Chapter Two

Television in the Age of Globalisation: Conceptual Debates

The world is on the threshold of globalisation. In the same way as modernisation, globalisation has an impact on all the various domains of life of traditional societies, which tries to adhere and adapt itself in the field of economy, while still seeking to preserve its own identity and cultural values. There are apprehensions that the United States has taken over the world through its cultural popularity. However empirical evidences only focuses on the ‘imperialism’ aspect of the equation and offer all too simple “evidence” of at a more complex and social and cultural debate. Can this be dismissed as a case of mere cultural imperialism or is the world proceeding towards a beginning of a new international order? The purpose of this chapter is to examine the phenomenon of globalisation that has taken place rapidly in the last few decades and to examine the charge of “cultural imperialism” as it relates to current media theory.

2.1 Globalisation as a Phenomenon

It is a common place of contemporary debate that our every day lives are becoming more global, more affected by events occurring far away. Giddens has labelled this process as a transformation in the ‘time-space distinction’. Once the world is connected through the web, it is as if the old Newtonian law – that one cannot be in two places at the same time – no longer holds true, at least virtually. Accordingly, Giddens defines globalisation as a transformation of worldwide social relations such that distant localities are now so linked that local happenings can very well be shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa. It can even be said, as some do, that globalisation is the end product of a long historical process of
continuing and progressive integration – from tribal groups to nation state societies to super state-blocs and eventually to a world state society. While many would hesitate to go so far as to see the emergence of a world state-society based upon global monopolisation, we already find references to ideas of “global society” suggesting that various modes and forms worldwide organisation are well under way. Such a global society is far from being comparable to the sociological notion of society, which is grounded in the nation-state, and as in the case of Durkheimian tradition, emphasises normative integration and common cultural values, rather than shared historical pasts.

Globalisation in recent times can be best defined as the integration of finance, markets, nation-states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and nation states to reach around the world – faster, deeper and cheaper than even before. The cold war had its own dominant ideas: the clash between communism and capitalism, as well as détente, non-alignment and perestroika. It had its own defining technologies: nuclear weapons and second industrial revolution were dominant, but for many people in developing countries the hammer and sickles were still relevant tools. Globalisation’s deriving idea is free-market capitalism. Globalisation has its own set of economic rules, which revolve around opening, deregulation and privatising economies world-wide and it has its own defining technologies: computerisation, miniaturisation, digitalisation, satellite communications, fibre optics and the Internet. Its defining measurement is speed, rather than the scale, of commerce, travel, communication and innovation. In cold war times, the most frequently asked question was: “How big is your missile?” In times of globalisation, it is: “How fast is your modem?” The symbol of the cold war system was a wall, which divided everyone. The symbol of the globalisation system is a World Wide Web that unites everyone. The defining document of the cold war system was the Treaty. The defining document of
the globalisation is The Deal. If the defining perspective of the cold war
world was division, the defining perspective of globalisation is integration.
Once a country makes the leap into the system of globalisation, its elite tries
to locate themselves in a global context. Last, and most important,
globalisation has its own defining structure of power. The cold war system
was built around nation-states, with two super powers at the centre: the
United States and the Soviet Union. The globalisation system is by contrast,
is built round three balances, which overlap and affect each other.

The first is the traditional balance between nation states. In the
globalisation system, the United States is now the sole and dominant super
power but the balance between the United States and other states still
matters for the stability of this system. The second balance in the
globalisation system is between the nation-states and global market. These
global markets are made up of millions of investors moving money around
the world with the click of the mouse. These investors are an "electronic
herd" which gathers in key global financial centres such as Wall Street,
Hong Kong, London and Frankfurt, which in turn may be termed as "super
markets". The attitudes and actions of these electronic herds and super
markets can have a huge impact on individual nation-states, even to the
point of triggering the downfall of the governments. The third balance is the
balance between individuals and the nation-states. Because globalisation
has brought down many of the walls that once limited the movement and
reach of people, and has simultaneously wired the world into networks, it
gives more power to individuals to influence both markets and nation-states
than at any time in history. Today there are super-empowered individuals
who are able to act directly on the world stage without the traditional
mediation of governments, corporations or any other public or private
organisations. Some of these super-empowered individuals appear to be
powerful enough to become akin to enemy states of earlier times. Thus
when Osama Bin Laden, a Saudi millionaire with his own global networks,
declared war on the United States in the late 1990s, the US Air Force had to launch a cruise missile attack on him as though he were another nation-state.\textsuperscript{3}

The process of "globalisation" is often portrayed as a positive force which is unifying widely different societies, integrating them into a "global village", and enriching all in the process. It is variously described as an inevitable by-product of human evolution and progress, as if it were an organic process, governed by the laws of nature. However, globalisation is not necessarily a natural progression emerging out of the ordinary communication and interaction of people and cultures around the world. Rather, it results from deliberate human choice by a powerful group of nations, trans-national corporations (TNCs) and organisations that have stakes in the process. The new communication & information technologies have provided methods for large corporations to maximise profits by entering foreign markets.

