

Young women and Reproduction of new Identities through Television Programmes

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Abstract

This paper covers a study on the influence of television in the reproduction of modern identities of women through television. The main objective of this study is to find out the outlook and stance of young women towards the reproduction of modern identities in television. Butler's views on gender and identity are used as the theoretical Frame work. This research was developed on a feminist paradigm. Feminist qualitative analysis had used in this research. This paper investigates the reality of the so called modern identities on television through the vision of young women. The television programmes selected for study are based on the interest of the respondents. The patriarchal based is reproduction of female identities also analysed in this study. This paper also tried to found how the powers of television influence young women? This study is an effort to open a new area in the field of media and gender research.

Key words: *women, reproduction, modern identities and television*

Introduction

In our society the expectations of gender identities of women are concentrated in what the women do and not to the identity of the woman. Representation of women and their identities in television are in a patriarchal way. The patriarchal societies have some expectations about women who are explored in media. The social and cultural construction of gender identity of women (based on patriarchy) is reproduced in media. The images and identities of women are exploited by the television for its commercial profit making. Why the identities of women only are exploited? Because, most women in our society not oppositely reacting to this system. By watching the soap operas and other programmes they are also playing

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a role in gendering these identities in television. The patriarchal based gender socialisation had creating a false consciousness in the attitude of women that the patriarchal systems are not affected them. **False Consciousness**, in a very *Matrix* kind of way, leads us to believe that things that are not, in fact, actually true. . In the culture industry, false consciousness means that the media, also for turning audience addicted to reflexive, traditional person completely, the efficiency trap of convincing viewers that the media really has no influence on us whatsoever. The people had not felt like a sheep, but they will not notice that anyway because the culture industry had done such a good job creating sense of false consciousness and, therefore of convincing them that they are not a sheep at all. This concept is able to apply to gender, as well. Women who claim that they experience no oppression in patriarchal society and media are victims of false consciousness who have the wool pulled over their eyes but the institutions of a male-dominated society (Robyn Ryle, 2012)

The enlightening attainments in female literacy and occupational level rate limited degree of financial independence do not appear to have deliberated on Kerala women a high degree of social freedom. Compared to other visual media like cinema, internet movies and you tube which were one of the most important sources of entertainment till recent times, television viewing was not that much costly. It was difficult for a woman to go and view a cinema. Sometimes she may have to get permission from the head of the household and have a group of trustworthy friends. All this effort, time and money could be saved when television came to house. If one could not acquire a television of one's own, he or she can watch programmes others house. Television is particularly comfortable for the women, because it gave her an easily available visual media of leisure (Usha V.T, under "Introduction: TV and her Story").

In India television transmission started with only one channel Doordarshan. Malayalam transmission started in Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala on January 1, 1985. For many years Doordarshan had been telecasting malayalam programmes for a few hours only. The rest of the programmes were in Hindi. This was changed after the arrival of several

new channels. The numbers of channels were increased. It led to competition among the television channels. Nowadays television channels give great importance to programme based viewership, the rating, entertainment and not to the realities. (Mc Robbie, 2003)

Objectives of the Study

- To investigate stance of young women towards the representation of their modern identities in television.
- To analyse the reproduction of modern women's identities through television.

Review of Literature

Laura Mulvey in 1895, in her leading and most quoted article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* establishes a psychoanalytical move toward to Cinema. In this article she argues that traditional Cinema rouses the yearning to appearance of building constructions of voyeurism and narcissism into the story. Observing a body or image makes a voyeuristic happiness, though egotistic pleasure is fashioned by recognition with the representation. Mulvey disclosed that how the sexual/ gender distinctions tasking to the constructions of these two main forms of visual pleasure in orthodox cinema. The classical description structure has found the supremacy over male character, who aggressively taking both the appearance and the action. She again states that camera effort and editing has built voyeuristic satisfaction absolutely to masculine, during the lens of the *phallic* 'camera, the viewer in the theatre is watching through the vision of the masculine personality in the movie. This triple gaze of watcher camera and the character- supremacy over the female character and constructs her into a viewer; 'to connote to-be-looked-at-ness'. According to Mulvey, in comparison to women's refusal from social and cultural involvements, their identities and images had been oppressed.

