UNIT 2: BRIEF HISTORY OF TV

UNIT STRUCTURE

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2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- trace the origin and history of Television
- delineate the history and growth of Television in India

2.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit you have been introduced to the audio-visual medium, i.e., Television. You have been given a brief idea about the characteristics it possesses as a medium of Mass Communication. You have also learnt about the kind of impact and reach that Television has as a medium.

However, this very popular medium, without which we can hardly imagine our life today, had to pass through a long phase of evolution, experimentation and transition before it could reach the point where it stands today. TV came to India after quite sometime it had emerged on the international scenario. The history of the growth of Television through the ages is both interesting and awe-inspiring – well, almost like a fairy tale.

In this unit, you will get an idea about the growth and development of this very popular audio-visual medium. Let us start with the world scenario.

2.3 HISTORY OF TV BROADCASTING (WORLD SCENARIO)

Experiments in television broadcasting were initiated during the 1920s in the United States of America and Europe. These experiments used a mechanical scanning disc that did not scan a picture rapidly enough. In 1923, however came the invention of the iconoscope, the electric television tube. The inventions of kinescope or picture tube, the electronic camera and TV home receivers arrived in rapid succession during the next few years and by the 1930s the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) had set up a TV station in New York, and BBC a TV station in London, offering regular telecast programmes. Germany and France too established television stations around the same time.



Nazi Germany: Germany under the regime of the ***National Socialist German Workers Party***, which established a totalitarian dictatorship that existed from 1933 to 1945.

The World War put a brake on further developments in television, though in **Nazi Germany** television was widely used as an instrument of political propaganda. The Nazi party conventions were televised, but the top event in the first chapter of German television history was the 1936 Olympics in Berlin which was staged as a gigantic propaganda show for the Nazi Germany. But by the late 1940s and early 1950s television had become a feature of life in most of the advanced countries. In 1948, for instance, there were as many as 41 TV stations in the United States covering 23 cities through half a million television receiving sets. Within a decade, the figure jumped to 533 stations and 55 million receivers. Canada, Japan and the European countries did not lag behind.



Optical fiber cable: a cable containing one or more optical fibers. An **optical fiber** is a glass or plastic fiber that carries light along its length. Optical fiber can be used as a medium for telecommunication and networking because it is flexible and can be bundled as cables. It is especially useful for long-distance communications.

The age of satellite communication dawned in 1962 with the launching of Early Bird, the first communication satellite. The two big international satellite systems, Intelsat and Intersputnik began operating in 1965 and 1971 respectively and from then on the progress has been remarkable. Today, almost every country in the world has earth stations linked to satellites having literally changed the world into what Marshall McLuhan, the Canadian media sociologist called, a 'global village'.

In the 1970s more sophisticated transmission techniques were invented employing **optical fiber cable** and computer technology. Japan succeeded in designing a computer-controlled network to carry two-way video information to and from households. The audio visual cassette and the

video tape recorder, closed circuit television, and more recently cable television, pay television and DTH (direct-to-home) television have changed the course of development of TV in new and unexpected ways. DTH and digital compression technologies have enhanced the number of channels which can be accessed, as also the quality of picture and sound transmission.

But this rapid growth has been rather lopsided. Most of the poor countries in Africa and Asia have still to possess their own domestic satellites or to provide an adequate number of production and transmission centers and receiving sets.

Another parallel development has been the use of television as an instructional and educational medium. The use of instructional television was first reported in 1932 by the State University of IOWA in USA. Later on, on account of the World War II (1939-1945) the introduction of television was slowed down; and as a result by 1948 there were very few educational institutions involved in using television as an instructional medium in spite of great interest in television by the educationists. Realizing the power of television for educational purpose, the **Federal Communication Commission (FCC)** in USA reserved 242 frequencies for educational broadcast on no profit and non-commercial basis in 1952.

