



Left: Manasi Salvi (center), who plays the leading role, with child actresses Aksara (left) and Brinda (right).



Above: Manasi Salvi (left) with Jayshree Arora, who plays her mother-in-law.

Soap Opera with a Cause

The cause is noble and the presentation engaging, yet it's a TV serial, in the soap opera style! Built around interesting storylines, *Atmajaa* (Born From the Soul) focuses on gender rights issues and challenges traditional biases against women. Its first season, aired in 2004 on Doordarshan's national network and 10 of its regional channels, focused on sex-selective abortion. The second season of 13 episodes is taking the theme forward. "The issues are unfolding now. This season will take a look at the root causes of female feticide, how issues like dowry, rape, domestic violence,

gender discrimination are linked to people's reluctance to have a girl child," says Nila Madhab Panda, the serial's director.

The production of the TV serial has been sponsored by USAID through IFES, a nonprofit organization, while the Indian Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is providing telecast and promotional support. It will also be shown in 45 countries on DD International, and on Citi Channel, a cable TV network.

Atmajaa is based on a short film of the same name that was screened in May 2005 at the International Independent Film and Video Festival in New York. —D.K.

Director Nila Madhab Panda (left) on the set of *Atmajaa* with the actors.