Globalisation is a complex dialectic that elicits very different reactions from different individuals, nation and cultures around the world. Globalisation has resulted in a complicated interaction between "globalism" and "localism", where huge corporations are selling products across national boundaries and creating globally homogeneous culture of consumption, while at the same time trying to adjust their products to local tastes. In addition, globalisation is resulting in economic growth in many countries and is presenting new opportunities for trade, individual empowerment and cultural integrity internationally. Globalisation also provokes the fears of indigenous capitalists of loss of markets, of local people of losing work and of nation-states of a drain of national wealth.

Also, globalisation has implications on politics and political legitimacy. Previously, distance and geographic barriers protected the homogeneity of
regional and national cultures. Now, however, neither the modern state nor the public sphere of a society can monopolise its people imagination. The borders defining cultural identity may be more influenced by the footprints of the satellites from which people receive their programming than by any natural or political boundaries. Consequently, the democratic state is faced with a dilemma: to be able to "generate, sustain or encourage narratives to communal well being and remain true to democratic values", or to risk its own survival by failing to enlist the loyalty of its people.

It is alleged that the process of globalisation has undermined the unity & integrity of nation-state societies. The process of globalisation suggests simultaneously two images of culture:

1. The first image entails the extension outwards of a culture to its limit, the globe. Heterogeneous cultures become incorporated into a dominant culture, which eventually covers the whole world.
2. The second image points to the compression of cultures. Things formerly held apart are now brought into contact & juxtaposition. Cultures pile on top of each other in heaps without obvious organising principles. There is too much culture to handle and organise into coherent belief systems, means of orientation and practical knowledge.

The first image suggests a process of conquest and unification of global space. The world becomes a singular domesticated space, a place where everyone becomes assimilated into a common culture, even though few would see this as the unfolding of a singular historical logic leading to a world-state with an integrated culture. Rather, this image appears to herald the by now famous slogan of the end of history – with absolute knowledge and absolute access, where space and time as physical entities becoming progressively irrelevant. The second image, on the other hand, suggests a complex reality – resulting in multiple sites of being and multiple positions.
from which processes of homogenisation can be contested. In this world, we can access not just our own, but other's cultures as well for our own purposes – resulting in a politics different from what we have till now known in terms of nationalism and socialism as the idea of society itself is transformed.6

But the most worrisome effect of globalisation, in the view of many critical observers, is the commodification, which arises from its fundamentally economic and instrumentalist thrust, its goal of maximising consumption. Everything comes to be stated in terms of “market”, whether it is material goods, entertainment, news and information, education, higher culture, morality, religion and even aesthetics. Value then appears universally to become analogous to market value.

2.2 Media Imperialism or Globalisation

The primary concern in international communication research has been concerning the international structure and flow of media. Since the late 1960s, one major theoretical framework in this area of inquiry has been the thesis of media imperialism – the idea of a one-way, non-reciprocal flow of information and cultural influence in international media environment, which embodies and causes the cultural subordination of the ‘Third World’ by the West.7 The idea of cultural imperialism is an offshoot of the concept of imperialism associated with political and economic domination of one society over the other. The result of the subordination of the peripheral to metropolitan countries, is a unidirectional flow of information to the dependent peripheral societies from the advanced West. This tends to submerge indigenous culture in favour of the imported cultures. Notwithstanding the much-celebrated ‘global’ nature of culture today, it is undeniable that cultural forms emanate mostly from the United States. As Peter Golding and Phil Harris contend, it is nothing but “the
transnationalisation of the very national voice, the universal triumph of a supremely local and parochial set of images and values". While in a way, this concept of cultural imperialism has an undoubted political and critical appeal, an attempt to go beyond the generalities show up numerous technical and conceptual problems in the very idea.

Media imperialism is a limited theoretical concept for exploring the intricate process of cultural contact, intrusion, fusion and disjunction. Media imperialism research assumes that media structure, rather than the audience, determines media content and impact. The conceptual flow of media imperialism research lies in that it equates ‘determination’ with absolute control, which is more imagined than real. Media imperialism asserts the imposition of one culture onto another. Imposition by coercion was prevalent during the colonial days when politics, economy, and culture were coerced “from above”, with little or no popular base and with little or no reference to the cultural traditions of the people incorporated in their domain. Media imperialism on the other hand, is based on the defining concept of market – which, at least in principle, must be able to understand and respond to people’s demand in a way in which a non-democratic state need not. However, this is not to naively believe in the ‘free’ and uncontrolled nature of the global market, it is merely to say that taste, demand and legitimacy are in a way in which they never were before, especially in times of political colonialism and media explosion.