Till the year 1961, the use of educational television tended to grow slowly. In the USA a total of 53 stations were affiliated with the National Educational Television Network (NET) by 1961. They had the primary goal of sharing films and coordinate scheduling. After 1960s, the number of educational television stations grew more rapidly and, by 1972 the number grew to 233 educational stations. The earliest universities to create network reach for both on-campus and off-campus student populations were the Ohio University, University of Texas and the University of Maryland. Some other universities also started considering as to how to bring distance learning to select student populations with the help of television.



FCC: an independent agency of the United States government, created, directed, and empowered by Congressional statute, and with the majority of its commissioners appointed by the current President. The FCC works towards six strategic goals in the areas of broadband, competition, the spectrum, the media, public safety and homeland security, and modernizing the FCC



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1. Give a brief overview of the early developments of television as a medium of mass communication in the West.

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Q.2. Name the first communication satellite.

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Q.3. Who coined the term 'global village'?

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2.4 HISTORY AND GROWTH OF TV IN INDIA

Television was introduced in India on an experimental basis on September 15, 1959. It started its operations from a makeshift studio at Akashvani Bhavan in New Delhi as part of All India Radio (AIR). The Government of India was initially reluctant to introduce television in India as it believed that a poor country like India, plagued by innumerable socio-economic problems, can hardly afford an entertainment-focused medium like television. As a result, television was not introduced for over a decade despite demands from several quarters. But then in 1959, Philips (India) made an offer to the government of a transmitter at a reduced cost. It even demonstrated its use at an exhibition in New Delhi. Faced with increasing pressure, the Government finally gave in to the demands and decided to introduce television on an experimental basis discovering what TV could achieve in community development and formal education. A UNESCO grant of $ 20,000 for the purchase of community receivers and the US government's offer of some TV equipment finally paved the way for TV in India and on September 15, 1959 the Delhi Television Centre went on air. The initial purposes for the

introduction of TV in India were community development and to spread education among the masses.

The initial transmission started with the formation of 180 'teleclubs' in and around Delhi which were provided free TV sets by UNESCO. Educational and developmental programmes of twenty minutes duration were shown twice a week which soon increased to one hour. The range of the transmitters was forty kilometers. The audience comprised the members of these 'teleclubs.' A UNESCO-conducted survey two years later in 1961 revealed that the programmes had made 'some impact.'

Regular daily transmission started in 1965. Entertainment and information programmes were introduced from that year, in addition to the socially relevant educational programmes for which TV was originally introduced in the country. The Federal Republic of Germany helped in the setting up of a TV production studio in Delhi. 'Krishi Darshan', a programme for the farmers, which later enjoyed a cult status, was started in January 1966 and was received by farmers of 80 villages in and around Delhi. The programme was made with the help of the Department of Atomic Energy, the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, the Delhi Administration and the state governments of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The range of the transmitters extended to 60 kilometers and as a result these programmes could be viewed in these two neighboring states as well.

The number of TV sets, which were all imported, in 1970 stood at around 22,000 excluding the community sets. By the mid seventies, Indian TV sets were in the market and in no time the number of TV sets crossed the 100,000 mark.

In 1972 India witnessed its first major television expansion when a second television station was set up in Bombay. Three more stations were set up at Srinagar, Amritsar and Calcutta in 1973. This was followed by stations in Madras and Lucknow in the year 1975. Relay stations were also set up in a number of cities to extend the coverage of the regional stations. Educational television in India took another step ahead when the government carried out its first test of the possibilities of **satellite-based television** through



Satellite-based television: television delivered by the means of communications satellites

the SITE program in 1975. SITE (Satellite Instructional Television Experiment) was designed to test whether satellite based television services could play a role in socio-economic development in India. Using a U.S. ATS-6 satellite and up-link centers at Ahmedabad and Delhi, television programmes were beamed for about 4 hours a day to about 2,400 villages in 6 states. The programmes beamed during the SITE experiment dealt mainly with agricultural issues, planning and national integration. School education programmes formed the heart of the experiment. The SITE experiment was fairly successful in demonstrating the effectiveness of satellite based television in India. Moreover, the government used the lessons learnt from the experiences of the satellite transmission in designing and utilizing its own domestic satellite service which was launched in the year 1982.

