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[Búsqueda](#)

Febrero - Marzo 2003

[Número Actual](#)

[Números Anteriores](#)

[Editorial](#)

[Sitios de Interés](#)

[Novedades](#)

[Ediciones Especiales](#)



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Cultural Bane or Sociological Boon?: Impact of Satellite Television on Urban Youth in India

Número Actual

Por [Kuldip Rampal](#)
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Introducción

Christmas eve 1999, Chandigarh, India: France's Fashion Television, one of the fastest expanding international channels in India, is taking a break from its transmission of the latest in haute couture from the fashion houses of Paris. It is time for the latest in lingerie. Millions of Indian viewers on this Christmas eve, still wondering what kissing would be like in Indian movies or television programming because the country's laws bar such scenes in domestic productions, are in for something elegantly provocative and sensuous. Fashion TV has just started showing the latest in lingerie. To the tune of Prodigy's "Smack my bitch up," models wearing eye masks purr up to the catwalk, concealing their faces more than parts of the body that lingerie is supposed to hide. It does not take the viewer long to sense that it is more of a display of full breasts behind the often sheer bras and bottoms left alone by Rio briefs than anything resembling the Victorian-era undergarments for women.

Just as the protected Indian viewer is taking all of that in comes another line of high-fashion lingerie to the song of "Going up, up, up . . . Going down, down, down." The highly suggestive bras and briefs are now supplemented with suspender belts, stockings and heels. The models have stepped down the catwalk and walk around the audience tables coyly. As if that was not enough to shake up the conservative Indian sensibilities, Fashion TV gives a peek into Le Lido, one of the most famous Parisian cabarets in the world, showing bare breasted women aplenty.

Welcome to the world of international satellite television in India. Fashion TV, which reached 30 million viewers in 125 countries in December 1999, is one of about two dozen international channels, many of them from the United States, available on cable and through roof-top satellite dishes across India (*The Economic Times*, July 14-20, 1999, p. 4). The Internet, which is already a big craze in India, is projected to have 30 million subscribers by 2004.

At the dawn of the 21st century, Marshall McLuhan's projected global village (McLuhan, 1967) is increasingly a reality made possible by the communication revolution -- satellite and cable television, multinational media conglomerates such as those of Rupert Murdoch and TIME-Warner communications, and, increasingly, the Internet. This writer, having traveled to some 25 countries, has seen first-hand the pervasiveness of American culture being imported through a variety of media, especially movies and television programming. The Washington Post reported that international sales of American entertainment and software products totaled \$60.2 billion in 1996, more than any other U.S. industry (*The Washington Post*, Oct. 25, 1998, p. A01).

American television is practically everywhere and young people are tuning it in at a viewing scale often unparalleled in the ratings

levels of indigenous programming. When the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation, for example, canceled MTV for contractual reasons in 1994, young Singaporeans spoke out in frustration and rejected an alternative local music video program as "unexciting." MTV has not only been a vehicle for the globalization of American music, but it has also attracted a young audience throughout the world, including in highly conservative countries such as Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The implications of the offerings of free-wheeling Western commercial television programming and movies have long been a subject of concern and research in Western countries. How do people with substantially different social and cultural values cope with such entertainment fare? Writing in *Mass Communication and American Empire* in 1969, Schiller cautioned that the implications of the cultural influences brought about by American programming were far-reaching, especially for developing peoples of the world. "Everywhere local culture is facing submersion from the mass-produced outpourings of commercial broadcasting in the United States," he said, adding, "To foster consumerism in the poor world [through American entertainment programming] sets the stage for frustration on a massive scale" (Schiller, 1969, p. 111).

More recently, Jerry Mander, co-founder of the International Forum on Globalization, has voiced a similar warning. Writing in *The Nation*, Mander (1996) said that global media corporations of Rupert Murdoch, Ted Turner and very few others "transmit their Western images and commercial values directly into the brains of 75 percent of the world's population. The globalization of media imagery is surely the most effective means ever for cloning cultures to make them compatible with the Western corporate vision." Re-visiting the theme of the dominance of American cultural products around the world, Schiller wrote in 1998 that "the machinery of mind management is so entrenched and pervasive that nothing less than seismic movements can be expected to loosen or weaken its pernicious authority" (Schiller, April 1998, p. 195).

