature is that much of this violence is hierarchical in nature (37 incidents), that is, a person higher up in the hierarchy perpetrates violence on a person at a lower level. Enemies figured in 28 of the cases and business rivals in 20 instances.

In 32 cases, acquaintances were responsible for violence. It is also notable that while there were nine instances of familial violence, brothers perpetrated violence on brothers in five cases.

The second-highest category was that of *male aggressors and female victims*, with 121 instances accounting for 34% of the depiction. This category comprised of violence within the family and at work place. The highest incidents (33 incidents) were among married couples where the husband was the perpetrator of violence. Next was violence by enemies and business rivals (19), followed by familial violence (13). Acquaintances also figured high in the list of aggressors.

Another facet of this was violence perpetrated by unknown men on women. This included women being abducted or eve-teased on the roads. Unrequited love on the part of the male aggressor or female victim was also the reason for violence to an extent.

In the 42 instances where the female characters were both perpetrators and victims of violence, family (12) and acquaintances (11) were the main aggressors whereas in the 33 cases where the aggressor was female and the victim male, the aggressor and victim were married or acquaintances (8 cases each). Rivalry between two female characters also ended up in violence in six instances. In the latter category, unrequited love on part of the female or male also led to violence in four cases while there were five instances of familial violence in this category.

✌️ TYPES OF VIOLENCE

Violence, as depicted in the serials, can be broadly divided into two segments:

➤ VIOLENCE WITHIN THE FAMILY

A person who is at a higher hierarchical level than the others is usually the perpetrator. It could be both the male and the female - a mother could be shouting at the daughter, the husband verbally abusing the wife or the family members screaming at the servant on the slightest pretext.

However during the period of the monitoring it was noticed that, in some instances, the roles can be reversed.

In *Swabhiman*, the wife Nishi keeps calling her husband names and feels he is unfit to handle the problems confronting them at home - the elder daughter's pregnancy.

Similarly, children play an important role in the violence. Very often they are the perpetrators - accusing parents for not taking care of their childhood.

In *Tara*, for example, Shriya in her early teens, blames her mother for her brother Shantanu's death. Her parents, Sheena and Jijo, are separated. She suggests that children whose parents keep fighting should be put in a hostel so that they can grow up in a better environment. She turns abusive and her mother's friend slaps to stop her. In this particular instance, there is both verbal and physical abuse.

Baba, Tara's son, hates his mother and opts for a foster mother in her friend Arzoo. He even refuses to acknowledge Deepak Seth as his father and calls himself the son of Mickey Bhattal. He is bitter about his relationship with Tara so much so that he even refuses to name her in his conversation.

Another teenage character in the serial, Devyani, the daughter of Deepak and Anita Seth, is also shown to be against her father's relationship with Tara. She blames Tara for the break up of her family.

Devyani does not share a smooth relationship with her mother, Anita, who is mentally unstable. She is scared of her memories and is often haunted by nightmares of her.

Social gatherings or parties provide the background for violence in dramas set in the upper class. In *Andaz on Zee*, parties which bring together business partners and rivals, invariably have dramatic endings. There are heated discussions followed by verbal abuses with each swearing to get even with the other.

Balwant Rai Thakur, a businessman, takes his mentally handicapped son to a party. His rival publicly embarrasses the father and son and it ends up in both abusing each other.

In another instance, the younger Thakur couple - Yash and Urmila, go for a party. Urmila loves Anand, a family friend. However, Anand who loves Anjali, does not reciprocate her love. Enraged by this insult, Urmila keeps taunting Anjali and finally tries to poison her. She pours poison from her ring into a drink and offers it to Anjali as a gesture of friendship. Yash gets to know of her plans and starts slapping his wife violently in the party to everybody's surprise.

In another party, Yash Thakur in order to distance himself from Pooja, whom he loves and wants to get her married to a decent man, publicly abuses her. Urmila pitches in and calls her names. This leaves Pooja heart broken and she decides to part ways with Yash.

In *Dastaan*, Suman and Lankesh are classmates. Lankesh walks into Suman's house while she is working in the kitchen. Lankesh informs her in a casual way that he broke a classmate's arm as he had dared to shake hands with Suman. Suman is stunned by his actions. Lankesh reveals that he is madly in love with her and very possessive about her.

