

Chapter 7

Conclusions

In its investigation of the dynamics of encoding and decoding of mediated messages of Bengali soap operas, the present thesis explores women's negotiation of social meanings from their socio-cultural and gendered perspective. Drawing on the third generation reception paradigm that acknowledges the power of active audience without declining the influence of encoding mechanism, the study addresses the micro-social dynamics of reception with an ethnographic perspective combined with a deep insight into the textual properties and encoding strategy.

In order to uncover the dynamics of reception, it is important to provide an intense focus on the life conditions of its female viewers which is considered to be possible only through a feminist ethnographic method. The efficiency in understanding viewers' reception necessitates the capturing of their heterogeneity. Selection of a standardized section of viewers will lead to an erroneous conclusion due to a probability of their homogenised spectator position. Hence, ensuring heterogeneity in the sample is given utmost importance for this study. But capturing the diversity based on social parameters is not sufficient for a qualitative reception study. Throughout the study it has been realized that the interpretive position of a viewer cannot be anticipated by their education, social status, religious affiliation, family type or occupation, rather, their traditional or progressive outlook towards a particular issue depends much on their social communication or boundaries, diversified interaction network, social exposure, internalization of patriarchal values, support base and gender politics of the family and society as well. With an intimate and thorough personal interaction with the female fans it has been explored how the thoughts and attitude of a financially independent and educated woman with a liberal consanguineous family background can be transformed into a conservative one owing to the strong dominating patriarchal influence in her conjugal family life. Though age, education and occupation have strong formative influence on women's outlook, the span of their interactive network or depth of inculcation of patriarchal norms may sometimes undermine its impact. Similarly, an aged woman with a

conservative background was often found to be quite liberal towards a particular issue inflicted by her personal life experiences. From these interpretations, it can be derived that, a superficial accumulation of personal information is insufficient for an exploration of the micro-social dynamics of interpretation. Moreover, there is ample possibility to deduce erroneous conclusions through such apparent assessment of socio-cultural background.

Many of the recent research works on Indian soap opera attempt to reveal its impacts on audience in shaping their attitudes towards women's issues with a purely quantitative or mixed method or on the basis of textual analysis. Some studies are intended to reveal the directive political principle behind these contemporary soaps or its gender politics. But except a few renowned works, there is a dearth of ethnographic reception studies on Indian soap opera. Considering the purpose of the study, a purely qualitative approach has been adopted here.

The Bengali women of Agartala integrate multiple cultural heritages. Initially, Bengali culture flourished under royal patronage that ensured its high status. After partition, the huge influx of forced migrants from East Pakistan, and in the 70s from Bangladesh, bred major socio-political complications. Still, Bengali as a dominant culture continues to grow despite its assimilation with the local Tribal culture. Regardless of its population dynamics and changes in material culture, the non-material part of Bengali culture still exhibits the traditional values and morality, compared to the other metropolitan cities, owing to its lack of industrialization and geographic isolation. The quest for cultural identity and a concurrent feeling of cultural superiority of the Bengalees hinders their adaptation to much liberal egalitarian tribal customs and practices for women. Thus, despite being a part of urban population, the internalized traditional values, and the patriarchal control that are operated in private sphere, are quite extensive in women's lives in Agartala. However, with the growing social exposure and financial independence, liberated women have developed a critical standpoint about their oppressed positioning. Their differential socio-cultural position combined with common feminine experiences produces an extensive diversification of interpretation.

In this study, the method of intimate informal interaction, in individual and group situation, helped in revealing how a woman's initial rejection of a regressive message can be transformed into absolute conformity within feminine groups in order to secure group acceptability. Similarly, a nonconformist group has the power to reject an idealized

feminine behaviour. It does not indicate that a 'fanship group' has the absolute formative influence, as it is also found that soap talks within groups not always end up with consensus. It may lead to debates over a particular portrayal, mainly on gender issue, and end up with disagreements. Such argumentative soap talks have been identified mostly among the young viewers whereas among the group of housewives or middle aged women, sharing of personal experiences and drawing references of life events with the soap narratives are found to be more frequent than ideological debates.