Media imperialism research suggests a pure and dis-empowered vulnerability on the part of the local or indigenous culture in its encounter with foreign culture. It also seems to imply that the result of media flow is always substitutive rather than supplementary – as if one is unproblematically converted from say Indian culture to American culture as a result of watching TV. However, when absorbing foreign media technology and content, being ‘re-embedded’ and ‘re-moored’ in the new context can
also sustain traditional cultural values and vision in a changed form. It is therefore difficult to conceive that exposure of the local/indigenous culture to Western products always taints the former without affecting the latter at all.

Interestingly, both media practitioners and their critics in academia perpetuate this notion that the media is a unilateral and unidirectional power which shapes people's cultural vision. The presence of Western media in the 'Third World' does not necessarily mean that they occupy a centre position in the cultural landscape. They could be marginal elements in the local people's cultural experience. Therefore, in studies of media flow, we need to properly locate the Western media's place in the local cultural milieu. Media imperialism research has primarily focused on the aspects of structure and content. How the message of Western media is actually created for the consumption of the 'Third World' has not received much research attention neither has the changing makeup of the market leading to adaptive changes in media organisations and their content production.

In contrast to the media imperialism theory, premised on the determination of media structure and content, the user-centred communication model in media studies holds media consumers to be active rather than passive. The consumption of or reception of the television messages is here considered to be as important a “moment” in the dialectics of globalism as the production and structure of the messages. Media audience thus cannot be ignored in the analysis of any communication process. Cross-cultural audience studies have revealed that audiences do not always subscribe to the prescribed meaning of foreign media products and that they often use and interpret media messages from their own distinct cultural experiences.

What we have in modern times are dynamic social institutions, including the mass media, that ultimately articulate a wide range of ideas, and ever
changing, expanding communication technologies whose social and cultural uses can not be predicted or controlled. This combination produces ideological discourses and technological possibilities, which are far more flexible, user-friendly, and democratic than ever before. As institutions grow and technology becomes more accessible, ideology expands and diversifies. Culture is produced not only by the culture industries alone, but also in negotiations and appropriations of publicly circulated symbols. What is more significant in key respects, technology has helped reduce the gap between cultural authors and interpreters, helping expand and diversify the exercise and the cultural power to the masses. 11

The enforcement of state hegemony over cultures -- repressing local cultures in the process was strongly promoted by the growth of mercantilism and capitalism as a means to expand markets. 12 The resulting tendency towards cultural homogenisation has continued through a long process of acculturation into the present phase of globalisation. This shift stems from the realisation that the most important trans-border influences no longer can be described in terms of power exercised by nation-states, but are, rather, the pervasive effect of activities by trans-national forces. The economic mega-conglomerates in particular and the trans-national corporations and trans-national media corporations whose interests are no longer identified with those of any particular country. The social and cultural impact of the trans-national forces increasingly manifests their cultural origins, rather than being wholly traceable to the United States, Europe, Japan or any other particular geographic source.

The scenario of 'cultural dumping' of American programmes on a powerless nation-state on the periphery is only one possibility. But it has to be set alongside with the activities of cultural gatekeepers deciding what aspects of local popular culture can be packaged and marketed. In many cases it may be various forms of hybridisation emerge in which the meaning of externally
originating goods, information and images are reworked, syncretised and blended with existing cultural traditions and forms of life. Even Herbert Schiller, long-time critic of US cultural imperialism, admits that the United States is no longer the dominant "imperial" power in terms of world communication hegemony. Schiller stated:

"Although the American presence in the message and image business remains strong, a powerful and expensive transnational corporate order is the main engine of current worldwide cultural and economic activity".

As an alternative to the media imperialism perspective, the concept of "glocalisation" appeared on the academic horizon in the early 1990s. As the composite word itself suggests, "glocalisation" is the dialectic of "globalisation" and "localisation". This perspective holds that the process of social change is a union of both homogenisation and heterogenisation and an interplay between the global and local. Viewed from another perspective, "cultural imperialism" may have lost some of its force as a critique of the existing world communication order due to the explosion of ethnically-motivated violence during the 1990s. Events such as the genocide in Rwanda and Bosnia, with its appeal to "ethnic cleansing" raise questions about whether local and regional cultures really should be thought of as sacrosanct. Crimes committed in the name of particular cultures undermine any appeal to a theory of absolute cultural relativism, which would make indigenous culture the final criterion of justice and morality, without reference to transcendent principles of justice. Nevertheless, culture remains important since it gives to the individual a sense of self-identity, world-view, and a rationale for living. Local cultures must be respected without being absolutised. They inevitably change in response to external forces, including the influence of international mass media.
Instead of therefore having to choose between the two alternatives - that through the media, the West reshapes the third world and learns to say things demanded by the third world - it is more important today to recognise that the local and global are not two absolute opposites, as they could have been if understood in purely spatial terms. The real impact of the media explosion is not so much an absolute domination by the West, nor an absolute appropriation of Western ideals by local cultures - it is the changed meaning of the 'local' itself. In earlier times, a remote village in Bihar need not have understood its own boundaries explicitly, because its own world-ness was uncontested - even though many people may have migrated from there to big cities. But today, with a TV in the village, the idea of the local nature of the village is asserted in everyday life in a way as never before. This localism has a different meaning now because the globe is packaged and available everyday - and not as an exceptional experience of some to be recounted in stories.

