UNIT 4 ALTERNATIVE NEWS/INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

Structure

4.0 Objectives
4.1 Introduction
4.2 Advancement of Communication Technology and the Growth of the Information Systems
  4.2.1 The Dominance Syndrome
  4.2.2 Consequences of Dominance and Dependence
4.3 Need for Self-reliance
  4.3.1 The Role of NAM
  4.3.2 Formation of Non-aligned News Pool
  4.3.3 Restraints on Growth of the Pool
4.4 Inter-regional Cooperation
4.5 Towards South-South Cooperation
4.6 Alternative News Distribution Systems
4.7 Satellite Television — Globalisation of News and Cultural Products: Social and Cultural Implications
4.8 Let Us Sum Up
4.9 Further Reading
4.10 Check Your Progress: Model Answers

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you shall be able to:

- explain how the Third World countries become dependent on the transnational news and information agencies to satisfy their needs;

- list the initiatives taken by the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) countries to become self-reliant for news-gathering and dissemination of the same;

- analyse the weaknesses of the NAM countries to have adequate cooperation among themselves; and

- point out the implication of the satellite and cable televisions, and the effects these might have on the audience of the Third World countries.

Activity 1

1) Take any edition of a newspaper that you subscribe to. Study the following aspects, and make a cross comparison:
   
a) Source of news
   
b) Type of news
   
c) Regions and Countries

4.1 INTRODUCTION

You have already been exposed, in the earlier units, to the imbalance in international information flows, problems originating from such a disparity in the informosphere, the agencies that either combat or perpetuate such imbalance and unequal flows, and the new world information order. In the preceding unit, you have learnt that one of the important prerequisites for the establishment of a New International Information and Communication Order (NIICO) is the development of alternate news and information distribution systems to face the domination, control, and dependence of the developing and under-developed nations on the transnational news agencies, viz., the Reuters, UPI, AP, AFP and TASS-ITAR.
In this unit, we briefly deal with the extent of dominance and dependence in the field of information at the international level. We shall also discuss the efforts of the developing countries, individually and collectively, to be self-reliant and self-sufficient in the field of news and information flow. We shall also delineate the important milestones in the journey of the developing and under-developed nations to achieve alternative delivery systems to the existing international information agencies, which are heavily biased in favour of the developed and industrialized nations. This will help us to understand the new developments that have a bearing on the development of alternative news and information distribution systems.

4.2 ADVANCEMENT OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AND THE GROWTH OF THE INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The post-second world war era was marked by revolutionary technological advancement in the field of the telecommunications. The information explosion provided the impetus for this technology to disseminate news and information across national boundaries. The electronic and computer systems have vast potential for information storage, retrieval, and delivery. Naturally, it revolutionized the media in the developed world in Europe, North America, and Japan. With the introduction of the communication satellites in outer space, the TV, and the transistor, the impact of information revolution could be felt in the remotest villages in the Himalayas and the Sahara. The scientific and technological revolution led to the borderless outflow of information to the Third World countries, and the advanced industrialized nations, grasping the scope of this technological advancement, have set up controls over information flows.

4.2.1 The Dominance Syndrome

The countries of North and South are separated by an enormous gap in their respective communication capacities. The developed countries continue to exercise considerable political, economic, and technological control on information flows.

Let us first examine the quantitative dimension of the concept of dominance and dependence. Over 5.5 billion people on this planet own over one billion radio receivers and 500 million television sets. The world receives information from 150 major news agencies, 30,000 radio and television stations, and 8,200 daily newspapers with a total run of 446 million copies a day. This global picture hides major regional imbalances. For instance, there are only 4.5 newspapers per 100, and one television set for 3,000 Africans. This is several times less than the corresponding figures for the Europeans and Americans. What is worse is that eight African countries publish no newspaper at all, 113 have only one each. As a rule, the print order of the largest of these newspapers does not exceed 16,000 in Africa. The Television is non-existent in nearly 30 Asian, African and Latin American nations. Further, 18 African and 16 Asian nations have no news agencies of their own. Asia, Africa and Latin America, where about two-thirds of the world population lives, account for only 5 per cent of the world television sets, and 12.5 per cent of world's newspapers. The hegemony is also exercised through the publication of encyclopaedia and other reference books, which interpret the experience and the history of the Third World countries in a deliberately biased and distorted way so that it serves the interests of the richer or technologically advanced countries.

