

Is DTH an ideal option for India?

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Even without actually entering the Indian scene, Direct-to-Home Television (popularly known as DTH) has attracted, considerable reporting in the media and created a public debate, perhaps as never before for any other communication technology. Emerging as if overnight, cable TV, on the other, has proliferated in every nook and corner of the country. All this happened without any serious public debate or policy consideration.

This is obviously because the investment involved in DTH are huge, technology is complex and aspiring players are big and of international standing. Also, the preparations involved for launching DTH are a lot more time consuming and a large network of alliances and partnerships nationally and globally are required than in the case of other mass media.

With miniaturisation of dish antenna, the concept of DTH has become a commercial proposition. DTH is barely three years old anywhere in the world. Even today, not more than 20 million subscribers are there for DTH across some seven-odd countries.

DTH service enables customers to receive TV programmes directly from satellites, using high power KU transponders on a small dish antenna, employing their own terminal using Integrated Receiver Decoder (IRD) and Remote Control—all this without the need of a cable operator. DTH however, need to be

broadcasting using satellite technologies with enough provisions for manoeuvrability and manipulation as to who will receive, what contents and when as well as "selective broadcasting" with implications not merely of commercial or cultural nature but of much larger consequence to do with national interests and long term concerns.

The motivation expected for migration of viewer households from cable TV to DTH include programme options in plenty with possibility for nearly 200 channels, better quality of picture and sound and, of course, a lot more specialised and targeted services. The choices include a good mix of region, national and international programmes and scope for simultaneous access with rest of the world.

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technology which would be cheaper, easier, more relevant, a lot more personalised and interactive in the coming decade, making DTH not absolute but as an yet another media like the cable TV. What one needs to look into today is cost-benefit aspects of cable TV, MMDS, DTH, etc for a country of contradictions and diversities as India. While it is rather a compulsion for DTH to aim at super rich and those who are already being reached practically by every other media of communication and entertainment, it has good potential to reach the so far unreached in far flung and hilly pockets of the country. This aspect of DTH should not be lost sight of.

Yet another aspect of DTH is that it can not be expected to survive primarily on advertising revenue. This obviously imply compulsions for DTH to aim at niche segments, and offer value added services and pay-for and encryption-based viewing, instead of free for all viewing.

With DTH, tv viewing time of children and adolescents is bound to increase further to the extent of becoming the primary preoccupation—unless moderated by parents at home and teachers

in schools. Then of course is the question whether DTH perpetuates preoccupations of TV with entertainment or offers opportunities and alternatives towards empowering and enabling people with information and skills.

Considering the implications of all such aspects of DTH, the educational system in the country need to be geared up to equip the children for "discriminative viewership" and also to avail wide range of options and choices that DTH offer. In fact DTH should enable considerable value addition for our educational process in the country, particularly at primary and secondary levels.

Based on 30 years of research and evaluation of mass media in the country, I feel certain issue to do with DTH deserve wider consideration. These include:

- * Will DTH help reduce information imbalances in the country or will add to the imbalances? Is it a cost effective option? Will it promote centralised or decentralised broadcasting?

- * Will DTH help TV become a medium of enlightenment, information and entertainment, instead of being a mere

entertainment medium as it largely is now?

- * Will it help to bring the people of India closer together and promote mutual understanding, no matter in which part of the country they live? or will it add to the existing problems?

- * Can we think of DTH as a means of reaching rural India more extensively? as is being attempted in China.

Although DTH is technically possible. The question is whether it is economically beneficial for the country and socially desirable for the people? The task has to be how to design DTH in such a way that it meets some such desirable conditions.

No Government allowed DTH without some regulations or other. It is in this regard we should recall the famous judgement of our Supreme Court in 1995 declaring that air waves belong to people and that they need to be managed by an independent regulatory authority. That being the directive of the supreme Court, it is high time that we come up with a regulatory authority and allow DTH such a way that it empowers people, ensures equity in the country and enables level playing for Indians globally. Allowing DTH without some such regulatory mechanism amounts to abdication of responsibility of a government to its people. ♦

No Indian culture without languages

Bhagavad-gita we get the virat-rupa of Shri Krishna.

Our language is so deeply connected with its background in Indian ritual and religion that any translation of our basic Indian ideas transmitted into "good morning" and what's the difference?

30 Years Ago

...In the Indian family life there

across some seven-odd countries. DTH service enables customers to receive TV programmes directly from satellites, using high power KU transponders on a small dish antenna, employing their own terminal using Integrated Receiver Decoder (IRD) and Remote Control—all this without the need of a cable operator.

DTH however need ~~to be~~ involved—uplinking, foreign equity and such other regulations. DTH is centralised and controlled

services. The choices include a good mix of region, national and international programmes and scope for simultaneous access with rest of the world.