2.3 Where the Global and Local meet: Nationality and Struggle for Cultural Identities

One central issue, in which recognition of the intertwining of global and local developments has strong theoretical and political consequences, is the issue of cultural identity. The structural changes brought about by the transnationalisation of media flows are often assessed and officially defined in terms of a threat to the autonomy and integrity of 'national identity'. Such a definition seems a limited and limiting one, as it tends to subordinate the other, more specific and differential sources such as those based upon class, locality, gender, ethnicity, generation, religion, politics for the construction of national identity. The defence and preservation of national identity as a privileged foundation for cultural identity is far from a general, self-evidently legitimate political option. After all, nations are
themselves artificial, historically constituted politico-cultural units; they are not natural destinies of the pre-given cultures, rather their existence is based upon the construction of standardised ‘national culture’ that is a prerequisite to the functioning of a modern state. 

The desire to keep national identity and national culture wholesome and pristine is not only becoming increasingly unrealistic, but is also, at more theoretical level, damagingly obvious to the contradictions that are condensed in the very concept of national identity. Defining national identity in static, essentialist terms- by forging - ignores the fact of plurality of cultural groupings and interests inside a nation, fundamentally dynamic, collective, unstable and an impure phenomenon.

However, contrary to the subterranean tactics by which informal identities are created, the categories of natural identity and national culture are invested with formal, discursive legitimacy and are at present still dominantly used as a central foundation for official cultural and media policies. It is this constellation that has been thrown into question by the electronic intrusions of the trans-national media system, which does not believe in national boundaries, only about boundaries of territory, of transmission and markets. Instead of ‘cultural imperialism’, the trans-national era may aptly be characterised by the term ‘cultural synchronisation’ and it poses quite a different problem as to the politics of cultural identity.

Nations are themselves repositories of conflicting identifications. In his book Orientalism, Edward Said (1978) has shown how the idea of Europe has benefited from the colonial period onwards from its claimed superiority over the culture of the ‘orient’. This heritage of the latent and manifest racism still has troubling effects in ethnic relations in most European countries. More recently, Indians have shown concern about support of Western
cultural invasion as a consequence of the transnationalisation of the media system. This ignores the fact, however, that Western cultural symbols always been an integral part of the way in which million of Indians construct their identities. Secularism, the Western cultural symbol is cherished by millions of Indians and the English language itself has become the officials and the medium of translation within India itself.

The increased cultural flows will not however necessarily produce a greater tolerance and cosmopolitanism. An increased familiarity with 'the other', be it in the face-to-face relations through images or the representation of the other's world view or ideology, may equally lead to a disturbing sense of engulfment and immersion. This may result in a retreat from the threat of cultural disorder into the security of ethnicity, traditionalism, or the active assertion of the integrity of the national culture in global culture prestige contests. To talk about a global culture is equally to include these forms of cultural contestation. 20

2.4 Global & Local cultures

A local culture is perceived as being a particularity, which is the opposite of the global. It is often taken to refer to the culture of a relatively small, bounded space in which the individuals living there engage in daily, face-to-face relationships. The sense of belonging, the common sedimented experiences and cultural form that are associated with a place, is crucial to the concept of a local culture. One paradoxical consequence of the process of globalisation, the awareness of the finitude and boundedness of the planet and humanity, is not to produce homogeneity but to familiarise us with greater diversity, the extensive range of local cultures 21.
One perspective on the process of globalisation which was accorded a good deal of credibility until recently is that of Americanisation. Here a global culture was seen as being formed through the economic and political domination of the United States, which thrust its hegemonic culture into all parts of the world. American way of life was regarded as a corrosive homogenising force, as a threat to the integrity of all particularities. 22

2.5 The Concept of ‘Glocal’

The central problem of today’s global interaction is the tension between cultural homogenisation and cultural heterogenisation.23 The emerging theory of glocalisation provides a framework that explores the dynamic interplay between these two tendencies. As a viable alternative to the thesis of media imperialism, this perspective seems to point out a path to a nuanced understanding of the nature and process of media flow and cultural change in the contemporary world.