Nearly 80 per cent of the information disseminated in the world originates from five largest transnational news agencies i.e., the AP, UPI, Reuters, AFP and ITAR-TASS. You have already learnt about the extent and significance of the operations of these news agencies, in the earlier units.

About 15 great media corporations dominate the production of the radio sets, television sets and printing equipment including printing devices, radio, and television communication satellites, paper, inks, and other elements of mass media technological infrastructure, ten of these corporations belong to the United States of America.

The statistical details cited above might have changed to some extent, but one should try to see the truth beyond the facts. These figures are noted to provide you a feeling of the extent
of the disparities that exist, and the dominance of the North in the field of information, thus making the countries in the South dependent on them.

4.2.2 Consequences of Dominance and Dependence

You may wonder what happens if there is Western dominance. Some might say that anyhow, we are getting news and information, which, otherwise, we in the developing countries, could not aspire to, given the limited capacity of our media systems. Of course, this could be true, if we did not understand the polemics behind it. Due to our dependence on the media delivery systems of the West, we also become dependent on the West. To understand this, we shall now discuss the various forms of dominance in the information flow with a couple of concrete examples. You may study, on your own, several such instances in your daily exposure to foreign news.

Example 1: During the British war with Argentina over their claim on the Falklands Islands, several developing countries supported the Argentinian claim, but their newspapers were receiving the stories put out by the transnational news agencies, which were biased in favour of Britain. The newspapers in these developing countries could not afford to send their own correspondents to cover the Falklands war.

Example 2: The Gulf War provides a classic example of how dependence on the West for news and information can distort the news content of the Third World media.

During the Gulf War, India's language dailies had no capacity to cover the war events through their own correspondents. Almost all the newspapers depended upon the news originating from the Western news agencies. Interestingly, the usage of words in the news dispatches became a form of psychological warfare during the so-called "Gulf War". To build up the image of the US-led multinational forces, the label 'Allied Forces' was used, a reminder of the Second World War. The Indian dailies published all these news items. The control over news flow in the Indian print media could be shown by citing the example of the news of 600 Iraqi soldiers, buried under the sand by the tanks of the Allied Forces, which was suppressed by the Western media. No Indian newspaper carried the news item.

How the big agencies take the Third World press for granted can be understood by looking at the coverage of the incidents at Tiananmen Square in China.

Even in covering the incidents in a neighbouring country and on the issues the coverage of which in all possibility might be distorted by the Western agencies, the Indian Press did not take an independent stand, but, instead, toed the line of the Western monopolistic agencies.

A recent study revealed that newspapers in Asian countries published 76.4 per cent of news on the Third World supplied by the big four news agencies. This survey was done by the Bangladesh Press Institute of Newspapers of six South Asian countries.

Similar studies, done elsewhere in other developing countries, also revealed that the media of these nations were still highly dependent on the foreign especially the Western, news agencies for news and information about the other countries including their own neighbours.

By now, you must have got a fairly good idea of the concept of dominance and dependence in news and information distribution. With this, you might be convinced of the need for achieving self-reliance in news and information distribution.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answer(s) with those given at the end of this unit.

1) How can the Indian newspapers, being dependent on the Western (foreign) news agencies, serve the people of India?
4.3 NEED FOR SELF-RELIANCE

Self-reliance in news and information distribution, both in disseminating news to the outside world, or in getting news and information from various places in the world, for internal consumption, is essential for the following reasons:

1) To provide the media a national identity and personality,
2) To facilitate the analyses of the world events not from the perspective of the West but from the national perspective,
3) To foster better understanding among the developing countries, which is far more essential now than ever before,
4) To prevent the unwarranted entry of foreign and alien ideas, cultures, and life-styles, that always tend to contribute to shaping public opinion in favour of foreign countries, particularly the West, and
5) To provide an objective account of the news and developments that were considered newsworthy by the indigenous media.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.
   ii) Check your answer(s) with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Do you agree with all the points mentioned above? Please give reason(s) for your decision.