This chapter examines the sociological implications of satellite television programming, both Western and Indian, for the urban youth in India in the areas of sex, violence and drugs. We will also examine if there are any indications of positive effects of satellite television. Research for this paper is based on an examination of literature and quantitative data on the subject, and focus group interviews in India by this writer during the summers of 1998 and 1999.

Satellite Television in India

Western television's popularity in India, especially in urban areas, is traced to 1991 when CNN became prominent in the country, as elsewhere in the world, for its live coverage of the Gulf War. The availability of international television in India for the first time in its history that year was aided, in no small measure, by the introduction of economic liberalization by the government the same year. A democratic government with a pronounced economic liberalization policy would have found it difficult, had it tried, to legally keep international television out of the country.

For decades, Indians had been restricted to the fare served by state television known as Doordarshan (DD), a diet of tedious discussions by government bureaucrats, old Hindi movies with generous amounts of singing and dancing, and news programs usually promoting the government line rather than always providing objective and balanced coverage. During the Gulf War, urban India was swept up in the Cable News Network craze. Satellite dish manufacturers worked overtime to provide equipment to hotels and apartment buildings and many people spent hours riveted to the first war seen live in India. But after the war, the repetitiveness of CNN and its concentration on American news caused many Indian viewers to drift away from the American network.

In the fall of 1991, as hundreds of unregulated cable TV operations flourished in urban areas, new channels began appearing on Indian televisions courtesy of Hong Kong-based STAR-TV, including MTV, an all-day sports channel for the cricket-hungry South Asian fans, two entertainment channels carrying a heavy dose of American programming, and BBC World, which the British Broadcasting Corporation launched, no doubt, as its answer to CNN.

Practically overnight, millions of Indian television viewers, long used to DD's staid educational programming and dramas based on Indian mythology, found themselves tuning in to the likes of "Baywatch," "Dallas" and "Dynasty." In a land where kissing has never been allowed in Indian movies or television programming, TV viewers could now experience the "sex and violence" culture long decried even in the West. Further globalization of television has brought dozens of additional channels to Indian viewers, especially since free and democratic India's (Freedom House, 1999) laws do not bar people from setting up their own satellite dishes. A survey of urban youth by India's influential newsweekly *Outlook* found that more than 85 percent of the respondents spend "over two hours daily" watching television. "Sidney Shelton is their [the Indian youth] top author, Dicken a lowly tenth" (*Outlook*, Nov. 8, 1999).

Commenting on the new phenomenon of the popularity of Western television in India, Edward Gargan of *The New York Times* (Gargan, Oct. 29, 1991) wrote: "For India, a nation long padlocked to the government's version of reality, the candy-store variety of programming has brought a poorly contained giddiness."

In early 1999, there were 20 million cable households in India, including at least two million multiple-TV households, and the reach of television was expanding fast. The more than 40 channels observed by this writer in the northern Indian city of Chandigarh in summer 1999 included SONY Entertainment, STAR-World, STAR-Plus, STAR-Movies, STAR-News, MTV, [V] Music, Music Asia, ZEE-Cinema, ZEE-Drama, Fashion-TV from France, BBC World, CNN, Cartoon Network, National Geographic Channel, and TB-6 from Russia, in addition to the three news and variety channels of DD and many other Indian and international entertainment, sports and news channels. The next wave in the Indian television industry was expected to arrive in the country by early 2000 in the form of direct-to-home (DTH) television planned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation and Indian broadcasters.

Consumption of Western English-language programming is facilitated in India by the fact that English, which is one of the official languages of the country, is widely spoken in urban areas. Indeed, according to David Dalby, eminent scholar and linguist from Great Britain, "by the year 2010 India will have the largest number of speakers of English, the world's language of communication" (Vaidya, Nov. 9, 1998).

