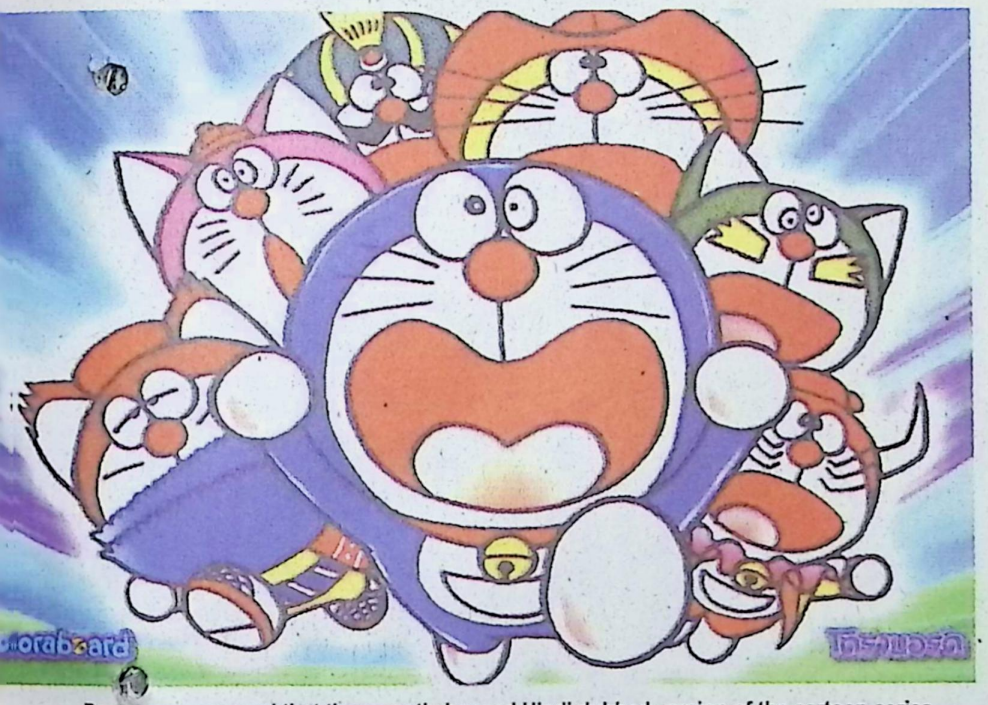
When asked about what she wants to be when she grows up, six-year old Ananya confidently replies, "A dedicated housewife like Gopi in 'Saath Nibhana Saathiya'."

Her mother looks on with an embarrassed smile. She says that her mother-in-law is a huge fan of the above-mentioned character, an archetypal self-sacrificing, "ideal" daughter-in-law. The character is a defenceless, spineless doormat, forever apologising to her family members even when they mistreat her. What is even more frustrating is that her in-laws are shown to be "relatable", righteous people who wouldn't hurt a fly.



Parents were scared that the recently banned Hindi dubbed version of the cartoon series "Doraemon" was encouraging children to be more fluent in Hindi than their own language.

But humiliating one's daughter-in-law falls right into the alley of these good people.

The female protagonists on popular Hindi-language soaps are usually either passive or vapid. The purpose of their existence is to moon for or to be wooed by handsome, aggressive men. They are far from the strong female role models we would want our daughters to look up to and emulate. Thus children learn to accept the stereotypes represented on the silver screen.

The Violence Factor

Apart from the regular soaps, many parents actually encourage their kids to watch crime drama on television, thinking that these shows would teach children about the dangers of the world. Most of these crime based shows deal with explicit images of the crime; be it murder, rape or theft.

Haque cites the disturbing example of a young patient, studying in grade two, who is fascinated by the private parts of the human body. His artworks feature the female nude; not something you'd expect in the drawings of an eight-year old.

"His parents denied that their child could draw something like that as they claimed that they were pious and religious-minded. Upon further inspection, we discovered that his parents have no control whatsoever on their son's television viewing. He watches shows with adult contents like CID and his parents have never objected to that," she says.

Most shows aired on TV are not suitable for children. And yet, parents let their children be in the room when they are watching shows with mature content.

"My favourite show is the American crime drama 'Dexter.' It is about a serial killer, who kills only bad guys who are murderers themselves. I think Dexter is one of the coolest characters on screen," says ten year old Adnan.

A number of children like Adnan root for Dexter, hoping that he doesn't get discovered, praying that he prevails in the end. After all, he is the good guy, the protagonist. He murders for good, right?

"Shows like 'Dexter' teach kids that it is okay to take another person's life if that person has done something bad in his life. No matter how evil a person is, children cannot be allowed to think that murder is an option," opines Haque.

Adnan's mother tells us that she noticed some changes in her son after he started watching the show a year back.

"He was always a happy kid but that seems to be changing. He seems to be getting more aggressive with time. He gets into frequent fights with his class mates. We have spoken to a psychologist who suggested that we restrict the number of hours he watches TV," she says.

The Children Television Foundation of Bangladesh (CTFB) states that exposure to violence on screen can hamper the psychological develop-