Following the global scenario, the study concludes that soap talk is pleasurable even more than the watching itself. Considering the hegemonic notion of soap as an inferior cultural form, some women from higher status group deny themselves as involved viewers and express their apathy in discussion on soaps. However, a detailed understanding explores their suppression of fact regarding their attachment and desire for soap talks. Contrary to the earlier reception studies by Ang, Stacy, Modleski, and Gray, it has been observed that a large section of educated professionals are quite assertive about their preference instead of feeling ashamed, though a few of them are compelled to compromise their choice under male domination in an indirect way. On the other hand, middle aged housewives unanimously express their enjoyment in soap talks and welcome soaps for invoking contexts for their pleasurable feminine discussions. Their desire to talk is so forceful that it can even eliminate the class barrier and instigate an open and intimate discussion between an affluent woman and her maid. It reveals the power of this genre to create a feminine discourse among audience from all backgrounds on the issues that were formerly considered as trifling. The political potential of such discourse in generating women's agency, at least within domestic periphery, necessitates its academic contemplation.

Apart from fan group discussion, pleasure lies in the generic feature of soaps which parallels the rhythm of women's lives. Its mode of telecast, slow progress, flashback, recap all contribute in compensating the fragmented and distracted viewing of women, who are expected to sacrifice their pleasure prioritising her family. Furthermore, these structural and technical codes are designed to stimulate the emotional impulses especially of their female fans. The elements like portrayal of powerful women in domestic setting and society, emphasise on emotional relationships, recurring stress and strain with the reassurance to overcome that, clues for problem solving, moral guidelines with a combination of traditional and liberal values, fantasized portrayal of supportive, sensitive

and understanding male characters, reassurance of triumph of good over evil, concern to the marginal section, along with their representational qualities such as the dramatic effects created through light, camera and sound, the dress, ornaments, interiors, enjoyments, affluence all act as a generic source of pleasure for the female fans.

Keeping these generic features intact, it has been identified that Bengali soaps largely differ from the national or international trends in order to uphold the essence of Bengali culture and to go with the sense of realism of its Bengali fans. The 'social definition of culture' in 'culturalist' tradition describes a particular way of life that encompasses the lived culture, recorded culture and the culture of a selective tradition. In that sense, 'the cultural tradition is not only a selection but also an interpretation' (Williams, 1965, p. 69). Following the Bengali cultural tradition, the representation of middle class people in government or private sector services predominates the national and international depiction of affluent business class and their glamorous lifestyle.

Instead of a homogenised representation of culture, class and womanhood, for which the soap genre receives scholarly criticism, these Bengali soaps intend to highlight the lives of poor rural women and their journey for success. Here, at least an attempt has been made to represent cultural heterogeneity (though a great controversy arises over the authenticity of the cultural representation of marginalized groups) and unconventional characterisation without intending to pose a radical challenge to the prevailing notion of womanhood. By popularizing and depoliticising the radical, as suggested by Chanda (2003), it is able to secure audience acceptability of unconventional portrayals even from the women with a conservative background. Likewise, no such trend of remaking Indian nationalism under Hindutva ideology or the commodification of ritual objects, as identified in contemporary researches on Indian soaps, can be located in Bengali soap contents. However, the avoidance of Muslim culture is quite prominent in these narratives. But this religious underrepresentation is mostly considered by educated Hindu and Muslim viewers as a mechanism to avoid controversy and conflict caused by misrepresentation out of ignorance of Hindu directors and writers.

