

USING RADIO DRAMA TO ENTERTAIN AND EDUCATE: INDIA'S EXPERIENCE WITH THE PRODUCTION, RECEPTION, AND TRANSCREATION OF "DEHLEEZ"

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"I should have the courage to do what I believe is right. Am I right?"
Jagendra Singh Thakur, a youth listener of "Dehleez".

"I know that I am attracted to girls. But are girls attracted to me?"
Neeraj Kumar, a teenage listener of "Dehleez".

Broadcast media can serve as important agents of social change when adequate attention is paid to both message production and reception factors. Media programmes that are based on audience needs assessment, and those that involve audience members in both the message production and reception processes, are especially likely to be effective (Mody, 1991; Melkote, 1991; Bhasin & Singhal, 1998).

6 *Audience feedback from "Dehleez" listeners showed that the programme was perceived as being engaging and educational by most audiences. While some elder members of the audience were offended or embarrassed by "Dehleez's" content, the programme helped break down the usual tabooess surrounding many youth issues, especially sexuality.* 9

The present article investigates the experience of All India Radio, the Indian national radio network, with "Dehleez" ("Threshold"), a 52 episode entertainment-education radio series, which addressed issues such as teenage sexuality, HIV/AIDS, intergenerational conflicts, and other salient adolescent issues. Entertainment-education is the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members' knowledge about an educational issue, create favourable attitudes, and change overt behaviour (Singhal & Rogers, 1999).

Entertainment-education seeks to capitalise on the popular appeal of entertainment media in order to show individuals how they can live safer, healthier, and happier lives. Here we investigate AIR's experience with

"Dehleez", including its process of conception, production, implementation, and evaluation.

Methodology and Data Collection

The present article draws upon the following data sources: (1) documents provided by All India Radio and the Population Foundation of India, New Delhi about the conceptualisation and production process of "Dehleez", (2) the scripts of "Dehleez's" 52 episodes, (3) a sample of letters written by its 11,000 registered youth listeners (who provided feedback throughout its broadcast), (4) other unsolicited letters written by its audience members, (5) a preliminary report by the Population Foundation of India that content analysed some 8,300 audience letters, (6) several reports of All India Radio's Audience Research Unit which measured the reach and impact of "Dehleez", and (7) personal knowledge and experience of the authors (especially Bhasin¹) in the genesis, production and implementation of the radio programme.

Research Questions

Our inquiry on "Dehleez" was guided by several research questions.

1. What were the various components of the participatory message-design process that were employed to produce "Dehleez"?
2. What activities were undertaken to boost the message reception environment for "Dehleez"?
3. What was the nature of listeners' feedback to the broadcasts of "Dehleez"?
4. What role did the anchor-narrator of "Dehleez" play in enhancing audience involvement in the radio serial?
5. What was the educational impact of "Dehleez" on its listeners?
6. How were the impacts of "Dehleez" multiplied through the process of transcreation?

A Participatory Message Design Process

Research question No.1 asked: What were the various components of the participatory message-design process that were employed to produce "Dehleez"?

"Dehleez" ("Threshold") was a collaborative creation of All India Radio, the Indian national radio network, and the New Delhi-based Population Foundation of India. The late Mr J R D Tata, former Chairman of the Population Foundation of India (PFI) and a noted industrialist, recognised that India's family planning programme had targeted mostly married couples, neglecting the adolescents. He encouraged his organisation to invest in tackling issues of adolescent sexuality. In 1990, the PFI commissioned Operations Research Group (ORG) to conduct a detailed analysis of teenagers' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours towards population, family life education, sex

education, and family planning. The study comprised over 17,000 young people, including male-female and urban-rural respondents in Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

The results of the ORG survey were revealing: Most of the students lacked specific knowledge of family planning and contraceptive methods. Knowledge about sterilisation operations was higher than for non-terminal methods like pills, condoms, IUDs, etc. Some 25 percent of the respondents did not know much about sexually transmitted diseases or AIDS. Most young respondents held traditional views of female roles, depicted in such responses as "a woman's place is in her home", "decision-making should always rest with males", and others. The survey showed that a large communication gap existed between parents and children on matters related to family planning, reproductive health, puberty, adolescent sexuality, and others. Only 25 percent of students reported regular social interaction with members of the opposite sex. The main source of information on sex and related matters were peers, classmates, and the "underground" pornographic literature on sex. Not surprisingly, most students held inaccurate and problematic views on sex, marriage, and fertility.

