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various television
channels which



The laughter, the tears, the agony and finally the celebration of triumph...it was all eagerly lapped up by the audience. Soon, the floodgates opened to a slew of shows on various television channels which were quick to spot and exploit the potential of these shows to raise their TRPs. 'Kaun Banega Crorepati', hosted by the charismatic superstar, Amitabh Bachchan, resurrected a flagging Star TV's fortunes and made it the No. 1 TV channel in India. It also boosted Bachchan's moribund career. More shows proliferated transforming the destinies of many people by giving them a platform to showcase their talents. Surprisingly, many of the winners turned out to be young boys and girls from the hinterland of India.

It revealed the immense talent that had hitherto lain untapped in obscure corners of the country. Star One's Lakme Fashion House provided a never-before opportunity for aspiring fashion designers. They had to design a garment and the best designer would win an assignment with Donatella of Versace, one of the world's top designers. Jade Goody, who was accused of making racist remarks to Shilpa Shetty in the Big Brother celebrity reality show, was an obscure dental assistant in the UK who went on to become a reality TV star and celebrity in her own right. When she died of cervical cancer at the age of 27 recently, many people mourned her and even the British PM, Gordon Brown, commiserated her untimely demise. She was one who milked the system to the utmost by even allowing a TV channel to film her death. And what about Shetty herself, a Bollywood actress with a flagging career, who hit the big time after being declared the winner of the show? People seem to be drawn to reality shows because it shows people

like themselves caught in real life situations and emoting without any pretence.

It may be a kind of voyeurism but the audience identifies with the participants of these shows and feels it is also a part of the action. But these shows have generated a lot of criticism. The public voting system is not seen as a very authentic way to gauge true talent. People have also questioned some of the antics of the participants and the judges. In some cases where children were the contestants the comments of the judges were seen as harsh and humiliating. One young girl even landed in hospital. Whether we like it or not reality shows are here to stay.

Some of them are pure mindless entertainment but some have helped find gold among the dross too.