

# Impact of Western TV Channels on Viewers of Bangladesh

By:

Md. Jalal Abdul Naser Bhuiyan

THESIS

Submitted to  
KDI School of Public Policy and Management  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY

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Supervisor Kim Kyong - Dong

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## **Abstract**

Bangladesh is a moderate Muslim country. But it is highly influenced by the Indian society and culture. Different ruling parties tried to resist this Indian influence. Because of geographical nearness, they failed to do it. With the emergence of satellite television after 1992, this Indian influence or the so called Indianisation became overwhelming. This influx of Indian Hindu culture was a shock to some fundamental Muslim and also some Highbrow. Western TV Channels to some extent replaced the Indian influenced. Especially, the Highbrow and the Lowbrow with High Taste embraced this Western culture. For some conservative Muslim, it was like an eye opener. But Western Channels also have not come without any flaw. No mentionable research work has yet been found on the impact of Western Channels on the viewers of Bangladesh. This work only initiates the process.

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2007

**Dedicated to**

My two babies Zakia and Tasnia, my wife and other members of the family whom I failed to give time because of this thesis.

## **Acknowledgements:**

This thesis is a result of wise opinion of many viewers and media officials. Professors, sociologists, News and Program Producers and Reporters spent their valuable time in answering my questions. I want to thank them all. I thank Md Sirajul Haque Bhuiyan who helped me in conducting the survey. I acknowledge my gratefulness to Ms. Ferdous Ara Begum, Member UN CEDAW Committee and Former Director General, BTV and Professor Hong Ik Chung of Seoul National University who inspired me to work on this topic. I also acknowledge my gratefulness to Professor Kim Kyong Dong who inspired me to write something of my own and advised me throughout the whole process of writing this thesis.

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**List of abbreviations:**

TV: Television

BTV: Bangladesh Television

CEDAW: Convention on Elimination of All Sorts of Discrimination Against Women

# **Impact of Western TV Channels on Viewers of Bangladesh**

## **Introduction:**

Western countries along with their army and media are now ruling the world. Western army is present in some countries but western TV Channels, with full force, are present in almost all countries of the world. It is with this audio-visual media that super powers and multinational companies of the western world can enter our living rooms and seduce people of all ages, sexes, cultures and values. The impact of these Western TV Channels is not the same upon all viewers around the world. The culture and values depicted in these channels sometimes create conflict with set values, culture and habits of people in some countries. It becomes really serious when these clashes with political and religious ideologies or beliefs of people of some countries which are quite different or opposite in some aspects. This thesis proposes an investigation into the impact of the TV Channels on viewers of different age group, sex and belief in Bangladesh.

## **Motivation:**

In this age of Information and Communication Technology, Television with its audio and visual effects is more powerful than other forms of media. It is a source of learning foreign culture. Western documentary channels like 'Animal Planet', 'Discovery' and 'Geography Channel' teach the kids and adults many unknown things related with science, technology and nature. We cannot see these on other Asian or South Asian channels. Western News Channels like 'BBC' and 'CNN' sometime come up with sensational news coverage and

interviews. These are absent in other news channels. Besides, these English Channels help our kids learn English. So Western Channels are beneficial in many ways.

But some western channels, especially entertainment channels are now-a-days bombarding our kids with sexual messages and images. Some television channels portray very young girls in sexual ways. It seems that some channels are experimenting with eroticizing the child. Action channels show violent scenes which cause “Mean and Scary World” syndrome. Even news and cartoon channels show violence. Our children are vulnerable to these images. Watching TV is a significant factor in childhood obesity. ‘McDonaldization’ through advertisements is widespread. Even popular cartoon serial “Tom & Jerry” promotes smoking by showing Tom smoking. Western TV Channels promote drinking alcohol and sexual relation beside marriage which is sometime unhealthy and in conflict with values of people of Bangladesh and neighboring countries. The clash of values, cultural conflicts and inability to keep pace with the western culture or culture shock cause frustration, addiction, loss of family values and loss of identity. In this situation the impact of foreign channels, especially that of the western channels on the viewers needs to be assessed. The Government of Bangladesh permitted satellite television and cable operation in the early 1990s. After that no study has been found on TV Channels’ impact on viewers of Bangladesh. So I wanted to carry out a research on it. Besides, after the Iraq War, there was much controversy about the role of western news media. In this situation, the role of western channels has once again come to the forefront.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of the study is to find out the positive and negative impacts of Western Channels on viewers of different ages, sexes and values. I have depicted how Western TV Channels affect our children's health and education and women's behavior. After the Gulf War and September 11, the popularity of CNN and BBC soared even in the Muslim dominated countries. But after the Iraq War there has been some dissatisfaction that CNN and BBC only show one side of the story. In my study I have tried to focus on it too. I analyzed whether transmission of some western channels should be blocked inside the country or not. If not, what else can be done to protect our children and girls and to save our age old culture and religious values. It is our moral obligation to save our children from eroticization, from exposure to violence, ensure healthy child development, prevent McDonaldization, media aggression and cultural conflict. Otherwise, some of the viewers, being overexposed to western and foreign culture will lose their identity and family values. Those who cannot accept other culture or keep up will suffer from culture shock. I tried to device out how to make TV more positive for maximum viewers.

**Thesis Writing Methodology/Data Collection:**

Articles published so far provides information about impact on people of different ages and sexes irrespective of region or especially of USA. I have used these data. But to show the especial impact on viewers of Bangladesh, the clash of culture, values and differences of context, I have collected opinion from News Editors /News Producers/ Program Producers/ Program Directors

/artists / professors / concerned Government Officials, etc. I investigated different news reports and articles, published in national dailies and magazines and collected data from those articles. I interviewed UN Member, Professors, sociologists, decision makers in media, News and Program Producers. Besides, I have conducted a survey on more than one hundred and twenty viewers from different age groups, economic conditions and sexes. Among the respondents 41% was male and 59% was woman. It was really difficult to conduct survey among the poor and illiterate people and the children. Because neither do they understand the questionnaire well nor can they express their opinion. Some of the rich and literate people don't understand or watch Western Channels because of their weakness in English. I considered only those who watch them. But the positive side of this survey was that most of the interviewees were in some way engaged with media. So they were more conscious of TV Channels and programs and their opinion truly reflect the impact of Western TV Channels on viewers of Bangladesh. Nevertheless, it seemed that some respondents are afraid of or feel embarrassed in answering some questions related with Islamic or terrorist groups. I have therefore decided not to consider some of those responses.

## **Problem Definition**

### **Brief Description of Different TV Channels:**

There are hundreds of Television channels worldwide. Western Channels cover a large part of this visual world. Among these Western Channels, there are PBS, ABC, NBC, CBS, FOX, The CW, MyNetworkTV, ABC1, Animal Planet, Asianet, BBC World, Cartoon Network, Channel 4, Channel S, CNN International, Discovery, Disney Channel, Fashion TV, Fox News Channel, Kiss TV, etc.

### **Western TV Channels in Bangladesh:**

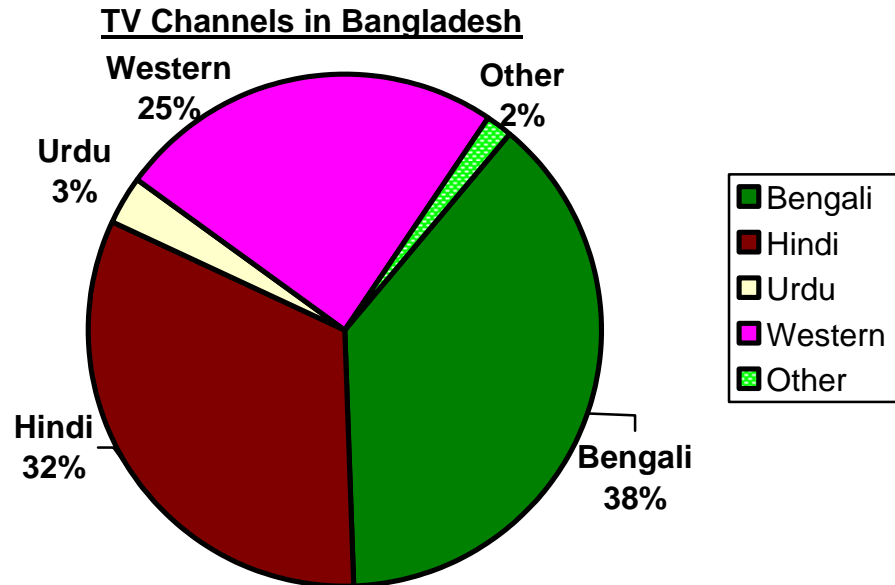
Till the early 1990s, the national terrestrial channel Bangladesh Television was the only Television Channel in Bangladesh. Satellite TV Channel was introduced in Bangladesh in the early 1990s. On September 29, 1992, the US news network CNN started relaying its transmission in Bangladesh for a few hours everyday using the BTV channel. Thus the history of satellite TV channels in Bangladesh begins with a Western Channel. Later, BBC started the same under similar arrangements. Permission to use dish antennas for receiving satellite transmissions directly by general users opened up new opportunities for the viewers of Bangladesh. Between 1992 and 1995, more than 10 international TV channels entered Bangladeshi homes. Today, the number has reached more than 60. Among them Bangladesh Television (BTV), BTV World, ATN Bangla, Bangla Vision, ETV (defunct), Channel I, Ruposhi Bangla Television (New York), NTV, RTV, Channel S (USA), Boishakhi, My TV are some of the Bengali Channels. Of the 55-60 channels



transmitted by different Cable Operators or received by general viewers, about 25 are Bengali TV Channels. More than 16 are Western English Channels and about 23 are Hindi and Urdu Channels.