Concerned by the ORG survey findings, in 1992, the late Mr Harish Khanna (who was then Executive Director of Population Foundation of India), invited All India Radio to produce a radio serial for socialising Indian teenagers about population issues. Khanna, an accomplished radio producer who had previously served as Director General of Doordarshan, the Indian national television network, was familiar with AIR's previous experience "Jeevan Saurabh" ("Fragrance of Life"), which was quite effective in addressing teenage sexuality issues (Bhasin & Sigal, 1998). During preliminary discussions, the representatives of PFI and AIR decided that the radio programme should be targeted to youth audiences in India's Hindi-speaking states. Mr Shashi Kapoor (then Director General of AIR) felt that the programme should be in the form of a radio drama series. Usha Bhasin (one of the present authors) was given the responsibility of directing the project, given her past experience in producing radio serials on youth issues, notably "Jeevan Saurabh" (Bhasin & Singhal, 1998). The responsibilities of AIR and PFI were clearly identified on the basis of organisations' respective strengths: AIR would produce and broadcast the programme; PFI would research the programme and publicise it.

In 1993, AIR and PFI organised a workshop to discuss how youth issues could be addressed in the serial. The workshop helped in formulating a general outline for the radio series, including a careful delineation of its educational themes, values, characters, and storyline. The title of the radio series, "Dehleez" ("Threshold"), appropriate for its youth-centered content, was also agreed upon, and also a tentative schedule for its broadcast: The initial plan was to broadcast the 26-episode series over 26 weeks i.e. one episode a week.

While Usha Bhasin initiated the administrative procedures (including budgets, selection of production staff, etc.) to produce "Dehleez", she knew the importance of finding a suitable scriptwriter. Ms Tripurari Sharma, an established theater playwright, was carefully selected. Ms Sharma had several rounds of personal interactions with many teenage school students in New

Delhi, gaining a first hand experience of the issues and the themes that she was to write about.

To stimulate listeners' involvement in the radio series and to secure their feedback, AIR, even prior to the broadcasts of "Dehleez", encouraged audience members to register themselves. Almost 15,000 listener registration forms were requested by audience members, of which 11,000 completed forms were returned prior to the programme's broadcast (Several thousand more listeners registered during the programme's broadcast). These registration forms queried listeners about sexuality, HIV/AIDS, and other youth-centered issues, inviting inputs to shape the programme. Pre-registered listeners, for instance, displayed several misconceptions about how HIV/AIDS spreads, and how to protect oneself from the disease. Ms Sharma, the scriptwriter, appropriately incorporated this audience feedback in shaping the programme's educational content. The educational themes addressed in "Dehleez" are listed in Table 1.

Table 1
Educational Themes Addressed in "Dehleez"

1. Raising the self-esteem of youth.
2. Addressing issues of aspiration-ambition-achievement among the youth.
3. Addressing gender bias and gender inequality in adolescent families.
4. Unequal status for girls in a patriarchal society.
5. Ignorance of biological changes experienced by the adolescents.
6. Physical attraction between boys and girls and ways to deal with it constructively.
7. Educating the girls about menstruation.
8. Educating the boys about masturbation.
9. Addressing issues of drug addiction among adolescents.
10. Educating the youth about constructive influence of elders in their lives.
11. Discussing situations of intolerance towards elders.
12. Tackling the inability of youth and elders to resolve value-based conflicts.
13. Addressing the issue of pre-marital sex and its consequences.
14. Hazards of "back street" abortion and promotion of safe medical practices.
15. Educating the girls and the boys of consequences of irresponsible sexual behaviour.
16. Addressing the danger of unreliable information from pornographic readings.
17. Highlighting the importance of selecting positive role models.
18. Informing the youth about safe sex practices.
19. Educating the adolescents about how to overcome the thought of dropping out of school and the options thereof.
20. Addressing issues of juvenile delinquency.
21. Informing the youth about ways of contracting AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and means of protection.
22. Encouraging discussions on homosexuality among the youth and giving it social acceptance.
23. Addressing issues of child marriage and its consequences on the girl child.
24. Discussing the social practice of dowry and its implications.