The term ‘glocal’ originated from the notion of global localisation, a business strategy in Japan. It refers to ‘global outlook adapted to local conditions 24 not much different from the “Think global, act local” aphorism. The process of globalisation includes the tendencies of both homogenisation and heterogenisation. Ethnic and cultural fragmentation and modernist homogenisation are not two arguments, two opposing views of what happening in the world today, but two constitutive trends of ‘global reality’.25

However, the term ‘globalisation’ in much of the academic and popular press tends to imply only homogenisation and uniformity. The imagery conjured up from Marshal McLuhan’s “global village” metaphor is that of ‘coming together’. On the other hand, “if by ‘culture’ is meant a collective
mode of life, or a repertoire of beliefs, styles, values, and symbols, then we can only speak of cultures, never just culture; for a collective mode of life, or a repertoire of beliefs, etc., presupposes different modes and repertoire in a universe modes of repertoires. Hence, the idea of a 'global culture' is a practical impossibility. \(^26\)

### 2.6 Dimensions of Globalisation: The Asian Debate

The issue of cultural identity assumes significance in the process of globalisation as it impacts the social, cultural and economic life of the people in different societies. Arjun Appadurai argues that modern technologies of communication outcross the boundaries of real time and real space in social interaction in which ‘virtual’ communities or groups may be possible but it doesn’t overcome the acuteness of crisis of cultural identities. \(^27\) This would be evident from the articulation of hopes and fears of intellectuals from developing societies, particularly from East Asian countries and from South Asia.\(^28\)

Soetrisno has expressed this feeling in his analysis of the consequences of globalisation on social harmony, stability and diversity of contemporary society. According to Soetrisno, globalisation doesn’t contribute to cultural, social and economic integration of people in society through equitable access to the fruits of development available through it. Cultural conflicts and contradictions sharpen society due to unlimited exposure of people to foreign cultural and entertainment package beamed through television.\(^29\) Similar fears are reported from Vietnam where cultural threats globalisation poses are displacement of traditional norms of society due to exposure to “dehumanising and retrogressive cultural products” in the form of entertainment, consumerism, exposure to new style of living to moral
deviance, loss of traditional humanistic values, disintegration of family life and age-old family values.\textsuperscript{30}

The responses to globalisation from South Asia have been qualitatively different as South as an entity constitutes a separate category. According to Gunawardana:

"The disjunction evident in South Asian societies today are not confined to the sphere of economic and trade. A new social ethic is emerging which has the potential to transform cultures by moulding them into a single global pattern of wasteful consumerism. But this homogenising thrust of globalisation is being resisted at different levels through appeals to culture, history, ethnicity, language and similar vehicles of identity which are both national and sub-national." \textsuperscript{31}

This process results not only in defining cultural identity through celebration of local cultural identities or growth of ever-new forms of symbolisation of nationalism and regionalism.

Whereas Malaysia has almost opted out of the agenda of globalisation reverting back to a closed economic model both in the economic and cultural sectors of their society, China once banned animated film like \textit{Dennis the Menace} as it undermines the traditional respect for the elders. But more than that the cultural policy of China, Singapore, Malaysia project additional Asian cultural identity rather than entirely national one. This emphasis on the preservation of Asian cultural values has been applauded by most other nations in the region for the preservation of cultural identity. This is being demonstrated by certain exclusiveness of political values and ideologies commensurate with their emphasis on State control on the
institutions of culture, rights of the citizens in making cultural choices and access to information.\textsuperscript{32}

Most recently, Samuel Huntington has discussed these same issues in his \textit{Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order}(1996), a book to which the present observations are greatly indebted. Huntington, whose view of the contemporary world can not be accused of being too optimistic, ends his book with a call to search for commonalities between 'Western' and 'Eastern' values is concentrated in the understanding of the individual's place in society. The West is interpreted as exaggerating the autonomy of the individual, as having institutionalised an abstract, mechanical concept of society, and as being gripped by a spiritually impoverished materialism. Against this 'Eastern' is characterised as having a more correct view of the individual embedded in community, valuing tradition and hierarchy, holding an organic and thus more natural concept of the society, and retaining a spirituality that limits crasser forms of materialistic acquisitiveness.

This is almost analogous to a tight-rope walk: on the one hand, not sacrificing the genuine, national, regional or local interests and on the other not letting xenophobic tendencies to insulate the State from the wholesome winds of change blowing in from the outside. The meeting of cultures may not be a clash of civilisations but a step towards building new bridges of understanding between different cultures. Globalisation postulates a borderless world and localisation subordinates its global forces to protect and serve genuine national and local interests. Given the changes taking place, globalisation is bound to unleash forces capable of generating synergy between the global and the local. Conceptually, the global and local will be the matrix of globalisation.

One of the fears against globalisation may be the Asian financial crisis. The onslaught of the Asian financial crisis was not entirely due to the State
being weakened by the forces of globalisation but more due to the State’s inability to make the necessary abiding structural changes. Asian values may not be primarily anti-Western but re-assertion of traditional values by the Asians. In fact there are many in the West who subscribe to Asian values such as the strength of family unit and campaign against vulgarity and violence in the media. Seen as a whole, however, it can be assumed, especially in regard to Asia, that a new self-confidence is spreading that involves at least a partial rejection of Western values. Finally, the freedom of information is as indispensable in Asia as in the rest of the world.