<b>No.</b>	<b>Bangla Channels</b>	<b>Hindi Channels</b>	<b>Urdu Channels</b>	<b>Western Channels</b>	<b>Other</b>
1	Akash	Lemon	Qtv	Star World	TVS Monde
2	ATN Bangla	B4U	PTV World	Animal Planet	
3	Bangla Vision	Z Premier		MTV	
4	Bangladesh Television (BTV),	Star		Fashion TV	
5	Boishakhi	Star One		AXN	
6	BTV World	Sony Max		Animax	
7	Channel 1	DD Sports		Star Sports	
8	Channel I	Tele Brands		CN	
9	Channel S	Z Cinema		CNN	
10	CSB News	Z Music		National Geography	
11	DD Bangla	Star Plus		Star Movies	
12	DD Metro	Zee TV		ESPN	
13	DD7	Sony		BBC World	
14	Ekushey Television (defunct)	Star Gold		Z Studio	
15	ETV Bangla	YoMusic		Ten Sports	
16	My TV	Tara Music		HBO	
17	NTV	Sony SAB			
18	RTV	NDTV			
19	Ruposhi Bangla Television (NewYork)	Z Sports			
20	STV (USA)	Z Smile			
21	Tara	Zoom			
22	Tara News				
23	Z Bangla				

Table 1: TV Channels Bangladeshi Viewers Watch



Zee TV and other Indian channels arrived with the huge entertainment shows and became incredibly popular among the middle class viewers. A survey, conducted by 'Centre For Communication and Research' in 1994, explicitly demonstrates the popularity as well as the strong footing of the Western and Indian TV Channels in Bangladesh. 41% city viewers revealed their passion for Zee TV (Indian), 21% were identified as the viewers of Channel V, 11% adored STAR Plus and 7% watched Prime Sports (English) regularly in the capital city (Rahman 1994: 11). The statistics is indicative in gaining an insight about the penetration of the Western and Indian Channels in Bangladesh, which has shaken the traditional cultural domain of Bangladesh.

**Advertisements/Programs/News on Western and Other TV Channels:**

There is much difference in advertisements, programs and news shown in Bangladeshi, Indian Hindi and Western English Channels. This difference is both in terms of contents and style of presentation. A survey carried out by

Bangladesh Television shows that the Government controlled “Bangladesh Television” is the only terrestrial channel watched by 95% people in the country. A large amount of people, especially in the rural area still doesn't have Satellite TV Channels inside their house. They watch Satellite TV in the bazaar or some other rendezvous. But they usually watch Bangladeshi or Indian Hindi Channels. So the impact of Western TV Channels is much limited in the rural area.

The impact is great on people in the urban area because of the overwhelming appeal of the advertisements and programs of western channels. This appeal is absent in Bangladeshi as well as Indian TV channels. Bangladesh Television and BTV World follow “**TV Code of Advertising Standards**” for its advertisements. According to it, Bangladesh Television and BTV World can not show advertisements which contradict with the national culture, spirit of Liberation War and religious values. Private Bangladeshi satellite channels have no regulation to follow for their advertisements. But they usually don't show programs and advertisements, which does not depict our culture. Indian Hindi channels are much liberal in terms of dress pattern. But Indian society and the family values depicted in most Indian TV Channels have much similarity with those in Bangladeshi society. But Western channels come with a society and culture, which is much different from ours. Advertisements on these Western channels therefore do not depict our culture. The Advertisement section in Bangladesh Television divides the advertisements on TV Channels in two major categories:

Category 1: There are advertisements made with artists of Bangladesh and made in Bangladesh. These advertisements are based on our culture.

Category 2: There are advertisements made with foreign artists and made outside Bangladesh. These advertisements are based on western culture. <sup>1</sup>

The same difference exists in programs as well as news on Bangladeshi, Indian and western channels. In government owned TV Channels of Bangladesh, a Preview Committee watches and approves programs and films before transmitting them. The Preview Committee does not approve any program that contradicts with Bangladeshi culture, religion, values and beliefs. Though there is no regulation regarding this, Private TV Channels follow the tradition set by the Government Channels. Indian society presented in Indian Channels being much similar to Bangladeshi society does not create any clash of culture. But Western Channels come with different programs depicting a quiet different society with quiet different values and beliefs.

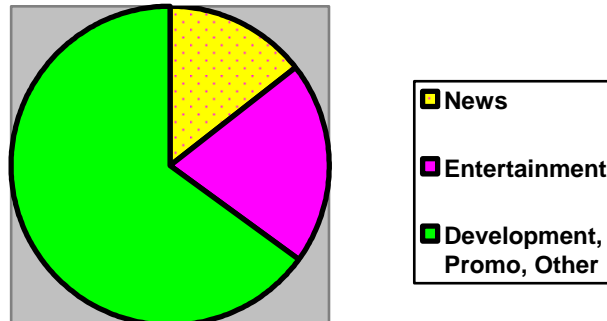
There is not much difference in contents of news presented in different channels. The difference is in the style of presentation. Bangladesh Television is a Public Service Broadcaster and it acts as the spokesman of the government. It is not only an entertainment channel. It gives highest priority to news.

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<sup>1</sup> Mr Mamun Sarker, Sales Executive, Bangladesh Television

The chart below shows the percentage of different types of programs on Bangladesh Television.

### Entertainments, News, and Other Programs on BTV



BTV, January 2007

Because of their commitment to the nation, news in Government Channels reflects national culture and belief in its contents and presentation. Government Channels usually don't show violence in news. According to BTV's practice, it does not include visual coverage of bloodshed, news of rape, acid violence, murder, or anti government elements in its line up. Private Bengali channels operating inside Bangladesh, does not have these limitations but their style of presentation is nearly the same. Besides, all of them transmit some news of Bangladesh Television at the same time. So there is a similarity in News on all Bangladeshi Channels.

The difference between news on Bangladeshi and Western Channels is both in contents and in the way of presentation. The local news, religion and politics is absent in Western Channels. Western channels don't reflect our country in their news and even in documentaries. So the Western news usually does not have much appeal to a large number of viewers in Bangladesh. Besides, most of the viewers don't understand English.

But gradually the Bangladeshi Channels are following the western style. Besides, they are getting news feeds from Western Channels like CNN, BBC, AFP, AP, etc. Thus the difference of style and contents between Bangladeshi and Western Channels is getting narrow day by day.

**Sex on Western and Other Channels:**

About 80 percent of Bangladeshis are Muslims, making Bangladesh one of the largest Muslim countries in the world. About 13 percent of the population is Hindu. Less than 1% is Buddhist. Less than 1 million people are Christian. Bangladeshi society is therefore a relatively conservative one. Our Bangladeshi TV Channels don't allow uncovered or half covered women on TV. Except on some music channels, Indian dress pattern is most of the time the same as that on Bangladeshi TV Channels. Western TV Channels present a contrast in this respect.

		
<p>Bangladeshi TV Channels</p>	<p>Indian TV Channels</p>	<p>Western TV Channels</p>

The scenes above show the difference between Bangladeshi, Indian and Western dress patterns in daytime programs.

In music videos women are sometime portrayed as objects of lust, scantily and provocatively dressed.



Music Video on Bangladeshi Channel

Music Video on Hindi Channel

Music Video on Western Channel

Bangladeshi TV Channels, specially the government owned TV Channels don't allow sexual elements in their advertisements. Indian TV Channels

Advertisements		
Bangladeshi TV Channels	Indian TV Channels	Western TV Channels
 <p>LUX BEAUTY SOAP</p>	 <p>L'OREAL India</p>	 <p>GARNIER USA</p>

sometime allow short dresses. But sexual element is common in advertisements in Western TV Channels. It is at its extreme in ads of cosmetic items.

