



## PICTURE OF WOMEN AS SHOWN IN INDIAN TELEVISION SOAPS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE SOCIETY

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### ABSTRACT

*Television (TV) is an integral part of people's life. It has a profound and persuasive impact on its viewers, People watch television for both information and recreation. Among the different television programmes, Television soaps enjoy immense popularity among the contemporary society, they have found a place for themselves and also allow a multiplicity of interpretations to suit the diverse tastes of the Indian audience. The picture of women portrayed in the TV soaps is a blend of both reality and illusion. The daily soaps are infact mirroring the India Society. All most all the aspects of Indian society and its culture are portrayed in the serials. The present study wants to showcase the portrayal of women in television soaps and its impact on the society. This paper is based on both primary and secondary sources.*

**KEY-WORDS:** *Television, women, soaps, serials, audience, respondents*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Television is an integral part of our everyday life and has become a kind of necessity. Nowadays people are internalizing the characteristics of television soaps. Television helps in shaping the opinion and beliefs, habits of life and mould behaviour accordingly in their own way. Television came to India in the year 1959 with National Doordarshan channel as the only TV channel owned by the Government of India. In those days few people owned television sets, it was only by late 1980's that more and more people started to own television sets. In 1990s the Government of India liberated its market and many foreign based channels such as Star TV, MTV and BBC etc came to India which gave Indians a fresh breathe of life.

Women are given different roles in the TV soaps. The primary place of women is shown as being within the home and this value is reflected in

the content and setting of most of the television programmes. This results in reinforcement of the stereotyped image and role specification of woman in an undimensional projection of their reality. When we speak of the image a society project of its women, we have in mind its ideal of woman hood or its popular stereo-types or the position of women of the institution, or the role or position of women or the vision of poets, artists and prophets relating to women . All serials wrapped in tradition of male chauvinism discourage women to aim for more than a loving husband, happy children and a modern home. She is portrayed as a glamour doll whose physical beauty is her only asset. The sacrificing role of women in most of the serial is highlighted, as it possess no threat to the patriarchal structure. The soap operas affect women more simply because normally women watch more serials then men. Sex stereotyping is also very much evident in the

television portrayal of men and women in their appointed roles. The images portrayed in TV serials have a definite impact on the thought patterns of society. Women need to ensure that media reflects images that create positive role models of men and women in society, which will alter damaging stereotypes. The picture of women as shown in Indian television soaps have a stronger impact on shaping gender images among people, female oriented serials influence women to become self-conscious about their appearance as a measure of their worth. This study attempts to explore the impact of the television soaps on all sections of the society.

## 2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

Both primary and secondary sources were used for the study. Primary data was gathered from 50 respondents. The universe of the study is Guwahati City of Assam. Primary data was based on observation and interview schedule method. Data was collected from the residents of North Guwahati and West Guwahati area. The study is descriptive and qualitative in nature.

## 3 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

To materialize the intention of the study 50 respondents were selected, out of 50 respondents 60% respondents were female and the remaining 40% were male. The study affirms that respondents do spend a considerable period of their time with television everyday for leisure as 74% respondents have replied that they spend time on television but it is less than two hours, 18% have said that they watch television for 2-3 hours and lastly 8% respondents have expressed that they give 4-6 hours daily for watching television.

All the respondents watch television soaps but their choice of watching television soaps are different. Some of the respondents follow the daily soaps while there are some who follow only the weekly soaps. Soaps like *Bahu Hamari Rajnikant*, *Kumkum Bhagya*, *Savdhan India*, *CID*, *Balika Badhu*, *Tarak Mehta ka Ulta Chashma*, *Yeah Hain Mohabbatein*, *Chandra Nandani*, *Crime Patrol*, *Bhabhiji Ghar Me Hain* and *May I Come in Madam* etc. were much-loved by the respondents. None of the respondents have chosen any of the mythological serials as their favourite. Characters of *Pragya*, *Dadi sa*, *Nandini*, *Ishita*, *Rajni*, *Anguri bhabhi*, *Sanjana*, etc are dearly loved by the respondents. Some of the respondents also added that they do not have any television soaps as their favourite but they have their favourite female characters, the character 'Rajni Kant' of the serial *Bahu Hamari Rajnikant* is one such character which has become a source immense pleasure for all its views. On the contrary, there are also respondents who have their favourite soap but they do not have any favourite female character.

