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Look now, DD is changing!

S. RAVI



A scene from Jab Jab Bahar Aayee

Special Arrangement



A scene from Khwabon Ke Darmiyan

Special Arrangement

The objective of revamping DD's national channel is laudable provided it is achieved.

The recent advertisements by Prasar Bharti in newspapers announcing the screening of new serials on Doordarshan's (DD) National channel from this Monday surprised many but did not evoke the inquisitiveness expected for a public broadcaster. The latter is natural considering the deluge of programmes on several channels. The former was justified since DD usually does not go to town announcing changes.

Change being part of life is essential for survival in today's cut-throat television channels market, the need to reinvent and revamp cannot be overemphasised. Keeping this in mind, DD has unleashed eight new serials in its prime time slot. "A number of old programmes were been beamed during the prime time and we felt that there is a need to induct fresh ones," explains Deepa Chandra, Additional Director General (ADG), DD National while giving the rationale behind the revamping. She clarifies, "The change is not confined to programme. It encompasses packaging and repositioning of the channel to reach out to the maximum viewers." Being the flagship channel and earning maximum revenue, DD (N) was the natural choice for the changes.

The eight serials have been produced under the Self Financing Commissioning scheme which entails the producer to invest in script, screenplay, cast and crew to submit a pilot for DD's approval. Following assessment, grading is done to arrive at the basic payment for the first 13 weeks. "The television rating points (TRP) seep in after 13 weeks and based on that we decide on whether to increase or decrease the grading," points out ADG. Four serials are from Monday to Thursday, two on the first five days of the week, one from Friday to Sunday and the last on weekends. The frequency of

the serials has been decided keeping in mind the objective of retaining viewers' curiosity to ensure continuous viewing by them. "It will help in garnering better eyeballs," says Chandra.

Earlier the public broadcaster with retrospection as the aim, held a meeting with the producers of three top programmes aired on channels occupying the top four slots in the popularity ratings. "This was done primarily to understand the reason as to why these producers were not attracted and drawn to DD," explains the ADG.

The new software has been selected keeping in mind DD's unique identity as public service broadcaster and at the same time providing entertainment to the audience. "In keeping with the logo of DD National 'Desh ka apna channel', we want to engage in a dialogue with different sections of the society at different times," says Chandra. She empathically adds: "With this in view the serials will definitely carry a message about the core values, ethics, culture and other concerns of our society," she adds.

Agreeing that induction of new programmes at regular intervals is essential, the ADG says, "We are sure of identifying new serials through the SFC system. In fact, we have increased two slabs for payment to producers in order to attract a wide array of talent." "Stree Shakti", a talk show showcasing the journey of women with many celebrities participating and "Paltan" on army personnel are planned for telecast next month. Accepting monitoring has a vital role, she clarifies: "We have three to four teams in place to continuously monitor the scripts, product, content and publicity, to be hands-on."

The perusal of the synopsis of some of the shows makes it evident that it is a mixed bag. "Dard Ka Rishta" brings Sushma Seth of "Hum Log" fame back to DD. It deals with the abandonment and neglect of old parents. Set against the backdrop of scenic Jim Corbett Park, "Prakriti" by Parikshat Sahni, who also acts in it, raises the issue of protection of environment and wildlife through a young girl who shuns a cushy job to opt for forest service. "Khamosh Sa Afsana" deals with the struggle of a girl whose parents are mute and deaf. It stars Tom Alter and Rupa Ganguli. "Happy Homes" produced by Arun Govil is the story of people of diverse regions and religions living happily.

Accused of being rather slovenly on the publicity front, DD this time seems determined to leave nothing to chance. V.K. Jain, ADG, (PR & Publicity) highlights: "It is very important to tell the people about our activities and what we are doing. To achieve this we are making use of social media through Facebook and Twitter. In the former we have eight lakh-plus friends." Apart from this the contents will be uploaded on YouTube which draws attention of all. To harness in-house resources, cross channel publicity is being done on all DD channels and Akashvani stations while also focusing on print media and outdoor publicity. "Our aim is to reach out to the maximum through all possible mediums with the clear objective of increasing the viewership of DD National," says Jain.

DD National must invoke the magic of its past programmes to not only become the country's top channel but also set benchmark for others.

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