2.6.1 The Indian Case

In the growing context of globalisation, a new era of civilisation is being born in India. The telecom and information revolution through television and Internet are tending to encourage a new mix of civilisation. This coming together of civilisation is in the view of some threatening to cause clash of civilisation. The fear is that an invasion of indigenous culture by other cultures through the medium of open skies - cable and satellite television and Internet would undermine Indian traditions and values. According to Singh:

“The movement and the exposure to Western culture mediated by the colonial rule made Indians very self-conscious of their cultural identity. The anxieties about the impact of globalisation and marketisation of economy, the media and information systems, the leisure and style of life etc., which have direct impact upon the symbolic contents and foundations of the traditions, have today generated anxious debate among scholars, the people and the political parties on the policy responses of the State. Such policy has long been in making, but today the process of globalisation and its impact on culture, both local and national, give it a new urgency.”33
On the other hand, Farmer states:

"In India, nationalist sentiments during the freedom struggle in the first half of the twentieth century fostered the notion that cultural nationalism could serve as a potent force for nation-building and as a tool for resisting cultural neo-imperialism. Though the interacting forces of legal precedent, cultural nationalism, and development theory, television in independent India evolved as an institution controlled by the emanating from Delhi. In this process, though the Government of India took responsibility for the implementation of a complex set of policy goals that ultimately proved unachievable."34

But, the central question is regarding the impact globalisation process has upon Indian culture. How does Indian culture respond to the challenges and exposure to new cultural values, styles of life and institutional norms? The Indian civilisation, by being more open and not exclusive, has acquired vitality. India from the time of immemorial has always welcomed people of different races, religion and culture and bound them all together. "India has lived with cultural pluralism for centuries. In fact, the history of India is based on linkages with other cultures".35 It is through intermixing that civilisations are rejuvenated. Multi-culturalism is the ethos of India, its uniqueness lies in the fact that it encompasses and embraces the values of various cultures.

The other inherent element of Indian society is pluralism and diversity that would contain the consequences of globalisation. As Singh states:

"Globalisation, market economy and powers of media technologies or information technologies are bound to put pressure on local cultures. Some degree of acceleration towards
homogenisation of cultural forms and activities can also be envisaged. Its consequences to the local communities may be progressive or developmental if the disintegrative tendencies that these forces generate are minimised. Though difficult, this task may not be impossible to accomplish. There are several reasons for this. First, the social structure and cultural system in India are intrinsically based on pluralism and diversity. This provides enormous cultural resilience to communities in India to filter the effects of globalisation through refractory and prismatic adaptations. The second source of resilience to local culture is the institution of democracy. Finally, the people of India with an enhanced sense of self-consciousness and awareness of identity respond the every step of movement toward economic, political and cultural modernisation, taken up by the State in India.” 36

Globalisation is being perceived as an inherently crisis-ridden process. The forces of globalisation and marketisation are intruding into every sphere of human life. The cultural bombardments that mass media have unleashed have created a spiral of aspirations and expectations which Indian society is not capable of satisfying. Mass media converts members of communities into audience; but often the audience reacts to message not passively; they decodify the cultural symbols and messages ‘actively’ as “producers of meaning.” 37 This is true, according to Singh in India “where in course of three decades of exposure to mass culture of films, radio, television, video etc., the self-consciousness of the local cultures and communities has not diminished. It has become more articulate about its identity and interests. Globalisation, therefore, not only makes people’s sense of cultural identity and cultural values more caring of shared experience within diversity, but it also makes them highly critical of conscious about ‘hidden packages’ of self-serving ideologies in communication.” 38
2.7 Globalisation of Mass Media

Globalisation is a complex phenomenon, marked by two opposing forces. On the one hand, it is characterised by massive economic and technological innovation. On the other hand, there is increased inequality, cultural and social tumult, and individual alienation. Globalisation of mass media is an integral part of this phenomenon and is propelled by the same ideologies, organisations and forces. The proliferation of communication technologies and the increased global interdependence it creates are often erroneously viewed as directly contributing to global understanding, equality and harmony. However, increased electronic communication does not necessarily mean an increase in human communication and co-operation. In fact, it leads to the replacement of traditional structures such as the family, religion and the community with ones supposedly more relevant to the modern world.

Globalisation of mass media should also be viewed in the context of its demographic constituencies. Within a few decades, the population of India and China combined will constitute almost half of humanity. This demographic shift no doubt will be an important factor in determining the geographical and economic basis of the market, as well as major conglomerates involved in the mass media. The rapid expansion of the mass media is based on the assumption that information is inherently neutral. This idea has been greatly magnified by organisations and companies, which have a stake in the globalisation process, and it ignores the important role that culture and social values play in shaping information. These in turn determine what become part of national consciousness and what values and ideas take precedence in the general public. Many countries in the South are concerned with bolstering their national identity and strengthening their role in the globalisation of media and technology. They
recognise that information and communication are increasingly the source of power in world today, and those can not compete effectively in the communication and information sectors will suffer both economically and culturally. 