The difference is shocking when it comes to late night shows.

Late Night Show		
Bangladeshi TV Channels (BTV)	Indian TV Channels	Western TV Channels (Star Movies)
Only Talk show/Music Video 		

Bangladeshi TV channels show classical music or talk show (usually political) at late night. Indian TV channels usually show Bollywood Movies or music videos. But some Western TV Channels like Star Plus, AXN and Star World sometimes show drama serials or other entertaining programs which contain extremely sexual elements.

**Violence in Western Channels:**



Bangladesh Television, the only TV Channel that covers 97% geographic area and 95% people of Bangladesh does not show violence in its program. It does not even show murdered victims, acid violence or blood in its news. It does not report on incidents which can create social unrest. Private Bangladeshi Channels show or report on all these things. Nevertheless, they usually don't show violence in programs. In Western as well as Hindi TV Channels violence is present mainly in horror series and horror movies.



Violence/Horror Show		
Bangladeshi TV Channels	Indian TV Channels	Western TV Channels
No horror scene		

**Commodification:**

Commodification in TV Channels is common both in Bangladeshi, Indian and Western Channels. As Bangladesh is a moderate Muslim country, commodification of female figure is much controlled. But it is in its crude form in Indian and Western Channels.

Commodification	
Western TV Channels	Bangladeshi Channels Mobile Phone - Channel I
	

The ad in the middle above titled “**Assembly Line**” works to commodify and objectify the woman in the ad. The laps of the three men serve as the conveyor belt for the product to move along as the men inspect it for impurities and by obvious extension the product being inspected is the blonde

woman in the gold dress. She is no longer a person, but merely an object on an assembly line. The 3<sup>rd</sup> advertisement is one of a mobile phone showing the reduced rate. But the female figure is more prominent in the ad than the mobile set.

**Eroticization of Young Girls:**

Television has an increasing tendency to portray very young girl children in sexual ways. In some Western Channels like Star Movies, MTV, AXN, etc. camera angles, wounded facial expressions, and vulnerable poses mimic the visual images common in pornographic films. Advertising firms are to a large extent experimenting with eroticizing the children. This is at its extreme in Western print and visual media. But these days, the Indian Hindi Channels are outreaching the Western Channels in some cases.

**Stereotypical Messages:**

A stereotype is a generalization made about a group of people which is supposed to be necessarily true for everyone in the group and which works to erase the differences within the group. Television programs and news are full of stereotypical messages. On TV viewers find

Male	Female
More dominant, rational, ambitious, smart, competitive, powerful, stable, violent, tolerant, strong, skilled, emphasize good performance, active, able to solve problem, competent	Submissive, sensitive, romantic, attractive, happy, warm, sociable, peaceful, fair, submissive, timid, emphasize attractiveness and desirability, incompetent, unable to solve problem without assistance, indecisive, caregiver, mother, wife, beautiful secretary
Brain counts	Appearance counts

**Table 2**

Western TV Channels add to all these.

**Impact on Children:**

Children comprise a large portion of TV viewers in Bangladesh. But among the viewers of Western TV Channels like CN (Cartoon Network), Star Movies, HBO and MTV, the share is even larger. By the time a child graduates from high school, he would have spent around 15,000 hours watching programs on television, and only 12,000 hours learning academic subjects in the classroom. This includes programs, news, and commercials. As they are captive audience, advertisers direct their advertisements specifically at them and through them at their parents. The children are easy prey to the repetitive advertisements that embed messages into their receptive minds. Children's growing process is a process of learning and experience from different sources. Excessive exposure to television makes them dependent and addicted to television. It narrows down their source of external education and experience. A survey<sup>2</sup> conducted among 97 children in Bangladesh between the ages of 1-19 shows that English Cartoon is the favorite program of 63 children. Bangladeshi TV Channels hardly produce cartoon program. So "Cartoon Network" is the only channel of enjoyment to them. So whatever impact TV Channels have on them is mostly of Western Channels. TV affects kids' sleep, weight, grades, behavior, and more. Survey carried out on 77 children who watch cartoon shows that on an average a child watches cartoon 8.766 hours a week.

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<sup>2</sup> This survey has been carried out in Dhaka in April, 2007

There are only two Cartoon series on Bangladesh Television and BTV World which are “Meena” and “Sisimpur” (Sesame Street). Both of them, as sponsored by the donor agencies are educative. Western Cartoon Channels are richer in its collection of educative programs. But the time these cartoon channels takes away from our school going children is unrecoverable. These TV channels along with other Hindi Channels affect kids' sleep, weight, grades, behavior, and more. Watching “Cartoon Network” takes time away from children’s healthy activities like playing in the field, practicing music and art or other activities that require regular practice, having dinner together with the family, or reading classics. Excessive exposure to television makes them dependent and addicted to television. It narrows down their source of external knowledge.

**Impact of Violence on Western TV Channels:** By the time a child is eighteen years old, he or she will witness on television (with average viewing time) 200,000 acts of violence including 40,000 murders (Huston, et al, 1992). Bangladeshi TV Channels edit violent scenes because of Government’s regulation and practice. But survey on children in Bangladesh shows that wrestling on Western Channels is the favorite program of a large part of young audience. AXN, Star Movies, ESPN, Star Sports and Wrestling are the favorite channels and program of 29 out of 97 respondents. These western channels show wrestling like WWF, WWE, action films, horror shows and also plenty of science fictions. Even the cartoon series also contain plenty of violent scenes. In children’s cartoon, violence is portrayed in humorous ways. **'Quest for Camelot'** was ranked as the most violent of the 74 films in a study<sup>i</sup>. G-rated animated films are sur

prisingly violent. Every single one of them has some elements of violence. The amount of violence like sword fighting, gunplay and other aggressive action is increasing day by day in series like Quest for Camelot, Ninja Turtles, Tom and Jerry, Thunder Cats etc. It is important for parents to be aware of the violent contents in these movies (Thompson)<sup>3</sup>. Much cartoon violence is intended for comic effect. But their influence on children's behavior is uncertain (Fumie Yokota<sup>4</sup>). "Tom and Jerry" is one of the most popular cartoon series watched by children and even youths of Bangladesh. Violence is portrayed in humorous way in this cartoon series<sup>ii</sup>. Cartoon violence was there in Mickey Mouse, Popeye Show, 3 Stooges, Thunder Cats, Superman and Looney Tunes. Some studies conclude that children who watch significant amounts of television and movie violence are more likely to exhibit aggressive behavior, attitudes and values (Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 1999)<sup>5</sup>. The American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Psychological Association, American Academy of Family Physicians, and American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (Congressional Public Health Summit, 2000) also assert that TV violence affects children's behavior. Bangladeshi cartoon series like "**Meena**" is free from any violence. But Bangladeshi or Indian TV Channels don't have enough children's cartoon or wrestling program of their own. The popular cartoon series shown on Bangladeshi Channels are sponsored by UNICEF or other international donors to educate our children<sup>iii</sup>. So whatever impact there is, it is mostly of Western Channels. There is violence in advertisements in Western Channels.

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<sup>3</sup> CNN.com; Grated Animated Films Surprisingly Violent: Study Says, May 23, 2000

<sup>4</sup> CNN.com; Kids Think it's OK and no big deal', May 23, 2000

<sup>5</sup> Children and Media Violence; National Institute of Media and the Family

We don't know for sure what the knife in this ad suggests. Our children may think that the knife between the legs implies the conquering of woman through violence. Bangladeshi TV Channels don't show women and violence in this way. Hundreds of studies have examined how violent programs on TV affect children and young people. Survey conducted on children in Bangladesh shows that 24% children have frequent nightmare/increased fear because of watching wrestling/violence on Western and English TV Channels.



Source:[http://pics.livejournal.com/jan\\_bree/pic/](http://pics.livejournal.com/jan_bree/pic/)

Young children who see violence on TV have a greater chance of exhibiting violent and aggressive behavior later in life, than children who have not seen violent media (Congressional Public Health Summit, 2000).

Because of violence on Western TV:

1. Children may increase anti-social and aggressive behavior.
2. Children may become less sensitive to violence and suffer from violence.
3. Children may view the world as violent and mean, becoming more fearful of being a victim of violence.
4. Children will desire to see more violence in entertainment and real life.
5. Children may accept violence as the easiest or only way to solve problems (Congressional Public Health Summit, 2000).