Although Indians of all ages have been fascinated with Western television, a variety of articles and ratings surveys indicate that the youth of India are particularly enamored with Western television and cultural values that it projects. Ratings indicate that MTV is the most popular channel among teenagers in India followed by other music channels and channels carrying dramas and movies, both Indian and Western. Programming that typically carries advisories for parents in the United States to keep inappropriate programming beyond the reach of their children is routinely available from Western channels in India without issuing such advisories as a matter of rule. The cable television industry was brought under government regulation in 1995 to manage its further expansion, but no moves were made to call for a programming code until early 1999 when the information and broadcasting minister in the federal cabinet

spoke of the need for such a code (*The Times of India*, March 27, 1999).

In a study of Indian satellite television (Crabtree & Malhotra, Fall 1996, p.6), the authors say that "early indications suggest that the presence of Western programming via satellite has had some influence on the social discourse of middle class Indian youth." We now examine the nature of influence, if any, in the areas of sex, violence and drugs before turning to the issue of any sociological benefits from international television.

Satellite Television as a Factor in Sexual Behavior

Vasanthi Nail, a 17-year-old girl from the city of Bangalore, India's silicon valley, told the country's premier news weekly, *India Today*, in October 1997 that she listened to the Spice Girls track "I wanna, I wanna" over and over again because "there is some kind of subliminal message telling me to go ahead and do my own thing" (*India Today*, Oct. 13, 1997). [V] Music channel's "Beach it out with the Spice Girls in Bali" was so popular with Indian teenyboppers that the British pop group was dropping by for an India tour later that month.

The article also noted that the Spice wannabes were not stopping midway. "They have not only donned the attitude, but also their body-hugging gear. Today, it is commonplace to see groups of leggy teenage girls showing a sexy navel peeping over their hipsters" (*Ibid.*). The magazine reported that this "new breed of girls are tougher because of constant Western media exposure and are also 100 percent resistant to authority." College girls often skip lectures and head for "watering holes" which run special afternoon hours for students. The magazine quoted the manager of a trendy Bombay pub as saying, "Girls now associate alcohol and skimpy clothes with hip culture" (*Ibid.*)

This hip generation finds that information on sex is also widely available courtesy of media globalization. Talk shows on adultery, seductive soaps like "The Bold and the Beautiful," and titillating pictures on the Internet are commonly accessible in urban India today. The number of Internet subscribers in India had shot up from 120,000 in February 1999 to 500,000 by the end of the year (The Economic Times, Jan. 3, 2000, p. 1). Even Indian TV serials like "Swabhimaan" and "Kabhie, Kabhie," which are clearly copying the commercial success formula from their Western counterparts, are spiked with illicit sexual relationships and sexual metaphors. Indian film actress Deepti Naval said that "vulgarity in Hindi songs today shows that filmmakers take the audience to be buffoons and even a little retarded. I call today's age as the 'pelvic age', where hero and heroine simply gyrate to the music" (*The Tribune*, Sept. 8, 1999).

Asha Das, an official in the Women and Child Development section of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, said, "I've seen TV even in the West. But ours is much more suggestive with far more innuendoes" (*India Today*, Sept. 21, 1998). A 15-month study conducted on 100 adolescents in India found they took most of their pointers on sex from television and movies. A 12-year-old boy, who said he thought about girls all the time, added, "It's all there on TV -- that's where I learned how to hook girls" (*Ibid.*).

Newspapers, magazines and novels too have been found to be major influences in the early sexual awareness of adolescents. In a New Delhi school, students asked to read the newspaper as part of their curriculum suddenly discovered the graphic reporting of the Bill Clinton-Monica Lewinsky case. According to a national newsweekly (*India Today*, Sept. 21, 1998), "They lapped it up -- especially the jokes. One joke went like this: Why doesn't Monica open her mouth? Because -- ha, ha -- she harbors the evidence there." A school principal commented, "Sex has become as banal as shaking hands -- it is much more in your face than ever before" (*Ibid.*).

As a result, said Dr. Achal Bhagat, a psychiatrist, "More than any generation in this century, children today experiment with sex, drugs and alcohol at a much earlier age" (*Ibid.*). A study conducted on adolescent girls in 1981 by Dr. Alka Dhal, a gynaecologist, found that 90 percent of the girls surveyed had practically no knowledge about sex" (*Ibid.*). In contrast, teenage pregnancies in recent years have reached an all-time high in India. For example, health ministry figures for the state of Maharashtra, of which Bombay is the capital, show that in 1997 girls younger than 15 accounted for 21.7 percent of all abortions -- more than 41,000 -- carried out in the state. There is also a sharp increase in the number of young people turning to prostitution, both as a business and as "customers" (*Ibid.*).