Later Suman gets married to Karan, a businessman. Lankesh develops a business rivalry with him and tries to ruin his business and personal life.

Here Lankesh is depicted as an obsessed lover who is possessive of Kusum and willing to do anything for her. His villainy is enhanced in the serial by his imagery.

Though physically disabled - he is shown limping with the help of a walking stick - the audience sympathy does not lie with him as he is depicted as extremely manipulative and cunning in his dealings in personal life and business.

We look into one of the examples of sexual harassment from *Swabhiman*. In episodes 20-23, Swabhiman deals with the relationship of a young college girl with a much older, married man, and the depiction raises several questions.

A brief description of the narrative:

The man, an MLA, seduces Ritu with assurances of love. When she discovers she is pregnant, she entreats him to marry her. He refuses and insists that she continues to see him. When she balks at his advances, he threatens her with a videotape of their lovemaking, and forces her to have sex with him again.

Ritu's parents deal with her pregnancy in a stereotypical fashion: the mother wants her to be married off immediately; the father insists on an abortion. The mother is against the abortion because she fears that the press will get hold of it, and the family will be dragged through mud. And when she arranges for a suitable match (a khandani boy, with not much money and no personality). The father puts his foot down, saying that he will not have his daughter marry "a cartoon".

There is no mention of the kind of trauma that the girl goes through. There is no sympathy for the girl's plight; all they do is to rail her and call her names (badjaat, tu paida hote hi kyon nahin mar gayi).

In episode 23, the problem is resolved by the intervention of Ritu's cousin, who takes her off to a clinic to have her aborted. And the MLA is silenced with a videotape of his misdeeds. End of problem: no unwanted pregnancy, and no embarrassing evidence of the girl's indiscretion.

The way the scriptwriter and the scenarist has dealt with the episode is indicative of several things.

One, the whole problem is seen through the prism of family reputation and business interest, in keeping with the tone of the serial, which revolves around an industrialist family and the predicament that the members find themselves in. So business interest is paramount for the father and maintaining the family name is the most important thing for the mother. The girl, whose problem it is, has become a mere cipher: her feelings about the problem do not find a voice.

Two, they play out the situation in the time-tested way of the movies, which is the prime source of inspiration for serial scriptwriters. The language is `filmy': (examples)

1. Ritu tells the MLA after discovering his intent to carry on with the relationship without marrying her "Main tujh jaise bhediye si kabhi shaadi nahin karoonge" (I will never marry a wolf like you).
2. Ritu tells her cousin, Rishabh, "Maine bahut giri huye harkat ki hai". (I have done a very wrong thing.)
3. Rishabh assures Ritu "Jab tak tera bhai jinda hai, tab tak tujh per koi aanch nahin aayegi." (Till the time I am alive, nobody would be able to harm you.)

Three, the scenarist sets the scenes in a manner which caters to the baser instinct of the viewer (and arouses those instincts in viewer who are young and impressionable).

And four, the language used by the characters also goes with the scene - it is offensive, in many ways abusive, and absolutely not fit for family viewing.

When the MLA gets Ritu to come to him for an afternoon tryst, he is to be seen lounging on a bed, dressed in a lungi, a glass of alcohol in his hand, and an anticipatory, wolfish smile. Without a word having been said, we know what will transpire in that room; and when the girl comes in and discovers his intention that is exactly what happens.

He takes her hand and tries to force her on to the bed. When she resists, he pins her against a wall, takes off his shirt, and her dupatta and leaves the rest to imagination. No room for doubt about the sort of activity they indulge in is left, and the viewers are left, in the middle of their afternoon (3.30 p.m. weekdays is Swabhiman's telecast time) with the impact of that sordid little episode on themselves, and their children.

The whole interlude is replete with suggestive dialogues, crude actions and at the end, a quick-fix solution which in no way addresses the larger question which arise from the problem:

- a) What are Ritu's feelings when she discovers that the man she is forced to surrender herself is an unmitigated cad, that he will never marry her and that he will continue to force himself upon her?
- b) Where does parental responsibility begin and end with young, college girls? When you discover your daughter is pregnant, is it enough to seek an alternative between forced marriage, or an abortion, without once talking to the girl about what she is going through?
- c) Is abortion to be depicted in this easy, facile way on prime time TV, without any of its attendant problem being thought through?
- d) Suggestive dialogue may be a way of adding interest from the scriptwriter's point of view. Does the question of social responsibility also figure in that stance?