6. Watching violent programs and ads children may become “immune” to the horror of violence. Besides, children will identify themselves with certain characters, victims or victimizers.

Nevertheless, we cannot generalize that violence on TV affects children. It is difficult to establish a direct “cause and effect” relationship.

**Eroticization of Young Girls:** The pressure on our girls is exacerbated by Western Television Channels’ increasing tendency to portray very young girl children in sexual ways. Camera angles, wounded facial expressions, and vulnerable poses shown on Western Channels like MTV, Channel V, AXN, HBO, etc. mimic the visual images common in pornographic films. Earlier it was absent in Bangladeshi TV Channels. But now a days, some widely watched Indian and Bangladeshi private Satellite Channels are following the Western Channels. It seems that our culture is experimenting with eroticizing our children. Western Channels are pioneering in this regard (picture<sup>iv</sup>). As these children become teenagers, some tune out but others hang on to those channels and maintain a hungry appetite for those messages.

**“Mean and scary world” syndrome:** Children, particularly girls are more likely than adults to be portrayed as victims of violence on TV. This can make them more afraid of the world around them. Children are much afraid of violence in news coverage. Fear based on real news events, increases as children grow older. Children who see a lot of violence<sup>v</sup> in movies or TV shows

may become more fearful and look at the real world as a mean and scary place.

**Desensitization to Real Life Violence: Meena<sup>vi</sup> and Sisimpur<sup>vii</sup>**

(Bangladeshi adaptation of Sesame Street) are mentionable among the two or three cartoon series Bangladeshi Channels have. **Meena** is produced to sensitize our children about pure drinking water, diarrhea, rules of hygiene, education, child rights, women's rights, dowry system, etc. Besides, these Bangladeshi channels show some western cartoons. There are very few Indian cartoons on Indian Hindi Channels. Our children are mainly dependant on Western Channels for cartoons and comedies.

In cartoons, Western Channels hardly show realistic consequences. This desensitizes children to real life violence. Viewing violent TV series, children try to mimic them. Children who view shows in which violence is very realistic, frequently unpunished, are more likely to imitate what they see. Children with emotional, behavioral, learning or impulse control problems may be more easily influenced by TV violence. The impact of TV violence may be immediately evident in child's behavior or may surface years later. Researchers found that watching these programs children may become "immune" to the horror of violence. Some early researchers suggested that televised violence might allow viewers to vent destructive impulses through fantasy instead of acting them out against real life targets. But later findings have not supported this so called "**catharsis**" hypothesis. An analysis of almost 300 studies in 1986 found that preschoolers tend to demonstrate more



physical aggression and other anti social behaviors as a result of watching violence on TV than do older children up to about 9 or 10 years old. During adolescence, the effect of violence increases for boys and decreases quite dramatically for girls. Research also shows that the content of violence children watch, the context in which they watch, the way they watch and the meaning they find in it, all these have different effect on children. So in order to understand the real impact of violence on TV, we also need to analyze these variables.

**Impact of Stereotyping on Children:** The roles played by the boys and girls on Bangladeshi and Indian TV Channels have great impact on children's future attitude. These channels teach children what the difference between responsibility of a boy and that of a girl is. Western Channels also send the same message. Regarding the girls, they put the beauty before the brain. Our children learn that the hero is always rewarded with a beautiful lady.

The role of girls in Western movies and dramas teach them what the girls should be like. It sends the message of dependency, weakness and submissiveness. In Western TV Channels children also watch series like '**Tomb Raider**' and '**Perfect Dark**', where girls are physically assertive. In most of the Western cartoons boys and girls are shown as equally strong. These contradictions in messages in programs and cartoons in Western Channels may make girls' transition from childhood to adulthood difficult. There is contradiction between the messages in our cartoons and Western cartoon. As almost all the cartoons on Bangladeshi Channels are sponsored

by development organizations or donors like USAID, UNICEF, UNDP, etc. there is uniformity in the messages of these programs. Both '**Meena Cartoon**' and "**Sisimpur** (Bangladeshi version of Sesame Street)" advocate for girls' rights, equal role of boys and girls and education for all. They reflect our society and culture.

Because of the stereotypical and contradictory messages on Western cartoon and other programs, girls may lose self-confidence. The Canadian Council on Social Development reports that while the numbers of boys who say "they have confidence in themselves" remain relatively stable, the number for girls drops from 72 percent in Grade six to 55 percent in Grade ten. It happens because of the widening gap between girl's self-image and society's message through TV about what girl should be like.

**Sexual Content:** Kids today are bombarded with sexual messages and images on satellite channels, especially on Western television. Children are exposed to it before they are prepared for this sort of messages. In Bangladesh, Government owned channels and PSB are much controlled and show respect to people's religious and social values. But after 1992, when Government permitted satellite television, Cable Network business and private channels inside the country, it became almost impossible to protect our children from sexual images shown on the Western as well as Indian satellite channels (Picture<sup>viii</sup>). Bangladeshi Channels also sends sexual and morally unacceptable messages. But those are limited in Bengali movies only and

children usually don't watch them. Survey<sup>6</sup> conducted on about 110 children between the ages of 1-19 shows that on an average, children in Bangladesh watch different western programs (except cartoon) on Western Channels for 6.60 hours a week. They watch wrestling, horror movies and other programs during this time. These programs and the advertisements between them contain explicit sexual elements.

Television can be a powerful kit for educating children about responsibilities and risks of sexual behavior. But such issues are hardly dealt with in programs containing sexual content. According to a survey entitled "Sex on TV"<sup>7</sup>, three out of four prime time shows on Western TV Channels contain sexual contents. Only one in ten shows with sexual contents included references to safe sexes. Although these surveys were carried out in Western countries, they depict a picture about the contents of Western Channels even in the South Asian countries. Because of religious and social prohibition sexual contents are absent in Bangladeshi Channels. There are sexual contents in Indian TV Channels but those are in limited form. Nevertheless, some time they turn out to be more unacceptable than those on the Western Channels. Both Indian Hindi and Western Channels may appear as a shock while watching with the family.

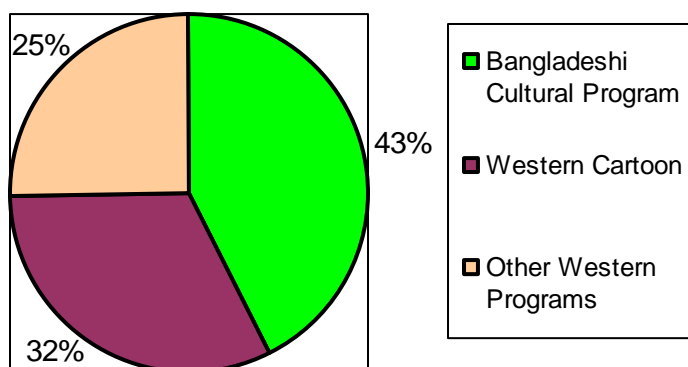
**Effects on Child Health:** Bangladeshi children between the ages of 1-19 watch Bangladeshi cultural programs on Bangladeshi Channels for 11.152

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<sup>6</sup> April 2007, Dhaka, Bangladesh

<sup>7</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation

hours a week<sup>8</sup>. They watch Cartoon on Western Channels for 8.485 hours a week. They watch other programs for 6.606 hours a week<sup>9</sup>.



### Share of Watching Western Programs

Watching television cuts into the time, kids need for activities, crucial for healthy mental and physical development. In a survey<sup>10</sup> carried on about 100 children, 83% said that watching Cartoon Network prevents their children from playing.

It is proved that watching TV is a significant factor in childhood obesity. Almost one in four Canadian children, between seven and twelve, are obese<sup>11</sup>. Time spent for watching TV is often at the expense of more active and healthy pastimes. Television broadcasts health programs too. But young TV viewers do not get enough exercise, and therefore, do not develop good motor and coordination skills<sup>12</sup>. Children find it hard to turn off TV. Viewers feel an instant sense of relaxation when they start watching TV. When the box is turned off,

<sup>8</sup> Md. Jalal Abdul Naser Bhuiyan, April 2007, Dhaka

<sup>9</sup> Md. Jalal Abdul Naser Bhuiyan, April 2007, Dhaka

<sup>10</sup> Md. Jalal Abdul Naser Bhuiyan, April 2007, Dhaka

<sup>11</sup> Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

<sup>12</sup> “Smart Start of Forsyth County”, NC, USA

that feeling disappears. People generally feel more energized after playing sports or engaging in hobbies. But after watching TV they usually feel depleted of energy<sup>13</sup>. Children become dependent on and addicted to TV (Annexure Picture<sup>ix</sup>). That's why children watch TV longer than they plan to.