"Dehleez" capitalised on AIR's previous experience in broadcasting "Jeevan Saurabh", which was a 13-episode youth serial that used the voices of adolescents and youth experts to address issues of sexuality, career choices, and intergenerational conflict (Bhasin & Singhal, 1998; Singhal & Rogers, 2001). AIR had had very creatively employed pre-broadcast publicity to boost audiences for "Jeevan Saurabh". The same was done for "Dehleez": AIR conducted wide media publicity, including spots on radio, television, and in the vernacular press. Further, in "Jeevan Saurabh", the anchor (played by Mrs Usha Bhasin), was found to be highly effective in striking a personal rapport with tens of thousands of youth listeners. In "Dehleez", a celebrity anchor was employed to build listener loyalty and to goad listeners to action.

The first 26 episodes of "Dehleez" ran from October 1993 to March 1994 and were highly popular with audience members. Over 8.5 million youth listeners tuned in regularly to the programme in the Hindi-speaking states, and an equal number of people from other age groups also listened in. The Director General of AIR, Mr Shashi Kapoor, was then requested by PFI to continue the radio serial. The original plan was to only produce a 26-episode serial, which was quickly modified given the tremendous audience popularity. Under the guidance of Mrs Usha Bhasin, Executive Producer and Director of "Dehleez", another 26 episodes were commissioned.

The second set of "Dehleez's" 26 episodes were scripted by a team of three new writers, each of whom brought a unique experiential background to the writing process. Lalni Bharadwaj and Alka Pathak hailed from two different states in India, both in the Hindi-speaking belt, and were familiar with rural issues. They incorporated a rich array of metaphors, allegories, and colloquial expressions in their writings which resonated with Hindi-speaking listeners. The third writer, Rakesh Bharadwaj, provided a "male" dimension to the story. This collaborate writing activity was first of its kind at AIR for any radio serial. A famous Indian film actor, Amol Palekar, was commissioned to play the role of anchor-narrator for the second set of "Dehleez" episodes. He brought celebrity appeal to the radio serial while displaying his strong commitment to social causes. Palekar was "amazed", as were the production staff of "Dehleez" by the seamless continuity between the first and second sets of "Dehleez's" episodes, even though a new writing team had taken over.

The storyline of "Dehleez"

"Dehleez" was produced as an entertainment-education drama series. The story of "Dehleez" centered around a middle class family in which Seema (an undergraduate student in a local college) is the chief protagonist. Seema's parents are traditional and conservative. Seema goes to a co-educational college but is expected to not interact with boys. Seema's sister, Taruna, attends middle school and her brother, Sameer, attends high school. Seema's widowed aunt, who lives with them, guides Seema's parents in matters of family decision-making. Seema's other relatives in the serial include Jyoti, an elder female cousin and Pravin, her male cousin.

Jyoti's family is broadminded; her parents, who had a love marriage, trust their children to make the right choices. Jyoti's parents understand adolescent feelings and invite conversations on all sensitive subjects. For instance, Jyoti's younger brother, Pravin, freely discusses his feelings about girls with his mother, who listens, and provides advice and support. Jyoti is a good student and helps with household chores. She raises her voice against injustice, and protects Seema, the protagonist, from being exploited by her family members. Jyoti is not popular with her peer group in college as she disagrees with their ways of having fun, that is, through flirting, smoking, using drugs, and missing classes to see movies.

