

Archiving Tradition: Role of Primetime Soaps as a Tool to (Re)Construct Tradition

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Abstract

Archives tell us more about individuals, institutions, customs and cultures. They increase our sense of identity and understanding of cultures by telling old stories, narratives, histories and travel tales. Women have a significant role in modern culture. The vital role woman can play in improving themselves, their family, and society is being established via efforts. The advancement and development of civilization are largely driven by women. They are essential components of a thriving society needed for the advancement of the country. Regarding women, television has a very high level of communication effectiveness. Their thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes are significantly shaped and influenced by television especially the primetime soaps. This paper aims to investigate how women are portrayed in popular Indian soap operas and how do they reconstruct and digitize new tradition.

Keywords: Ideology, Doordarshan, Cultural Archive, Social Change, and Soap Operas

Introduction

The majority of Indian families like to watch soap operas in the evening, one of their favourite ways to pass the time. People from many different religions, including Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Sikhs and Janis, all coexist peacefully in India, regardless of their culture

or religion, regularly watch different language soap operas. Soaps have thus ingrained themselves into the life of most of their viewers. Most of the soap opera characters and families are Hindu. Even though minorities make up 15% of India's population, they are given less attention and are rarely the focus of the narrative. When compared to minorities, Hindu cultures as well as customs are given much more importance in television serials. Rarely do we witness the cultural and religious rituals of these communities on television. This study tries to investigate how minorities are portrayed within Telugu soap operas as a connection to characterization and culture (Somaniand Marissa 231).

The study has a particular focus on serials, and it also sheds light on how much prominence are given to Indian television soap operas. To achieve the predetermined goals of the study, carefully selected individuals participated in groups. According to the study, certain people are portrayed negatively and stereotypically in soap operas. They are frequently portrayed as terrorists, criminals, or mafia-connected individuals. The perception of such person is badly impacted by this type of representation of them on tiny screens (Kaluvoya 2).

In the 1930s, the American media created the phrase "soap opera" to describe the wildly Serialized home radio dramas were a common genre that, by 1940, made up around 90% among all economically supported daytime broadcast hours. The term "soap opera" relates to its sponsorship by manufacturers of cleaning supplies, whilst the word "opera" suggests an ironic contradiction between domestic narrative concerns of the daytime serial and the most aristocratic of dramatic genres. Seriality is what distinguishes the soap opera form. There are two primary narrative patterns in soap operas: "open" soap operas, where the action of the story continues without a clear conclusion in sight, and "closed" soap operas, where the story does, come to an end, regardless of how slowly it unfolds.

Where it dominates evening programming from Mexico to Chile in Latin America, the closed soap opera is more prevalent. "*Geet*" and "*Dil Mil Gaye*" are examples of this in India.

These "telenovelas," which can last three to four years as well as hundreds of episodes, are broadcast every night. However, as they are eventually intended to come to an end, a closed soap opera differs significantly from the open form both in terms of its conception and its audience. The phrase itself denotes an artistic and cultural incongruity: ordinary circumstances becoming the topic of an operatic genre (Ahmed 6).

Television is well renowned for being a potent meaning-provoker and circulator. The goal of the study to investigate the discursive elements a female soap opera leads to determine whether they are partially idealised as devout religious followers throughout their entire lives. In the media domain, wars of production as well as reinforcing of meanings are frequently fought. Therefore, character reading analysis of Hindi soap operas will aid in concentrating analytical attention on the various hegemonic power structures that make up the text. This article's goal is to examine the textual as well as semiotic codifications used to define the main characters of the selected soap operas in question. These protocols will help to understand why religious acolytes are occasionally produced in soap operas (Laskar 199).

On Indian television, the fiction genre has been very common. Compared to the days when there was just one national broadcaster, the amount many General Entertainment Channels (GECs) that are available on Indian television has increased exponentially. Among the most popular options is TV series. While broadcasting is under attack from narrowcasting currently, the television serials genre appears unaffected. The substance of TV series has incorporated socio-cultural patterns as well. There has been some evolution in the material in Indian television soap operas. They have espoused loud cultural images used during the process. The study aims to examine how the substance of television soap operas has changed over time in India. The study explores how these soap operas contribute to the formation of cultural ethos and identity. It would also aim to criticise the current generation of "pseudo-social" soap operas' cultural ethos (Jaggi 145).