**Promotion of Unhealthy Food:** Most food advertisements on children's TV shows are for fast food, candy and pre-sweetened cereals<sup>14</sup>. Food and candy producers and advertisers are dependent on children for marketing their products. But this can contribute to childhood obesity. Advertisements for healthy food make up only 4 percent of those shown. McDonalds, the largest food advertiser on TV, reportedly spent \$500 million on their "*We love to see you smile*" ad campaign. Advertisements of milk powder for infants or baby food have bad impact on infants' health. So the Government of Bangladesh has already restricted advertisement of baby food on Bangladeshi TV channels. But there is no such restriction for Indian and Western Channels.

**Promotion of Thinness:** Media promote Images of thinness for girls.

Producers of goods and advertisers think that

- Thin models are supposed to spur the sales of beauty products,
- Creating an ideal of thinness unattainable, cosmetics and diet industries ensure their sale of product.
- Persuading girls in this way, diet industries alone earn about \$100 billion (US) a year.

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<sup>13</sup> "Scientific American" article entitled "Television Addiction"

<sup>14</sup>Canadian Pediatric Society,

Seeing thin models and actresses, girls lose self confidence and become dissatisfied with their own bodies. They skip meals. But girls with thin, air brushed body suffer from depression. Generating a computer model of a woman with “**Barbie Doll**” proportion, researchers found that, the back would be too weak to support the weight of her upper body. Her body would be too narrow to contain more than half a liver and a few centimeters of bowel. A real woman built that way would suffer from chronic diarrhea and die from malnutrition (Annexure Picture<sup>x</sup>).

**Impact of Smoking & Drinking in Ads and Cartoons:** The average North American girl will watch 5,000 hours of television, including 80,000 ads before she starts kindergarten. No such survey was conducted on children in Bangladesh. It is supposed that statistics will not vary much. Messages about tobacco and alcohol are shown in almost every Indian and Western TV channel. Kids see characters on Western and Indian TV Channels smoking and drinking. *Tom and Jerry Show, the Flintstones, Scooby-Doo* and *The Popeye Show* are the most popular Cartoon series watched by Bangladeshi children. They see smoking in these cartoon series too<sup>xi</sup>. They see signs for tobacco and alcohol products at Music programs and even sporting events. Drinking and showing advertisements of alcohol is banned in Bangladeshi TV Channels. Even advertisement of cigarettes has been banned on Bangladeshi TV Channels. Western TV Channels sometimes have a tendency to unite drinking and smoking with personality. Hindi Channels also do the same but they are not so liberal in this regard. These advertisements on Western, Hindi and Indian Bangla Channels send kids the message that smoking and

drinking make a person sexy, cool and that “*everybody does it*”. Teens who see a lot of ads for beer, wine, liquor, and cigarettes admit that it influences them to drink and smoke. Advertising has its good sides like teaching compulsory precautions “*smoking is harmful for health*”. But it is found that the three most advertised cigarette brands are also the most popular ones smoked by teens. Turner Broadcasting is now scouring more than 1,500 classic Hanna-Barbera cartoons, including old favorites *Tom and Jerry*, *The Flintstones* and *Scooby-Doo* to edit out scenes that glamorize smoking.

**Values, Habits and Learning:** The use of stereotypical and sexist adjectives such as sexy, young, beautiful, etc. to describe women artists and models is unacceptable to the Bangladeshi viewers because of their conservative and Muslim culture. But Western Television channel are richer in program contents. They pioneer the other channels in these South Asian countries and come with new ideas and knowledge. These western channels enriched our knowledge. It is found that, in the early 1990s students were afraid of their listening test more than any other section in TOEFL and IELTS. Some years after the launching of CNN and BBC, the listening skill of students developed. A good number of students are now less afraid of listening test in TOEFL and IELTS. But when Television Channels in Bangladesh depict national culture and religion, Western Channels come with different culture. It is good to know about different culture. But our children suddenly find themselves exposed to foreign culture before they are prepared for it. This causes conflict of culture and loss of self confidence. Some children learn TV values instead of family values. Children learn that every hero is rewarded with the most beautiful girl.

Besides, survey shows that children who watch too much TV typically have lower language and reading skills<sup>15</sup>. According to another survey 83% said watching Cartoon Network prevents their children from playing<sup>16</sup>. Although this survey discards the notion that children's academic result/school grade have deteriorated because of watching western channels, 86% respondents said that watching Cartoon Network, Star Movies, AXN, HBO, Discovery, Animal Planet, ESPN etc. cut into the time their children are expected to study.

### **Impact on Other Viewers:**

Because of young age and some parental controls, our children's entertainment is limited to a few TV Channels that show cartoon, animation, comedy, music video, wrestling, etc. But our grown ups especially women are exposed to all types of programs.

**Culture Shock:** When the Satellite Television was introduced in Bangladesh after 1992, it had very limited access. As there was no Cable Operator and as the receiver was very costly, only the Highbrow and high class had access to the Western and Indian TV Channels. Most of them had orientation with outside world and culture. But the middle and lower class were not prepared for it. They were clinging to the age old Bangladeshi culture though it has some elements of Indian culture in it. Within one or two years cable operators started mushrooming and satellite channels jumped inside the houses of people of all classes. Suddenly people found themselves open to the world

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<sup>15</sup> Smart Start of Forsyth County”

<sup>16</sup> Md. Jalal Abdul Naser Bhuiyan, April 2007, Dhaka



and globalization, exposed to new cultures, information, media messages as well as stereotypical portrayals of male and female. The Indian Hindi Channels started the so called Indianization. Some people did not welcome it. For them Western Channels is an alternative for entertainment. The Highbrow Snobs welcomed the penetration of Western Channels like Star Plus, AXN, TNT, HBO, Channel V, MTV, etc. But some failed to keep up with this Western culture. It was like a shock to them. There was a conflict of different cultures. Nevertheless, it was a challenge for the influx of Indian Hindu culture.

**Commodification of Women in Bangladeshi Channels:** The objectification and commodification of women and their bodies is very widespread, with the tradition of pictures of a scantily clad woman on almost all TV advertisements.

Female body is used as an object and commodity in Western advertisement. The photograph “**Assembly Line**” commodifies and objectifies the woman in the ad. “Assembly Line” works to perpetuate gender dominance. Private Bangladeshi Satellite Channels are also learning how to commodify our women.

Women’s bodies are used to sell everything, whether the commodity being sold is related to the female body or not. Drinking is forbidden in Bangladeshi society. It is a taboo in Islam. Advertisements on Western TV Channels have a tendency to relate drinking with manliness, personality and heroism. Bangladeshi TV Channels are imitating these advertisements. The Government of Bangladesh has banned smoking in open places and

promoting them on TV. But Western TV Channels are still showing cigarette advertisements. This encourages both young and grown ups to smoke.

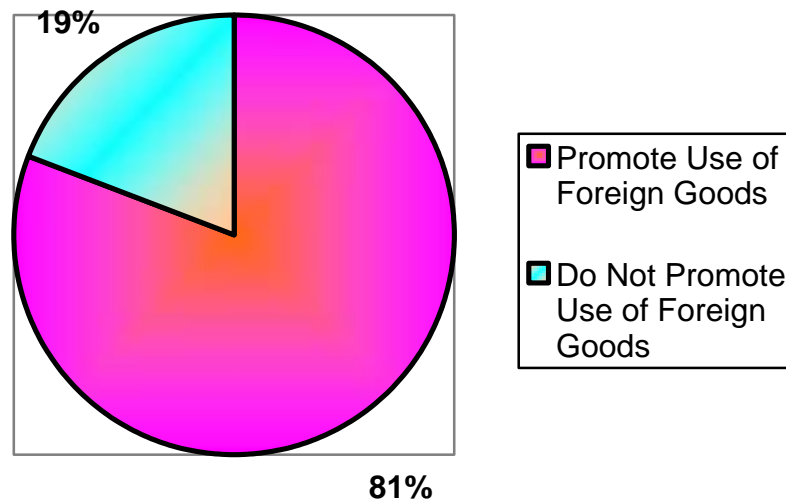
There is stereotyping in advertisements in Bangladeshi and Indian Channels. But Western Channels add some new elements and dimensions to it. Men are often portrayed as authorities and shown outdoors or in business settings while women are in domestic settings. Following '**face-ism**', men are shown in close face shot, which implies intellect and women are usually shown in full body shots representing emotion in Western cultural mythology. Woman in advertisements is defined along the lines of sexuality. To get the attention and to communicate sex provides a powerful resource. Women are used as tools in this regard (picture<sup>xii</sup>). Western as well as Indian Channel promotes strong muscle for men but images of thinness for women. Women's programs are full of messages urging that if they can just lose those last twenty pounds, they will have it all-the perfect marriage, loving children, great sex, and a rewarding career. Popular actresses are becoming taller and thinner. Television movies and dramas reinforce the importance of a thin body as a measure of a woman's worth. But the Bangladeshi culture does not promote this image of thinness. So there is a conflict between those who follow this message and those who don't.