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2) What should be the first and foremost step that our news agencies and newspapers take to start the path of becoming self reliant?

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4.3.1 The Role of NAM

The first important step towards achieving some self-reliance in news collection and dissemination was the effort made by some of the non-aligned nations.

First, the call for New World Economic Order was articulated from the non-aligned centres as a reflection of the movement's general antipathy to the former colonials. This was evident from the first statement on information endorsed by the fourth summit of the Movement in Algiers, in 1973, and there could be no doubt about such an orientation in the documents on information endorsed by the fifth summit in Colombo, in 1976.

Ultimately, it was the New Delhi declaration of NAM which said:

1) "The present global information flows are marked with inadequacy and imbalance. The means of communicatory information are concentrated in a few centres. The majority of countries are reduced to be passive recipients of information, which is disseminated from a few centres.

2) This situation perpetuates the colonial era of dependence and domination. It confines judgments and decisions on what should be known, and how it should be made known to a few.

3) Just as political and economic dependence are legacies of the era of colonialism, so is the case of dependence in the field of information, which, in turn retards the achievements of political and economic growth.

4) In a situation where the means of information are dominated and monopolised by a few, the freedom of information really comes to mean the freedom of these few to propagate information in the manner of their choosing and the virtual denial to the rest, and of the right to inform and being informed objectively and accurately. The enunciation of the Non-aligned Movement's New Delhi Declaration is perhaps the running thread that continues in all the NAM documents on information. These statements are precisely the philosophy of the Non-aligned Movement regarding information flows. Its efforts to combat the existing information imbalances emerge from this understanding.

4.3.2 Formation of Non-aligned News Pool

As per the directives of the UNESCO to establish a news pool or consortium of news agencies, the "Pool" of news agencies of the non-aligned countries was formally launched in July, 1976, at the New Delhi Conference of Information Ministers and Representatives of the news agencies of the non-aligned countries. According to a statement of the Conference, the objective of the Pool is to expand the mutual exchange of information among the non-aligned countries in a spirit of collective self-reliance. The former Prime Minister of India, the late Mrs. Indira Gandhi, in her address to the Conference, called upon the non-aligned countries to know one another directly, not through the eyes and ears of the Western media.
The Non-aligned News Pool is not a transnational news agency, but a system of exchange of information, based on co-operation and co-ordination among individual news agencies taking part in these activities. There are over eight participatory news agencies. The Pool is not based on any formal membership. The national news agencies can join in its activities by forming one of the Pool’s distribution centres. They send news to it, and from there it is distributed to the other participants. The Pool has no single directing centre or staff employee, nor does it have its own budget. Each of the national news agencies pays the cost linked to the transmission of its own news to the centre and the service received from it.

Besides the creation of optimum possibilities for the exchange of information, the tasks of the Pool, as formulated at its General Conference in Belgrade, in 1979, were mainly a programme for training the journalists working in this service, and also the creation of bilateral regional and multi-national communications systems and their link-up to the overall communication systems of the non-aligned countries. The Conference stressed that the creation of a communication network of the non-aligned countries is one of the main long term aims of the Pool.

Check Your Progress 3

Note:  i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) “The non-aligned countries seldom take concrete steps to improve their situation. The NAM has reduced itself to a talking shop. Whenever the NAM takes any step, it is always to build castles in the air. The news flow inside each of the member country is weak and disorganised. Before setting up a pool of news agencies, the NAM should have looked into each of its intra-country newsflows and strengthened them”. Do you agree with this statement? Please justify your answer.

