

PTV's unbridled rush to liberalism

Whether we like it or not but the fact remains that we have surrendered our sense of responsibility and shame. We have made our self helpless, silent spectator of the rising tide of cultural deviancy and liberal revolution fomented by our television. Almost everyone who watches PTV is of the opinion that it has very much relaxed its moral standards and in most cases is following the footprints of Indian TV channels. In laymen words: "General Sahib's TV is crossing the limits of decency." We need to think if we can afford to brush this fact aside as a trivial issue or have to gauge the consequences and take some corrective measures in time.

Perhaps decency is not entirely dead in Pakistan. However, we are well on the way to say goodbye to a society where good predominates and public equivocally identify and stigmatize the bad. Presently we hear no parent, no civic or political leader outraged at the fact that now not even the home is safe. Some of the dark forces, which were once stopped by the front door, have found their way into our homes through progressive programmes. Satellite dishes and cable TV are optional and those who like may use them for information or entertainment as they may wish, but PTV has become a compulsory component of our lives, which cannot be avoided regardless of a person's choice to watch it or not.

We are silent for we consider it a trivial issue but this is the beginning of a situation which has led parents even in India to protest over the rising immorality due to satellite channels. The Indian film industry is busy in spreading filth and the concerned parents have broken their television sets in protest. Pramod Navalkar, a former Minister of Culture, is fulminating about the images of sex all around him. Pramod Navalkar has launched an antiobscenity drive with the aim of getting immoral content in TV programmes and magazines banned. To say the least, academic studies and researches are going on in India to gauge the impact of dirty movies and satellite TV programmes on the society. Moreover, conservative Hindus, whose cultural soul is

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According to a study, teenage pregnancy and abortion rates only in New Delhi rose dramatically from just 20 to 278 between 1991 and 1994. In the southern a state of Kerala, the number of teenage abortions are rising by twenty per cent a year. All this is the direct result of sex bursting out of the closet with the false confidence of the Western idea that implies that its time has come. And, consequently, values, attitudes and behaviour are in state of tremendous flux as the TV revolution has corrupted traditional values and brought about the end of Indian civilisation we know of.

According to London Observer's report, "unwanted pregnancies and clandestine abortion have always been part of the lives of impoverished women, but now it seems that middleclass India is experiencing the same phenomenon as teenagers feel peer pressure to have sexual relations." Indian demographers also attribute to the rise of women increasingly becoming sexually active at early ages, cohabiting more, and marrying or having children at later ages to the Western influence through TV. In a recent survey, fifty six per cent female students in New Delhi said they believed casual sex

relaxing broadcasting and publication standards of morality, the more the American leaders are struggling to restore and recreate limits within their lives. In June 1995, for instance, in a speech in Los Angeles, opposition leader Bob Dole seriously criticised and accused the entertainment industry "poisoning the minds of American youth," while the government "assaults the values and moral codes taught in churches and synagogues."

"Every parent knows," Mr. Dole said, "the way the popular culture ridicules family values. Our music, our movies and advertising regularly push the limits of decency, bombarding our children with destructive messages of casual violence and even more casual sex."

Time Magazine, also, waged its finger. In the first week of June 1995 through a splendid cover story it acknowledged the charges of cultural pollution against its parent company — Time Warner — as true. New York Daily News columnist Jim Sleeper has the right term for what is happening in the US. He calls it a "civic rebellion" against cultural polluters. This is a broad based and rising campaign supported by ordinary citizens who feel overwhelmed by an increasingly coarse corrupt and brutal popular culture.

Is not it a matter of shame for us to promote and embrace a source of debased and demeaning entertainment that is being rejected by the people who created it? "An informed shift in public taste may be our only hope of reversing the current malignant mood," writes Martha Bayles in her book, "Hole in Our Soul." The present "artists" of the entertainment industry she writes, "are like child who wets his pants to get attention. However, we are silently accepting the rejected."

Senator Kent Conrad's proposal to reject and block the immoral content on TV was endorsed by President Clinton and passed by the US senate. It involves as much government censorship as self-control. Unable to stop the TV channels from producing and broadcasting immoral programmes,

The American producers can justify their cheerleading for "egalitarian hedonism" by saying that their TV's sexual content reflect mores of their society, but PTV doesn't have that justification. The defence that "it's real" does not work in Pakistan. We cannot justify "liberal PTV" revolution by taking refuge on the low grounds of realism, snorting that it presents what is actually going on. We must stop what has corrupted the West and neighbouring India. Cable TV and dishes antennas are available and anyone who wants to enjoy these facilities can enjoy them any time they may like. In this age of information, we cannot avoid dish and cable but its up to the individual conscience and sense of responsibility how to use them for the greater benefit. PTV, on the other hand, is everywhere — unavoidable and uncontrollable. So, it has to provide entertainment and information in a balanced manner without relaxing its moral standards.