Both Bangladeshi and Indian TV Channels do not represent women as multifaceted human beings as men are. When they appear in programs, their sex and beauty is more highlighted than their self. Western Channels make the matter worse.

Bangladeshi women hardly smoke cigarette. Even the males are not allowed

drinking. Bangladeshi programs don't show women smoking or drinking. But Western TV Channels, though not the only villain, promote smoking and drinking. This also creates a group of followers who are always in conflict with the established norms and practices of the Bangladeshi society.

**Sale of Foreign Goods:** A survey<sup>17</sup> was conducted on more than 120 respondents in Bangladesh on whether Western Channels promote use of foreign goods. 81% said that it has promoted use of foreign goods, cosmetics, candy, chocolate or drinks inside their family.



Promotion of Sale of Foreign Goods

**Absence of Bangladesh in Western Channels:** Opinions of the experts like Member of UN CEDAW Committee, professors, sociologists, media chiefs, news editors, program producers and news producers have been collected in this regard. Almost all of them think that Western Channels do not reflect our life.

“In general, western media have never projected from the

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<sup>17</sup> Md. Jalal Abdul Naser Bhuiyan, Dhaka, April 2007

perspective of Bangladeshi culture. They never project cultural values of Asian countries. In Bangladesh we have CNN, BBC and some movie channels. In the CNN and BBC Bangladesh and South Asian countries are projected when there is a cyclone, disaster or political turmoil. But in all these countries there are so many success stories in socio cultural indicators such as success of Micro credit in the field of empowering women at the grass root level providing them collateral free loan to establish their own business. Grameen Bank and Doctor Yunus received Nobel Prize in this field. In the whole world there are 94 countries where Grameen Bank model has been replicated. Besides, Bangladesh has got a unique success, achieving parity in the field of primary and tertiary level. But all these success stories were not given adequate publicity in the Western media”-**Ferdous Ara Begum, Member, UN CEDAW Committee**<sup>18</sup>.

Because of these, Bangladeshi viewers never know what they are and what the prospect of their country is. They only look at and try to follow what is going on in the Western countries. This creates a sort of dependency among them.

**Religious and Family Values, Beliefs and Attitudes:** The most important impact of Western TV Channels is that on our culture, beliefs, values and attitudes. BBC and CNN present global news. Some experts think that our religious conflict is highlighted in these channels. Their news influences our political ideology.

We learn about the technological inventions from these channels. These

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<sup>18</sup> Ferdous Ara Begum, Member, UN CEDAW Committee, Member, Board of Directors, Grameen Bank and Former Director General, Bangladesh Television.

channels increase our kids' interest for the mystery of science, technology and nature. But what they show in science fiction is changing our culture, values and beliefs. A survey conducted on 104 viewers, show that attitudes and behaviors of 82% viewers have changed after watching Western Channels. Only 18% said that their attitudes and behaviors have not changed. 81% viewers think that their attitudes to life, family values have changed after watching Western Channels like AXN, Star Movies, HBO, BBC and CNN.

These Western Channels allure our women and children for a sophisticated life. But they form a negative attitude toward our social values. When asked about the Western Channels' impact on our values, most of the Sociologists, Professors, Program Producers and Executives of Bangladeshi TV Channels<sup>19</sup> said that the culture and values depicted in these Western Channels create conflict with the set values, culture and habits of the people in Bangladesh. Some of them think, these sometimes clash with our political and religious ideologies.

Our children learn rock, pop and hip hop from the Western Channels like **MTV**, **Channel V**, etc. But these don't reflect our culture. Some people learn and accept this western culture. But those who can't, sometime loose their confidence and suffer from inferiority complex. Besides, because of its increasing impact on young and new generations, the gap between the generations is widening. This causes lack of control in the society.

Earlier there was very limited access of women in advertisements of shaving

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<sup>19</sup> Md. Jalal Abdul Naser Bhuiyan, April 2007, Dhaka

cream, shaving blade, and cigarette. But now our channels are also using women in these advertisements imitating the Western Channels.

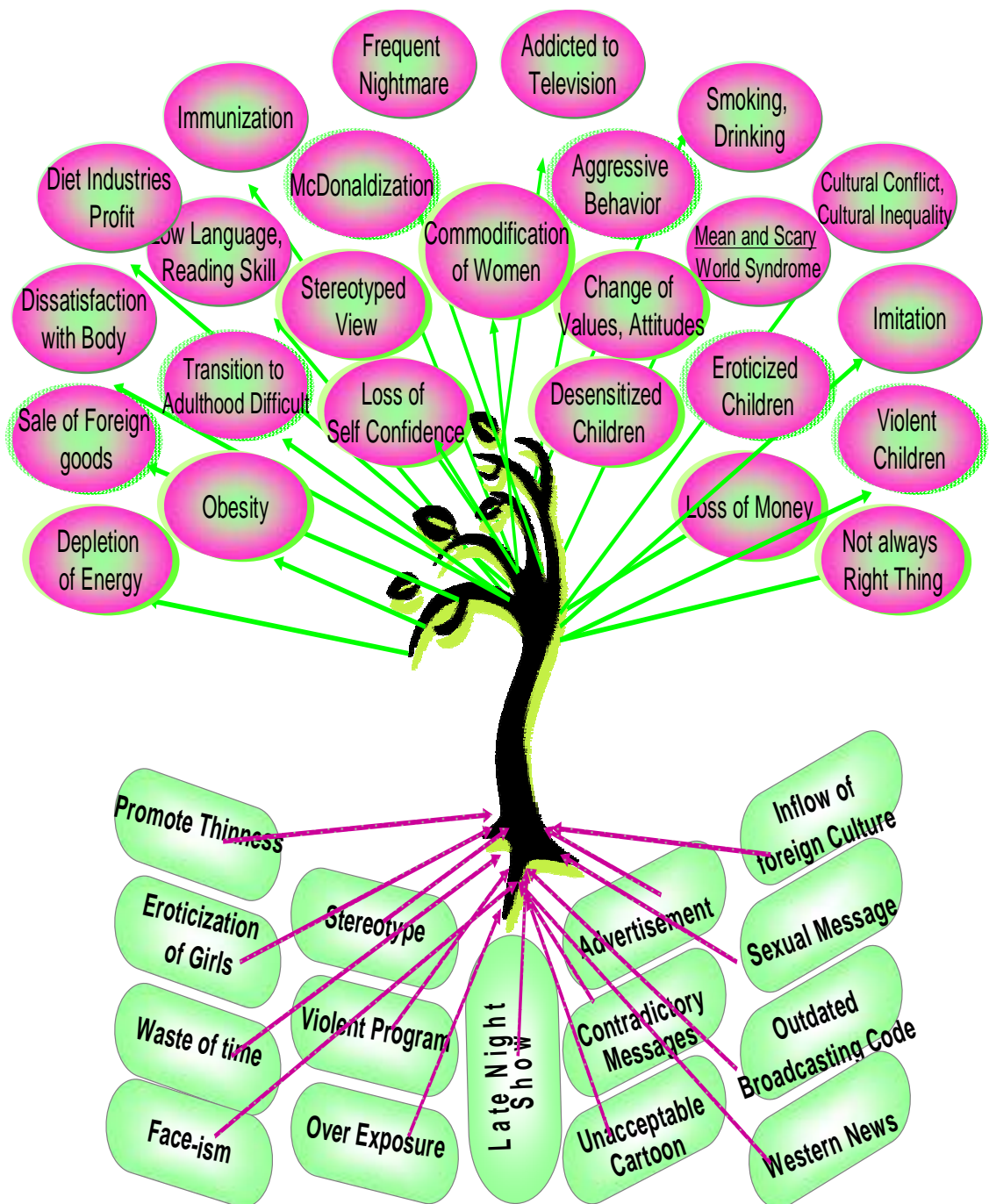
**Other Impacts:** Regarding political and religious ideologies, BBC and CNN played a very important role. CNN pioneered the direct transnational broadcasting. The language is a barrier for most of the viewers. Nevertheless, a survey conducted by 'News Scan 90'<sup>20</sup> found that a majority of the viewers watched CNN. During the early 1990s, the penetration of Indian culture was almost irresistible. CNN does not show entertaining programs. A survey conducted by "Center for Communication and Research" during 1994 shows that 41% revealed their passion for Zee TV, 21% were viewers of Channel V, and 11% like Star Plus. CNN, TNT, MTV and Cartoon Network were found to have a high viewing rate. Among the relatively new entrants, ATN Bangla, Channel I, ETV, Star World, National Geography, HBO, AXN, Action TV, and Alpha TV also made good impression among the Bangladeshi viewers.