From the 1980s onward, the research of soap operas on broadcast grew in popularity in western academia, largely because of feminist media research that helped raise awareness of gender issues and saw Media texts as merely a place where definitional disputes take place, and the growing academic validity of studying media texts from popular culture. Television studies, however, were eventually developed in an Indian context. This has to do with India's decision towards liberalise their economy beginning in 1991 and how it affected the Indian media environment. Beginning with the year 2000, a production firm named Balaji Telefilms brought about a significant change in the concept of soap operas on Indian television (Munshi 22).

This production company debuted long-running prime-time soaps with lesser-known stars that had extremely high TRPs (television rating points). The mainstream media engaged in extensive discussion and debate about this new trend. Except for a few research papers, the academic literature on the subject is very lacking. *Prime Time Soap Operas in Indian Television*, authored by Shoma Munshi, a professor at the American University of Kuwait, is one noteworthy study. In a positive light, Dr. Munshi's research highlights the age that these kinds of soap operas helped establish and provides observations on the notions of gender and identity that are propagated through popular culture such as these. In the light of their fragmented and never-ending frames as well as narrative patterns, her book examines the construction of soap operas focusing on the complicated constructs of family, tradition, and gender. From the year 2008 onward, societal issues such as forced marriages, female foeticide, child labour, exploitation, and farmer suicides provided the thematic background for this new breed of soap operas, which resulted in a paradigm change in soap opera themes.

The focus of the study is that the fresh generation of soaps shared ideological traits with the previous crop. Here on an Indian television screen melodrama, cliches, and heteronormative gender stereotypes were also used in the social component, which seemed to indicate their

commitment to a nova culture. In this study, an "apparent paradigm shift" in Indian television soap opera material during the previous ten years will be discussed and examined. The study attempt to analyse and evaluate the "socio-cultural" variables' traits and the "identity" issues which this popular culture medium possesses produced (Jaggi 145).

Information, education, and entertainment are the three main goals of television. Because of the abundance of visual movement on television, which has the ability to bring the world into living room with great authenticity and efficacy, it has a more significant and persuasive impact on viewers, especially women. Women are recognised as "special audience groups" to make accommodations for their preferences and inclinations. In this context, many television programs frequently feature concerns and difficulties specific to women. One of the watched television genres is soap operas, which are also a hugely popular type of popular culture. Unavoidably, there is a significant and committed fan audience for soap operas. Soaps are incredibly popular today and have established a niche for themselves while also allowing for a variety of interpretations to cater to the varied interests of the dominating Indian middle class (Ahmed 6).

The Indian television series deal with a variety of social messages and issues, or they can just be for amusement. The few common topics that Indian television soap operas centre around include humour, family ties, societal issues, mythology, children's shows, patriotism, etc. On Indian television, however, Hindi serials are the most watched. The availability of numerous channels via cable networks has enhanced the exposure and reach of tv series in India. Ekta Kapoor, who is known as the queen of Indian television serials and launched her "K" series with "*Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*," "*Kasauti Zindagi Ki*," "*Kkusum*," "*Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki*," and "*Kasam Se*," is one of the most well-known personalities in the area of Indian television. The popular Indian television series "*Saat*

Phere,””*Maayka,*””*Balika Vadhu,*””*Mata Ki Chowki,*””*Pratigya,*””*Chand Chupa Badal Mein,*””*Tere Liye,*””*Maryada,*””*Ye Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai,*” etc. are just a few examples.

However, Indian television series has outperformed the competition in many ways, including how subjects, cast, running episodes, time slots, and so forth. Particularly on the ZEE Marathi, Saam Marathi, and Star Pravah channels, Marathi serials are shown. Like this, Gujarati serials have their channels to cater to their native viewers. The success of Indian television series has spread to all spheres, creating a fiercely competitive market based on TRPs.

One of the most interesting times on Indian television is watching Indian television serials. The serials are broadcast following a thorough analysis of the target audiences as well as their preferred viewing styles. Family dramas, for instance, are often broadcast as in afternoons and nights, whereas comedies are broadcast during teatime. As a result, devoted Indian television fans maintain a special place in their hearts for Indian television serials (Kluvoya 2).