2.7.1 Global Television

Of all the media forms, it is television that contributes most to a sense of globalisation. Television in its scope and effects has become truly international. First, its content is international. It is not only news programmes that depict events taking place in far away places. Further, television is, in effect creating a global audience. Certain events, the Gulf War, the Tianamen Square massacre, Kosovo crisis are played out in front of an audience drawn from every country. Second, television can be received internationally. This is partly a function of new means of supply, cable and satellite transmission. In certain circumstances, the international scope of television transmission can leave national governments powerless to regulate the content of programmes that its population can receive. Third, the ownership of television production and distribution is becoming internationalised. The process of deregulation, technological changes and the perceived economies of concentration are creating further opportunities for the growth of large media companies on an international scale by the acquisition of other companies. Alternatively horizontal mergers between companies involved in different products or active in different countries are possible. Fourth, the aspects of the globalisation of television concern the trade, the imports and exports in television programmes and products. Fifth and last, television is produced internationally. Some of the processes involved are most obvious in the production of news. There are television news agencies, which distribute raw, unedited news footage from around the world. Organisations like CNN or Sky News supplies fully edited news
programmes by satellite. Various regional broadcasting organisations, such as the European Broadcasting Union, manage the exchange of news stories between their members.

The ability of television to entertain, inform, titillate, and lure has made it not only the chief leisure activity but also perhaps the most influential cultural invention since the printing press. The television experience can be seen as a constant dynamic movement between similarity and difference. The dimension of similarity is that of dominant ideology that is structured into the forms of programme and is common to all viewers. The dimension of difference accounts for the wide variety of groups who must be reached if the programme is to be popular with a large audience. These groups will be positioned to the dominant ideology in different ways, and these ways will be paralleled in the way of experiencing the struggle between hegemony and resistance. On the other hand, television has been uniquely unifying national phenomenon. Never before have so many people held in common a core of shared cultural experiences (although Indian culture may not be quite the right term for Ramayana or Mahabharata). That shared experience constitutes a durable communal bond.

What is worrisome in the international trade in films and television programming is the tendency to rely on action, violence, sex, and simplistic plots designed for easy translation into many languages and for cross-cultural intelligibility. This tendency lowers not only on the moral level of available mass media but also its quality level. Direct, cause-effect relationships between kinds of media consumption and the behaviour of its consumers are difficult to prove, but it is obvious that the media has a major role in shaping our cultural environment. That shaping process becomes doubly disturbing when it involves alien elements - especially elements that undermine the accepted moral standards of a culture. Media time can be quality time if media contents are worthwhile; but often,
substandard contents makes the media experience into merely a routinised round of superficial sensual stimulation, leading nowhere.

The various aspects of the globalisation of the media industries have clear implications in limiting the national sovereignty. The globalisation of television appears to mean the dominance of American television made by American companies. It is not only direct importation that is in question. Even when smaller countries do make their own programmes, they frequently copy American models as being the only ones available. Arguments like these can promote the claim that globalisation of television are in fact a process of cultural imperialism. And in this context it is interesting that United States imports only a tiny proportion—about 2 per cent of its television programmes.41 In any event, it might perhaps be argued that cultural imperialism thesis is a little overstated as although the United States continues to dominate international trade of television programming, other countries are beginning to develop a television industry and become exporters. As Sreberny-Mohammadi comments:

“Empirically there is more complex syncopation of voices and a more complicated media environment in which Western media domination has given a way to multiple actors and flows of media products. More nation of the South are producing and exporting media materials, including films from India and Egypt, television programming from Brazil and Mexico. The major Brazilian network, experts' tele-novelas to 128 countries including Cuba, China, the Soviet Union, East Germany, earning export dollars for Brazil, and its productions outnumber those of any other stations in the world. Indeed the flow of television materials from Brazil to Portugal is one example of how contemporary cultural flows reverse the historic roles of imperialism.” 42
Like Brazil, India too is a large country with a vast home market, and is today able to produce and export its own programmes; both in the domain of film and television.

Ultimately, the success or failures of cultural imperialism will depend on the ways in which audiences take to foreign language programming. There is evidence that audiences prefer their own local (as opposed to global) programmes. Collins uses Hoskins and Mirus's term 'cultural discount'\textsuperscript{43} to refer to the loss of attractiveness when a television programme is shown to an audience whose cultural and linguistic experience is alien. The audience preferences, together with government attempt to resist 'Americanisation', may well create substantial incentives to produce more television locally. This, in turn will force the international media companies to recognise local and national cultures as market niches. As Miller argues, international media companies now understand 'that shifts in the global political economy require a de-domiciling of corporate thoughts and are planning to include local cultural contours as one more configuration to be parcelled as a market niche.'\textsuperscript{44}