Because of Geographical nearness, easy Hindi language and entertaining TV Programs, there was Indianisation in Bangladesh. Indian Hindu culture penetrated inside Bangladesh. This was a shock for some Muslim. During this time Western Channels came as a boon for the Aristocrat or upper class. This prevented our culture and society from being totally taken over by Indian culture.

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<sup>20</sup> Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology; Volume 4, No. 1, January 2007

The Problem Tree Below shows the Western TV Channels' problems and impacts on children of Bangladesh.



**The Problem Tree**

### **Brief Look at Three Turning Periods: Gulf War, 9/11 and Iraq War:**

The history of Satellite TV Channels inside Bangladesh at first begins with the transmission of CNN and then with BBC World. The Indian Channels like Zee TV, Doordarshan, etc. follow them. These Indian Channels became very popular among the middle class viewers. But it was CNN that prepared the platform for globalization. It was CNN and BBC that made news very popular among the viewers of Bangladesh.

When the Gulf War erupted in 1991, other Satellite Televisions were almost entirely dependent on CNN coverage of the war. The logo of the American news channel appeared on almost every feed about the war.

Since the early 1990s Western media have represented the best option for Bangladeshi viewers. First, it possessed the necessary resources for high quality news coverage, resources that Bangladeshi media lacked. Secondly, it was generally viewed as being free and unconstrained by political considerations. It had gained a reputation of being motivated solely by professional incentives, in which the first and most important objective was to seek and present the truth as it was. This was in contrast to many Arab media, which had gained a reputation of being a mere propaganda tool. After the September 11 attack, the popularity of CNN reached its peak.

But now things seem to be changing and there is evidence to suggest that Western media might be losing its edge. During the Iraq War US allies used Western Media to shift the sentiments of the viewers who have powerful



sentiments against the invading army. According to some experts, the war that was shown on CNN and BBC was a war with lower casualties on both sides than the real war taking place. In the first couple of days of the war, most Western media discarded Iraqi claims regarding 'Umm Qasr' and adopted the Coalition's version of the story, stating that American and British troops had full control over the port. It was later revealed that 'Umm Qasr' did not capitulate until the fourth or fifth day of the war.

A significant part of the Western media's sources during the war came from the reporters or combat journalists who were either with the troops or located in the military headquarters of the Coalition. Being with the Coalition forces, these combat journalists looked at the War from the Coalition's perspective. These reporters got their information primarily from American and British military personnel. Whether other correspondents located in Iraqi-controlled areas did not have access to Iraqi statements or whether they did have such access but the editorial decision makers disregarded it, is not clear. At best, it would mean that they did not have enough sources - whether voluntarily or involuntarily - which is a professional shortcoming. At worst, it would mean that the editors were being motivated by sheer bias. American and British media were also criticized for how they presented the war in such a way as to give the impression that it was a "clean" war. A lot of emphasis was placed on the humanitarian aid facilitated by Coalition Forces in "freed" areas. On the other hand, they treated Iraqi civilian losses and the

misery brought upon them by American and British bombs and missiles with notable negligence.<sup>21</sup>

Experts think that in Bangladesh there is a common complain from the viewers that they don't get realistic treatment about what is happening in the Middle Eastern countries especially about Afghan and Iraq War and conflict situation in Palestine.

**“Especially the news treatment only focused on how many men killed in bomb attack but we never got any information about what happened to the destitute women who lost their husband, orphaned children who lost their father and adolescent girls and family who lost their bread earning family members”**

—Ferdous Ara Begum, Member, UN CEDAW Committee and Former Director General, Bangladesh Television

We seldom got any information in these Channels about what happened to those unfortunate women and children. Were they trafficked out of their country for sexual abuse? Were they subjected to abuse and torture and victim of poverty? These Western Channels do not tell us who is responsible for this disaster and human rights abuse in these countries<sup>22</sup>.

Instead of giving enough focus on the humanitarian disaster in Iraq and Afghanistan, these channels helped form opinion in favor of the coalition there. They gave a lot of weight to their military leader's declarations about the “precision” of their weapons. During the war, the scene of Iraqi civilians

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<sup>21</sup> [Gulf War and Media](#); IslamOnline.com

<sup>22</sup> Ferdous Ara Begum, Member, UN CEDAW Committee, Former Director General, Bangladesh Television and Member, Board of Directors, Grameen Bank

stating that they were happy to get rid of Saddam's regime was more common on CNN than the image of mothers crying in front of their dead children's bodies, although in reality the second scene was more frequent. In this way CNN and BBC seem to be losing the credibility and the trust of the viewers of Bangladesh and other Muslim countries, which they earned during the invasion of Kuwait and 9/11 episode. It appeared that BBC and CNN is trying to create an impression of low cost War in Iraq, a war that is conducted with minimum casualties for both the parties. They are trying to create an impression that the war is worth fighting and the benefit of the war in Iraq is more than its cost. That is what the political leadership of USA and UK badly needs at this moment. Several times CNN reported that there were Weapons of Mass Destructions (WMD). One day later CNN reported finding Scud Missile inside a factory. Later they talked about finding 1000 chemical suits as if this proved something. It also reported of firing scud missiles on Kuwait. These are only examples of many such reporting. But most of this news turned out to be false and motivated. A survey<sup>23</sup> was carried out on more than 100 viewers on whether viewers think Saddam Hussein and Osama-bin-Laden was portrayed neutrally. 68% viewers think they were not portrayed neutrally. Among 109 viewers, 83 (eighty three) of them think BBC and CNN's portrayal of invasion of Kuwait was partial, 18 (eighteen) of them said, it was impartial and 8 (eight) of them did not answer. It was worse regarding the portrayal of Afghan War and Iraq War. In both cases 92% said the portrayal of War was partial and only 8% said the portrayal was impartial. BBC and CNN's overall portrayal of Middle East Crisis was partial according

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<sup>23</sup> Md. Jalal Abdul Naser Bhuiyan, April 2007, Dhaka

to 89% viewers and impartial according to 11% viewers in Bangladesh. This survey shows that BBC and CNN have lost the trust of Bangladeshi viewers to some extent.

Unfortunately, the combat journalism of BBC and CNN turned in favor of the Coalition Forces. Being with the Coalition Forces, what these combat journalists sent from the War field only added to the propaganda and thus tarnished the image of the Western News Media. **Arab Media like “Al-Jazeera” only occupied these vacuum and some viewers ultimately rushed to it.**

Nevertheless, survey<sup>24</sup> shows that BBC and CNN were successful in sending their message. They changed the outlook of many viewers in Bangladesh. 38% viewers said that their opinion/view has changed after watching the Gulf War, September 11 Attack, Afghan War and Iraq War on BBC, CNN and other Western Channels. 25% viewers said that their view about Taliban fighters, Al Qaeda and other Islamic groups have changed after watching September 11 attack, Afghan War and Iraq War on BBC and CNN. 3% viewers had mixed impact on them.

#### **What to Change and How:**

The first thing that comes to mind is why we don't ban these Western Channels. Experts have been asked about it. Almost none of them support banning Western Channels. Before the penetration of Satellite Television in

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<sup>24</sup> Md. Jalal Abdul Naser Bhuiyan, April 2007, Dhaka

Bangladesh, our news and program was poorly produced and broadcast. The News and Program Producers as well as the technical experts like Lighting Technicians, Cameramen and Broadcast Designers did not have enough examples before them to follow. Even the viewers didn't have any idea about the poor quality of News and Program Broadcasting of Bangladeshi Channels. With the penetration of Indian and Western Channels, Producers became conscious about the quality of their programs. Influence of Indian Channels is now apparent in our drama, movies, musical shows and advertisements. Program Producers of Bangladesh Television and BTV World declared that Western Channels present better program. And Bangladeshi Channels are improving under their influence. Even the graphics and set design has changed. But their movies and other programs don't influence our producers, TV Channels and viewers as much as their news. Bangladeshi Channels learnt online reporting and studio reporting from them. These Western Channels help develop our science and technology. Even the Producers agree that these channels have high excellence<sup>25</sup>. Bangladeshi Channels are improving under their influence. That's why, as the experts think, we should not block Western Channels inside Bangladesh. We would rather try to make the Western Channels more fruitful for our viewers.

