

Indian Mythological Series As A Media Communication

By

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Abstract

The article studies and analyses the properties of Indian mythological series as means of media communication, and the role of series in people's lives and communication sphere in particular. Taking other means of communication, such as news, advertising, newspaper articles it is clear to understand that they have a fragmentary character. Meanwhile, series is a detailed narration. The entertainment role of the media properly illustrates the point where political and social ideology is revealed behind the facade of entertainment. It makes the receiver take a prolonged act of attention. Dealing not with "real", but with "fictional reality", it is at the same time incommensurably more suitable for the purposeful broadcasting of patterns of behavior, value systems and images of social identity than other fragmentarily organized media that can only count on a cumulative effect. It is the most optimal means for conveying meanings in their third, sociological, meaning, namely, as models of behavior aimed at achieving certain goals and using certain means for this, as well as for negatively evaluating deviant behavioral strategies. Using the H. Lasswell's theory of communication and W. Schramm's model of communication, the political psychology of Drew Westen, the authors of the article found that the Indian mythological series, being a media communication, is able to create a people's general view of both the world and a separate community.

Keywords: TV series, ethics, propaganda, Hindi films, Ramayana, mythologicals, media, communication, politics

Introduction

Having become an important phenomenon in cinema and the phenomenon of mass culture TV series has an impact on motion pictures and even newscasts, which have become inherent in "serialization" and "seriality". Despite the fact that the series is a product of mass culture, it has already become "almost the main channel for informing the population", expressing Zeitgeist. Seriality is the main distinguishing feature of this type of media communication. Serial dramas become integrated with viewers' lives in a way that films cannot do. This integration turns to be TV series' strengths. [Camille Deprez](#) asserted: "Through these (TV) programmes, the Indian Authorities sought to bind the population in to a homogenous whole, within which cultural and religious differences would be subordinated to the idea of the

nation. The linguistic diversity of India, too, was put to one side, since the serials were broadcast only in Hindi". [1] Television series in India gained popularity immediately with their appearance, especially mythological series. Scientific novelty of the research is in a complex interdisciplinary study of Indian mythological series features that is carried out on the new material. In addition, some of the studied materials are introduced into scientific circulation for the first time. The object of the study is Indian mythological series of the late 20th and early 21st centuries based on the plots of traditional Indian epics, namely Ramayan (1987), Luv Kush (originally called Uttar Ramayan-1988), Ramayan (2008), Ramayan: Sabke Jeevan Ka Aadhar (2012), Siya Ke Ram (2015), Mahabharat (1988, 2013). According to Rachel Dwyer mythological is the "founding genre" in Indian cinematography as it combines entertainment with religious and other purposes. [2, table 1]

To understand the specifics of the organization of any activity in media-saturated times, one should clearly understand its structure and model. The very first basic model of communication was presented to researchers in the form of an action (the source of communication sends a signal that the perceiver receives), but here they did not take into account such an element as feedback, since the recipient of the information acts as a link in the chain, but passive one. In various studies, media communication is often considered as mass communication. Therefore, in the framework of this study, they are considered to be synonymous. Classifying media communications, it should be noted that for the first time a scientific interest was shown to them on the part of the German sociologist Max Weber, who at the beginning of the 20th century provided rationale for the need to study the press and its role in social processes. In 1948, the American political scientist and communications theorist H. Lasswell developed a communication model, which is relied on by many researchers of media communications. This classical model represents mass communication by a linear process from the communicator to the object: "Who (says) What (to) Whom (in) What Channel (with) What Effect". In accordance with this structure, Lasswell identified the following basic constituents: 1) management of mass communication processes; 2) the content of the transmitted mass media messages; 3) mass media operation; 4) audience; 5) the result ("effect") of the communication impact [3].

Further activities of media communications became the object of research of a wide range of foreign scientists (H. Marcuse, P.F. Lazarfeld, R.K. Merton, G. Gerbner, B. Westley, M.S. MacLean, etc.). A book of readings "Mass communications", published in 1960, edited by W. Schramm presented a range of studies in this area. For our work, the communication model of Professor W. Schramm is of particular interest, since it pays special attention to the social environment with which the signal sent to the recipient interacts, and it is under this condition that a communication component such as a message is formed.

Important elements of the structure in this case continue to be the sender, the perceiver of the information and the message itself, it is assumed that the sender and the recipient have a common cipher that allows you to encode and send a message that the addressee is able to receive and recognize [3]. That is why W. Schramm introduced such units as "interpreter" and "feedback" into his model. As a result, the perceiver not only can receive the message, but also transmit it, that is becoming not passive, but an active participant in the process.

Thus, the specified communication model is fundamental for media discourse and media communication, as it contains important conditions for them: 1) the communicative situation record; 2) the presence of the obligatory ability of the recipient to correctly interpret the sender's message; 3) endowing the recipient with the potential to provide feedback on the received message. [3]

If we focus on the areas of activity of mass media, then we should pay attention to such a definition of the concept of media communication as “information interaction between social subjects (individuals, groups, organizations, etc.), based on the production, distribution and consumption of mass information” [3].