Affirming the worldwide trend, soap opera is found to be the most popular form of entertainment among Bengali women of Agartala. For the most oppressed section of women, it is the only domain where they can express their emotions, feelings, judgements or suggestions that are hardly ever listened to in their real life situations. Their pleasurable

and passionate involvement produces continuous comment, suggestion, and loud expression of fear, hatred or anxiety during the time of watching. It often becomes the object of ridicule for their male family members. Such male condemnation of this genre in turn contributes further in making it a 'masculine free zone', rather than causing a detachment. But contrary to Modleski's conclusion, male opposition is not found to be women's source of pleasure. The findings also contradict to a great extent the previous view that, the negative evaluation attached with this genre leads to a sense of guilt among its viewers. A sizable section of progressive women in this study is unhesitant about their taste and also argumentative for establishing their own choice. When the educated section strongly protests against the condemnation of women's preference, the less educated section justifies it as the most suitable form of entertainment for women, referring to their family orientated lifestyle. Among the viewers, both a small section of highly educated women and a small section of women with very less educational qualifications are hesitant to express their fondness. But the former suppresses their taste from elitist position, and the later feels ashamed of their taste owing to their complete submission to the patriarchal judgement about this genre.

Women's pleasure in viewing can also be analysed from the point of view of exercising agency. The episodic structure, generic feature and mostly the extra textural knowledge provided enough space for a correct prediction of future events which is found to be a source of 'producerly pleasure' as suggested by Fiske (1989). This prediction provides them a feeling of power to control the lives of these characters. From feminist perspective such pleasure seems extremely momentous. While in the present gendered power structure women don't have complete control over their own lives they may enjoy their ability to control others, at least in the virtual world, through accurate prediction. The study also resonates with the conclusion of Ang (1985) and Allen (1985), that viewer's prediction about the way of solving a problem is more gratifying than the solution itself. So the concern is mostly with the paradigmatic, not the syntagmatic. Moreover, for a regular viewer the ability to read between the lines amplifies her satisfaction. These abilities make soap operas the domain of women's own creation for their personal entertainment.

The textual analysis affirms a comparatively less exaggeration or absurdity in storylines of Bengali soaps as against national soaps. For a non viewer, this melodrama, characterization or coincidences may appear pure sensitization that ruins their credibility,

but this exaggeration never results into intellectual distancing for their fans. Some of them explain melodrama as a representational necessity to increase viewers' involvement. Others interpret this excessiveness as a means to problematize some so-called non significant issues of women, and to bring them up for open discussion. It has been found that, for the fans, soap opera realism is something different from social realism which assures their involvement despite exaggeration or unrealistic incidents.

Verifying the prior findings (Baym, 1993; Brown, 1994; Ang, 2007; Meyer, 2012; Perks, 2012), the study concludes that making fun of the weaknesses can be a source of pleasure within women's groups. However, the use of irony and satire requires knowledge of production practices (Herbig and Hess, 2012). In the present study, Perks' (2012) identification of three satiric decoding positions like, refusal of natural meanings, focus on text's resonance with reality, and emphasis on text's exaggeration of reality, are marked among the socially advanced interpretive community. But majority of the viewers of *Agartala* justify some of these unrealistic elements as part of the sub-cultural specificity of West Bengal instead of making fun of it. Their justification derives from their knowledge about a different metropolitan Bengali culture of West Bengal, from where these media productions as well as their delusion about this culture originated.

In this study, female viewers unanimously protest against the male anticipation about the negative influence of soap operas. They argue that their adverse effect is possible only for the individuals already infused with a negative aptitude. Besides, a small number of highly educated women are doubtful about their impact on young or illiterate women. However, they commonly appreciate their positive functions in women's lives such as, offering suggestion for problem solving, increasing women's strength and confidence and providing moral guidance. For these merits, the mothers even encourage their children to watch some selected segments. Furthermore, the young viewers with extremely conservative social background receive the strength and courage of the protagonist as an inspiration to fight against the patriarchal power operating in their private and public sphere. Women, as a marginalized section, also enjoy the powerful representation of other marginalized groups like autistic woman (*Jalnupur*) or tribal woman (*Isti kutum*) who are even more discriminated on the ground of class, caste or minority. These representations often seem to be unrealistic for the viewers from those marginalized sections or for the viewers with close proximity to them. However, the recognition of marginal social groups in media representation is appreciated by all.

