How has satellite Television brought about cultural change in the Indian Mindset?

Before we delve deep into the impact of satellite TV/Dish TV, which dished foreign culture into our Drawing Rooms, Bed Rooms and Living Rooms since 1990’s let us imagine today’s scenario.

Sitting with my 18 years old niece and my 8 year old son, I realise that they are totally at ease with the otherwise explicit content shown on MTV, where obscene gestures and gruesome crime is taken as just another scene. Foul language, short dresses and vulgar content has become the order of the day.

In contrast to this, I remember, during my childhood, old and young, men and women, came together holding “Agarbatti” and chanting “Jai Shree Ram”, sitting together on the floor they watched TV serials like Ramayana & Mahabharat. There were Tele-series like “Surbhi” which showcased Indian culture and diversity from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. There was “Bharat Ki Khoj” which enlightened us about rich history of India its Kings, various dynasties etc.

There were serials like “Buniyaad” “Neem Ka Ped” and “Humlog”, which embibed folk culture, community wisdom, patriotism and secularism, whereas being no less then a full time entertainer!

Till the inception of “Gulf War” we had only Doordarshan, our own government channel giving us both “News” and “Views”. But our own inquisitiveness to know more about the happenings of the world, opened the doors for foreign funded news channels, Fox News, CNN and BBC made their entry to Indian television through satellite.

But along with these knowledge barons, came MTV and STAR TV, exposing Indian taboos to totally open culture where the dresses were short, language was foul and sensationalism dominated the scene. There were serials like “FRIENDS” which had jokes termed as vulgar and explicit by Indian standards, there were reality shows like “Big Boss” where contestants openly did things, otherwise counted as “Taboo” in our culture.

How did all this “Masala” change cultural mindset of Indians? Let us first look at the gloomy picture i.e. the negative side of it.

Lets first look at our belief, language, and the dressing sense; which are the utmost important part of any culture.

Indian mindset changed from believing in community living, Religion – oriented life to an Urbanised, individual centric living, which had no taboos, neither in showing pre-marital relations, live-in-relations nor in showing “explicit content” or violence without any remorse. But the immature adolescent mind suffered the most. They could not judge what is good or bad and there has been a rise in the “Juvenile Crime”, aptly reflected in the Nirbhaya case.

Although women have come out of their four-walled confinements there has been, an increased objectification of their bodies. They have been used for commercial ventures and rather than becoming role models, they have become just “models”

People in general and youngsters in particular have suffered from Desensitisation. This all is due to shows like “Roadies”, Khatron Ke Khiladi:, where it is “Cool” to do daring/vulgar acts which are totally unmindful and obscene.

Urban, filthy way of living out of pocket and selfish behaviour has taken a toll on old and poor people. There has been constant migration from villages to urban areas only to end up in slums. This commercial way of Western living has taken us away from the detached way of life which had “Moksha” as final goal. Focus has shifted from Joint Families to nuclear family and loneliness resulting into “lack of trust” and “Suicides”.

Effect of Dish TV has been so pernicious that our dresses have become small, houses have become big, cars have become bigger, but our heart and minds have shrunk to narrow-minded individualism.

But “Dish TV” has given some sweet dishes also, along with the bitter platter shown in above paragraphs.

Focus on living life fully by enjoying the blessings of life-food, travel and enjoying talking to people from all cultures and civilisation has brought up social, horizontal and vertical mobilisation not only throughout the country, but across the border as well. “Masterchef India season 2” winner, a divorced single mother got the identity of an icon and celebrity, resulting into women empowerment. She broke the shackles of patriarchal mindset seeing separated women as curse, as we see in Vrindavan. Now they don’t commit Sati, but they are now “youth icons”, thanks to shows like “Oprah Winfrey”, which idolise women like “Aishwayra Rai” as achievers in the society, where still sex-ratio is alarmingly low and there is a mindset of treating women either as “object of pleasure” or slaves of men!

Shows like Indian Idol and voice India have made people “Aspire for more”, expanded their personal space and made the whole society achievement oriented rather than relying on Caste, Region and dynasties.

“Social Psyche” has changed towards a liberal, casteless society, where youngsters are more oriented towards their own comforts and they enjoy life to its fullest. It is quite apparent that youngsters are no more bothered about whether there will be Babri Masjid or Mandir, at the disputed site. They have embraced the easy way of living, thanks to exposure to world’s different culture.

Not only this, there has been increase in knowledge and curiosity due to exposure to Tele-series like National Geographic and History channel, thanks to Dish TV.

On the balance-sheet, the paradox of our society having ethos of Indian culture along-with the Urban fast-life, we must do some rational censorship, till we achieve a find blend of good things of our culture and the openness of Western Civilisation. The future belongs to a life away from “Hedonism”, but liberal; enough to embrace all cultures.

Manu Kr. Jha

8826571637

manu.jha2004@gmail.com