A 1998 study, "Child Prostitution in India" by Centre of Concern for Child Labour, found that the number of children below 14 years in commercial prostitution is increasing at the rate of 8 to 10 percent annually. Nearly 20 percent of the customers of these young prostitutes were found to be students, particularly in the urban areas. Sexually transmitted diseases were becoming a significant problem (*The Times of India*, Nov. 10, 1998).

In a 1998 survey of 3,000 young people, ages 15 to 34, in small and big towns by MTV-India, 29 percent of the respondents said "yes" to the question: Is pre-marital sex a way of life in the '90s? (*The Times of India*, Nov. 13, 1998). That percentage of approval may not be high by Western standards, but for the traditionally conservative Indian population this finding is very revealing about the sexual values of a significant percentage of today's youth. Others saw this finding as evidence that Western influences have not overwhelmed the Indian youth, with most displaying strong traditional moorings with regard to issues like sex and marriage.

G.C. Gupta, a psychologist and professor, citing a number of studies, surveys and trends said that the phenomenon of teenage sexuality has come to stay in the Indian society (*India Today Plus*, 1998). He said trends indicate that it will prosper in the 21st century as a consequence of "free mixing between members of the opposite sex, exposure to increasingly uninhibited mass media, more permissive family/home environment, and the desire to indulge in it just for the kick of it" (*Ibid.*). Cyber romance will also be a major stimulant for the information technology-savvy young population of India, said Gupta.

Satellite Television as a Factor in Violence

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) in India reported that in 1997 young people in the 16-25 age group were responsible for 56 percent of all crimes committed in the country. In New Delhi, the country's capital, 93 percent of all serious crimes in 1998 were committed by young men trying their hand at crime for the first time. A total of 767 robberies were reported in the capital in 1998 compared with 602 in 1997, a jump of 27 percent. Of people committing robberies in the capital, most were below age 30, a third from middle class background, and almost 40 percent were school educated (*Times of India*, March 16, 1999).

This Times article also reported that the crime graph in the entire country has shot up. The following crime data were recorded in 1998: 38,000 murders, 15,000 rapes, 23,000 robberies, 900 cases of extortion, and 35,000 cars stolen. Kidnapping and abduction cases also scored high. A study on crime patterns done at India's prestigious Tata Institute of Social Sciences found in 1998 that the crime rate among the youth had gone up by as much as 40 percent in the past decade. This study also found that although the youth crime wave flows across all races, classes and lifestyles in India, there was a "noticeable increase in the number of heinous crimes committed by young people from middle-class and upper middle-class families" (*India Today*, January 18, 1999).

Achal Bhagat, a New Delhi psychiatrist who runs a counseling center for troubled youth, offered the following explanation for increasing youth crime rate:

In a world where cutthroat competition begins from kindergarten and the concept of having 'made it' is defined by satellite TV images of the rich and famous, most children today prowl tirelessly for a better deal that will free them from the restraints that their parents faced. Ambitions soar and images of making it big (cars, exotic holidays) constantly play on the mind. But when failure strikes, most can't handle it. A squeeze in the job market and the general lack of opportunities frustrate them. And soon the tremendous pressure to succeed builds up anger (*India Today*, Jan. 18, 1999).

This view was shared by Pramod Kumar, director of the Institute of Development and Communication in the northern Indian city of Chandigarh, who said that young people "suddenly find crime and brute force has a premium" (*Ibid.*). Several studies by non-governmental institutions in India indicate that the "sensation-seeking" younger generation facing an unemployment rate of approximately 23 percent increasingly feels insecure and socially frustrated. Crime suddenly becomes an option for a number of young people, even those coming from middle and upper middle class backgrounds, to quickly attain the lavish lifestyle they are seeking. For example, a newspaper report (*The Times of India*, March 16, 1999) said that a young man in New Delhi had stolen approximately \$3,500 from his own house and "to impress his friends got himself a secondhand car."