### **Stakeholders' Analysis:**

Before making any suggestion to make Western Channels more fruitful for the Bangladeshi viewers, we should do the Stakeholders' analysis.

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<sup>25</sup> General Manager, Bangladesh Television & BTV World, Dhaka

### Stakeholders Analysis: BBC, CNN and Other Western Channels

<b>Group</b>	<b>Interest in issue</b>	<b>Resources available</b>	<b>Capacity to mobilize resources</b>	<b>Position on issue</b>
Parliamentary Standing Committee	Ensure right to information	Strong political and legislative power, influence on the PM, Ministry of Information and Ministry of Telephone and Telex	Very High	+1
Paper Media	Availability of information; competition	Power on viewers and decision makers in every stages	Very High	+1
Ruling Party	Freedom of media, commitment to people, International Media Support at home and abroad,	Power to take any decision	Very high	+2
Ministry of Information	Freedom of media and right to information as a responsibility	Influence on the Prime Minister, strong administrative power and control over any visual media and cable operators, power to ban transmission	Very high	+2
Cable Operators	Business	Control over selection of Channels	Very High	+3
Parents	New roles, Americanization, cultural conflict, loss of control and family values	Control over family members and viewing hours	Very high	-1
Religious Fanatics	Against their interest	Ability to frighten people	High	-3
Religious groups	Contradiction with the set values,	Strong political influence on	High	-2

	culture and religion	government's policy, society and culture		
Bangladeshi Channels	Compete and develop their own program, news and ad; fear of losing ad and acceptability	Strong influence and control over Program, News and ads; influence over the Ministry of Information	High	-1
Journalists	Competition; Scope of learning	Developing news and reporting,	High	-1
Ministry of Women and Children Affairs	Develop women and fulfill their mission	Influence over PM, National Parliament in implementing new rules and regulations	Medium	+1
Opposition Parties	A change, freedom of expression, a riddance from Govt. controlled channels	Political power over Govt. and ability to form strong opinion	Medium	+3
Intellectuals	New outlook	Influence on viewers, political and religious leaders, decision makers and Government in formulation of rules and regulations	Medium	+2
Editors and Producers	Fear of competition and scope to learn new technology and technique	Editing, censoring authority over news and program	Medium	-1
Artists, writers	New outlook, knowledge	Power on viewers	Low	+1
International Organizations, NGO's	Expression of Views/opinions	Financial power	Low	+2
Children	Entertainment; learn new culture, technology, information, stereotypes, prejudices, cut into study hours; less exercise		Low	+2
Youth	Americanization; availability of information, entertainment,	Control over viewers and political parties	Low	+2

	technology, stereotypes; other cultural impact			
Bangladeshi manufacturers and industries	Increasing advertisements and sale of foreign goods	Influence over Govt. to control ads and foreign channels	Low	-1

The Prime Minister, the Ministry of Information and the Parliamentary Committee have power over the transmission of Western Channels. But any restriction would create public dissatisfaction. The Cable Operators have enough power to select the Channels. But it is only a business to them. So they would go for more and more channels. But the intellectuals, parents, print media, religious groups and also the religious fanatics will strongly protest against this. So we need to think about the interest of all these groups before making any policy / recommendation.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **State Level Interference:**

1. Our Channels have learnt a lot about visual technology and program production. To rein media, especially television is always very difficult. Controlling foreign channels is more difficult. We need the interference of the Ministry of information to dictate and control the Cable Operators. The Cable Operators should not allow those channels, which show obscene programs, which are not suitable for the children.
2. We cannot stop transmission of these Western Channels. But we can persuade them to reflect our culture in their programs. We can urge them to see things in the right perspective. Now a day, some of the



Western Channels like MTV and Star Plus are representing Indian Culture.

### **Media and Cable Operator's Role:**

1. Sometime it seems that even the state level interference is not enough. In that case the Bangladeshi TV Channels and Print Media can send the message to them so that they don't transmit partial news. Media power is the best one to counter the media aggression or unwanted penetration inside any country.
2. In terms of news Western Channels are far ahead. So we should not block them. But we should request them to sensor the violent scenes in the coverage. Besides, Cable Operators can block the channels or change the frequency when the Channels show obscene or horror series.

### **Parental Control:**

All the recommendations mentioned above cannot make our channels completely free from sex, violence, advertisements of fast food and stereotypical messages. Those are part of our life and culture. But children of our culture are not prepared for these messages. So we need some parental control inside the house.

1. Average child watches TV from 21-28 hours every week as one survey in US shows. Surveys<sup>26</sup> on Bangladeshi children shows that average child watch Cartoon and other programs in Western Channels for 15.4

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<sup>26</sup> Md. Jalal Abdul Naser Bhuiyan, April 2007

- hours a week. Viewing hours should be reduced to 7-10 hours a week
2. Parents have to screen what children watch. Children should not be allowed to watch violent, offensive or adult programs. Parents may contact with local cable operators or TV centers to show kids channels and programs. Sometime one phone call can make a difference.
  3. Parents need to be actively involved with TV shows. We cannot completely turn off TV. One way to filter television messages is to develop the skills to question, analyze, and evaluate them. Parents should talk about what they are seeing. They should help children think about what is happening. A young child cannot tell the difference between pretence and reality. Children need '**media literacy**' or '**media education**'. Children will then become critical of what they see on TV.
  4. TV sets with satellite connection should be kept out of children's bedrooms. It would be placed where parents are involved.
  5. Parental lock can be used for some channels, which show violence, sex, eroticization, etc. Parents should not allow children to watch late night shows.
  6. Parents should talk to child's pediatrician if they find any of the following behaviors in their child:
    - a. poor school performance
    - b. hitting or pushing other kids often
    - c. aggressively talking back to adults
    - d. frequent nightmares
    - e. increased eating of 'junk food'
    - f. smoking, drinking or use of drugs.

### **The Last Words**

There is no proof that violence or sex on Western or other TV Channels directly makes our women and children violent or erotic. We can only infer from the data of different surveys that there is some correlation between violence and sex on Satellite TV programs and behavior of the youth and children. Messages of TV Channels or ads depend on the receiver's values, attitudes or tendency towards them. If our viewers especially children have a tendency toward violence, TV programs can increase it. Still we are not in a position to generalize that Western Channels are the foe of Bangladeshi viewers. Effect of different Television Channels on the viewers needs more analysis. But we can say that Western Channels together with other Indian and Bangladeshi TV Channels cut into the time, our children need for activities, crucial to healthy mental and physical development. Some youth and children become addicted to watching MTV, Star Movies, Channel V, Star Sports, etc. We are not sure about the direct effect of Western TV Channels. But we cannot deny that TV Programs together with receiver's tendency and other contextual factors are responsible for the bad impacts mentioned above.

Then why don't we disconnect the Satellite TV Cable? Doing this means remaining away from the outside world in an age of globalization. It is like living in an island. But we can control watching Channels. The problem is still in the societal and family level. Screening by the parents and guardians, good selection of Channels by the Cable Operators and awareness of the viewers at this point will be the best and immediate solution to this challenge. This three fold controlling is enough to make Western Channels more positive for the Bangladeshi viewers.

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## Annexures

i Quest For Camelot



ii Tom And Jerry



iii Sisimpur on BTV



iv Eroticization of Young Girls:





v Violence on TV



vi Meena



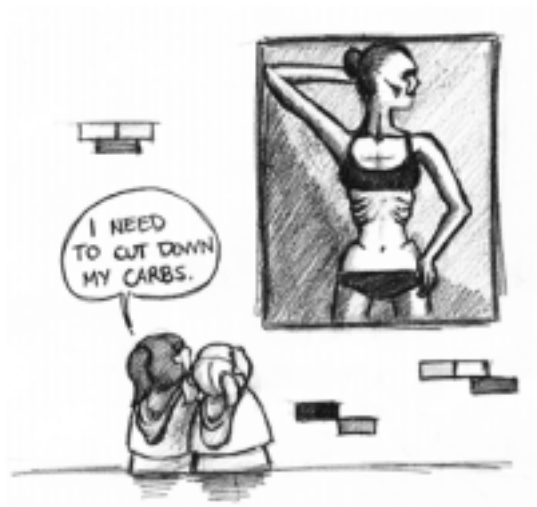
vii Sisimpur



viii Sexual content in Ads



ix Watching TV for long hours



x Picture of thinness

xi



Popeye smoking



Tom Smoking

xii Women used as tools