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4.3.3 Restraints on Growth of the Pool

The biggest obstacle to the broad development of information and news exchanges among the non-aligned countries through the Pool have been:

a) Communication Restraints: Many of the developing countries do not have an extensive and elaborate telecommunication network. For some other countries, the high tariffs are major barriers. Hence, it is clear that the development of the communication systems in the non-aligned countries is imperative to their overall development. It should also be understood that the optimum information exchange also depend on the level of development of communication systems in the individual non-aligned countries. It is worth noting here the statement of the former Director General of the UNESCO, Arthur M'Bow, who said: “The creation of the widespread communication system of the non-aligned countries is intrinsically linked to the overall development of these states.

b) News Flow: According to a study by J.S. Yadava, a few years ago, about 85 per cent of the news items receive by PTI from the Pool partners were spiked. The reasons for this were given as delay in news reception, poor quality, low news value, or propaganda material.

c) Lack of Training: The lack of proper training among the non-aligned journalists and their inability to match the professional standards of the journalists of the transnational news-agencies, are the reasons for the poor quality of material put out by the Non-aligned News Agencies Pool.
d) **Political Constraints:** Due to the totalitarian and despotic governments in many non-aligned countries, the news agencies are under the strict control of the governments in these countries. The first casualty of such a solution is the objectivity of the news and information put out by their agencies. For instance, the news agencies in Pakistan or Sri Lanka, which are the partners of the Pool, hardly provide any objective news, either about their own news events, issues, and problems, or those of other countries. Even the coverage of the movement for democracy in their own countries lack objectivity, and are highly lopsided and biased. Should the Indian news media publish or use these materials, just because they have to foster cooperation and exchange among the non-aligned countries?

c) **The Media’s Lukewarm Attitude:** The editors of private-owned newspapers in the democratic countries like India, either are not convinced of the need for such an inter-regional cooperation or they do not respect the news coverage of several agencies, which are participants of the Pool.

### 4.4 INTER-REGIONAL COOPERATION

Earlier in Unit 1 of this Block, you have been told about the several inter-regional agencies and networks. In the first part of this unit itself, we have dealt at length with the Non-aligned News Agency Pool. We shall now broadly discuss the problems and bottlenecks in the process of inter-regional cooperation.

The essence of any inter-regional cooperation in the field of information is to bring about a new sense of common destiny, and unite news agencies operating under different levels of development. The UNESCO played the role of more than a catalyst in fostering inter-regional cooperation in the field of information.

The fundamental problem in the inter-regional news networks and cooperation is that the participating news agencies in the networks being, essentially, domestic agencies are geared to serve purely national needs in their news coverage. This has often been quoted as reason for the non-descript coverage of the Pool News.

Another area is about the issue of relevance. Most of them are editorially ill-equipped to produce copy for the consumption of the other agencies in the region. They are mostly irrelevant to each others needs.

Further, in most of the networks, almost all agencies are, in principle, committed to producing a regional file containing news reports and features, especially prepared for the consumption of the readers outside their national frontiers. However, the tendency that persists is to move copy originally written for domestic readership for the network transmission without necessary rewriting. A great deal of information may be missing in such reports for the readers abroad, or much more than necessary is included. For instance, proper designation of a politician in the story, the conversion of local currency into internationally known monetary units, are absolutely essential when the story is disseminated abroad. But, criticism on several agencies, which are part of such networks, is that they do not make amendments and changes in the news reports, keeping in view the requirements of the readers abroad.

Another severe criticism is that a large majority of reports transmitted in these networks are hard news, which rarely attract the attention of the editors in other countries.

On the other hand, the transnational news agencies with their speedy transmission and professionally more competent stories and spicy writing, obviously overwhelm the inter-regional networks. Especially in the case of spot news, the networks lag behind the transnational agencies like the AP, UPI or Reuters, etc.

When we look at the small degree of success of the Pool and similar such efforts, we see that inadequate facilities and improper planning continue to be an impediment in strengthening inter-regional cooperation. Several countries, though involved in such regional bodies articulate their resolve to strengthen mutual cooperation, but hardly take any steps to achieve their goals. Mutual distrust continues to remain a major obstruction, in addition to the allurements dangled before these poor countries by the advanced and developed countries,
in the shape of aid and help. For instance, can any meaningful exchange of news or other information be possible between the media of Pakistan and India, when there is a tension between the two countries with both being tempted by the rich Western powers to tilt towards them? Under such conditions and relations that exist among different countries in the same region, any inter-regional cooperation will, at best, prove to be a mechanical exchange of information rather than a media of one country enjoying the confidence and credibility of the media of another. Suppose, the Pakistani news agency, the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), sends a report on the situation in Sindh, and the Press Trust of India (PTI), as a nodal agency in the inter-regional cooperation among the SAARC nations, disseminates that news report fed by the APP to all Indian newspapers. What will happen to that news item? You can easily imagine the possible fate of such a report in the editorial offices of the Indian newspapers.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

You have read about various hurdles stopping any meaningful cooperation among various developing countries as far as the exchange of news, information and communication is concerned. Please suggest at least 5 points, which could pave the way for a better cooperation among the SAARC countries in the field of news, information, and communication.