In the serial, Seema meets a fellow college student, Anirudh, and they fall in love. Seema is conservative and does not wish sexual involvement with Anirudh. Anirudh believes that when two individuals are in love, it is okay to have sex. Seema knows that her family would disown her if she engaged in pre-marital sex. Despite Seema's reluctance, they get sexually involved, and Seema becomes pregnant. Her woes begin. Anirudh is unwilling to marry Seema and is unable to provide her any psychological support. Angry and helpless, Seema tries to abort the fetus with help from her maid. The maid gives her a potion, a home remedy for aborting the child, which leads to excessive bleeding. Jyoti finds Seema in a delirious condition and rushes her to the hospital. Seema loses the baby and almost her life. While her family is shocked, they somehow reconcile with her aberrant behaviour. This event represents a turning point for Seema. She gradually transforms into a strong character, putting the ordeal behind her.

Meanwhile, Anirudh's parents want Seema to marry their son but Seema believes she could never trust Anirudh. Seema's parents support her decision of studying further and pursuing a teaching career. She teaches in an adult education programme in a slum, where she inspires others to take control over their lives. Seema's transformation in thinking, and her gaining in self-efficacy, was depicted as a natural consequence of her previous travails.

Seema's younger sister, Taruna, modeled situations that 13 and 14 year old girls face. Taruna, wrestles with an identity crisis, sexual urges, menstruation, socialisation, and attraction to the opposite sex. An older man (some 40 years old) tries to misguide Taruna and showers her with favours (much like "Sugar Daddies" do). However, Taruna realises his sexual intentions in time and saves herself and her friends from his exploitation.

Seema's brother, Sameer modeled a high school student who is coming to grips with sexuality. When Sameer is caught reading pornographic books in schools, his parents simply dismiss his behaviour as being indecent. Sameer represents adolescents who have unanswered questions about sex and are curious for answers. This group seeks parental approval as they formulate a new identity. Sameer's parents do not recognise this need for belonging and respect. His father wishes that Sameer take over his newspaper business, but Sameer has other aspirations. Feeling confused and betrayed Sameer runs away from home. He has an encounter with a homosexual truck driver, a group of drug addicts, and then with a young AIDS patient, Arun, who educates him about HIV, and builds his self-confidence to return home.

Another important character in "Dehleez" is Tara, who attends the same college as Seema and Jyoti. Tara's parents are constantly fighting; for them Tara was an unwanted child. Tara attempts suicide but is saved. In the hospital, she falls in love with Ranjan, her doctor. They decide to marry, but only after Tara finishes her studies. Tara stays in a women's hostel, where she meets Sudha, who models safe sex behaviours and family planning.

In summary, through an entertaining and engaging storyline, "Dehleez" addressed a variety of adolescents issues, including sexuality, HIV/AIDS, youth identity, parental conflict, and peer pressure and support.

Boosting the Message Reception Environment

Research question No. 2 asked: What activities were undertaken to boost the message reception environment for "Dehleez"?

The message reception environment for "Dehleez" was boosted through a great deal of pre-programme publicity and advertising for the radio serial, as noted previously. A month before the first broadcast of "Dehleez", AIR launched intense publicity for the serial on various AIR radio channels, and broadcast on many stations. "Dehleez" was also publicised in several newspapers throughout the Hindi-speaking region of India, inviting prospective audience members to register themselves as listeners. Some 11,000 listeners registered themselves in advance, thereby building a sizable captive audience from the first day of the serial's broadcast.

Parallel interaction programmes

To boost the effects of "Dehleez", listener feedback was actively solicited by AIR. For instance, at the end of each episode, Amol Palekar, the anchor-narrator for "Dehleez" would pose a question to audience members. This boosted listener participation: Audience members were encouraged to think, reflect, and act on the educational issues raised by Palekar, and provide feedback to AIR. Responding to listeners' feedback was crucial to enhance the impact of "Dehleez". To do so, a series of parallel interaction programmes (in addition to the radio serial episodes) were created by Bhasin to address audience feedback. Initially, the parallel interaction programmes for "Dehleez" were broadcast once a month but then became fortnightly (every 15 days) as the number of listeners' letters providing feedback increased rapidly.