Lola of *Daraar* belongs to the lower income group and the sole earning member in the family, working in a hotel. Her father is appreciative of the fact that she took up the responsibility of the family - sent her sister to college, maintained the family's standard of living and supports her throughout. The mother is portrayed as 'conservative', ever-complaining, opposes the daughter's lifestyle - her staying out late nights, returning home with male colleagues, and wants her to settle down in marriage.

Lola wants to break out of the vicious circle of poverty and aspires for a better life with all comforts (car, big house). Her means of fulfilling this dream was by getting married into a rich family.

In a particular instance, Lola's mother watches from the balcony as she arrives late at night with a male colleague. Lola slowly enters her house which is sparsely furnished, with her father and sister sleeping on the floor.

Lola sits on the bed, signifying her higher status in the family as the breadwinner, while the mother stands next to the door. The mother asks Lola for an explanation for returning at one at night and is offensive in her approach. Lola replies she was doing overtime and pulls over the sheet to sleep.

Angered by her actions, the mother comes and pulls her up. She asks her about the 'man on the motorcycle' who had come to drop her and why she did not return in the office van. She admonishes Lola when she asks her mother to be grateful to the man for dropping her.

The father walks in and complains about the commotion. The mother informs him that the daughter should be married off soon as she does not want her continue working in the hotel.

Lola reminds them that only because she was working that they could afford to send the younger daughter to college, eat good food, wear good clothes, have a fridge and television. The father softens and agrees that she has been 'like a son' to them. The mother says that she does not want a luxurious life but a respectable one.

The father looks concerned but agrees with the daughter that they should not worry about her marriage. He persuades his wife to go back to sleep. Lola sighs and starts talking to her sister about her dreams of having a better life.

➤ VIOLENCE AT THE WORK PLACE

In the work environment also hierarchy plays an important role. The employer is at an advantageous position than the employee. In this case as well, it does not make much difference whether the employer is a male or a female.

Work also brings in professional rivalry and brings out the manipulative nature of the characters. The women usually take to the male ways of resolving conflicts through violence.

In *Parivartan*, Ila Singhania, a businesswoman, is shown resolving conflicts through violence. In one instance, she gets to know that her daughter is in love with the man, Prince, who is blackmailing her. Singhania's cavalcade, including her business partner and son reaches Prince's house on the pretext of signing a contract.

Singhania's daughter is also present in the house. As everybody settles down to sign the papers, Singhania reveals the Prince's true identity - he is Jogi who had been blackmailing her. As he tries to resist, Singhania's men draw out their guns. As she verbally abuses Jogi, her daughter is confused about the turn of events. As Singhania leaves the place, a gunshot is heard in the background, conveying that the rival had been killed.

In *Imtihaan*, the boss Devaki terrifies everybody as she enters the office. People stand up to wish their employer. Priya, newly employed with the company, unaware of Devaki's arrival, continues to work. Her colleague later warns her that she might land up in trouble for not wishing Devaki.

One of the trends on screen is that the women of the house are used as targets for taking revenge, specially the unmarried sister or daughter.

The villain befriends the girl, persuades her to marry him and then leaves her in her parental house. The other option shown is that the girl enters a relationship with the trust that her boyfriend would marry her. But when she is pregnant, he rejects her.

In *Andaz*, Anand lures Suri's sister into marriage and then leaves her. The reason being that he wanted to take revenge.

Another interesting facet of violence on the screen is that the aggressor is usually a known person and takes place in private space.

In *Campus*, the college-going Deepa lives with her middle-aged, widowed mother who is the sole breadwinner in the family. The mother plans to get married a second time to Shrikant who is a regular visitor to the household.

In a particular sequence as the mother leaves the home for work, Shrikant is shown lurking around the house. After the mother leaves, he enters the house and looks around for Deepa. He tries to molest her. Deepa, gauging his intention, runs around the house pursued by the much older man.

She manages to run out of the house. However, the man convinces her mother that when he tried to stop Deepa from going around with Shakti, they hatched a plan to malign him.