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4.5 TOWARDS SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

Whatever may be the Third World's criticism on the West for the latter's dominance in the field of information, at the same time, one has to understand the underlying reality. On the news collection and dissemination front, the threat from transnational agencies is of a qualitative nature. Hence, improving the quality and increasing professionalism of the indigenous media systems in the developing countries is very essential. This needs cooperation and a spirit of sacrifice.

One of the most important suggestions made to remedy the situation is to develop infra-structures. Elaborate infrastructural facilities, like telecommunication network with reduced tariff structure, proper news-gathering facilities, sharing satellite time, etc., should be developed. The editors have to be convinced of the importance of expanding the news network abroad. For instance, it is ironic that most of the major Indian newspapers are able to afford to have correspondents in Western capitals, but do not have their own men in the neighbouring countries. As a result, the two neighbouring countries have to know each other through the eyes of a biased Western press. This was amply proved between India and Pakistan on the issues of Ayodhya and Kashmir.

It has also been suggested that inter-regional cooperation should not confine to just the governmental level, but, such an exchange and cooperation should be encouraged at the media-to-media level, between newspapers, journalists, editors, etc. Efforts are to be intensified to foster mutual confidence by providing easy access at the people-to-people level. All artificial barriers existing in the way of the free movement of the journalists should be bridged. A recent interaction among the SAARC journalists, held at Hyderabad, recommended doing away with visa regulations among the seven South Asian countries. Proper training should be imparted to the journalists in these countries. Finally, while these efforts are going on, what we need to see is that the editors and decision-makers in the different media are "educated" on the need for such a cooperation at the South-South level by removing their firm belief that the "West is the best".
These steps would lead to the establishment of an alternative news and information system suited to the needs of the developing countries and relevant to the conditions existing in these countries.

### 4.6 ALTERNATIVE NEWS DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS

While there has been a continuous effort to establish alternative news and information distribution systems in the world, the recent global changes have had a deep impact on the information scene. This has especially to do a lot with the Third World efforts to usher in alternative information flows, between and among themselves, on the one hand, and with the developed world, on the other.

The West has been for a long time using the concept of "freedom of information" as an ideological weapon, and successfully deploying it to deflect the Third World from its pursuit of a new world information and communication order.

In the matter of broadcasting, the Western powers insist upon the "open skies" policy, which they claim to be consistent with the principle of freedom of information. On the face of things, this seems a plausible argument. The metaphor of open skies seems to connote a situation of an unfettered information exchange of knowledge flowing freely across the national boundaries. On the contrary, the same Western countries, in a different forum — the multilateral trade negotiations, popularly called GATT (General Agreement on Tariff and Trade) — show a complete disinclination towards free trade by imposing heavy tariffs to protect their own products. However, they link their intellectual property rights, by using Super 301 against countries like India and China.

These developments call for a greater unity among the Third World countries to come out of the dependence and dominance in the field of information, and promote self-reliance. So, any emergence of alternative information systems should be understood in this changing world scenario and current concept of a "unipolar" (?) world dominated by the West, particularly the USA.

The existing world information order provides an opportunity to the richer nations to use the scarce global natural resources, such as the radio and satellite frequency range, and exclude the poor nations from using the same. For instance, the radio frequency range and the geo-synchronous orbital slots for parking communication satellites are both natural Western monopolies today. Added to this, an attempt is made through the ongoing GATT talks to impose stronger forms of monopoly control over the content of information flows.

Let us also examine what the Third World countries are doing at the global level on the question of providing access to the communications media. The allocations of the radio frequency spectrum and geo-synchronous orbital slots are done through the instrumentality of the World Administrative Radio Conference (WARC), convened every ten years, by the International Tele-communications Union (ITU).