Myra Macdonald (1995) in her Study *Representing Myths of Femininity in the popular Media* examined the ways in which the identities of women and the myths of femininity in particular managed to survive various direct attacks and more subtle cultural shifts. She debates that these often contradictory, but surprisingly durable myths of depicting femininity as enigmatic and threatening, fostering and loving, and exposes

sexual image of female bodies in ways which are frequently unrealistic. Rather than arguing that these notions have been imposed upon popular culture by men, Macdonald seeks to account for why women have united in, and engaged satisfactions from their reproduction.

In the study representation of women on US television, Diana Meehan, (1983) united a quantitative analysis, which counted the number and kind of representation of women, with a qualitative interpretation of women's identities and power (lessness). Within those representations found that depictions of television direct 'good' women submissive, sensitive, and sensitive and domesticated while 'bad' women are rebellious, independent and selfish. Meehan concludes that American viewers have spent more than three decades observing mannish heroes and their adventures, muddled visions of boyhood, adolescence replete with illusions of women as witches, bitches, mothers etc.

Methodology

The main research questions underlying this study are 1) Does television play a crucial role in the reproduction of new women identities? 2) What is the influence of television in the production of female misogyny towards modern women's identities? What type of qualitative research employed in this study was dependent upon research objectives and practical paradigm. By way of a feminist scholar, researcher' has compelled to choice a feminist paradigm. The ontological notions for selecting this paradigm are those women's identities are patriarchal constructed in society. From a feminist perspective, the conclusions in this study are developed through the association formation comes from the interaction of researcher and respondents.

In the study, researchers employed availability and snowball sampling to employ interview participants. The findings are based on the response and attitudes of the respondents. The following reactions of the respondents are based on the social and cultural background of the respondents. The education, Religion and family backgrounds of the respondents influence on their outlook towards identities. Qualitative methods like in-depth and informal interviews are used in the research. In our society women have not got the complete freedom to express

their attitudes and outlooks to their problems. From a formal interview, it may be difficult to get a detailed study. For the snowball sampling researcher asked to the participants to know the other interested respondents in this area.

For the purpose of the study the programmes are limited to serials and reality shows. The women viewers are classified into two groups (i) working women (those who work outside their homes for remuneration); and (ii) nonworking women. The viewers belong to a wide range in respect of age: from 20 years to above 30 years of age. The women interviewed for this study are not just research objects, but participants who shared their very personal narration towards the female identities. For ethical concerns the researcher here used number codes instead of the names of respondents in the analysis. Young women are selected for this study because they are the powerful and bold voice of women present. The women are selected from Thrissur District (the 2nd highest urbanized District and cultural capital of Kerala) both rural and Urban areas. For securing the privacy of respondents used number codes instead of the names of respondents in the analysis.

Theoretical Frame Work

Through the work *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 1990) Judith Butler debated that both the expressions of gendered identities illustrate that 'gender is performative'. What does she mean by this? Butler says that many feminists rejected the idea that gender is biologically or naturally fixed. But in doing so, they separated gender (culture) from sex (biology), arguing that gendered norms of behaviour were built upon biologically determined male and female bodies. Butler rejects this position, arguing that *no* biologically determined identities lie beneath the cultural expressions of gender. Instead, gender identities are instituted accurately *through* their endless performance. There is simply no essential, natural or biological basis that is very widespread within many societies and such beliefs shape people's behaviour. Butler's position is that gender identity is not a question of *who you are?* But of *what you do?* (Butler, 1990)

Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or position of society beginning with which different performs ways relatively gender is

an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted as an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the ordinary way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of numerous kinds of constitute the illusion of constantly gendered self... That gendered reality is created through sustained societal acts means that the extremely ideas of an vital sex and a true means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also... part of the strategy that conceals gender performative character. For Butler, lineal models of growth or development are inevitably built in terms of 'masculine domination and compulsory heterosexuality' and these restricting frames must be disrupted by the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations. (Butler, 1990)

Reproduction of modern identities of women through Malayalam serials and reality shows.

Respondent R1

The respondents have positively responded to the question that whether the television is always giving importance mainly two identities of women they are good women (who were dependent, subordinate, sacrificing, loyal wife, an ideal mother, and bad women ((immoral, dominated, tortured and selfish, modern). Most of the responses are about the following serials. Padasaram (6.30 to 7pm) Parasaram. In these serials lot of the identities of women are portrayed. Padasaram serial showing the life struggle of an educated IT professional woman. This serial is about the IT field public and its multifaceted existence.