At a seminar in July 1999 in Chandigarh, several school teachers attributed youth violence to satellite television in particular, although they cited the high unemployment rate and travails of social relationships faced by young people among the contributing factors. The "invasion" of young minds by violence-heavy programming on various cable channels was said to be a catalyst in the rising incidence of crime among the youth. In what is clearly consistent with Albert Bandura's "Modeling Theory" (DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1989, p. 212), one high school principal at the seminar said: "What they [the youth] see on television is what we get from them. They imitate their real-life heroes [role models] on the screen to become real-life heroes themselves (*The Tribune*, July 26, 1999).

Rajni Kothari, an eminent Indian social scientist, wrote in July 1998 that the fast pace of social and cultural changes in the country was contributing to a rising amount of tension. "We are likely to witness criminalization of tensions. Most of the problems emanate from social changes," he said (*The Tribune*, July 31, 1998, p. 4). That was also the view of some experts speaking at the World Conference on Injury Prevention and Control sponsored by the U.N.'s World Health Organization in New Delhi in early March 2000. Dr. Emmanuel Rozental, a surgeon at New York General Hospital, noted at the conference that economic globalization has led to increasing inequality, with concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few and massive exclusion and deprivation among growing majorities. "Social exclusion within contexts characterized by inequity and poverty is fertile ground for all kinds of violence," Dr. Rozental said, adding that when deprivation and opulence co-exist, violence is perceived as functional to the satisfaction of needs that appear otherwise inaccessible (*The Hindustan Times*, March 7, 2000).

Satellite Television as a Factor in Drug Use

A study published by the Ministry of Welfare and Development in India in 1998 found that there were 3 million drug addicts in the country in 1997 out of whom 15,000 were female drug abusers. Drug use was attributed to stress, peer pressure, permissive social atmosphere promoted by both international satellite television as well as privately owned Indian channels and other

media, increased availability of drugs, and often just "to experiment" with drugs. Dr. Aruna Broota, a clinical psychologist, noted that illegal sale of drugs was on the rise in the country. Increasingly young women were getting involved in such a trade "to make a quick buck or earn extra for that new dress or jazzy bloc heels" (*The Times of India*, Aug. 12, 1998, p. 5).

Although use of illegal drugs in India is nowhere close to their use in the West, the problem is getting serious enough for national publications like *India Today*, which came out with a cover story on the issue in its April 5, 1999 edition. Titled, "Drugs: New Kicks on the Block," the investigative story said that the use of cocaine and ecstasy was on the rise, especially among wealthy entrepreneurs and young professionals, "a generation that is rich, successful and wants to party hard" (*India Today*, April 5, 1999).

In what the magazine noted was a typical example of many young urban professionals trying drugs just for the fun of it, it quoted Vicky Kapuria, 32, who runs a computer business and "does drugs every weekend" before going to parties, as saying:, "More than half the crowd in these parties do cocaine and ecstasy. I know because only a user can spot fellow users" (*Ibid.*).

The magazine quoted Dr. Harish Shetty, consulting psychiatrist at the National Addiction Research Center, as saying that cocaine use "is very high in this segment of kids from rich families." Another psychiatrist, Dr. Sanjay Chugh, who managed a de-addiction center in a south Delhi hospital, said, "two years ago, I didn't know a single cocaine addict. Now I treat 25 to 30 cases, all of whom belong to the upper crust." Yusuf Merchant, president of the Drug Abuse Information Rehabilitation and Research Center in Bombay, said that 15 percent of his patients were addicted to cocaine, adding that "the [actual] number is higher since most of these drug addicts don't believe there is a problem." Maneka Gandhi, the country's social welfare minister, whose ministry looks after the de-addiction aspect, confirmed the wide of use of drugs among the wealthier by saying, "Among a certain class this winter, there wasn't a party in Delhi that didn't have cocaine" (*Ibid.*).