To look into the impact of television soaps in the society, the respondents were asked to pour there

heart out on what makes them turn on their favourite characters. Majority of the respondents (58%) have expressed that they like everything in their favourite character which includes acting, dressing and their physicality, 20% have uttered that they are only carried away by their acting skills rather than their dressing and physicality and 18% have voiced that they like the acting and dressing style of their favourite female characters.

The respondents were asked to give their opinion regarding the representation of women in television soaps. Out of the total respondents more than half of the respondents (66%) held that women are portrayed with both positive and negative role, Only a little segment i.e., 14% of the respondents are of the view that women were portrayed only as positive characters and remaining 10% are of the opinion that women are given detrimental role to play in the serials and it may have adverse impact in the society because media act as a good socialising agent.

Large number of respondents i.e., 72% have expressed that the character of working independent woman attract them most, it means that the society is heading towards change and they want both men and women to come at par with each other. Only 14% respondents have said that the role of housewife attracts them the most and another 14% have said that they don't have any particular choice. 74% respondents have expressed that some characters portrayed in the soaps are debasing the position of women in society. The character of *Tanu* and *Alia* in *Kumkum Bhagya*, are of such type. If all the people are influenced by such characters then it will lead to the loss of harmony in the society on the contrary 26% respondents are of the view that none of the character in the soaps are degrading. The respondents were also asked if there were certain scenes which are detrimental to the position of women in society, to which majority (80%) of the respondents replied that some of the scenes are detrimental and only 20% have uttered that none of the scenes are detrimental. Some respondents have uttered that scenes of physical abuses by the mother-in-law to their daughter-in-law should be avoided. Television soaps displaying extra-marital affairs, multiple relationship are damaging women's status. Another much talked about scene which can be harmful to the position of women are the scenes which represent women as a sexual objects. Few of the respondents also feel the need to change the dressing pattern in some television soaps because young girls have the tendency to follow them. Thus such type of scenes should be avoided.

The respondents were also asked to give their view regarding the scenes that attract the viewers most, out of the total respondents 52% respondents feel that romantic and comedy scenes attract the people most, 18% respondents feel that only comedy scenes attracts the people, another 18%

respondents feels that people are only attracted by the romantic scenes, and lastly 12% feels that romantic scenes & sensuous scenes attract the viewers most, none of the respondents think that action scenes attract the people.

The respondents were also asked to give their view regarding the scenes which draw their interest the most, 54% respondents have answered that only comedy scenes have attracted them the most, 42% are interested in romantic and sensuous scenes and 4% have said that they do not have any particular choice in this regard. Out of total respondents, 82% respondents have uttered that it is not necessary to show intimate scenes in television soaps and 18% have felt the necessity of displaying the same. 82% respondents were also asked to specify the reasons why showing intimate scenes in the soaps is not necessary, to which respondents added that such scenes have bad impact on the children as they also watch the soaps aired in the television.

Lastly to find out the impact of television soaps on the society the respondents were enquired whether it is possible for a woman to play exactly the same role as shown in the daily soaps to which 84% respondents said that it is not possible to play the same role and 16% respondents have said that it is possible. Some of the respondents also feel that most of the stories are not realistic at all. Lastly the respondents were asked regarding the impact of television soaps in the society to which 80% said that the impact of soaps on the serial is both positive and negative, 10% said that the impact is positive and 10% said that the impact is negative.

## CONCLUSION

There are plentiful of daily soaps which are not only providing amusement to a huge mass but also have a deep impact in their minds in multiple ways. For example if people are in the habit of watching comedy serials then the effect is optimistic but on the other hand if they like abusive shows/scenes then its consequences will be very serious. Some serials are such that they develop both good and bad effect on human mind as those shows include a character playing the role of a villain/vamp and another character playing the role of a protagonist/hero. Different type of soap showcase different types of tradition, culture etc. The present study reveals that most of the respondents watch mostly the romantic and comedy soaps and the characters in the soaps leave both positive and negative impact on the people's life.

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