



RESONANCE OF TAMIL TV SERIAL IMAGES OF WOMEN AMONG URBAN WOMEN VIEWERS

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ABSTRACT

Television as powerful mass medium shapes the attitudes and beliefs of the audience. Plenty of studies have been done on the contributions of television programs for the empowerment of women. The television soap operas, as analyzed by foreign authors change the mindsets of women viewers constructively. Whereas Indian studies on the impact of soap operas have negative picture of portrayals of women in soaps. The researcher analyzed how recent Tamil television soaps resonate among urban women viewers. Study used survey method and collected information from 500 urban women viewers. The results show Tamil television serials portray women in constructive roles except economical dependency. These portrayals have resonance among urban women viewers to great extent.

Key words- Television, Soap Opera, Portrayal, Women, Resonance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Television, being audio visual in nature and easily accessible right in our homes, has the capacity to influence people on various issues. Plenty of studies have been conducted in this area and this medium has been criticized relentlessly with regard to its portrayals of various issues such as violence or the objectification of women for example.

On the other hand, we also see lot of efforts to empower women from all sections of society. There are also a lot of studies done on the role of television in the empowerment of women. As stated by one of the researchers, Dr. Awa Shukla (2015), *“Television as a medium can be considered as the right direction to change the future for women in our country.”*

He adds on saying that serials in particular have a profound effect on people, their attitude, lifestyle and value systems.

This study concentrates on urban women viewers in particular and is aimed at analyzing how far Tamil television serials contribute to their perspectives on women. The researcher finds a basis for this study in the Cultivation Theory of George Gerbner. He talks about the cultivation effect in terms of two phenomenon; Mainstreaming and Resonance. This study concentrates on the Resonance factor and aims at finding out how far portrayals of women in Tamil television serials resonate among the urban viewers.

1.1. Need of the Study

The study is needed to find out how far images, constructed through Tamil television serials, impact viewers' minds. It would also be useful to analyze the ways and means these serials could help and complement in the ongoing efforts to empower women.

1.2. Objective of the Study

The study aims at finding out the amount of resonance the Tamil TV serials have among the urban women viewers as regards five different aspects of constructive roles that women are portrayed in, namely; Space Allotted for Women, Economic Independence, Social Status, Crisis Management Capacity of Women and Appearances of Women.

1.3. Research Methodology

The Study has incorporated the Survey method with a sample size of 500 urban women viewers from the northern districts of Tamilnadu, namely Chennai, Tiruvallur, Vellore, Villupuram and Kancheepuram.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Soap Operas and Women

Hornham& Purvis, (2005) opine that soap opera frames and constructs our social world and such kind of construction can be interpreted as cultivation.

La Pastina (2004) argues that exposure to tele-novels provides women (in particular) with alternative models of what role they might play in society.

Chong, Duryea and La Ferrara (2007) observed that exposure to soap operas in Brazil reduces fertility.

However, some of the studies on Indian soap operas revealed the negative side of serials. ShashiKaul and ShradhaSahni, (2010) in their study on the ‘Opinion Of Viewers & Portrayal Of Women In TV Serials’, found that around 50% of women felt women are projected mostly as housewives, concerned with domestic problems related to children and other family members. Around 53.3% women believed that women are also projected as tools of glamour and fashion in the serials. Nearly 71.6% of women did not agree that serials empower the women in playing their rightful role in the society as real life is quite different from what it is otherwise shown.

Dr. Awa Shukla (2015) did a study on “Portrayal of Females in Tv Serials – Opinion of men And Women in Kutch Region” with sample which comprised of 500 men and women from Kutch region, selected by purposive sampling method. These men and women (65%) agreed that most of the serials display women as housewives or sex objects.

With the above as a backdrop, the present research aims at finding out the urban women viewers’ perspective of Tamil serials and how it resonates among them.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study is based on George Gerbner’s Cultivation Theory with special focus on Resonance. George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Michael Morgan, Nancy Signorielli,(1980), talk about the dynamics of the cultivation of general concepts of social reality (which we shall call “mainstreaming”) and of the amplification of issues particularly salient to certain groups of viewers (which we shall call “resonance”).

He further explains that the ‘double dose’ of the Television message tend to amplify the cultivation effect. If double dose takes place there is amplification of certain portrayals dealing with salient issues of women viewers.

Lisa Mills-Brown, (2008) mentions cultivation theory in her article on Political Communication. Both George Gerbner and Tony Schwartz have used the word “*Resonance*” to refer to a process by which a mass media message is received, interpreted, or affected by a person's real-world experiences”.