Explaining reasons for drug use, Delhi psychiatrist Dr. Achal Bhagat said: "The single-most important reasons seems to be the desperate desire to party hard -- stretch those definitions of fun. Today their whole lives seem to revolve around a partying culture. They live for instant gratification" (*India Today*, April 5, 1999). Although available research indicates that critics are not blaming satellite television directly for promoting drug use, liberal and permissive social values that run through their programming themes combined with their promotion of a sensation-seeking culture are said to be instrumental in the increasing drug abuse in the country. Rising frustration among the youth with high social expectations but inability to achieve them because of the unemployment problem is also cited as a key reason for drug abuse. *India Today's* investigative story mentioned above said that drug use is also linked with copious literature available on the Internet that explains how to do "drugs safely."

Satellite Television and Sociological Benefits

An extensive review of literature on the sociological implications of new media technologies, especially satellite television, in India indicates that there is a positive aspect to what satellite television has to offer. For example, the huge popularity of the Hindi-language programming carried by STAR-TV for its Indian viewers has been promoting understanding of this language among non-Hindi speakers in the country. As a brief perspective, it should be noted that although 15 different languages with hundreds of dialects are spoken in various regions and states of India, the Indian constitution provides for Hindi as the national language of the country. But Hindi is spoken by only about 40 percent of the Indian population, forcing the government to

maintain English, the language inherited from British colonial rule, as an associate national language of India along with Hindi.

The Education Ministry's efforts since the 1960s to promote Hindi through its "Learn Hindi" campaign have often faced stiff resistance in parts of multi-lingual India, especially in the South, where understandably people prefer to learn and use their own language. For example, the southern state of Tamil Nadu refused to carry the Hindi news service from the national television network, DD, in early 1990s and has been insisting that Tamil be made an associate national language. A common sentiment expressed in the South has been that English has been serving the country well for over 100 years, so where is the need to have Hindi as the national language. Moves to teach Hindi across India have been seen as an attempt by the Indo-Aryan people of the North to impose their culture on the Dravidian South, which the South has resisted, at times with demonstrations and riots.

Amidst this continuing row came Hong Kong-based STAR-TV, and then Indian satellite channels such as ZEE-TV, which began to broadcast Hindi movies around the clock. Although India's movie industry, the largest in the world (*The Washington Post*, Oct. 25, 1998), produces movies in a variety of languages, Hindi movies have attracted the best of talent and financial resources. The Bombay-based Hindi movie industry, commonly referred to as "Bollywood," produces hundreds of movies every year, with a huge popularity in India and a substantial viewership in the Middle East, Africa, the Central Asian republics and in Southeast Asia.

The popularity of Hindi movies and other Hindi-language entertainment programming carried by STAR and ZEE is providing an incidental benefit: It is promoting understanding of Hindi across the country, a development that the Indian government, no doubt, welcomes. Since entertainment programming brought by satellite television does not appear to have any hidden agenda, it is apparently contributing toward addressing a sociological problem that the government has not been able to solve through its "Learn Hindi" policy. Rupert Murdoch, whose News Corporation owns STAR-TV, told the Indian prime minister in 1994 that Indian critics needed to tone down their rhetoric of "cultural invasion" by satellite television in view of the obvious sociological benefits that were accruing from it.

Interviews conducted by this writer with a focus group comprising 10 college-aged male and female students in the northern Indian city of Chandigarh in July 1998 about the effects of satellite television revealed another positive aspect of this entertainment and information source. Although the respondents were often concerned that sexual content in television programming was "harmful" for children and teenagers, there was a consensus that satellite television had made them aware of the larger world and the possibilities and opportunities that it presented.

As this writer explored this positive aspect associated with satellite television with the focus group, he was reminded of the "empathy" variable that the American sociologist Daniel Lerner had spoken of as playing a central role in the societal modernization process (Lerner, 1958). Lerner had discovered in his research that media exposure cultivated one's sense of "empathy," which he defined as the capacity to see oneself in desired situations, say a preferred job or a lifestyle, that the empathic individual could then work to achieve.

The focus group members emphasized that they and their peers were concentrating on finding ways to develop the economic ability to achieve the lifestyles that they were learning about from satellite television. A good job and a family with kids, a decent home, a car, good friends, holidays at exotic destinations, and often a pet figured prominently on their list of goals. Indeed, evidence indicates that more and more Indian students are

looking toward education abroad after high school and college, either to settle abroad after education where jobs are seen to be abundant or to improve their competitiveness for jobs in India. Thousands of young professionals are also seeking employment visas or educational opportunities abroad to be able to further their careers.

