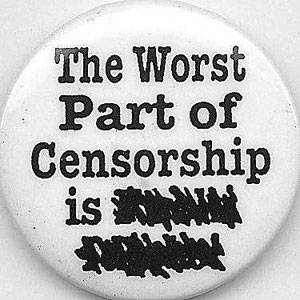
THE ‘SENSE’ IN CENSORSHIP!  


Ross and Rachel don’t kiss on ‘Friends’ anymore. Howard and Bernadette get married and never have the ‘you may now kiss the bride’ moment. Would the sex, drugs and rock & roll fuelled TV show Californication be worth watching without the sex, drugs and rock & roll? I don’t know why channels even bother airing movies like ‘Bad Teacher’. And what is the sense of taking out scenes from a superhero film like ‘Iron Man’?

In an effort to appeal to younger viewers without exasperating the older ones, Indian TV is now showing some of America's edgiest shows - but cutting out the edge. Here’s why... Apparently Indian audience is not mature enough to read words like ‘condom’ or ‘sex’. I say ‘read’ because they are perfectly loud and clear when the character is saying them in the show or the movie. But when it comes to the subtitles, the words have been asterisked or changed to be made *suitable*.

So, ‘I don’t give a shit’ becomes *‘I don’t give a jerk’*, and even ‘Breastfeeding’ becomes *‘Chest-feeding’*. I once witnessed a subtitle that went ‘It is a b\*\*\* to my self-esteem’ – the censored word was *blow*!!! It is almost as if people with jobs of subtitling and censorship don’t know English at all. Censors often let the spoken word slide through, but change it or strike it completely from the subtitles. So while a character on Mean Girls is allowed to say the word "lesbian", the subtitles show "queer".

In a country with an estimated 146 million TV-viewing households, the government reserves the right to sanitize programming, usually to make sure that nobody offends multiple ethnic and religious groups as well as their societal sensibilities. And there’s the other big reason these days to censor content. The government in its own well-intentioned way is trying to avoid allowing millions of people to watch programming that its civil servants worry might inflame lust, particularly at a time when the world is expanding its image of India to include men running amok and raping women right and left.

The FIRSTPOST reported: “One incident turned an episode of Friends into a legend of unwatchable TV. The show hinged on the gag that two pages in a cookbook got stuck together and the character Rachel mistakenly made a fruit pastry with beef. The station bleeped out the word beef, a show of sensitivity for Hindus' reverence for cows, leaving viewers to guess why her diners were so disgusted.”

It’s true that children have no business watching adult shows but that’s the parents` duty to turn the TV off. The parents need to monitor what their children are looking at on television. So it makes no sense that you watch the legendary ‘Hangover’ on TV while most of the movie has been cut to make it “suitable for family viewing in India”.

I wish this arbitrary and mindless editing stops so I wouldn’t have to force myself to press the off ‘B\*\*t on’ every time I try watching an American sitcom on TV.

Yashika Kakkar

(Pearl Academy of Fashion)