In the early years of its invention, television was considered a facilitator of development like radio. Moreover its introduction was justified by the role it was asked to play in social and economic development. Since the government was the chief architect of economic and social development in the country, television was institutionalized as an arm of its governance.

By the year 1976, a network of eight television stations were being run by the government. These television stations were covering a population of 45 million which was spread over 75,000 square kilometers. Administration of such an extensive television system as a part of All India Radio was found to be very difficult and therefore the government constituted the national television network, which was later named Doordarshan. It was formed as a separate Department under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Doordarshan was set up as an attached office under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) - a half-way house between a public corporation and a government department. However, as far as the policy planning and financial decision-making on critical issues were concerned, Doordarshan operated much like a government department. Doordarshan was headed by a Director General appointed by MIB, drawn from the members of India's civil services. Another important landmark in 1976 was the airing of 'commercials' at all the centres from January 1.

In 1977, terrestrial transmitters came up at Jaipur, Hyderabad, Raipur, Gulbarga, Sambalpur and Muzaffarpur and television coverage in India extended to a population of more than 100 million. Another significant

development that took place in this year was the equal sharing of air time by the political parties for election campaigning.

By the year 1982 television in India began to develop as the government's pre-eminent media organization. This year was marked by two major events - one was the launch of the country's first domestic communication satellite INSAT-1A which helped in networking of all regional stations of Doordarshan. In that very year for the first time Doordarshan originated a nation-wide feed called the "National Programme" which was fed from Delhi to the other stations. In November 1982, the country hosted the Asian Games and the government introduced colour broadcasts for the coverage of the games. The government launched an extensive programme to set up low and high power transmitters to increase television's reach. These transmitters would pick-up the satellite distributed signals and re-transmit them to surrounding areas. In the year 1983 television signals were available to just 28% of the population, but this was doubled by the end of 1985. Over 90% of the population had access to television signals by the end of the year 1990. Doordarshan's network of 1400 terrestrial transmitters alone covers more than 90.7% of India's population according to its official website on early July 2010.

With the advent of advertising on Doordarshan in the year 1976 the country witnessed a significant event in the history of Indian television. The introduction of advertising began in a very small way with under 1% of Doordarshan's budget coming from advertising revenues in 1976-77. The introduction of the "National Programme" in 1982 was a result of Doordarshan's endeavours to attract the advertisers by reaching the nation wide audience. It was during this period that Doordarshan began to shift the balance of its programming from educational and informational to entertainment. The commercialization of Doordarshan saw the development of **soap operas**, **situation comedies**, dramas, musical programs, quiz shows etc. As a result of such reforms Doordarshan started earning substantial revenue from early 90s. The pressure to earn more revenue is increasing with time.

It is often alleged that by the year 1991, Doordarshan had clearly deviated from its earlier mandate to aid in the process of social and economic



Soap opera: Also known as soap, it is an ongoing, episodic work of fiction, usually broadcast on television or radio. The name *soap opera* stems from the original dramatic serials broadcast on radio that had soap manufacturers such as Procter and Gamble, Colgate-Palmolive, and Lever Brothers as the show's sponsors.



Situation Comedy: Usually referred to as a **sitcom**, it is a genre of comedy programs. The situation comedy has a storyline plot and is more or less comedic drama. Sitcoms usually consist of recurring characters in a common environment such as a home or workplace and generally include laugh tracks.

development and in its place entertainment and commercial programmes turned out to be the forerunner in the organization's programming strategies. This was done to attract advertisements which had become Doordarshan's main source of income. However, except for the major cities which received two channels, television in India was still a modest enterprise with most parts of the country getting just one channel. But in the year 1991 the launch of a major economic liberalization program brought with it international satellite transmission in India, which changed the country's television environment dramatically.