For example, the New Delhi office of the British Council noted in late 1999 that the number of self-funded Indian students going to the UK for higher education is expected to increase to 6,000 by the year 2,000 from the 1997-98 figure of 2,193. An India-based Australian education official said that the number of Indian students going to his country for further studies is expected to jump to at least 10,000 by the year 2,000 from 3,800 in 1997-98. MBA remains at the top of the list of preferred study disciplines for Indian students in the U.K. and Australia, with the other popular disciplines being information technology, food processing, fashion technology, media studies, hotels and tourism, among many others. The United States, which has historically been the favorite destination of Indian students wanting to study abroad, still continues to attract the largest number of students from India. France and New Zealand are also becoming the countries of choice for Indian students seeking education abroad (*The Indian Express*, Nov. 18, 1998).

A further indication that Indians view globalization generally positively, in spite of the sociological problems linked to it by many people, came from the results of an opinion poll conducted by the *Outlook* newsweekly in early March 2000 in six major cities across India. Fifty five percent of those polled said American culture posed no threat to Indian culture, whereas 33 percent said that it did. Fifty eight percent supported the entry of multinationals into India, while only 29 percent were opposed to it (*Outlook*, March 20, 2000).

Conclusion

Although no definite conclusions were sought or can be drawn from the foregoing analysis of the available data as to the effects of satellite television in India, the available evidence indicates that critics of "cultural imperialism" like Herbert Schiller were only partially right in arguing that Western cultural products are harmful for the youth of developing countries. Critics like Schiller also needed to look into the possible positive effects of exposure to Western popular culture.

It is true that many sociologists, social psychologists, teachers, government functionaries and lay people in India hold the permissive and promiscuous culture portrayed by satellite television as a significant contributing factor to problems in the areas of sex, violence and drugs. One forceful reminder of that view came from an Associated Press story in late 1994. The story said that "hundreds of people sick of violence and sex on television shows have hurled their television sets out of the window" in two large apartment buildings in Bombay (AP, Dec. 26, 1994). This action came amid rising criticism that Western soaps and game shows, and Indian song-dance sequences which are increasingly using the Western sex-and-violence formula for commercial success, are overtly violent or risqué.

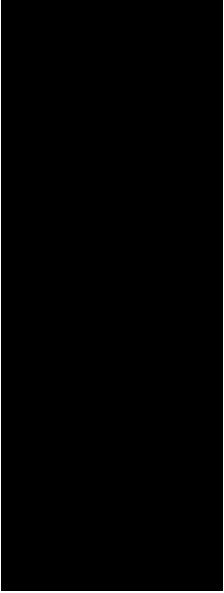
The state government in Maharashtra, with Bombay as its capital, announced in June 1998 that it had asked the culture minister to police sexually suggestive lyrics in movies and music video programs. Even the federal government announced that it will have to devise a multi-pronged approach to meet the challenge of "cultural invasion thrown up by transnational electronic media which have invaded Indian homes" (*The Hindu*, March 14, 1999). Fortunately for free flow of information advocates, the government was not speaking of restriction of such a flow. Instead, it advocated creating an awareness on the part of producers, programmers, parents and people to fight the challenge by becoming responsible producers and discriminating consumers of media (*Ibid.*).

But social scientists also point to other contributing factors to problems in regards to sex, violence and drugs that are commonly associated with media influences. It is virtually impossible to conclusively study the effects of satellite television separate from other influential variables such as parental role in child rearing, unemployment, widening income gap between the rich and the poor linked to economic globalization, peer pressure and stress.

At the same time, the positive effects of satellite television cannot be ruled out. There are indications from the new awareness and motivations acquired by young people in India that such television, indeed the information revolution at large, is instrumental in contributing to, and possibly hastening, the modernization process of people in democratic societies. And who could have imagined before satellite television that a Hong-Kong based television service would help in addressing India's national language problem someday? In retrospect, one can see why a "neutral" foreign channel would have a better chance to accomplish that inadvertently than the state-run television network based in the north of India. There is little doubt, therefore, that there is more to international satellite television than just "cultural imperialism."

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