The process of double dosing takes place in two ways based on the ideas of George Gerbner as mentioned by Lisa Mills-Brown (2008). First, the way serial images are received and interpreted, and second if there is congruency between serial images and viewer’s real experience.

3.1. Reception and Interpretation of Media Messages

Stephen Price jr (2011) refers to Fiske (1987) in his article titled “*Exploring audience responses to self-reflexivity in television narratives*” that the experience of viewing television and the meanings that are negotiated are influenced by the physical act of viewing and the activities viewers are concurrently engaged in.

According to Fiske (1987) even the decision to watch a show alone or with others influences the way meanings are negotiated. Fiske (1987) goes further and states that by discussing the plotlines, characters, story points, and even advertisements during or after the viewing of a show,

audiences make sense of the show. In order to study television audiences, one must also study the social elements of watching television.

Hence the researcher aims at finding out how urban women viewers receive and interpret serials images. If they receive relaxed position and in group and discuss with others there would happen ‘double dose’ of serial images.

3.2. Real Life Experience and TV Portrayals

George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Micheal Morgan & Nancy Signoreili, (1980) states that ‘Resonance’ describes to the intensified effect on the audience when what people see on television is what they have experienced in life. This double dose of the televised message tends to amplify the cultivation effect. When what people see on television is most congruent with everyday reality (or even perceived reality), the combination may result in a coherent and powerful “double dose” of the television message and significantly boost cultivation.

Hence the researcher aims at finding out the level of congruence between Tamil Tv serial images and viewer’s real life experience which results in double dosing.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

1. Profile of Viewers:

Table.1. Profile of viewers based on serials they watch

Occupation	Minimum1-4 serials	Medium(5-8 serials)	High< 8 serials
Homemaker	108	81	45

Coolie/Casual	36	15	10
Business	40	18	13
Salaried	39	19	7
ProfessionalJob	54	9	6
Total	277	142	81

Table.2. One-Way ANOVA for profile of viewers

<i>One-Way ANOVA table</i>					
Source	SS	df	MS	F	p-value
Between variation	10060.333	2	5030.167	7.183	0.0718
Within variation	2101.000	3	700.333		
Total variation	12161.333	5			

Table.3. Turkey method analysis of profile of viewers

<i>Tukey method</i>				
Difference	Mean diff	Lower	Upper	Signif?
Minimum - Medium	67.500	-3.047	138.047	No
Medium - High	98.000	27.453	168.547	Yes
Minimum - High	30.500	-40.047	101.047	No

From the above ANOVA we see that there is no significant difference in the minimum, medium and high viewers, since p-value is 0.07. But using Turkey method there is a significant difference between Medium and High which shows that there is a possibility of resonance taking place in homemakers and the working women among medium and high viewers.

2. Reception: Physical Viewing

Table.4. Physical viewing of urban women viewers.

Occupation	Relaxed Viewing	Frequency	Percentage
Homemaker	109	234	47
Coolie/Casual	36	61	59
Business	32	71	45
Salaried	27	65	42
Professional Job	9	69	13
Total	213	500	43

The table.4 reveals that urban women have relaxed viewing (43%) while they watch serials. There is a possibility of effective reception which would result in double dosing and resonance.

3. Reception: Social Viewing

Table.5. Social viewing of urban women viewers.

Occupation	Group Viewing	Frequency	Percentage
Homemaker	115	234	49
Coolie/Casual	32	61	52
Business	40	71	56
Salaried	33	65	51
Professional Job	43	69	62
Total	263	500	53

Table.6. Social viewing of urban women viewers in terms of discussion.

Occupation	Discussing with others	Frequency	Percentage
Homemaker	102	234	44
Coolie/Casual	30	61	49
Business	27	71	38
Salaried	18	65	28
Professional Job	14	69	20
Total	191	500	38

The above two tables show that 53% of urban women viewers always watch serials in a group. Among them 38% women discuss with others the storyline and about the characters. Therefore there is possibility of double dosing which would amplify serial images.

4. Resonance: The Level of Congruence between TV Portrayals and Real Life Situation:

4.1. Space Allotted For Women:

Table.7. Congruence of serial images of working women and real life experience of urban women viewers.

Non Domesticated			
Real Life Experience	Serial Portrayal	Frequency	Percentage
Home Maker	96	234	41.03
Working Women	146	266	54.89
Total	242	500	48.40

The table.7 reveals that 53% of (266 out of 500) urban women viewers are working women. Among them 54.89% observed serials portraying non-domesticated women. It means there is double dose of working women image in the minds of 54.89% of urban working women. Hence we conclude we have resonance in terms of space allotted for women.