The parallel interaction programmes were effectively used to stimulate public discussion and debate on several youth topics: For instance, to discuss the larger consequences of Sameer's flight from home because of parental pressure; or Seema's dilemmas about having pre-marital sex, her pregnancy, abortion, and life thereafter.

The programmes were much appreciated by the "Dehleez" listeners. According to an avid listener, Bhanwar Singh, "Dehleez" and its parallel interaction programme were the "best two programmes" he had ever heard.

He said "Dehleez" makes our foundations strong and our lives a great deal better". A small booklet published by PFI on physiological changes among adolescents was mailed to several thousands of letter-writers in response to their queries.

The parallel interaction programmes provided the listeners a platform to be heard and be provided with some sort of professional advice. The personal identity of the listeners was closely guarded but "mass" relevance issues were especially tackled so that professional guidance could be provided on a large scale. This gave the "Dehleez" listeners a sense of security and privacy while "interacting" with a mass medium.

Radio bridge programmes

In order to enhance the comprehension and retention of the educational messages of "Dehleez", and to reward respondents who provided thoughtful feedback, two radio bridge programmes were created that connected selected listeners from the six capital cities in the Hindi-speaking States of Northern India. Two-way communication occurred among "Dehleez" listeners of six regional radio stations. The participants were later invited to AIR, Delhi, where they were recognised for the high quality of their feedback, including their thoughtful suggestions about how adolescents should cope effectively with age-specific sexuality, career, and intergenerational issues.

The first radio bridge programme was broadcast after the first 26 episodes of "Dehleez"; the second after the latter 26 episodes. Distinguished media personalities anchored the radio bridge programmes. Ameen Sayani (a well-known radio celebrity), and Amol Palekar (the anchor-narrator of "Dehleez") anchored the first and the second radio bridge programmes, respectively. The anchors asked issue-oriented questions of each of the selected listeners in the six participating radio stations, stimulating a dialogue. Participants competed for three prizes for thoughtful responses. This interaction between listeners further clarified issues of salience to the youth. The panel of judges comprised of noted social scientists, counselors, and communication practitioners. The participation of "Dehleez" audience members on live radio enhanced the salience of youth topics among the rest of the regular listeners.

Listeners' Feedback

Research question No. 3 asked: What was the nature of listeners' feedback to the broadcasts of "Dehleez"?

As noted previously, before the broadcasts, of "Dehleez" began, some 11,000 listeners had registered themselves with All India Radio. In addition, there were millions of other regular listeners who did not formally register. While the registration process was handled through All India Radio, Delhi, where Mrs Usha Bhasin was based, regional stations received hundreds of letters each week from many non-registered listeners. Both the registered and

non-registered listeners listened to the programme regularly, reacting to specific episodes and also providing answers to the questions posed at the end of each episode. AIR was flooded with letters. While no exact count was kept, an estimated 100,000 listener letters were received by AIR during the one-year duration of "Dehleez's" broadcasts.

The listeners' feedback, especially if it dealt with an important youth issue, was incorporated in the storyline of the successive episodes. Further, the Population Foundation of India carried out a content analysis of some 8,300 randomly-drawn letters. Many letters emphasised the entertaining and educational nature of "Dehleez", the multiple interpretations and reactions to "Dehleez", and the role of "Dehleez" in creating a "community" of listeners. Further, letters provided suggestions on how to shape the future storyline of "Dehleez".

An entertaining and educational message

Almost all listeners commented on the entertainment, educational, and socially-ameliorative nature of "Dehleez". For instance, Banwaar Singh of Village Phaglava, Rajasthan State, congratulated "Dehleez" for "inheriting strong attributes of goodness, entertainment, and morality." Comments provided by Vinod Kumar of Village Pavariya, U.P. State, are reflective of how "Dehleez" clarified misconceptions: "Earlier I had no idea about the reasons of nightfall (semen discharge during sleep). I thought I had a problem and should see a doctor. This programme answered all my questions and I feel more confident now."