The story route of Padasaram demonstrates the war between the companies in an IT park and its struggling employees by and large. The luxurious undisciplined non-committed life leads them into inhuman. Survival of the fittest policy makes them demons than humans. The serial "Padasaram" focuses real issues of technocrats. Krishna veni and Kumar are two vibrant technocrats working in Net Asia Software Company. At the beginning of the story they are in love and decided to marry and live together .But when an opportunity has come Krishna veni holds it and became the team leader .It makes her lover Kumar egotist and slowly

he moves against her and eventually he succeeds to expel her from the company. Krishna veni was not a mute woman to bear all this. Even though she was pregnant by Kumar, her womanhood wanted to win over his ego and betrayal. She joins in another neighbouring software company and starts a war against Kumar. It was not just a conflict between two individuals, but it spreads into the clash of titans in the IT community. This serial unleashes how this takes place in different people in the society.

The respondent R1 was unemployed, but a graduate aged 22, lived in a rural area in Thrissur District. She says that her mother was criticising the heroines are creating problems by having sexual intercourse with their lovers before marriage. They do not criticise their lovers. The answer to the question why they are not criticising them is that they are males; they have no problem in their life only women will face all the difficulties. She says that she was not agreeing with the identity of Krishnaveni in this serial. She gave a reason why an educated and independent woman doesn't teaches a She gave reason why an educated and independent woman not teaches a lesson from her cheater lover. Krishnaveni was cheated by their love affair and get pregnant before their marriage. But she is not ready for abortion and gives ultimate importance to their motherhood. In this serial only the dress code and jobs of the heroine are modern. But their thought and outlooks are traditional. . She has debated that this serial shows not the reality of the IT professional. The main lead identity of Krishnaveni had done foolishly thinks. She had not a modern woman's attitude.

Respondent R7

Parasparam serial narrates is the story of a young woman Deepthi as she trains as an IPS officer. She visions to halt the borders of her limited life of middle-class values. The story is also about Sooraj, who is a nice guy. Sooraj owns a famous bakery near his house. Sooraj and Deepthi get married under strained circumstances. Deepthi struggles with her strict mother-in-law who does not accept that her daughter-in-law could become a police officer. The story shows how her husband becomes her strength and helps her to fulfil her dream. Sooraj gets the

title of World's Top Cook. Deepthi completes IPS training and wins the Best Cadet Trophy. The serial now shows her working as an ASP in her own home town. The Malayalam serial parasparam, shows the story of a woman 'Deepthi'. Her ambitions to become an IPS officer, but circumstances make her as a wife and daughter-in-law of an uneducated family. This makes her life miserable. At first she hates her husband, as he is uneducated and the harsh behaviour of her mother in law. But later the love and caring nature of her husband compelled her to love him. She began to adjust with her mother in law and family. At a stage, she ready to give up her IPS ambition for her husband. But her husband began to encourage her to achieve her aim.

The respondent R7 give a negative answer to the question whether it is necessary to a woman, to sacrifice her ambition to her husband? The R7 a postgraduate educated working woman is positive to the question. She states that 'Deepthi' must love her husband because he is so nice guy, but no necessity to give up her ambition. She argues the serial showing first Deepthi as strong lady who have the spirit to oppose against the social harassments and violence. But after marriage, she changed her character, the question that if a lady has no strength to fight against her troubles in her own house, how she can become an IPS Officer.

Myth identities of modern women through Reality shows

Malayalee House is a reality show based on the original Dutch Big Brother format developed by John De Mol. A number of participants (known as "residents") live in a house and are isolated from the rest of the world. Each week, residents nominate one among them for eviction, and the residents who receive the most nominations will have to leave the house. The residents in Malayalee House are famous personalities in their respective fields. All the rooms in Malayalee house are locked at the beginning of the show. A room will be opened when a contestant gets evicted. The room to be opened after an eviction will be decided by the contestants through voting.

Miduuki is the other reality show sponsored by Malabar Gold & Diamonds Midukki was being shown. Actress Rima Kallingal was a part

of the show. This programme got over on 4 August 2013. The winner was Sneha Unnikrishnan. Second place was won by Remya R Menon and third place to Reeba Monica. The main judge of this reality show is Ambika Pilla (world famous hairstylist and beautician). The respondent R9 criticising the reality shows 'Midukki' and Malayali house.