4.2. Economic Independence:

Table.8. Congruence between portrayals of women not owning wealth and real life situation of urban women viewers.

Occupation	Own Wealth %	Don't own wealth %
Homemaker	2.56	14.53
Coolie/Casual	1.64	19.67
Business	4.23	18.31
Salaried	6.15	6.15
Professional Job	4.35	15.94
Total	3.40	14.80

Table.9. Congruence of serial images of women depend their husbands for money and real life experience of urban women viewers.

Occupation	Dependent	Independent
Homemaker	47.86	3.42
Coolie/Casual	34.43	8.20
Business	16.90	12.68
Salaried	23.08	16.92
Professional Job	20.29	8.70
Total	34.80	7.80

The table.8 shows that there is 14.80% congruence among urban women viewers who view Tv serials with the images of women not owning wealth and who do not own wealth in real life.

The table.9 reveals that there is 34.80% congruence among urban women viewers who watch Tv serials portraying images of women depending on their husbands for money and their real life experience of same thing. Hence there is chance of double dosing of this image of women in Tamil serials. **Hence, we conclude there is resonance of economic dependency.**

5.4 Social Status in terms of Equal Treatment:

Table.10. Congruence of serial images of women being treated equally and real life experience of urban women viewers.

Occupation	Treated Equally	Not Treated Equally
Homemaker	44.87	4.27
Coolie/Casual	31.15	13.11
Business	15.49	16.90
Salaried	23.08	20.00
Professional Job	15.94	13.04
Total	32.20	10.40

The table.10 reveals that there is 32.20% of similarity between Tv serial images portraying women as being treated equally and real life experience of urban women viewers who are treated equally. There is possibility for double dose of images of women treated equally. **Hence we conclude there is resonance in terms of equal treatment.**

4.5 Social status in terms of power to make decisions in personal life;

Table.11. Congruence of serial images of women having power to take decisions in personal life and real life experience of urban women viewers having the same power.

Occupation	Allowing me to take Decision	Not allowing me to take decision
Homemaker	47.44	1.71
Coolie/Casual	39.34	4.92
Business	36.62	0.00
Salaried	43.08	1.54
Professional Job	42.03	0.00
Total	43.60	1.60

The above table reveals there is 43.60% similarity between real life of urban women viewers having power to take decision in their personal life and Tv serial images portraying women in such a way. There is possibility for double dose of serial images of women. **Hence we conclude there is resonance in terms of power to take decisions in personal life.**

4.6 Social Status in terms of Power to Make Decisions in Family Matters;

Table.12. Congruence of serial images of women having power to take decisions in family matters and real life experience of urban women viewers having the same power.

Occupation	Considering me in family decision	Not considering me in family decision
Homemaker	54.70	2.14
Coolie/Casual	55.74	11.48

Business	50.70	4.23
Salaried	55.38	4.62
Professional Job	43.48	1.45
Total	52.80	3.80

The above table reveals there is 52.80% congruence among urban women viewers having power to take decision in family matters and Tv serials portraying women in such a way. There is possibility for double dose of serial images of women. **Hence we conclude there is resonance in terms of power to take decisions in family matters.**

4.7 Crisis Management Capacity of Women:

Table.13. Congruence of serial images of crisis management capacity of women and real life experience of urban women viewers having the same capacity.

Occupation	Helpless	Bold	Intelligence
Homemaker	17.95	50.00	52.56
Coolie/Casual	24.59	55.74	50.82
Business	11.27	59.15	57.75
Salaried	9.23	55.38	50.77
Professional Job	5.80	44.93	39.13
Total	15.00	52.00	51.00

The table.13 reveals that there is similarity between Tv serial images of women facing problems with boldness (52%) and with intelligence (51%) and real experience of urban women viewers who face problems with boldness and with intelligence. There is double dose of serial images of women managing crisis with boldness and intelligence. Hence we conclude that **there is resonance in the minds of urban women viewers in terms of crisis management capacity.**

Table.14. Correlations between three different crisis management capacities

<i>Table of correlations</i>			
	Helpless	Bold	Intelligence
Helpless	1.000		
Bold	0.961	1.000	
Intelligence	0.961	1.000	1.000

From the above correlation table we conclude there is a strong relationship between bold and intelligence. We conclude that there is resonance in the minds of urban women viewers in terms of crisis management capacity.