Rupert Murdoch: Australian-American global media mogul. He is the major shareholder, chairman and managing director of News Corporation. According to the 2008 Forbes 400, a list published by *Forbes Magazine* of the wealthiest 400 Americans, Murdoch is the 109th-richest person in the world, with a net worth of $8.3 billion.

In India international satellite television was introduced by CNN through its coverage of the Gulf War in 1991. Three months later Hong Kong based Star TV (now owned by **Rupert Murdoch**'s News Corp.) started broadcasting five channels into India using the ASIASAT-1 satellite. Star TV telecasts were being received by nearly half a million Indian households by the early part of the year 1992 and it which rose to 2 million by the next year. However, by the end of 1994, an estimated 12 million households which is a little less than one-fourth of all television households in India, were receiving satellite channels. This increase in viewership was made possible by the 60,000 or so small scale cable system operators who have mushroomed across the country. These cable operators redistributed the satellite channels at Rs 200-250 per month to their customers. Taking advantage of the growth of the satellite television audience between the years 1991 and 1994, a number of Indian satellite based television services were launched. The first Hindi satellite channel launched during this period was ZeeTV. By the end of 1994, using a handful of different satellites 12 satellite-based channels were available in India. With time, the number multiplied. A number of Indian and international media companies launched satellite television services.

The mushrooming of channels has put great pressure on the Indian television industry to produce more programmes. India being the largest producer of motion pictures is now in a position to become a sizable producer of television programmes as well. The new television services are spending heavily on the development of indigenous programmes as the Indian audiences are clearly preferring them over the foreign programmes. The number of hours of television programming produced in India increased 500% from 1991 to 1996.

The Indian film industry still dominates the television programming despite the rapid growth of television channels. Hindi films are the staple of most of the national entertainment channels and regional channels rely heavily on a mix of Hindi and regional language films to attract audiences. Almost all Indian films are musicals and this allows for the development of inexpensive derivative programs. *Chitrahaar* which was a compilation of old film songs was one of the most popular programme of Doordarshan. At present all the private entertainment channels, including ZeeTV and music video channels like MTV Asia and Channel V, show some variation of *Chitrahaar*. A number of game shows are also based on movie themes. Other genres like soap operas, talk shows and situation comedies are also gaining in popularity. As the production of these programs has been unable to keep up with demand, hence they are still based on film based programming.

Doordarshan's long-standing monopoly has been threatened and broken by competition in news and public affairs programming first by BBC and CNN through international satellite programming, and then by Indian private news channels. Most of the other foreign broadcasters, for example, ESPN and the Discovery Channel, are focusing on special interest programming.

Satellite broadcasting has threatened Doordarshan's hold on audiences. Commercial competition has transformed Doordarshan as well and it is struggling to cope with the changed competitive environment. It is trying to keep its mandate of being the public service broadcaster; and also looking for revenue from the market. It is trying to re-invent itself by bringing in a synergy between its role as a public service broadcaster and an enterprise, which earns its bread.

Main events in the development of television in India

Year	Event
1959	Television is introduced in Delhi as an experimental service under a grant from UNESCO.
1965	Television service is regularized in Delhi with daily broadcasts of entertainment and educational programmes.
1969	The Government of India signs an agreement with the United States National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA) to launch the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) in India.

1972-75 Regular television service begins in Bombay, Srinagar, Amritsar, Pune, Calcutta, Madras and Lucknow.

1975-76 SITE broadcasts television programmes to 2400 villages from six states of India from NASA's ATS-6 satellite for one year.

1980 The first television commercial is aired on Indian television.

1982 Indian television switches from black and white to colour in order to broadcast the Asian Games in New Delhi.

1983 INSAT-1B is launched by the US space shuttle Challenger and begins broadcasting in India.

1984-85 Over 120 television transmitters are installed in India to rapidly increase television coverage. Indigenous soap operas become popular, starting with *Hum Log* (1984-85), *Buniyaad* (1986-87), *Ramayana* (1987-88), *Mahabharata* (1988-90) and others.