In another sequence, Deepa rushes out of Shrikant's car shouting for help. Shakti, the college sports instructor, comes to her rescue but Shrikant stops him from interfering in their "family affair".

Here Shrikant is known to Deepa as a family friend and as a person to be her step-father in the future. Shrikant has access to the house - he has a key and can enter whenever he wants to. In the second instance, when an acquaintance of Deepa's tries to intervene, he is stopped as it is a 'family issue'.

The violation takes place in the house, which is often perceived as a safe and secure place.

Banegi Apni Baat's Richa, a middle-class fashion designer, is raped by a colleague on a business trip. In the subsequent episodes, Richa and her family is shown coping with the trauma. A family friend, Karan, proposes to marry her despite the social stigma attached to rape in our society.

The night after their marriage as Richa sits on the bed waiting for Karan, she remembers the incident and visualises Samir, the rapist, approaching her and hears him laugh and traumatised.

In this instance, again the rapist is an acquaintance.



QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF TARA, ZEE TV

No. of episodes 29
Period 13 May to November, 1995

Tara, when it started in 1993, revolved around the lives of four friends - Tara, Sheena, Arzoo and Kanchan. This kind of female bonding was new to the small screen which was one of the reasons for its high viewership in the beginning. The story looked at independent women who took their own decisions, were unconventional, and yet were bonded by friendship.

While Tara used to be the focus in the earlier episodes, the limelight has now shifted to Devyani, the main protagonist and Tara's stepdaughter. This has distracted many of the loyal viewers. All the same the serial has completed three years on the small screen.

Devyani, 19, an employee in an ad agency, is projected as an independent, modern, single woman. She wants to take her own decisions (decides to leave home and live on her own after her father's death), forgoes her father's property (hands it to Tara). Some viewers feel she is unemotional. For instance, after P.C. Gupta tries kidnapping her, she approaches Gautam and proposes to marry him.

In a competitive world, she makes a place for herself by using the same tactics as her male counterparts. She uses Veeru, a friend who wants to marry her, to get information from the rival company. She plants false stories about her rival group in the newspaper.

As a woman entering the male domain, she also faces sexual harassment.



CONFLICTS AND THEIR RESOLUTIONS ON TARA

1. Devyani is an employee in an advertising agency run by Gautam Sareen. Since he is out of town for a contract, Devyani handles the offer from Rich Fields Tea Company for developing an advertising campaign.

When she meets the Chairman, P.C. Gupta, he asks for sexual favours in return for the contract, which she promptly refuses. As a result, her rival ad agency run by Rohit bags the contract. She feels let down, wants to avenge the insult and goes to Gautam's father for advice.

Mr. Sareen advises her to approach the rival company of R.F. - Treasure World, who are also planning to launch a new brand of tea in the market. He approaches Piyush, head of Treasure World and an old friend, on Devyani's behalf.

Impressed by Devyani's capability and her strong will to fight on, Piyush gives her the campaign.

In this instance, a professional conflict starts between Devyani's ad agency and the R.F. Tea Company over the contract for the ad campaign for the launch of their new brand of tea. Devyani, disappointed over losing the valuable contract, wants to avenge the insult and asks Mr. Sareen for help.

Mr. Sareen helps in resolving the conflict by approaching the rival company, Treasure World, for the contract of their ad campaign. This resolves the conflict for the moment but is the beginning of a long-drawn battle between the two parties.

Devyani also plants Veeru in Rohit's company to keep an eye on R.F.'s campaign. She decides to launch a similar campaign for her client and release it just before P.C.'s.

The next stage of this conflict is when Devyani retaliates by inserting a story against R.F. Tea in the newspaper. This leads to a raid on their godowns and samples of narcotic contaminated tea is recovered from the premises.

But from here on there is a change in the storyline. The methods that are used by Devyani and the other business people are ones that can be believed to a great extent. But hereafter there is dramatic change in the methods that are used to resolve their conflicts.