4.8 Appearance of Women not as Glamorous and Sexual Objects:

Table.15. Congruence of serial images of women not as glamorous and sexual objects and real life experience of urban women viewers not considered as glamorous and sexual objects.

Occupation	Not Glamorous	Not Sexual Objects
Home Maker	58.55	64.53
Coolie/Casual	63.93	78.69
Business	64.79	63.38
Salaried	66.15	72.31
Professional Job	72.46	82.61
Total	63.00	69.60

The table.15 shows there is congruence of serial images of women not as glamorous and sexual objects and real life experience of urban women viewers not considered in such manner among 63% and 69.60% respectively. There is double dose of serial images of women not as glamorous and sexual objects. Hence we conclude that there is resonance in the minds of urban women viewers in terms of appearance not as glamorous and sexual objects.

4.9. Women as Successful in Life:

Table.16. Congruence of serial images of successful women and real life experience of urban women viewers as successful persons in life.

Occupation	Successful women	Not Successful Women
Homemaker	41.45	2.56
Coolie/Casual	44.26	4.92
Business	52.11	4.23
Salaried	41.54	1.54
Professional Job	34.78	1.45
Total	42.40	2.8

The table.16 shows there is 42.40% congruence among of urban women viewers who watch Tvserial images of successful women and their successful real life. There is possibility of double dosing of such a serial image. **Hence we conclude that there is resonance in the minds of urban women viewers in terms of their appearance as successful persons.**

CONCLUSION

One thing that is clear from the present study is that all the respondents watched at least two to four serials per day. 44.6% of urban women viewers fall into the category of medium (5 to 8 serials) and 16.2% as high viewers (over 8 serials). This clearly shows that there is a high possibility of resonance taking place.

They have good resonance effect in terms of physical and social viewing wherein 43% of them have relaxed viewing, 53% have social viewing and 38% have discussion with others on the story and characters of the serials they watch. There is double dosing of serial images which would result in resonance of those images.

This study analyzed resonance effect in terms of congruence between Tv serial portrayals (*five constructive images*) and real life situations of urban women viewers.

The results show that there is resonance among 54.89% of urban women viewers. 266 of the 500 viewers are working women. They observed that Tamil Tv serials portray working women. There is double dose of images

of non-domestication among 54.89% of urban women viewers. Therefore non-domestication of women issue resonates in their minds.

The study concludes there is congruence of images of women dependent on her husband for money matters among 34.80% urban women viewers. And there is congruence of serial images of women not owning wealth among 14.80% of urban women viewers. On both the aspects of economic status there is possibility of double dosing of dependent women only. Hence the images of economically dependent women resonate among urban women viewers.

Talking about the social status of women, there is congruence of images of women having equal treatment (32.20%), power to make decisions in their personal life (43.60%) and family matters (52.80%). There is chance of double dosing of images of women having these rights. The study reveals there is resonance of portrayals of women having social status.

The findings show there is congruence of serial images of women facing problems with boldness (52%) and with intelligence (51%) and real life experience of urban women viewers. There is double dose of images of women having crisis management capacity. Hence there is resonance of these images among urban women viewers.

We also discussed about the resonance of women's appearances as glamorous and sexual object or as successful person. In Tamil Tv serials, as perceived by urban women viewers, women are not portrayed as glamorous and sexual objects. They also feel they are not treated by society in such a way in their real life. Therefore there is congruence of images of women not as sexual object (69.60 %) and not glamorous (63

%) but as successful person (42.40%). There is resonance of successful women images in the minds of urban women viewers.

On the whole there is resonance of serial images in terms physical viewing, social viewing and interpretation and congruence of serial images and real life experience of urban women viewers on following perspectives; non-domestication, high social status, good crisis management capacity and appearances as successful persons. There is also resonance of stereotypical image of women not having economic independence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Tamil Tv serials portray constructive images of women at present. It is far better than the portrayals of last ten years. The study suggests the present story writers of Tamil Tv serials should go ahead with this kind of portrayals.
- There is a much progress in the portrayals of space allotted for women in the screen. There were a lot of characters domesticated in the serials of yester years. But this study reveals women are portrayed in working places. The serials writers should come out with different spaces that women occupy in the real world.
- However there is stereotypical portrayal of women with no economic independence. Though they go for work/jobs still they are dependent on husbands for their financial needs. There should be economic freedom given to the female characters.

- The study comes out with positive observation that the portrayals of these constructive characters of women resonate among women viewers. It is proved that Tamil Tv serials cultivates positive attitude on women viewers. If the serial writers come out with the images of contemporary women it would be useful for women viewers to get empowerment in the society.

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