1986 The first regional television network is launched in Maharashtra.

1990 The **Prasar Bharati** Bill granting autonomy to Doordarshan and All India Radio is passed by Parliament but is not implemented until 1997-98 because of political wrangling.



Prasar Bharati: An autonomous corporation of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India and comprises Doordarshan and All India Radio. It was established under the Prasar Bharati Act.

1991-92 Private cable and satellite television channels begin to spread rapidly in India after the Gulf War, competing for audiences and advertising revenues with the state-run Doordarshan. The private television channels broadcast from satellite transponders to the dish receivers of thousands of cable operators.

1993-94 Doordarshan reorganizes to cope with the cable onslaught, launching the Metro entertainment channel in metropolitan cities and several regional language channels from state capitals.

1995 Doordarshan launches an international channel DD International.

1997-98 Doordarshan and All India Radio are delinked from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and an autonomous Prasar Bharati Corporation is established. Meanwhile, competition from private cable and satellite channels intensifies; gradually eating into Doordarshan's advertising revenues.

2000 Almost 500 million Indians (50 per cent of the population) watch television regularly. Doordarshan broadcasts some 20 channels by satellite and its 1000 ground transmitters provide potential access to about 90 per cent of India's population.

2010 Several television channels stream live news on web. There are television channels exclusively for web. With the advancement of Information technology capturing and sending audio and visual signals have become easy. This has led to the phenomenal growth of Citizen Journalism in television and web medium. DD has plans to telecast in HD (High Definition) mode by end 2010.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.4. How did satellite television come to India?

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Q.5. When was television introduced to India on an experimental basis?

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Q.6. Why was the Govt. of India reluctant to introduce Television in India?

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Q.7. In 1959, which company made an offer to the government to provide a TV transmitter at a reduced cost?

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Q.8. When did regular transmission of Doordarshan start?

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Q.9. Which legendary programme for farmers was started is 1966?

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Q.10. When did the SITE experiment start? What the purpose of this experiment?

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Q.11. Name the satellite which was used for the SITE experiment.

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Q.12. When did Doordarshan start airing commercials?

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Q.13. Why is the year 1982 considered to be a landmark year in the history of Indian television?

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ACTIVITY 2.1

1. Pay a visit to your nearest Doordarshan Kendra and find out its history.
2. Carefully watch two primetime programmes (programmes that are shown between 8 pm to 10 pm); one on any satellite entertainment channel and another from the Doordarshan national channel for one week. Do you see any difference in the format and content of the two programmes?

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2. 5 LET US SUM UP

- Television was introduced in India on an experimental basis on September 15, 1959 from a makeshift studio at Akashvani Bhavan in New Delhi as part of All India Radio.
- The age of satellite communication dawned in 1962 with the launching of Early bird, the first communication satellite.
- In 1975, the government carried out the first test of the possibilities of satellite based television through the SITE program. SITE (Satellite Instructional Television Experiment) was designed to test whether satellite based television services could play a role in socio-economic development.
- 1976 witnessed a significant event in the history of Indian television with the separation of Doordarshan from All India Radio
- 1976 also saw the advent of advertising on Doordarshan.
- Colour Television came to India in 1982
- The first indigenous soap opera *Hum Log* was shown on television in 1984.
- International satellite television was introduced in India by CNN through its coverage of the Gulf War in 1991.



2.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q No.1 : Experiments in television broadcasting were initiated during the 1920s in the United States and Europe. These experiments used a mechanical scanning disc that did not scan a picture rapidly enough. In 1923, however, came the invention of the iconoscope, the electric television tube. The inventions of kinescope or picture tube, the electronic camera and TV home receivers arrived in rapid succession during the next few years and by the 1930s the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) had set up a TV station in New

York, and BBC a TV station in London, offering regular telecast programmes. Germany and France too established television stations around the same time.