The contemporary academic discourse on Indian soap opera offers a debate over its propensity towards regressive, stereotyped, repetitive codification of female images and its objective of women empowerment by triggering women's thoughts and invoking feminine talk. In connection with this debate, the textual examination of the selected soaps explores a blend of traditional and modern values in their mediated messages. However, the gap between 'ethic and experience' is bridged by 'shared structure of feeling; the unconscious and conscious working out of the contradictions' as established by the culturalists (Storey, 1993, p. 54). The issues of joint family and its value structure, conformity to women's domestic confinement, her submissiveness, tolerance and sacrifice and glorification of marital bond is encoded with an intention to affirm the age old Indian tradition. Also a persistent mediation of such messages adds to the generic knowledge of their spectators in such a way that any delineation of women's professional life instantly gives clues to their fans about their probable impact on her personal life. Owing to this representational logic, the credentials of the villainess are associated with her ambition, extrovert nature, fashionability, quest for power and the other such features that are not in tune with the image of so-called ideal Indian women. Even the male characters may often physically assault woman, but in the case of the protagonist, violence is projected as an expression of love, care and possessiveness and for the antagonist it is shown as a means of rectification considered as a male responsibility. Further, the structure of encoding and decoding of these Bengali soaps substantiates Livingstone's argument that "A number of normative alternatives can be encoded in the text and different viewers may select different readings and yet remain within a dominant framework. Hence, the negotiated reading may be a compromise between two dominant but contradictory discourses." (1992, p. 83)

Besides its implicit intention of reproducing patriarchal values, there is a sincere attempt to say something new. Hence, on every issue some characters must adhere to an unconventional standpoint, the female protagonist must search for her own identity, try to be independent at least financially, do something for the larger society, and achieve some respectable social position. Despite glorification of marriage there are plenty of examples of divorce, remarriage, and child and widow marriage. In the concluding part of all narratives, the protagonist inevitably overcomes all the odds with an uncompromising attitude. So the structure of the narratives can-not be marked as emancipatory, reactionary or just arbitrary in a definitive way. Rather, encoder's conscious attempt to incorporate progressive values within the traditional framework, without hampering their commercial

aspect, is reflected in these narratives. Considering this complex structure of encoding, it can be said that reception of these messages cannot be gendered in a straightforward way as suggested by Raghavan's (2008) findings. Adoption of an interpretive strategy by viewers is found to be an outcome of the complex interplay between contradictory representational strategy, spectators' subjective positioning, familial power structure, discursive interactive network, and some micro-social parameters that are captured in this study. In this regard, Livingstone's psychological parameters can also be perceived as socially determined.

The significance of family power structure in reception of a particular issue has been explored by an intense examination of gendered viewing practices. Female fans strive for an uninterrupted viewing, but in most of the middle class patriarchal families they are directly constrained by their husbands or even by their sons. Besides sarcastic comments, ridiculous, and evaluative judgement, the male family members often force them to stop watching. Within the family structure of Agartala, gender politics is powerful enough to undermine the age politics. Under continued oppression, women of this dominated section also begin to accept its triviality. The acceptance of masculine superiority is so entrenched that often their assessment about soap realism is guided by the judgement of the patriarch.

The scenario is not completely subverted in the case of educated working women, although the nature of male imposition is something different here. In this case, a silent disapproval, or an indirect insinuation about neglecting the family for a silly personal entertainment, may work as a moral constraint. Among the female viewers, kinship relation and age are found to be the determining factors responsible for program selection, but it hardly creates any disagreement because of their preferential unanimity developed through shared gender position. However, the conclusion doesn't claim a stereotypical gendered power structure of the families under study, at least in the case of television viewing. Since, in a few families either the majority decides about program selection or the husband doesn't want to interfere in wife's entertainment, though such families are relatively much smaller in number. Under the influence of socialized patriarchal values, some housewives consider their own household activities as relaxing, and thereby consider it as their duty to sacrifice their own choices for their husband, who is working hard to meet the needs of the family.