Against the backdrop of globalisation and development of mass media, the South faces both opportunities and challenges. The response of the South to the process of media globalisation is varied. The historical experience, level of communication infrastructure, and political and cultural system of each country have an important influence on how it might react and adapt to globalisation of the media. Over the last few years, a number of trends have emerged within the South, which may profoundly have an impact upon the way the South responds to this worldwide phenomenon.
These emerging themes, which results from individual reactions and the responses of private and governmental sectors to globalisation, may be summarised as follows:

**Ethnicisation of Mass Media**

India boasts of the largest film industry in the world and exports its films and cultural products to many of its nationals living abroad, including those in Australia and Fiji. In both countries, Indian communities have created an "ecology of communications", using films and Indian cultural products, inviting film stars, organising community activities and organising events around Indian films & videos as a centre for community life and daily activities. Currently, for instance, the Zee television network's global spread, the making of Hindi movies with a view to reaching non-resident Indians (NRIs) all over the world etc seem to produce a process of Indianisation – on a global scale – rather than globalisation per se. This has been called by some the 'ethnicisation' of mass media – a process possible only in the age of globalism, but a process which cannot be unproblematically called 'globalisation' without emptying it of its cultural and political intent.

Reaching language minorities inside a developing country also takes special efforts and leads to ethnicisation of mass media. In India, broadcasting through the Indian National Satellite (INSAT) has achieved a multi-lingual mix in programming carried by the networks. These programmes reach linguistic minorities within India's own population, large numbers of immigrants residing in the country, and even speakers of those same languages who live in neighbouring countries.
Development of Alternative Media

As a counter to the over-reaching spread of global media corporations, some countries are promoting and making increased investments in local, indigenous programming. "Alternative media" and community programming have developed and grown. Alternative media, especially community radio and television, provides grass roots communication outlets, which trace their origins back to the link between radio and education. In India, the state run television organisation, Doordarshan is competing with the private channels for viewers whose number has swollen from 17 million to 300 million in less than 15 years. These private channels are outside India since Indian law does not allow private broadcasting from an Indian base. India has seen a spurt in production of television programming by private companies that have chosen less known subjects, classic stories of Indian languages and characters, and have adopted innovative methods for their production.

Designing Comprehensive Media Policies

The globalisation of communications and media is spurring a new recognition by the countries in the South. They are facing issues and concerns similar to those expressed in the 1970s and 1980s debate on New Information and Communication Order (NWICO). But these questions are arising in a much more complex manner. The technology of globalisation forcing these countries to take hard look at their media and communication policies and a more comprehensive approach to their formulation, seeking to move faster in trying to match the aspirations of their people. India has been designing policies to empower and strengthen the indigenous communication and media sectors. A Broadcasting Bill in 1997 trying to establish an independent Broadcasting Authority of India to facilitate and regulate broadcast services. The Prasar Bharati Act, 1990, which came into
force in 1997, shows that, “at last the Indian electronic media are truly moving towards the creation of an autonomous, independent and responsible broadcasting structure to meet the information and entertainment expectations of television viewers in a democratic country.”

**Internationalisation of Mass Media within the South**

The South particularly views its dependence on foreign firms and transnational actors as evidence that the important basis for national decision-making is now located outside its national boundaries. To remedy this situation and depending on the resources and infrastructures available within the South, many countries have succeeded in developing and extending their media systems, in particular television, beyond their national boundaries into areas with shared language and cultural characteristics. This phenomenon is occurring within the trend toward commercialisation and privatisation of public communication. India, traditionally a major centre of film and cinema production, has already added a number of related enterprises, including video technology. It has also aggressively accelerated production, dissemination and marketing of its films to South Asia and the Middle East. India has been active in the development of its advertising industry and expanding its techniques and know-how to the Gulf region, where privatisation of industry and commerce has been more pronounced over the last few decades.

**2.8 A Global Need: Media “Literacy” Education**

The ubiquity of media in general, not only of those media which carry more obvious loads of globalising influence, calls for more intensive and extensive efforts for systematic media “literacy” education. Inserting media education into already crowded school curricula is a challenge everywhere; but if that
challenge is not met, children and the adults will be left unprepared to deal with one of the most powerful forces shaping their lives. The greatest but perhaps least recognised dangers in media use is the developments of habits of passivity. Images can be used for varied and constructive purposes if they are viewed critically and discussed with parents, teachers, and siblings and in peer groups. But that requires effort and activity. Only active, fully alert and informed use of the media can take advantage of the benefits of the global media experience avoiding its pitfalls.
Endnotes

32 Yogendra Singh (2000) op. cit., p. 75
33 Yogendra Singh (1994), Significance of Culture in the Understanding of Social Change in Contemporary India, Presidential Address, Indian Sociological Society, New Delhi
36 Yogendra Singh (2000) op. Cit., p. 75
38 Yogendra Singh (2000) op. cit., p. 75
41 Ibid. p.102