"Dehleez's" parallel interaction programmes often encountered highly "sensitive" questions, which the producers tackled with care. One such question was from Arun Kumar of Mahasamudra, M.P. State, who wrote: "I liked episode number 27 and the discussion about child marriage. However, child marriage is a very common practice in our society and several underage children are married off all the time. Although the couple is not completely physically and mentally evolved, they go ahead to have healthy children. In that case, why does medical science call such marriages unhealthy?" The producers in consultation with experts provided the following reply: "You have self-asserted that the couple is neither physically nor mentally evolved. Hence, the mother to that child is weak and physically underdeveloped. She is the one who will bear the negative consequences, even though sometimes these consequences may not be perceptible. Therefore, medical science wants to protect the health of the mother-to-be and the child-to-be born."

Overall, "Dehleez" was appreciated by its millions of listeners for highlighting the emotional, social, and psychological problems of adolescents. As Bhima Singh, a parent from Delhi aptly summarised: "This serial has given me and my children a new perspective on youth issues, and a reason to talk about all those issues that we thought were not issues."

Different perceptions about programme's relevance

Some listeners felt that "Dehleez" primarily depicted problems of adolescents in urban areas, while the majority of the India population (over 70 percent) live in rural areas. This feedback provided by listeners' led to some script changes in the subsequent episodes. For instance, a set of listeners suggested that the problems faced by boys who run away from home (usually from a village to the neighbouring town or city) be addressed. So in "Dehleez" Seema's brother, Sameer, runs away from home and depicts the problems associated with such behaviours. Several listeners expressed great happiness when the serial took a turn from an urban to a rural setting, and broached issues confronted by rural adolescents. Several letters came from young boys thanking AIR for familiarising them about the types of ordeals faced by those who run away from home. Several said they were dissuaded to do so.

Several listeners were sharply divided on the appropriateness of educational values addressed in "Dehleez". On one hand, "Dehleez" received kudos from adults, including parents and teachers, who felt that the youth issues related to sexuality, personality, and career choices are rarely addressed in either the school or at home. They commended "Dehleez" for tackling these issues. According to Veerendra Singh, a teacher from Delhi, "Dehleez" was extremely useful, educative, and informative about youth issues." On the other hand, several parents and elders in the audience criticised the programme, calling it "pornographic" and "needless". Comments from Shashi Gangwaar from Gaziabad, U.P. State, aptly expressed this sentiment:

The programme includes letters that ask awkward questions and on listening to those questions I am forced to think about these uncomfortable issues. These issues are of low moral consequences. This programme emphasises on such issues and glamorises them. This programme is a less educating and more embarrassing as most of the interaction programmes cannot be heard with family members. Why should radio, a medium of the masses and for the masses, be discussing such needless issues that we do not discuss in our living rooms. Is there any need for such programme for the family person?"

Clearly there were multiple readings on the value, purpose, and relevance of "Dehleez". Nevertheless, "Dehleez" put "taboo" issues on the audience agenda, stimulating audience talk, discussions, and reflection. That was, actually, its key purpose.

Creating a listener community

"Dehleez" helped foster an on-air "community" of radio listeners. For instance, Sheetal from Bhilwara, Rajasthan, sent a long letter expressing her feelings on the tradition of dowry. She wrote: "Dowry is the bane of our society and is like a plague that will never stop. Suicides, divorce, and female exploitation are all outcomes of this practice." Upon hearing Sheetal's feelings during the interaction programme, Rajesh Kumar of Rajasthan State also vented his

feelings on dowry and called it "the devil of the society". Soon a chain reaction occurred among listeners and several listeners began to interact with one another by sharing their sentiments on the practice of dowry. The parallel interaction programme became the platform where a community of people shared similar sentiments on a topic of great social significance. Several listeners' letters began to vent pent-up feelings about the ills of dowry. As a result, many listeners pledged not to give or take dowry.