A sub-session of the WARC, held in February 1992, marked a new low in the ability of the Third World to influence the international negotiating agenda in matters relating to the utilisation of scarce global resources. The Third World underwent a volte face in the WARC. More than a decade ago, in the WARC 1979 Conference, the Third World made a united bid, and could make the West accept the principle of equity in the allocation of radio frequency spectrum. However, to date, this has not been translated into reality.

### 4.7 SATELLITE TELEVISION — GLOBALISATION OF NEWS AND CULTURAL PRODUCTS: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

It was during the Gulf War that the satellite television became very popular — thanks to on-the-spot coverage of the war by the American-based Cable News Network (CNN). The concept of the Cable TV and the availability of the foreign television channels via satellite in India are a recent phenomenon. The CNN's Gulf War coverage revealed the potential of
such antennae for receiving foreign broadcasts. With the start of the satellite television for Asian Region (STAR TV) by a Hong Kong-based conglomerate of companies, the Satellite Television has made a decisive entry into India.

The foreign programmes received through satellite used by the STAR TV include an entertainment channel (STAR plus), a sports channel (Prime Sports), and a music channel (MTV). The STAR TV added yet another channel, the BBC World Service, from October, 1991. The Asian Television Network (ATN), an international Hindi satellite television service was started from January, 1992. The sixth channel on the STAR TV, ZEE TV meant for entertainment programmes in Hindi, was launched on October 1, 1992. Concomitant with the penetration of foreign TV services, the Asian region saw a steady rise in the popularity of the TV as news medium.

There were 160 million television sets in the world, in 1965. Only 12 per cent of these were in Asia, North America, Europe and the Caribbeans, accounted for a large chunk of them. By 1990, Asia’s share of one billion TV sets has increased by nearly three times to 32 per cent.

Despite all this, much of the expansion and viewership of these satellite TV programmes is concentrated in the cities due to their distinctive projection of life styles and cultural products. For instance, Bombay has more than 8.5 lakh house-holds having cable connections, with a viewership of more than 4 million. It accounts for 30 per cent of the total cable network in India. More than 3 lakh households are hooked into the satellite TV, in Delhi, with a viewership of 1.5 million. Overall, three million households are hooked to cable with a viewership of 15 million operated by 14,000 cable operators.

Social and Cultural Implications

Satellite TV faces the wrath of many on the ground that it encourages an alien world view, culture, life style, etc. Though the reach of the satellite TV is largely confined to the upper middle class, there is a possible danger to these classes of people, due to the unhindered exposure to an alien transnational socio-cultural environment.

Further, there has been severe criticism that the foreign satellite broadcasts do not respect national boundaries and national sovereignty, that calamities and scandals were given more importance than the development programmes in countries to which they are beaming their news telecasts. For example, the BBC’s live telecast of the demolition of Babri Masjid on December 6 by the Kar Sevakas certainly heightened communal passions and shook the confidence of the minorities. To give another example, during the Punjab elections, while the Doordarshan highlighted the heavy turn out in polling, the BBC showed visuals of empty polling booths. Both were two faces of the reality, but do not give an objective picture.

The satellite TV programmes have a serious impact on the audience, especially on the children and youth. Studies indicate that these foreign telecasts provide a clear role-model for the Westernisation of the youth. The teachers and parents complain of excessive TV viewing in the households having satellite and cable connections. In a study, done in a Delhi
Public School, the students revealed that the introduction of the satellite TV coincided with a marked decline of school grades. Studies also indicate that children were experiencing steep disturbances, and learning and teaching were taking a backseat. A study done in Sardar Patel School in New Delhi revealed that the cable TV programmes hamper the children’s studies. Reading for pleasure has been curtailed. Many children in the survey revealed that at times strong will power is needed to leave the cable TV programmes and get back to studies.

While there are fears and apprehensions about the satellite TV, there is also a sense of confidence that India can sustain the impact of foreign telecasts. We can put the entire discussion in perspective in the light of the observations of Dr. P.C. Joshi, who headed the Committee on Software for Indian Television:

“Our windows and doors should be opened to outside influence. But, we should not be swept off our feet. At the same time, we have to welcome fresh air. The foreign influences should be used as a catalyst for spurring creativity”.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

                        ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) It has been said that the satellite and cable television has become a powerful instrument of the rich Western nations to dominate the Third World countries, culturally, and eventually, to make them dependent on the Western nations to satisfy their various domestic needs. This has become an acute problem as Doordarshan has failed to address the relevant national issues adequately. What steps should Doordarshan take to address the relevant regional and national issues adequately?

