

THE SPIRITUAL SCIENTIST

A Cyber Magazine for Those Who Think

Vol 3 Issue 4

Television: The One-Eyed Modern Guru

Television has become an integral part of every modern house. It is thought by most modern people to be an indispensable necessity that offers them a much-needed break from the tension & boredom of modern mechanistic life-style. Although a few whispers are often heard here & there about the detrimental affects of TV., they are generally drowned out by the overwhelming uproar of those wanting the enjoyment offered by television.

Television is not run by social workers interested in the benefit of the audience. TV is run by businessmen who are ready to do anything and everything to maximize their profits. Although people eagerly savor the various programs on television, little do they know the deadly effect it is having on their minds. Almost without exception TV programs shows levels of opulence & enjoyment that are unattainable for common people. Such programs coupled with the alluring advertisements of various luxury products that are periodically aired between all programs, ensures that the audience's hearts become filled with uncontrollable and most often insatiable desires for wealth and pleasure. This inevitably results in people behaving like programmed robots working hard to try to earn money - by hook or by crook - to enjoy life the way it is portrayed on TV. It is important to understand the TV doesn't offer harmless innocent entertainment. It also determines the values and goals of people.

Television is becoming the guru of modern man; it teaches him how to dress, how to walk, how to talk, how to eat. However TV is a treacherous guru. Statistics shows that within two years of introduction and promotion of TV in a third world country, the crime rates increased 10 times within just 2 years. An average American child, even before he reaches 10 years of age, sees thousands of murder, rapes and other crime on television. After exposing their children to such ghastly violence, isn't it ironic that American parents feel aghast when school children armed with guns shoot their teachers and co-students? Many intelligent Americans including eminent film stars, social activists and national leaders have joined hands in forming a "no TV" campaign group. They and their children have minimized TV viewing to the barest minimum necessary. Their concern is of course mostly material. Excessive TV viewing inhibits creativity, creates lethargy and of course wastes time.

But from the point of India, which has the most glorious cultural and spiritual heritage in the world, the effects of TV are far more insidious. What 700 years of Mogul rule could not accomplish, what 200 years of British rule could not do, television has done in just a few decades. Television has attacked and damaged severely the very foundation of Vedic culture. In the past, everyone in India would gather every evening as a family in a local temple or under a nearby banyan tree to sing bhajans, kirtans and hear the glorious stories of Lord Rama and Krishna and the timeless message of the Bhagavad-gita - of the soul and its loving relationship with God. Their minds and heart saturated with these divine vibrations, people would sleep happily and wake up enthusiastically and joyfully advance towards the ultimate goal of life - to return back to the kingdom of God. Unfortunately nowadays instead of coming together to glorify God, people come together in front of the modern deity - TV. There they sit together united in a stupor of illusion, burning

with passion and desire, dissatisfied and frustrated, imagining happiness in the vicarious inane pleasures offered by the idiot box.

Indians are meant to lead the world through the spiritual wisdom and culture Srila Prabhupada would lament that Indians are sitting on jewels but are begging for broken glass. Instead of being victimized by the bombardment of Western culture through TV, Indians have the opportunity to find the treasure of divine love and happiness that lies dormant within their own heart and share it with the whole world. The original television meaning 'vision from a distance' was when Sanjaya observed from the court in Hastinapura the events on the battlefield of Kurukshetra and narrated them to Dhritarashtra. Thus the message of the Bhagavad Gita is India's ancient TV program. Let us see, hear and understand the message coming from that original mystical television. Let us assimilate and disseminate the wisdom of the Gita to the whole world and become happy ourselves and offer the whole world the pathway to everlasting happiness.

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Investigating Reality from the Higher Dimensional Perspective of Vedic Wisdom

Published by ISKCON Youth Forum (IYF), Pune

Dedicated to

His Divine Grace A C Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada,

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