... survive, are roaming at the mouth ever since satellite TV came to India ten years ago. On the other hand, we in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, are slowly and silently sliding down the secular and liberal path of immoral squalor, without anyone even taking notice of it.

Most of our leaders proudly yearn for a "liberal democracy," ignoring the fact, pointed out by Amstrong Williams in the Washington Times (September 1, 1995) that "laissez faire liberalism has created a do-your-own-thing, self-indulgent, personal ethic." And we are quietly following the same doctrine: unmoved and unprovoked by whatever is going on the screen of our televisions. This moral myopia and celebration of degrading content and mindless entertainment under the label of "progress" and "liberalism" must force us to look for answers to the following simple questions.

We must ask those people, who dominate political and administrative offices, who control radio, television, newspapers and films to step back a few inches and look at themselves: Are they pleased with the products their families routinely watch at the mini screen? Are they going to worsen or enhance the quality of our national life? To foresee the impending disastrous consequences of our failure to clearly demarcate the line between good and bad, we must try to understand the background of how not only the line of taste but of human dignity and decency has been crossed in India, Europe and America — as they have a powerful influence on our TV, and establish, how powerful a role of TV in molding a society is being taken for granted in Pakistan.

According to Amrit Dhillon of London Observer Service: "India is being asked to accept in five years changes that have crept over the West in several decades. Elderly Indians watch agog as they hear all manner of intimate practice exhaustively discussed on the Oprah Winfrey show on satellite, while children, when asked for a kiss, reply, 'All right, but not 'Santa Barbra kiss, OK?'" In India no one is unaffected by the transformation brought about the satellite TV.

before marrying was acceptable and that virginity should no longer be a prerequisite for a bride. Seventy five per cent said sexual relationship should not necessarily be viewed in the context of love or a step towards a permanent marriage.

On the other hand are the products of great geniuses at the American TV and film industry who left no stone unturned to evoke all the sickening clichés of New York's sex industry. The print media is also supporting them in spreading the cultural poison to the rest of the world. The New York Times advertisement on August 28, 1995, for example, expressed surprise that "some people are taking different perception" or porn advertisements than their "intended message."

The intended message, we are told, is that "young people today, the most media savvy generation yet, have a real strength of character and independence." And, moreover: "They have very strongly defined lines of what they will and will not do — and have great ability to know who they are and who they want to be." These messages of American entertainment industry are so obvious: "Peel Off Inhibitions," and "Just Do It." The liberal content of PTV, so influenced by the satellite TV, brings only one declaration to our families and that is to convince us that instant gratification is the supreme human virtue.

PTV must get out of the Western and Indian Influence whose only message is that there are no rules; or if there are, break them; do your own thing, work outside the lines. And we, as a whole, whether lost in joy and festivities of Islamabad, or suffering from a sense of misery and wretchedness in some remote corners of Pakistan, have failed to understand how deeply these anarchic messages are taking roots in our society. The very leaders to whom we look to maintain the leftover moral boundaries in society, appear instead to be concerned solely with their power, and instead are removing them in a bid to be seen as "liberals" and "moderates" to the West.

The irony, however, is that the more our leaders try to cut our cultural roots by

... producing and broadcasting immoral programmes the US government now forces manufacturers of TV sets to build in a special electronic device, which reads a rating signal that broadcasters have to transmit with each programme. So, those who want to effectively block morally degrading programmes, the V-chip is doing for them.

Passage of V-Chip bill by the US senate speaks volumes of the liberal hypocrisy. When Iran banned all satellite dishes, it was condemned as a "totalitarian state" and BBC aired a very critical programme about the Indonesian government's ban and heavy taxes on dish antennas. It is plain nonsense to think that our TV in Pakistan cannot become like Indian TV and will not affect our society like the US and Europe. It is just a matter of time. Remember how sex was absent as colour during the early days of TV in America. Now zoom in on to the new millennium when the TV is not only dishing up sex more often than it piles commercials, but that it clearly endorses recreational intercourse, show men and women joyfully atop each other and goggles at teens losing their innocence.

We need to condemn the policies of our government which are aiding or abetting in activities that are cracking the dawn of our cultural decline. We must speak plainly and openly about the injustices perpetrated in the name of progress by the PTV. Hollywood and Bollywood entertainment industries are trying to feed their nations' enormous spiritual hunger, but PTV doesn't need to do that, as it cannot replace our faith and cultural spirit, as we are not merely individuals like the Americans and Indians, but bonded to a greater community — the Islamic Ummah — with a great purpose of our life. For us morality is not a private and relative matter.

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