👉 VIOLENCE/HARASSMENT

- May, Devyani refers to the incident at the R.F. Tea Company to Mr.Sareen, Gautam's father. The Chairman, P.C. Gupta, had laid down conditions which violated her integrity. (Tara and Adi discuss about the incident in a later episode and worried about Devyani.) (Sexual harassment)
- May, At RFT, Gupta yells at the editor of the newspaper for writing an article against his company, at Rohit and Agarwal, his employee, for not listening to his instructions. (Verbal)
- May, P.C. Gupta yells at Agarwal and Adi regarding the newspaper article. (Verbal)
- May, Devyani is dragged into a van by P.C. Gupta, who is a business rival. She had adversely affected Gupta's advertising campaign. (Sexual harassment)
- June, Devyani uses abusive language (which is beeped out) (Verbal)
- June, Anita Seth goes to meet Ashok Sehgal in the jail and becomes abusive when he refuses to give her the papers of Seth Hotels. (Verbal)
- June, P.C. Gupta abuses Rohit as Devyani releases an identical ad campaign of a rival tea company before their release. Rohit, in turn, is furious with his employees - Popo and Veeru. (Verbal)
- July, When Veeru discloses that he was responsible for the leak of the ad campaign to Devyani, Popo beats him up. (Physical violence)
- July, Devyani decides to meet P.C. at Seth Hotel. In the room, P.C.'s goons are waiting for her. They chase her.
- July, Piyush is threatened by P.C. and his friends to face the consequences if he did not cooperate with them to destroy Devyani.
- July, Piyush goes to P.C.'s place to find Devyani, has an argument with P.C. and Agarwal. Piyush attacks Agarwal and then leaves. P.C. slaps Agarwal for being suggestive. (Physical violence)
- August, Two men with guns force Piyush to get into their car and drive off.
- August, Devyani sleeps with P.C so that he will drop the charges against Rohit, a friend of her deceased father. P.C tells her that he is willing to do anything to enjoy a body like hers. He agrees to drop the charges. He further coaxes her to meet him whenever he wants to and she agrees. (Sexual harassment.)

- August, Ashok Saigal, who is attempting to takeover Seth Industries and has teamed up with P.C in a pact, is angry that P.C has broken his promise by dropping the charges just because he has slept with Devyani. He threatens P.C with a gun. (verbal violence)
- August, Piyush, Devyani's friend and boss who has been kidnapped is released by his abductors who tell him that their purpose has been served by keeping him in captivity. (Physical violence)
- August, Piyush confronts Devyani about where she was. When she avoids his questioning he begins to slap her repeatedly. (Physical Violence)
- August, Devyani has violent nightmares of P.C terrorising her. She is reliving her experience with P.C. and is unable to accept the reality of what she has done.
- November, Devyani is being pursued by some people. Tara saves her. (Physical violence)
- End November 95'. Devyani goes to the press and makes her pregnancy public. exposes P.C Gupta. P.C decides to kill her. She comes under the wheel of a truck.
- This is the same episode in which we see Raju, The pimp, intimidating Shriya, by yanking her by her hair and then forcing her to beg for her joint.
- November, P.C dreams that he is being killed by Devyani. Then he decides to kill her.

TARA

30 May, 1995

One of the scenes described in detail will give an indication of what exactly the viewer sees when watching these episodes.

This scene is between the main protagonist of the serial a young woman Devyani, who has just won the first victory in her business battle and the head of the rival company. She is walking down a lonely street at night when a van comes up to her and stops. As she turns some one from inside the van pulls her in and the van drives away. Then begins Devyani's harassment. The abductor is none other than the boss of the rival company, P. C Gupta.

The camera zooms in on the confines of the van as a very eerie music plays in the background, all indicative of the danger that Devyani finds herself in and the fear that is going through her mind. PC is very calmly sitting and puffing on a cigar even as she looks on at him in anger and disbelief. He is smiling and laughing at her reaction. The impression given, is one of an animal toying with his prey.

The dialogues between the two also follow this line of thinking. The girl is struggling physically and verbally to come out as an equal while all the time the abductor is watching her efforts with unconcealed amusement daring her to do her worst.

The dialogues have been given in Hindi to impart the same effect that the director attempts to give it on screen

PC *Relax (He laughs)*

Devyani *Tumhari itni himmat PC ki tumne mujhe kidnap karne ki koshish ki!*

Driver, Gadi roko. PC main tumse keh rahi hoon gadi rukwa do warna...

Even as she speaks PC is amused at her childish attempts to threaten him. He laughs dismissively.