1. Literature Review

According to George and Larry (1976) in their work “Living with television” asserted that television served as society's primary cultural institution and that it socialises most people into standardised roles and habits. They contend that rather than making limited attempts to convince viewers, television more effectively shapes viewers' worldviews through the relationships, behaviours, and values it depicts. Soaps convey various messages and depict various social relations; some portray a greater proportion of women in professional employment while others aren't career focused. In soap operas, women are stereotyped, yet today's ladies are different. She had changed from being a weak, passive, and subservient housewife into a strong person. She had become a skilled homemaker in addition to being a

pro in her field. The soap operas currently being broadcast on Indian television partially, if not totally, reflect this transformation in women's roles (Gerbner and Gross 124).

As said by Muriel and Suzanne (1983) in their work "The Soap Opera" stated Personal identity was a different area of identification that the audience likes developing with the characters. It was clear from personal experience that viewers frequently utilize a character's actions to support their actions in a comparable circumstance. In this sense, the appeal of soap operas was due to the joys provided by the identifiers that the characters offer. Viewers are interested in seeing what happens to all those particular characters that are tied into those ties. There was no beginning, no end, and no structural closure in soaps. They don't build to a conclusion or point of meaning closure. A soap opera allows viewers to participate at any time. Devices are already there to review certain plot points. There was not just one story to tell. Soap opera plots are nonlinear in this regard. Over time, narrative threads are weaved together (Cantor and Pingree 75).

As claimed by Richard (1986) in his work "What are cultural studies anyway" stated that the phrase "circuit of culture" relates to reciprocal loans across texts in addition to lived cultures. It may be demonstrated that loans through organisational reality to either a series as well as vice versa. If "texts" are replaced with TV shows, we can concur that serials and organisations fall under the category of "places and situations in which literary tradition as well as a real-life notable transect," but that they revealed the simultaneous as well as reciprocal process by which life continues to provide materials to literature while literature also repays the favour by bestowing forms (Johnson 80).

According to John (1987), in his work "British Cultural Studies. In R. Allen (Ed) Channels of Discourse" viewed that interpretation of the text as encompassing a wide range of things that are symbolically encoded, including language, structured social standards, and clothing. Semiologically based forms and codes are examined to determine their meanings and

socio-cultural intertextuality points that any system of social interactions will inevitably entail control and submission, as well as power and resistance. The portrayal of specific cultural or religious teams and their discursive practices throughout the two chosen Hindi channels had raise concerns about the mediated dominance of these discourses over other ones that aren't given screen presence throughout Indian television because cultural or religious organizations are hardly autonomous nor equal. Despite being portrayed as a superwoman, the protagonist's identity was based on unobservable divine assistance. All of them result in more or less pronounced social differences that are related to one another in a variety of intricate ways that always include the elements of power and, in the end, conflict of interests (Fiske 289).

According to Charles (1992), in his work "Multiculturalism and The Politics of Recognition" described that women were forced to accept a negative self-image and low self-worth in patriarchal societies. A variety of political currents are centered on the need for acknowledgment in the face of hegemonic dominance. He stated that our identity is shaped in part by others' misrecognition of us. The true harm would be done if popular culture, like television, likewise reflected an inaccurate and stereotypical image of women (Taylor56).

As said by Mary Ellen (1994) in their work "Television and Women's Culture" stated that, Due to their consistency, regularity, and familiarity, soap opera was also well-liked. It had been described as a "ritual pleasure" that brings comfort in its length and predictable familiarity, which was the main draw for humans. The audience may be sure of familiarity and consistency because the soap is only geographically located in one location and depicts the lives of the same individuals in each episode. However, author maintains that this familiarity does not make it uninteresting because audiences that enjoy change and disruption embrace familiarity and predictability because of the presence of well-established characters. There are several opposing points of view provided to the viewer, and the juxtaposition of them adds intrigue because there is no clear-cut solution, and he must come to his conclusions.

The viewer was actively participating as he forecasts and speculatively considers what may happen in the future. The spectator was free to interpret the resolutions as they see fit. Due to familiarity with the stories and characters, a regular watcher of a specific soap opera may feel watching to be a low-stress activity. The low degree of focus required to understand each episode could therefore indicate that soap operas are simply watching for their followers, as demonstrated here: An individual who has been a long-time fan of a particular show hasn't seen it, only to catch up by watching either one or two seasons (Brown 21).