DTH has not replaced cable tv anywhere in the world nor cable tv has become absolute anywhere and vice versa as in Europe where DTH unlike elsewhere preceded cable TV with emerging convergence of technologies, DTH is not the end or the ultimate. We can expect a newer communication

preoccupation—unless moderated by parents at home and teachers

instead of being a mere

to abdication of responsibility of a government to its people.

The Government should impose following conditions to be met by any broadcaster before obtaining the licence feel media experts

1. The broadcaster should undertake to observe the programme codes incorporated in the Cable Television Network (Regulation) Act, 1995 as also those incorporated in the draft-broadcasting bill. It should agree to obey the orders of the government or any designated authority in respect of violations of these codes.
2. The broadcaster should have a central control room from where all the decoders are activated and access to channels is authorised. The broadcaster should provide facilities at its subscription Management Centre for round the clock monitoring of all channels carried on the DTH platform.
3. The broadcaster should undertake not to carry any channel, which is considered objectionable by government, or any designated authority.
4. Any DTH service started before coming in to force of the Broadcasting Act should be given licence only as an interim service whose continuance would depend entirely on obtaining a licence under the act from the prescribed authority. In case the licence is not granted the broadcaster should undertake to stop operations and would not be given any 'grandfathering' protection.
5. The broadcaster should be asked to undertake that it would carry DD-1 and DD-2 on its DTH platform by uplinking these channels at its own cost.
6. To provide level playing field, there should be a six-month lock-in period after a decision is made to permit DTH to allow entry of many players.

No Indian culture without languages

development of many millenia. Each word spoken in Indian languages is loaded with a background meaning. Even if a person is not conscious of the meaning at *madhyama* and *pashyanti* when articulating the word at *vaikhari* level, his inner mind cannot but be influenced by the inherent *spṛṣṭa* in the word. The language of India influences of mind of its citizens right from the moment of conception. The ideas continue to be expressed throughout life. In fact, an average Indian finds it extremely difficult, well nigh impossible, to carry on a family conversation in English. The most intense supporter of English speaks an Indian language in his wife's bedroom.

Is there any way one can touch an elder's feet in English? How can one bless a newly wed daughter-in-law in English with an equivalent of *सौभाग्यवती भूयाः*? What is the English translation of *suhaagin*? One hears words like "हेरे राम"! "हे भगवान्"! as interjections; how would the English speaking India translate them? "Jesus!"?

In the normal polite speech of India the culture of India is pervasive. You welcome a guest at home and say "विराजिये". How does one say that in English? "Do shine!"? Does that mean anything in English? The idea goes back to the Vedas where "viraj" is the very unity of the universe and so in the

Bhagavad-gita we get the virat-rupa of Shri Krishna.

Our language is so deeply connected with its background in Indian ritual and religion that any translation of our basic Indian ideas into "good morning" and what's the difference? The answer is that the difference is the same as between earth and sky. The Hindu greeting as *Suprabhatam* is taken from the temple ritual. The Hindu temple ritual is an attempt to express the macrocosm in a microcosm: the daily cycle of ritual in a Hindu temple is a imitation of the *kalpa*, the cycle of creation and dissolution. At the end of His *yoga-nidra*, the Brahman wakes up to start a new creation, and this is the morning ritual in a Hindu temple. "Suprabhatam", therefore refers to the Hindu idea of the cycles of time and space, and makes the human being conscious of his place not merely in his immediate circle of friends but in the entire universe and its infinite revolving cycles. "Good morning", however, limits us merely to the immediate cycles of friends and is not an aid to higher realisation.

'Shri' does not mean 'Mister'

I have above-spoken of "Shri" and "Shriman". In the Hindu ritual one takes an *achamana*, a sip of holy water, with "ममि श्रीः श्रयतां स्वाहा" "may Shri abide in me." May I become endowed with Shri "श्रीमान् भूयात्तम्". This Shri is not glory, nor prosperity, but the intrinsic quality of a personality whereby his external actions illuminate his surroundings. Success and prosperity are merely outer extensions of this intrinsic quality.

30 Years Ago

...In the Indian family life there are gradations of relationship; each person has his own special place. In India there are only two kinds of relationships: some bless and some receive a blessing. In the equalitarian societies like that of America today, equality has been brought to such extreme level that children call their parents by first name. The idea of elders' blessings is just not known. In our language there is a special word for the love that elders bear for the younger ones: *वात्सल्य*. How does one translate *वात्सल्य* into English?...

Change the language and your whole association changes. In Hindi you speak of someone "बेचारी सीधी गाय है" —poor girl is a little cow! We mean that she is so simple-hearted and ever-giving that anyone takes advantage of her and she does not protest. In English "she is a cow" means she is a stupid brute.

To a westerner, ever conquering, Himalayas are something to conquer and climb. To the Indians, they are sacred places of worship. Speak of a cave to an American or English child and it conjures up images of primitive fears, witches and cavemen. Speak to an Indian about *guha*, a cave, and he thinks of the *rishi* and ancient yogis practising *tapasaya* in the caves of the Himalayas.

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