

How does television affect our lives? It can be very helpful and enjoyable to people who carefully select the programmes they watch. Though television is beneficial to people in many ways, it also has some ill effects on its viewers. Children are generally the most affected. It is time we awakened to its dangers.

Let us first look at the beneficial effects of television. It can increase our knowledge of the outside world; and there are high-quality programmes that help us understand many fields of study; science, medicine, the arts and so on. It also provides entertainment which is equally important for human well being. Furthermore, television benefits the very old people and the sick who may not be able to leave their homes. Language learners too, can improve their vocabulary and have daily language practice.

There are, however, serious disadvantages with television. Long hours of watching can have an adverse effect on a person's physical condition. Many people spend much of their free-time slouched in front of their TV sets. As a result, they do not get enough physical exercise which is necessary for a healthy life. The most affected are the children. Many children, when they return from school, run straight to the television to watch their favourite programmes. Many of them rarely take part in sports. This often has an adverse effect on their health and growth.

Watching television for long hours hinders the development of the mind. It is a well-known fact that the brain slows down when a person is watching television.

Reading, on the other hand, involves the active participation of the brain, and thereby develops the mind. It is clear, therefore, that the mind's development can be affected by long hours of watching television.

Another disadvantage is that television often causes people to become dissatisfied with their lives. The reason for this, is that to many people, what they see on television; for instance, a tele-drama or an advertisement, become very real. The lives of these actors (or actresses) on television seem very interesting and exciting. So, the viewers' own lives seem dull and boring. Moreover, these actors seem to solve problems very quickly in a half-hour programme or in a fifteen-second advertisement. When viewers cannot solve their own problems as easily and quickly, they get upset or depressed.

Another danger in watching television is that some people cannot stop watching it. In other words, they become addicted to it. Addiction to television is similar to drug or alcohol addiction, and is equally dangerous. The result is that they do not spend enough time on the important areas of their lives, such as education, sports, reading, visiting and entertaining friends and relations.

We must be aware of all the dangers mentioned above. We can overcome these dangers by limiting ourselves to few interesting and educative programmes. If not, there will be more harm than good in watching television.