Suggestions for future episodes

In general, listeners of "Dehleez" were eager to make suggestions about issues that needed to be incorporated in subsequent episodes. Several listeners suggested that the sensitive issues should be presented in a manner to not offend elder family members. Some listeners suggested that "Dehleez" explore such emotions as fear, timidity, and inhibitions among adolescents. Several listeners felt that while the serial addressed homosexuality, it did not deal with incestuous sexual relationships, which are also prevalent in India.

There were listeners' suggestions about various other issues. For instance, Archana Bede of Delhi said: "The issue of suicide should be made part of an episode. Today's youth are ambitious and are upset by the smallest disappointment. Therefore, s/he can easily think of committing suicide. Hence, this issue should not be neglected." She further suggested that "Dehleez" should address issues that are faced by adolescents who grow up in orphanages. She wrote: "People should be educated on how to be sensitive to the needs of those adolescents who grow up in orphanages. Orphans usually rely on the impressions of others to form their own identities and individualities."

So the listeners of "Dehleez" felt comfortable suggesting scriptlines for future episodes.

Role of the Anchor-narrator

Research question #4 asked: What role did the anchor-narrator of "Dehleez" play in enhancing audience involvement in the radio serial?

As mentioned previously, after finalising the entertainment-education format of the serial, the programme's executive producer and director wished to recruit an appropriate anchor-narrator for "Dehleez". She believed in involving a popular personality to introduce and conclude each episode. She saw the anchor-narrator as serving the role of a "novelist" one who narrates the novel and talks about the characters as if they are real.

As noted previously, after a search and audition, Mr Amol Palekar, a popular Hindi movie-actor, agreed to serve as anchor-narrator for "Dehleez". His task was to tie the story together and explain the educational nuances to the listeners. So each episode included a brief introduction by Palekar, a recap of the previous episode, and a brief introduction to the next episode. Palekar

always left listeners with a rhetorical question about the current episode, which was then discussed in the following episode either by him, or was addressed in the following episode.

The listeners were very comfortable with Amol Palekar's engaging narrative. Narendra Kumar from Meerut, U.P. State wrote: "I love the way Amol Palekar tells the story. I feel as if I am sitting next to him as he is writing his novel." Most listeners believed "Dehleez" was a novel that Amol Palekar had authored himself and wrote to AIR requesting a copy. They knew who he was i.e. a celebrity, and that boosted "Dehleez's" audience popularity. Palekar created an impression among listeners as if he was the novelist, reflecting on what was happening to the characters, setting the scenario for the episode to unfold. In some cases, Palekar would intervene between episodes, especially when a sharp turn occurred in the storyline.

In sum, the listeners loved Amol Palekar as an anchor-narrator; he gracefully guided the listeners through the radio serial.

Educational Impact

Research question #5 asked: What was the educational impact of "Dehleez" on the listeners?

The Audience Research Unit of AIR conducted a survey on the effects of "Dehleez" in the broadcast area of nine radio stations in the six Hindi-speaking states of Northern India. The main objective was to assess the audience size, regularity of listening, level of awareness and knowledge among the audience about the issues broadcast in "Dehleez", the perceived utility of the programme, and general opinion on the qualitative aspects of "Dehleez". The survey included a sample of 17,185 males and females (roughly half of each gender) between the age of 11 and 19 years.

Nearly half of the listeners among those surveyed were aware of "Dehleez". As mentioned previously, an estimated 8.5 million youth listened to "Dehleez" regularly, plus perhaps an equal number of adults. Some 31 percent of the respondents reported listening to the programme at least two or three times a month ("Dehleez" was broadcast once a week and the same episode was repeated once during the week). Some 14 percent of the respondents listened to all the broadcasts in a month. The parallel interaction programmes were listened to by 17 percent of the respondents regularly. Of those who listened to "Dehleez", some 68 percent found the programme to be immensely useful. Further, 28 percent of those who listened to "Dehleez" explicitly commended the format of the programme. Overall, listeners thanked AIR for providing young listeners with information, advice, and motivations to effectively deal with issues of sexuality, career choices, and parental discord. One listener profusely thanked AIR, commenting how the information on AIDS in "Dehleez" saved the life of his friend.