PC *Don't waste your energy, Baby!*

Devyani *Kya chahte ho tum?*

PC *Nothing, Bas tumhe itna batana chahta hoon how crazy I am.*

Devyani *Tum apni defeat jhel nahin paye, PC*

PC *Defeat.. Look Devyani, Yeh jo Richfield Tea Co. hain na, Yeh meri company ka 5% portion hai, Not more than 5%, aur tumne iski choti si advertising campaign spoil ki hain.*

He points at her with his fingers to show her exactly how small and insignificant her victory was. The body language of the two is indicative of their individual emotions. PC is very relaxed and smoking on his cigar even as he is terrorising her. Devyani is sitting on the edge of the seat. She is shown to be frightened but very brave as if to prove that she has got the better of him while all along he is keen to deny her the pleasure that she has got out of that victory.

Devyani *But it is your defeat, its your "f g" (audio beeped out) defeat!*

He is very amused at her anger all the while knowing that he has the upper hand. He is unmoved by her attempts to curse him. He wants her to listen to what he has to say. Even the dialogues that have been given to Devyani are very inconsequential and are seen as the stereotypical woman who resorts to badmouthing the villain of the piece. He is the epitome of the calm and the normal man while she is tense and frightened by what is happening to her

He moves the cigar towards her face in a very toying gesture. As she moves away from him PC smiles.

PC *Haar Jeet se bahut upar uth chuka hain PC, Devyani isliye to itni badi empire khadi ki hain. You are a kid, a naughty kid. apni choti si Jeet bhi nahin digest kar payi tum, (laughs) mujh hi ko bata diya.*

Devyani makes a final attempt to bluff her way out

Devyani *Kya kar loge tum mera?*

But he has a ready reply for that

PC *PC jo karta hain bas kar leta hain- kisi ko bata nahin hain.*

What is he, a man, who has a woman at his mercy, possibly threatening her with? It couldn't take the viewer many guesses to figure that out.

So how does the woman respond to that veiled threat?

Devyani *You "B " (audio beeped out)*

PC *Devyani, pahli galati tumne ki mujhse jhagada mol kar, Doosri, usse badi galati ki mere khilaf khadi hokar. Mere hi campaign ko bigadkar mujh ko inform kiya.*

Devyani *You " " (beeped out)*

PC laughs at her insults

Devyani *Main tumhe zinda nahin chodoongi, PC*

When she tells him that he will not get away with such an action she, of course cannot be taken very seriously. After all what can she do....

PC *(Laughs as he hears that) Dekho Devyani, I always win. I am used to it. Aur Haar chahe kitni bhi choti kyon na ho, PC bardarsh nahin karta. Tum bachi ho isliye bata raha hoon. (pats her on the cheek with the cigar in his hand). Take care*

The power equation has been spelt out at the end of the conversation. She is still a child, incapable of understanding the extent of his power and what the business game is all about.

Devyani *You bastard!* (This for some reason is not beeped out.)

Devyani gets out of the car as it comes to a halt.

Violence is inherent in every sentence that is spoken but what is more disturbing is the calm and common place manner in which it is delivered.

It is to be understood that these incidents of violence, verbal abuse, sexual harassment are a common feature of this serial. They are a rule rather than an exception. So the viewer is treated to unceasing scenes of violence. Every character has an element of violence in his or her life whether it be mental torture, sexual harassment or physical violence.

The viewer is left with a feeling of unease after every episode. A large number of characters in Tara use abusive language. (Some of which is beeped out.) Physical violence is abundant starting with people slapping each other to goons being hired to physically harm business rivals.

In other words, for this serial, violence is very common place and what is more disturbing is that it is an accepted part of all the characters good, bad or otherwise. The element of violence has crept into every dialogue and is delivered with the same ease with which most characters would be describing the weather.

The violence with respect to the other characters is also very much a part of the story line.

- May, Mickey Bhattal, Arzoo's separated husband, physically assaults, Rajeev Sharma, her friend. (Physical violence)

- May, Police raid a godown where some men are drinking including Makrand. Following a scuffle, the men manage to escape except one man who is caught by the police.