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Activity 2

Study the impact of the satellite and cable television on the audiences in your locality. Interview/conduct a survey among the families using the following questionnaire.

Questionnaire
(To be filled in by you)

1) How many hours a day the family watches satellite and cable television?

[ ] 1 hour     [ ] 6 hours

[ ] 2 hours     [ ] 7 hours

[ ] 3 hours     [ ] 8 hours

[ ] 4 hours     [ ] 9 hours

[ ] 5 hours     [ ] 10 hours

[ ] above 10 hours
4.8 LET US SUM UP

Let us now summarise what we have learnt in this unit. An alternative news and information distribution systems cannot evolve in a vacuum. Such an alternative should be a part and parcel of a wider endeavor for a just and equitable world economic order.

Fostering of inter-regional cooperation is an effort to alleviate the dependence, but not to dismantle the existing information distribution systems. As a prelude to the formation of an alternative, the Third World should powerfully intervene in the global information debate to counter the concept of "freedom of information". Information cannot be a human right in terms of the news flows, and the same information cannot be a commodity in the case of scientific and technical information. So, any alternative information distribution system should call for a radical redefinition of several concepts, like "freedom of information", "access to information", etc.

Given the decreasing bargaining power of the poorer nations, there is a greater possibility in the near future, of information and news flows turning more favorable to the rich and developed nations. Hence, it is essential for the developing countries to evolve their own response to the unfolding global changes.

4.9 FURTHER READING

4.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: MODEL ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1) Indian newspapers cannot serve the people of India properly, so long as they are dependent on the Western news agencies, which have their own philosophy, rules and regulation, interests and perspectives. And these are not of India’s. Therefore, it is not possible for the Indian newspapers to serve the Indian readers adequately.

2) The Indian newspapers must have enough correspondents within India. The newspapers must focus on the major issues of each and every state. Reporting of events in India in the Indian newspapers must be exhaustive. However, there must be some space devoted to the international news with news analysis. In other words, a strong infrastructure, coupled with an urge to serve the people, might reduce the dependence on the Western news agencies to a great extent.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Yes, I agree with 1, 2, 3 and 5, but do not agree with 4. In today’s world, it is simply impossible to prevent the entry of the foreign programmes. What we should do is to motivate ourselves to serve our people, and strengthen our own values and beliefs. For media to do this, well trained people are required to man the radio and television station.

2) At present, the news agencies of the PTI and UNI are controlled by the government. They should be freed from the clutches of the government. The newspapers should have correspondents spread throughout the country, and thus, bring to focus India and its people in our newspapers.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Yes, I agree with the statement. Many of the NAM countries are ruled by despotic tyrants and autocratic rulers. When the Western countries and media write or speak about the situation in these countries, we, the people of the Third World countries accuse the West of interfering. But the NAM, as a group, could help the situation improve. It could set its own standards and goals. The news agencies pool, set up by the NAM, would be rewarding, if the newsflow within each country is strengthened.

Check Your Progress 4

- There should not be visa requirements and movement restrictions in the SAARC countries for the journalists of the SAARC countries.
- A training centre for the journalists of the SAARC countries should be established.
- There must be a burning desire to project the issues of the countries in each country’s newspapers.
- Each SAARC country must have at least one news agency, which should be free from government control.
- Seminars and meeting at various levels must be organised for the journalists; newspapers may fund such seminars and meetings.

Check Your Progress 5

- The control of the government on the functions of Doordarshan should be drastically minimised if not totally wiped out.
- Instead of pouring out money for the improvement of the national programme, more attention should be given to professionalize the regional and local centres.
- All the political parties must have access to the facilities of Doordarshan.
- There ought to be more issue-based programme: the focus should be on issues, not on persons.
- Doordarshan should address the present situation and problems, and not shun away from them.