The World War put a brake on further developments in television, though in Nazi Germany television was widely used as an instrument of political propaganda. Nazi party conventions were televised, but the top event in the first chapter of German television history was the 1936 Olympics in Berlin which was staged as a gigantic propaganda show for Nazi Germany. But by the late 1940s and early 1950s television had become a feature of life in most advanced countries. In 1948, for instance, there were as many as 41 TV stations in the United States covering 23 cities through half a million television receiving sets. Within a decade, the figure jumped to 533 stations and 55 million receivers. Canada, Japan and the European countries did not lag very far behind.

The age of satellite communication came in 1962 with the launching of Early Bird, the first communication satellite. The two big international satellite systems, Intelsat and Intersputnik began operating in 1965 and 1971 respectively and from then on the progress was phenomenal.

Ans. to Q No.2 : Early Bird

Ans. to Q No.3 : Marshall McLuhan, the Canadian media sociologist

Ans. to Q No.4 : International satellite television was introduced in India by CNN through its coverage of the Gulf War in 1991. Three months later Hong Kong based Star TV (now owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp.) started broadcasting five channels into India using the ASIASAT-1 satellite. By early 1992, nearly half a million Indian households were receiving Star TV telecasts. A year later the figure was close to 2 million and by the end of 1994, an estimated 12 million households (a little less than one-fourth of all television households) were receiving satellite channels. This increase in viewership was made possible by the 60,000 or so small scale cable system operators who have mushroomed across the country. These systems have redistributed the satellite channels to their customers at rates as low as $5 a month. Taking advantage of the

growth of the satellite television audience, a number of Indian satellite based television services were launched between 1991 and 1994, prominent among them ZeeTV, the first Hindi satellite channel. By the end of 1994 there were 12 satellite-based channels available in India, all of them using a handful of different satellites. In later years the number went up many folds.

Ans. to Q No.5 : Television was introduced in India on an experimental basis on September 15, 1959.

Ans. to Q No.6 : The Government of India was initially reluctant to introduce television in India as it believed that a poor country like India, plagued by innumerable socio-economic problems, can hardly afford an entertainment medium like television.

Ans. to Q No.7 : In 1959, Philips (India) made an offer to the government to provide a TV transmitter at a reduced cost.

Ans. to Q No.8 : Regular daily transmission of Doordarshan started in 1965.

Ans. to Q No.9 : In January 1966 the now famous programme for farmers, 'Krishi Darshan' was started in and was received by farmers of 80 villages in and around Delhi.

Ans. to Q No.10 : The SITE experiment started in 1975. It was designed to test whether satellite based television services could play a role in socio-economic development in India.

Ans. to Q No.11 : ATS-6 satellite

Ans. to Q No.12 : Doordarshan started airing commercials on January 1, 1976.

Ans. to Q No.13 : 1982 is a landmark year in the history of television in India because from this year television began to develop as the government's pre-eminent media organization and attained national coverage. This year was marked by three major events - one was the launch of the country's first domestic communication satellite INSAT-1A which helped in networking of all regional stations of Doordarshan. In that very year for the first time Doordarshan originated a nation-wide feed called the "National Programme" which

was fed from Delhi to the other stations. In November 1982, the country hosted the Asian Games and Doordarshan introduced colour broadcasts for the coverage of the games.



2.7 FURTHER READING

1. Kumar, Keval J (2012) Mass Communication in India Mumbai : Jaico Publishing House
2. Singhal, Arvind, Rogers, Everett M. (2001) India's communication revolution : from bullock carts to cyber marts. Sage Publications
3. Shrivastava, K.M. (2005) Broadcast Journalism in the 21 st Century. New Dawn Press



2.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q.1. Give a brief overview of the growth of television in India.

Q.2. Discuss the growth of private satellite channels in India.

Q.3. What do you think has been the impact of private satellite channels on Doordarshan?

Q.4. What were the factors that led to the growth of television in India?