Respondent R9

Respondent R9 is an engineering graduate and IT professional. She lives in urban areas and her marital status is unmarried. She says that these shows are trying to portray the wrong representations of new woman. According to her own concept the modern women who have modern thoughts about their life, have ambitions and fighting spirit against their problems like gender discrimination, harassments, abuses, etc. They said that these television programmes portray the identities of women who are said themselves as 'modern women', independent, Stylish, sexy and very close to men etc. She argues that this makes a wrong concept about modern women. This misrepresentation will create a thought that the freedom will destroy the woman. She has debated that these reality show 'midukki' gave importance to the beauty of the contestants and not to the talent of girls. This show had given challenges to women like 'shopping, fishing from the pools and to cook the fishes for proving their abilities and talents. The young respondent R9 asks that is, whether shopping some items in a limited time is a talent. They also ask whether the cooking is only vested in women.

The respondent R9 argues that there are many misunderstandings about the identity of modern women in society. The reality show *Malayali house* is giving strength to this type of confusions. She says that in this show the contestants like. In this show the women who are presenting themselves as modern are showing their body parts, wear sexy dresses, and speak bad and abuse languages, hug men, etc. Neena kuruppu, Twinkle, Sasha are created an illusion that these are 'new women' of the present society. Respondent R9 does not mean that hugging man an immoral fact. But we cannot assume that it is the freedom of women. She debates that the media image of 'new woman' is also in a concept of male dominated society. She says that these productions and representation

of modern women's identities in television are creating difficulties in the development of woman. She says that she had brought up in an urban area, but her mother was from the rural area and she is not highly educated. The R9 says that when her mother watching this type of reality shows sometimes she scold the whole women who were stylish .The R9 claims that she likes a modern life but not like the life in malayali house. She comments that being a modern woman does not mean she should drink, smoke, and have freedom in sexual life. She wants to be modern in her thoughts, attitude and does not like to spend her life in the four walls of her husband's house. Her claim that her mother concern about her job only because it will be helpful for future life with husband. She got examples from her mother how to behave in the husband's family like the serial heroines in the serial like 'parasparam'. Her mother says to her that she can do anything now, but life will change after marriage. But she says that she will do the job only for herself and is not ready to change her attitude and lifestyle. She again disagrees that the reproduction of the identities of women through television purely in a patriarchal basis

Conclusion

Grounded in this analysis of the responses, young respondents have different views about the television programmes. But it is not sure that this attitude will not change. Because it was an unfortunate process that in the young age of women, their thoughts were also different. But after becoming wives and mothers, their attitude will change. It was due to the patriarchal reproduction of gender identities.

This serial Padasaram reproduces the traditional identity expectation that a woman wants to adjust her life with the background of her husband's house. The primary objective of a woman's life is to find a good husband. The serial parasparam shows a type of domestic violence against the woman by her mother in law. Only the change is the husband of the female lead in supporting her. The identity of a woman showing in this serial, gave the message that there is no need to fight against the domestic violence but suffer it even she is an IPS officer. How idiotic conception was reproduced in television programmes. All of the programmes are again telecasting on the main justification from

programme producers that women like it. But this analysis of the responses of respondents shows these reasons are wrong. Women were repetitively watched it, because of the lack of options for better programmes or the unavailability of other visual media.

All women have their own understanding about the representation of their identities on television. But there is few women have a feminist understanding about their identity representation on television. In this study the participants have a feministic understanding toward representation of modern woman on television. The age, education and marital status have influenced their outlook and attitudes. Television plays an important role in shape, influence and reproduction of traditional types of gender identities of women. In television Media especially in reality shows and serials are showing a patriarchal conception of modern woman's identity. These types of messages are decoded to the audience. Television media at a great extent not ready for showing the real identity of a woman. Like the patriarchal society television also is demanding to bind the women's identities in the world of femininity and motherhood. 1) Women are always dependent of her husband even in this present time. 2) A woman's life is limited to the happiness of her husband and children. 3) Woman has no strength to face problems alone. 4) Men are the main protector of her existence, security and body. 5) Modern women are dirty, untruthful, careless and selfish etc.

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