Morley (1986) and Fiske (1987) identify that the alteration of economic power in the family results into a subversion of gender power. Hence, in the families of working women and non working men program choice is determined by women. Contrarily, because of the family values of Agartala, gender power can easily subdue the economic power structure of the family. The nature and intensity of constraints may vary with financial contributions of women, but the dismissal of feminine preference is common to almost all families. Male interference results into women's preference for solitary viewing or watching within women's groups. Their discussion is also confined within female groups of fans where they can open up without hesitation. Such gendered viewing practices contribute in creating women's subjectivity different from men's. This feminine subjectivity and feminine discursive practices in combination contribute in formation of their distinct interpretive position and perception about their life world and social world.

Influence of dominant culture is also notable in program selection especially among the young generation. Despite a relatively more exaggerated depiction, unrealistic story line and glorification of religious and traditional patriarchal values, a large number of youngsters consider Hindi soaps as superior. Their sense of superiority of choice is so compelling that within the peer groups, the fans of Bengali soaps are humiliated in many ways. Often they divide into groups with opposed viewpoint and involve in argumentative talks. It has also been observed that for these youngsters, the glamour, affluence and splendid lifestyle of Hindi soaps are more attractive than the emotional strains of middle class family, portrayed in Bengali soaps. The findings lead to the conclusion that, rejection of regional culture in favour of a dominant national culture is tending towards detachment of young viewers from Bengali soaps.

Throughout the study the reception of the mediated messages is found to be a complex process. A multiplicity of factors maintains the fluidity of interpretive positions of the audience. Often their interpretive divergence brings out completely opposite meaning of a single representation. Because of their varied spectators position and historical subjectivity, the same character is received as hero (Archi) / heroine (Mun and Baha) by some and a real villain by others. Even for a single viewer, the judgement about a character may oscillate between positive and negative. This is because her kinship position and life experiences situate her in a contradictory spectator position on different issues, which generate ambiguous feeling for a character. Due to this interpretive divergence, soap narratives are evaluated by the viewers in an oppositional way, either as a source of

woman empowerment or as a means to re-emphasize women's traditional role expectations.

The study concludes that the values of family tradition, internalization of patriarchal ideology and the spread of communicative boundaries may generate interpretive divergence among the viewers with similar socio-economic and educational position. Owing to these micro-social dynamics, some fans with privileged socio-educational position directly reject non stereotypical characters, in view of women's submissiveness or selflessness as an essential feminine quality; whereas, others with similar background, consider those qualities, as an expression of women's lack of sense of dignity and confidence. Despite their privileged social background, these micro-social parameters situate the former group of viewers in a regressive interpretive position. Thus, in their discussion, they stress only on the efficient domestic performance of an unconventional female character (Rashi), completely ignoring the representational emphasis on her larger social role. So, in contrast to Raghavan's (2008) focus on the propensity of reconciliation of gendered and universal moral in audience reception, an acceptance of the primacy of gender role over the larger moral principle has been identified here. On the other hand, adopting a critical standpoint, the second interpretive community directly rejects the representational binary between good and bad as an overstated, idealised imagery. Thus the result confirms that, the formation of dominant, negotiated or oppositional reading is a combined effect of micro-social factors and viewers' overall socio-cultural background.