As claimed by Charlotte (1995), in their work "The role of soap opera in the development of feminist television scholarship" has noted that feminist critics had been more interested in how soap operas are received since the late 1970s for a range of reasons. Initially, the soaps drew a primarily female audience, However, Brunsdon's further justifications for this growing interest are more important for our research. One of these was the spreading notion that politics was personal and also that families serve as microcosms that capture and concentrate an image of the predominant institutional order. The negative symbolism of the soap operas, which implied that "*the feminine is despicable, as commonplace, and beneath serious critical attention,*" was another contributing factor. As a result, the early, binary feminist viewpoints were strengthened and given more nuance even as feminists' initial disdain turned into genuine interest. Although soap operas have clearly served as models for changing gender roles ever since the late 1990s, this has only served to strengthen the appeal of a genre as a source of information for feminist studies (Brunsdon 65).

According to Tania (1996) in their work "The Search for Tomorrow in Today's Soap Opera" asserted that a female character in the soap opera that corresponds to her place as in a patriarchal home is decentred. She was confused since her relationships with her spouse and kids are the only ways, she can truly understand who she is. The woman lead was shown struggling to meet the evolving requirements provided by these partnerships (Modelsky 21).

According to Christiane (1999), in their work "Is this the real thing? Packaging cultural nationalism" described that a community can create and glean meanings using these symbolic means and the packaging of those ways via a network of communication. A community's members identified with a particular set of reference (moral standards, following that, there will be dynamic process of continual negotiation for the emergence of either a sense of community. This negotiation covered cultural norms, legal requirements, and rights (such as religious rituals). A multicultural state can achieve more just outcomes if it was willing to embrace explicit policies that aim to foster cross-cultural communication and social justice.

However, if ignored, this might put the country in danger. The first goal, which examines the relationship between how characters are portrayed and how frequently they follow a religion, was crucial for analysing the predominant religious discourse in soap operas. The reasons advanced in Christianne Brosius (1999) can indeed be reiterated to support this goal. According to him the 1990s saw a rise in the urge to glorify Indianness through cultural nationalism-inspired by Hindu revivalism (Hindutva). Then this was accomplished by "branding" and the use of a variety of pictures, metaphors, and stories drawn from larger areas of popular culture (Brosius 25).

According to Ron (2000), in their work "Thinking through television" claimed that religion and rituals rule India, a country rich in epic literature and mythology. These activities play a significant role in an Indian's daily life since they serve to normalize social interactions. However, there are numerous differences in the religions they belong to. Once more, there are disparities in people's levels of religious identification, especially among young urban residents. Reading the texts is perceived as being a very complex action given the multiplicity of social locations and identities in the context of cultural studies. People are free to accept or reject the meanings that discourses will hold for them in various ways, or even to negotiate them.

The audience might, however, occasionally reject the opportunity for the "coherence" provided by the dominant discourses to create its own truly coherent ways of thinking experience. And he also stated that the polysemic or plurality aspect of television contributes to the possibility of meanings that socially positioned viewers might realize or transform into really experienced meanings through their reading of such soap operas. Further levels of power will emerge as a result of the viewer's understanding of the text in terms of its dominant, negotiated, or alternative meanings (Lembo 22).

According to Kate (2000), in their work "Representation in The Media & Communications in Australia" stated that A soap opera was indeed a consistently broadcast, episodic work of dramatic fiction for radio or television. Soap operas started to influence Indian culture around the start of the twenty-first century. The tensions between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law are a major focus of Indian soap operas (Bowles 57).

As said by Arvind and Everett (2001), in their work "The entertainment-education strategy in communication campaigns" discussed that in the current climate for Doordarshan, the efforts made in 1984 by the Joshi Working Group to diversify channels as well as programming to fulfil market demands are still valid. The state had played a very static role in using television to promote national development. It was necessary to change the programming from centrist, top-down patriarchal to critical, decentralised, alternative, grassroots, and far-reaching if television in India is to regain its potential for progress (Singhal and Rogers 356).