Transcreation

Research question #6 asked: How were the impacts of "Dehleez" multiplied through the process of transcreation?

The impact of "Dehleez", originally produced in the Hindi language, was multiplied through the process of transcreation, which involves adapting an existing serial's plot, characters, and context to suit the needs of another audience. The Hindi-version of "Dehleez" was transcreated in six additional languages in six additional Indian states, namely Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bengal, and Orissa. The plot of the radio programme was modified to create realistic *local* characters and to address the subtleties of *local* norms with respect to the depicted educational issues. For instance, gender relations depicted in the Malayalam version of "Dehleez", which was set in Kerala, a predominantly matriarchal society, differed in important ways from the gender relations portrayed in the Hindi version of the programme; targeted to audience members in the patriarchal system of North India. "Dehleez" was the first Indian radio serial to be transcreated; many have since followed suit (Singhal & Rogers, 2001). This transcreation process for "Dehleez" institutionalised the methodology of producing entertainment-education serials in several AIR regional centers, while adding tens of millions of new listeners.

Conclusions

From the outset, "Dehleez" utilised a participatory approach to message design, including incorporating the voices of the targeted listeners, i.e., adolescents, who provided rich insights about message formulation through formative research processes. The extensive youth survey conducted by PFI and ORG provided a good sense of audience's needs, and helped AIR to identify educational themes around which the story of "Dehleez" could evolve.

Many creative techniques were implemented by AIR to influence the message reception environment for "Dehleez", boosting its audience size and enhancing the programmatic efforts. For instance, prospective listeners were registered in advance. These listeners were active letter writers to AIR and provided effective feedback for message construction in successive episodes. Further, extensive pre-programme publicity, plus the use of parallel interaction programmes, the radio bridge programmes, and listeners' awards helped boost audience engagement and participation. The transcreation of "Dehleez" in six additional Indian states helped multiply its impacts further.

Audience feedback from "Dehleez" listeners showed that the programme was perceived as being engaging and educational by most audiences. While some elder members of the audience were offended or embarrassed by "Dehleez's" content, the programme helped break down the usual taboo surrounding many youth issues, especially sexuality. Further, the anchor-narrator, Amol Palekar brought a celebrity appeal to the programme and helped stimulate reflection and debate among listeners through his commentary and

questions. His narration had a strong emotional and intellectual appeal and represented a powerful agent of motivation as well as of information.

AIR's experience with "Dehleez", based on audience feedback (provided in the audience survey and in letters) suggested that the programme effectively dealt with sensitive issues. Overall, "Dehleez" raised the public discourse on sexuality to a higher level, at least among its listeners. In the Indian context, "sex" is an uneasy word. Transitioning from childhood to adolescence represents highly uncertain period for a child. Adolescents have a lot of questions that go unaddressed. New sexual experiences can neither be discussed with the family members or with outsiders. "Dehleez" fulfilled this communicative need in an effective manner by alleviating adolescents' anxiety, and by systematically and scientifically answering their questions. The entertainment-education nature of programme helped listeners to see varying role models of desirable and undesirable behaviours, providing several guides to action.

In summary, "Dehleez" addressed sensitive adolescent issues effectively and creatively. It provides several lessons about creatively shaping a media message, and also about establishing a media reception environment in which messages can be discussed, debated, and reflected upon. Orchestrating such message design and message reception elements in a creative manner can make for highly effective development communication interventions.

Endnotes

1. During 1993 when "Dehleez" was produced, Bhasin was Director of Programmes for All India Radio and Head of its Central Educational Planning Unit (CEPU). She also was the Executive Producer and Director of "Dehleez".

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