Recognition of the significance of micro-social aspects doesn't undermine the impact of macro-social factors. Therefore, except some unique cases, it has been found that the adaptation to dominant or oppositional interpretive strategy largely depends on viewer's education, occupation and social exposure. Also the enlightened sections of independent women are found to be more critical about the representational aspects. However, the result of this study challenges Livingstone's empirical finding that interpretive divergence mostly represents "conventional rather than radical positions" (1992, p. 83). Being critical about the dominant framework, women of this study question the issues like, uniform class representation, commodification of women, compromising realism for commercial success, gender politics to induce orthodox values, presentation of women as women's biggest enemy and the like. Some of them believe that the implicit message intends to reemphasize the patriarchal values despite its explicit portrayal of

women empowerment on the surface level. But in all cases, this resistance hardly leads to their emotional detachment.

The present study reaffirms the indistinctness of the boundaries of interpretive communities. In fact, their formation is absolutely issue based. Viewers' identification with a character continuously swings with the variation of issues and perspectives, making their positions flexible. The issue of marital instability, around which the narratives revolve, is contrary to the lived experiences for a large majority of the viewers. On this issue, viewers' age and education are identified as the crucial factors responsible for formation of interpretive community. Regardless of heterogeneity, almost all the aged viewers drastically reject the message of divorce and remarriage considering them as a symbol of immortality and decaying of the value system. Few of them believe divorce must be avoided even at the cost of self respect. However, all of them are much flexible about widow remarriage considering it as a social necessity for a single woman. On the contrary, for a very small section of highly educated working women, these unconventional portrayals of divorce appear as a challenge to male centric lifestyle and as a symbol of women's mental strength. But the issue of remarriage produces a conditional acceptance from all sections. It is noteworthy that the viewers with diversified background are extremely conscious of and critical about the social evils like child marriage. In this regard, women having personal experiences express their sympathetic attachment to these characters whereas some socially advanced sections challenge the practicability of such portrayal in the contemporary scenario. The incongruity between these two sections reveals that viewers' sense of realism depends on their life experiences or awareness about the larger social occurrences. Likewise, acceptance of widow customs originates from the blind faith on customary and religious norms. On this issue, Muslim women exhibit more liberated view mostly because their religious codes do not prescribe such restrictions. Besides, young educated sections unanimously exhibit extreme opposition to such evils. Hence on this issue, religion, family value or age are significant for the formation of interpretive community. The study concludes that, resistance to these social evils not always get reflected in their real life practices, as validated by Jensen's (2008) justification that a change in behaviour is dependent on multiple factors beyond women's control.

On the issue of aged, interpretive community largely forms around kinship position and family types. However, multiple factors affect its complex formation. Viewers of joint family interpret the depiction as per the values and authority structure of a joint family.

From the spectator position of a mother-in-law, the characterization of mother-in-law seems either cunning, dominating and negative or a submissive, dominated one. Whereas housewives, suppressed by in-laws, consider the overall representation of aged characters as authoritative. Except some critical viewers, majority of the fans concede soaps' intention to pertain to some social messages. They uphold their intent to promote the Indian tradition of jointness. For the aged viewers, the representation of joint family values is reminiscent of their insecurity in contemporary nuclear family structure. Viewers having experience of joint family often challenge the practicability of independent decisions of a woman that are highlighted in the narrative. On the other hand, a very few consider joint family as an extinct family structure and hence suggest its replacement by the setting of a flat culture as a reliable portrayal. It shows that, both the real experience, and inexperience about joint family life, may lead to critical reading with different interpretive strategies. This narrative backdrop also stimulates nostalgic feelings among the viewers with recently neo-local background and the youngsters of nuclear family consider this representation as an imposition rather than their choice. Despite contrasting validation, fans of soaps unanimously accept the glorification of joint family as a necessity to maintain the complicacy and suspense of the narrative structure.