2. Discussion

It is hardly surprising that television genres are now at the centre of both academic research and public discourse on television, or even that soap opera should dominate these discussions. In discussions of genres and arguments on television in general, the research on soap operas has been particularly significant. First off, categorizing soap operas allowed for the delineation of television drama's characteristics from those of drama in theatre or film as

well as the evaluation of differences among television drama itself through contrasting them with other genres like the series or serial. Second, how soap opera has already been analysed and defined has influenced the growth of television studies and continues to influence the way one views particular topics. It is seen that the debate between soap operas and women's fiction relied heavily on the idea of the private sphere. Modernizing messages could be rejected or more individualized interpretations could become the focus of the viewing experience thanks to the viewing and conversation processes (Geraghty 323).

The genre of soap operas has been effective in developing a style that is compatible with the concerns and discourse of women. Women can develop a sense of unity among themselves and pose a danger to the dominant ideological system through the relationships they forge through conversations about soap operas as well as the affective pleasures of watching. One may argue that soap operas have given women a voice in some ways. Soap opera discussions offer a forum for a specific type of dialogue where issues about women can be voiced. Ironically, soap operas still are rubbish. Women's genres require a careful examination of women's lives and tales must be taken seriously (Ahmed 6).

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process by which life continues to provide materials to literature while literature also repays the favour by bestowing forms.

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Devices are already there to review certain plot points. There was not just one story to tell. Soap opera plots are nonlinear in this regard. Over time, narrative threads are weaved together.

3. Conclusion

There is a desire to develop genres of fictional television programming as it is recognised that there is an audience outside of metropolises. In the past, women were stereotyped as being selfless and kind due to the way they were presented in television soap operas. But there was a change in the early 1990s. Many television soap operas depicted women's transition from the home to the workplace. One prominent example is '*Udaan*,' which describes the life of a police officer who is from the middle class. There were many additional soap operas with strong female heroines who pushed stereotypes aside, such as "*Tara*" and "*Shanti*". There was a kind of return to the 1880s in the late 1990s. The women had returned to their husbands as well as their homes. Every soap opera seemed to depict the family as completely ritualised.

These women appeared clever and smart on the outside, yet they were traditional and ceremonial. The subtexts of Indian mythology were connected to the iconography of their selfless personas. In a "*Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*" subplot, the ideal lady, Tulsi, bears children and fits in flawlessly with the kinship, customs, and traditions in a similar soap opera, a disobedient heroine pays a high price and is not able to conceive children. Understanding how women are portrayed within soap operas has changed as in post-economic liberalisation era is essential since liberalization of television in India as well as the ensuing growth of private television stations. Indian soap operas frequently feature very strong, either good or negative, female characters since they operate under the premise that women are the major audience for drama. In general, men take a backseat. This bias is evident in all the top shows throughout all networks.

In these soap operas, the nuclear family has been exalted. These soap operas do not refer to the struggles of nuclear families, which are quickly becoming a reality in modern India. The nuclear family was absent from Indian television's soap opera landscape. The ideas of family structure, patriarchy, and rituals form the foundation of a feminine-oriented narrative. The new wave of socially conscious soap operas was like a breath of fresh air. But as seen by the earlier case studies of "*Balika Vadhu*," "*Na Aana Is Des Laado*," and "*Uttaran*," the plotlines of these soap operas have taken odd detours. Within roughly two years of its debut, the film "*Balika Vadhu*," which appeared to be the torch carrier, appears to be moving toward another child marriage within the plots. It was the right time for the soap to start addressing social issues, but instead, there were numerous domestic political plot twists, which may have led to the expected course of action.

As is seen in "*Na Aana Is Des Laado*," women are portrayed as submissive as well as toeing the line rather than speaking out against societal injustice. Women are becoming treated like doormats in name of social relevance, Sarah Salvadore argues in *The Times of India*. Tulsi and Parvati appeared to be more fighters than the present crop of heroines if anything. The narrative, as well as drama, have reportedly surpassed the thematic construct because the majority of Participants in focus groups for this research stated that those who want to see women characters in these kind of soap operas give birth to baby girls instead of boys and see the social evolution were the ones who wanted to see this seems to have overtaken the conceptual structure. Another problem arises when connecting the storylines of such soap operas to certain dialectical and geographic boundaries. Any culture has its own identity in a country like India, hence it might have upped the drama factor, but it also seems to have linked the societal evil portrayed to the area where it was portrayed.