- May, The arrested man, bashed up by the police, collapses and is shifted to the hospital. (Physical violence)

- May, Makrand yells at the waiter in the hotel for taking such a long time with his order. He grabs the waiter and shouts at him as he is suspicious of his behaviour. (Physical violence)

- May, In the hospital, the injured man is killed by injecting poison by two people posing as doctor and nurse. They had been paid by Makrand for the job.

- May, Devyani's mother, Anita, turns abusive when she visits her at night. (Verbal)

- June, Tara slaps Veeru for being sarcastic about Devyani. (Physical violence)

- September, There is a lot of violence by Goldie who has shot a "maharani". Her shooting mentor and P.C Gupta have differences and P.C decides to kill him.

- November, P.C wants Goldie, who is Baba's wife, to do some work for him. She refuses, but he persuades by blackmailing her. He has a video of her murdering someone which he threatens to hand over to the police. She agrees.

- November, Tara goes to Shriya's place to persuade her to go back to her mother's place. There she finds out that Shriya has fallen into bad company. She sets a trap for the "agent" of Shriya who is in reality a pimp.

- July, Devyani sarcastic about Tara's marriage to Digvijay and later turns abusive. She calls her names. Tara's husband slaps her and finally throws her out of the party.

Physical violence	
Threatening postures	5
Verbal abuse	5
Sexual Harassment	3
Abduction	3
Physical Abuse (slap, push, shove)	6
Mental Torture	2

Priya, **Imtihaan**; loses her father and their business to the machinations of their business partner, Sikander. The story is about her struggle to win back her father's company from Sikander.

Meanwhile Sikander tries his best to thwart her attempts by browbeating her and sometimes by abusing her. She is very steadfast in her efforts. In one attempt to dissuade Priya, Sikander sends his goons to attack Priya's sister and warn her of the consequences of her sister's efforts. They try to scare her by throwing acid on the road to show its effectiveness. In retaliation, Priya goes to the restaurant where Sikander is dining with some business colleagues. She takes the glass of wine that he is drinking and pours it on his head. She warns him not to try to harm her family because she would not sit back and watch.

In **Gumraah**, Radha Goswami, lawyer by profession, is investigating into the Bharti murder case. In order to save her client, implicated in the murder of her mother and sister, she starts questioning her acquaintances. While questioning Bharti's lover, Raju, against whom Radha has evidence, he tries to throttle her.

Another acquaintance, Dharampal, asks for sexual favours from Radha in return for information about the murder. She refuses but is a typical damsel in distress, waiting for her male colleague to come to her rescue.

She has a tiff with a senior, well-known lawyer, Parmanand. He keeps taunting her about her mistake in handling a previous case. He takes up cases against her to show her down. She decides to leave the case so that an innocent person is not convicted because of her.

Devika, in **Swabhiman**, is the young mistress of Keshav Malhotra, a rich businessman. She is portrayed all along as a deviant character given to smoking and drinking, manipulating people to get her work done and all the same doing nothing substantial to support herself financially.

In a particular instance, she is shown drinking with a male friend in her room. The viewer is told that the strict, old landlady had asked the inmates not to entertain men late at night. The friend is quite nervous about the landlady getting to know about it while Devika is extremely relaxed.

The landlady enters the room and reprimands the two for disobeying her. Promptly Devika pulls out a file from her cupboard and waves it at the landlady threatening to reveal her secrets about illegal construction. She immediately softens her stand. Devika asks her to have a drink and although she refuses initially as she does not drink, she is forced to have it.

Here Devika, as a single woman, is shown resolving the conflict in an unusual manner. She decides to be aggressive and goes to the extent of threatening the landlady. The same situation could have been resolved amicably to the benefit of both the parties.

In **Shanti**, the main character Shanti, is a journalist who has taken upon herself to avenge the humiliation of her mother who was raped 20 years back. The rapists, it is revealed to the viewers, are two close friends, Kamesh and Raj, who are prominent businessmen.

Anita, in **Virasat**, is the spoilt daughter of a rich financier, Mr. Bhargava. Her father decides to get her married to a business partner's son, Rahul Mittal. Rahul is in love with his secretary and refuses to marry Anita, though they are good childhood friends. She is not willing to concede defeat, vows to either marry Rahul or remain a spinster rest of her life. Her aggrieved father, left with no options, pressurises the Mittals. Thus the story takes the shape of a business rivalry.