Though the necessity of women's education is accepted by all, the issue of their occupation generates plurality of interpretation. Despite conscious avoidance of women's professional life, the narratives assert the necessity of women's independence. Like other issues, women's dilemma in prioritising family or profession is represented through characters with incompatible outlook which triggers the possibility of divergent reading. Regarding women's occupation, the most conservative reactions come from viewers of joint family. In this study, all women of joint family are housewives who directly oppose women's professional roles on several grounds. They even consider it as a source of marital maladjustment and conceive narrative predominance of housewives as a moral guidance. This interpretive community is so fanatical about their feminine role that the profession of a woman is considered as a compulsion. A diametrically opposite interpretive position builds up with viewers' higher education, occupation, and frequent interaction with external world. For this section, the avoidance of career women in soap narratives is deemed a part of gender politics. But all of them unanimously prefer family and relationships as the main plotline. This enlightened community is critical about the representational politics that demonstrates women's success as an endowment by her

husband. Like these highly educated women professionals, the young generation of progressive family background exhibits more critical and liberated viewpoint towards financial independence of women.

Majority of the housewives of nuclear family take a negotiated interpretive position. They accept the portrayal of all-rounder working women who can perfectly balance between her professional and traditional feminine roles. Conversely, a completely altered conventional role is not easily appreciated or accepted by them. Therefore, those who are vocal about women's liberty in socio-economic spheres are opposed to their political participation. On this issue, the viewers, having active political involvement or at least having political family background, form an interpretive community that uncritically accepts women's political role. But the overlapping boundaries of their political interest and family type or family ethos create a more intricate interpretive position that often generates rejection of women's occupation with a concurrent acceptance of their political concern.

The study also reveals that, viewers' religious identity and conservatism play a decisive role in generating their concern and viewing perspective about underrepresentation of religious minority in Bengali soaps. In this regard, 'fanship groups' have a vital formative influence. Discussion and argument in a group situation can generate a consciousness and common feeling of gender oppression regardless of individual religious diversity. This realization of universal womanhood is imperative to feminist politics. Their discussion on obliteration of religious minority further indicates women's larger social and political concern. Apprehending the emergent cultural detestation between religious communities, Muslim viewers endorse the necessity of their cultural depiction in order to eliminate the misconceptions and prejudices. Some of them question the representation of Muslims only in inferior social positions. Pointing to the liberal representation of Doordarshan soaps, some educated and liberated viewers of both the religious backgrounds criticize the present trend of elimination of Muslim oriented stories. At the same time, they are cautious about the necessity of authentic and careful reflection of Muslim culture, to avoid conflict. However, for some viewers, the religious identity predominate all other identities on the issue of religious representation in soaps. Thus, a section of Hindus belonging to diversified educational, occupational or familial backgrounds directly or indirectly express their apathy towards depiction of Muslim

characters and culture owing to their religious conservatism, prejudices and narrower interactive network.

The whole discussion reveals the complexity of an absolutely issue based formation of interpretive community. The boundaries of these communities are obscure due to the multiple and overlapping interpretive position of a single viewer. Intricacy of reception process is an outcome of the fluidity in interpretive position based on diversified social parameters entangled with the representational politics. However, the essence of Bengali culture, embedded in soap structure and representation, is consequential for generating a common base of identification for its Bengali viewers despite their being different in sub-cultural terms. Although Bengali soaps have wide female fan following among Bengali population, the indigenous women of Tripura are found to be least interested in them. Therefore, the study cannot capture the impact of ethnicity in reception process and the formation of interpretive community on ethnic basis.

Revelation of women's sources of pleasure does not support those discourses that consider this genre as a mental blockage or inhibition for women. The results emphasize that, this seemingly trivial genre has enormous power to provide political space for women which contributes in legitimizing their feminine zone of emotion, sentiment or relationship and bringing the hitherto neglected issues into public discourse. In this sense, the reception of soap messages by a socially oppressed section, whose experiences are hardly acknowledged in hegemonic discourses is crucial from the feminist point of view. The study further concludes that the political space provided by this genre can enable women to resist masculine imposition and evaluative decision. By turning personal into political it can bring about changes in gendered and social position of women and in their ability of exercising agency. Furthermore, the elimination of conviction about passivity of its viewers, and a concurrent assurance of their acceptability of unconventional portrayal, can inspire a far more liberal representational scheme than a standardized production.