However, this type of relationship is only a preliminary finding, and further investigation and examination are needed to confirm it. However, such cultural affinity offers

many chances to use ceremonial and religious elements to produce typical, stereotyped stories. The stories gently address class inequalities, and the audience's view does establish a celebration of such issues. The story portrays a conundrum in terms of social significance and advancement because no real progress is shown in terms of preventing class issues.

The media are incredibly powerful, effective, and influential in changing women's behaviour and impacting other aspects of women's empowerment. One of the crucial aspects to be examined to determine the function of media in women's empowerment is how women are exposed to and represented in the media. Due to the visual nature of media, exposure to television in particular generates information accumulation and behaviour modification in women that reflects their involvement in decision-making, inter-family communication, and role negotiation at home, all of which can contribute to a higher quality of life. An item of culture is television.

It is a two-way mirror that simultaneously reflects society and is influenced by it. Popularity among the general public has skyrocketed for soap operas that depict interpersonal issues, family crises, the balance between work and home, and modern yet traditional ideas and values. One may argue that soap operas have given women a voice in some ways. Soap opera discussions offer a forum for a specific type of dialogue where issues about women can be voiced. Ironically, soap operas still are considered to be garbage. Women's genres require a careful examination of women's lives and tales must be taken seriously. Women identify with soap operas because they're able to relate the stories to their own professional and personal lives. The characters that the viewers can relate to maintain a consistent relationship with them, and these characters aid the viewers in discovering their inner selves. For women, watching soap operas has greater value.

They represent the viewer's life in some way. It assists the viewers in resolving their issues and inspires them to do and do things that, for most women, would be unthinkable. The

way "the audience is placed by the narrative," who evaluates the person he is viewing, also demonstrates femininity. The many jobs that women play are also associated with a great deal of beauty and glitz. This is yet another "textual contribution of potential modes of femininity from which women might construct and remodel their feminine identities". Women can consequently relate soap operas to their lives and identities. Indian soap operas place a strong emphasis on the decision-making process by articulating issues in great depth and with subtlety to move the storylines.

If one were to read from a dominant point of view, one might claim that soap opera serve to emphasize the already troubling elements of women's lives since women are truly just interested in the insignificant aspects of daily life. The fabric of women's lives is valued by soaps, to put it another way. In many situations, women are given prominent roles in modern soap operas. This type of television programming could be a powerful instrument for raising awareness of how society is changing.

This study's main objective was to investigate why women watch Indian soap operas. The study looked at correlations between watching Indian soap operas and respondents' favourability of Indian culture, attitudes regarding current serials, and perspectives on romantic love, community, religion, as well as tradition to identify the uses and gratifications. The current study also looked at the relationship between female viewers' views of power and their religious attitudes. The five variables that we identified using a uses and gratifications method are moral support, identification, relaxation, escape, romantic fantasy, as well as and idealisation. These five factors help to explain why people watch Indian soap operas. The research's most unexpected and striking discovery is that watching Indian soap operas is a kind of protest serials, which feature sexually explicit material and morally repugnant acts. It might be said that the participants are an "interpretative community" who like Indian serials.

Women are urged to identify as females in Indian soap operas who uphold social order and perpetuate cultural and religious norms. The conservative heroine, who instructs the hero how and where to love and care and forces him to maintain God's word and discover the right path, is a cultural figure with whom the participants identify as well as feel a strong bond. In addition, the participants chose to spy watching Indian soap operas to mock their husbands and relatives as being foolish. Since Indian soap operas occupy their time and prevent them from keeping their position as sacrificed mothers or wives, they do not feel at ease viewing them.

The female protagonist must have patience and endurance, as patience must be employed as a tool to accomplish goals in a process comparable to participants' surrender. As they watch the heroine persevere, be patient, and recreate an ethically re-examined romantic ideal akin to Radway, they gain confidence in themselves. Since they still uphold their traditional cultural background, Indian soap opera protagonists are an excellent archetype among female Indian television drama viewers. In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that observing Indian soap operas is related to participants' favourability toward upholding traditional social order (including religious, traditional, as well as familial values), their motivation to uphold traditional female stereotypes, as well as their desire to lead a traditional lifestyle.

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