Having studied the experience of a large number of researchers in the field of media communication, E. A. Voytik [4] comes to the conclusion that this is a complex and heterogeneous phenomenon characterized by: 1) transmission, reception, preservation and actualization of semantic and evaluative information, on the basis of which social adaptation and identification occurs; 2) impact on the social attitude, on the relationship between groups of different levels. At the same time, the level itself is influenced by these relationships and is largely determined by the characteristics of the social system within which mass communication takes place; 3) the availability of technical means by which the regular functioning and replication of mass communication products is carried out: print, radio, television, the Internet. Having scrutinised the concept of “media communication” in historical and cultural, sociocentric, technocentric, semiocentric and psychological context, I.M. Bogdanovskaya [5] derived the following meaning of the designated notion as the following: “The process associated with dissemination by technical means between different groups and individuals of specially trained messages of social and personal importance”.

According to our reckoning it is this definition that reflects both the structure and directions of activity, and the means of the TV series as media communication, and also in this case the author points to the organized nature of this phenomenon - media communication does not occur spontaneously, like series.

As an object of transformation and use, information within the framework of media communication has syntactical, semantic and pragmatic properties which perform their own tasks. Thanks to syntactics, there is an ordering of the relationship between communicators in terms of transmitting and receiving information. Semantics is directly related to textual activity, and therefore, the operation of meanings. Pragmatics is associated with interaction, which determines the interaction, the mutual influence of people or the influence of groups on each other. The nature of the development of the social environment itself is the key point to the success of the communicative influence of information in the framework of media communication. [4, 6]. The audience usually rejects everything that contradicts it because the social environment has already formed systems of preferences and attitudes: it tends to interpret information in the usual “coordinates”, value hierarchies and look for it where it is presented in accordance to its ideas, beliefs and beliefs. It is the discrepancy of the information presented to the original text and the views of the audience that causes a reaction or is ignored when watching Indian mythological TV series, which dictates the need for a selective approach to the introduction of this or that information into the narrative of the series.

TV series or serial drama belongs to the mass type of media communication. This is an element of modern communication, which is aimed at a wide range of the public and is built on various platforms (video, photos, graphics, text, etc.) and also provides a fourth component for mass and especially for media communication - multichannel. Matt Zoller Seitz considers TV series “a combination of traditional feature filmmaking, serialized novel-writing and slow-motion improvisational theater” [7]

If media communication, according to I. M. Bogdanovskaya [5], is designed to carry out communication, ideological and political influence, maintain social community, organize any activity, inform, educate, entertain, then media discourse, as noted by E. A. Kozhemyakin, is aimed at describing reality, interpreting it, regulating the activities of recipients, influencing their consciousness, assessing reality, predicting positive deeds, etc. The interaction and dependence of media communication and media discourse from each other led to the compilation of their functions. So you can designate the following list of activities: 1. Information function carries out the transfer of information. 2. The influencing one makes it possible to obtain a pre-planned result with the help of evaluative, expressive means, etc. 3. The educational function allows you to replenish knowledge about the object of communication, discourse. 4. Entertainment creates an atmosphere conducive to interaction. 5. Inciting, directing promotes orientation in social values, cultural, historical phenomena, events, etc. will pass effectively). 6. The function of socialization introduces the perceiver to the achievements of society. [3] For example, Indians are very proud of their epic literary heritage, and watching TV shows is an opportunity to become familiar with the national heritage. All of the above functions are inherent in TV shows.

In an attempt to classify the end use of materials actually available in the media, V. Kurennoy [8] identifies a fairly extensive number of functions that overlap with the functions of media communication mentioned above: 1) informing, 2) social and political functions, 3) economic functions of stimulating consumption, and, finally, 4) entertainment.

TV series as media communication bears a very strong power of manipulation influencing force. Here again there is a maximum activation of emotions and a shutdown of rational vision. By the way, this is also recorded by political psychologist D. Westen, who states that only the emotional acts in politics. As for the television series as a way of controlling attention, one should recall the deserted streets of India, when the series "Ramayana" appeared on the screens in 1987, which clearly demonstrates where the attention of the population was.

It is clear that serial dramas in general are popular among the viewers and in recent years a considerable amount of valuable work has been done in TV studies, especially of Western and American ones. The problem of studying of Indian mythological TV series as means on media communication demands special attention and investigation as it hasn't been regarded yet.

Methodology

The methodological parts of the study rely on H. Lasswell's theory of communication, namely his model of communication. W. Schramm's model of communication where the encoding of information given and received plays a very important role because it initiates the process of communication by converting the thought into content. The conditions of effective communication are also relevant for those who consume media. The analysis of Indian mythological TV series is also based on the political psychology of Drew Westen according to which when reason and emotion collide, emotion invariably wins. Some elements of discourse analysis were also applied in the research. Concerning television series theory or TV studies we rely on works of Adam Nayman, Adrian Martin, Christopher Sharrett, Debora L. Jaramillo, Neil Landau, Michelle Hilmes, etc. The working definition of the term in this material is based on the understanding of media communication by I.M.Bogdanovskaya as a process associated with propagation of specially prepared messages of social and personal importance using

technical means between different groups and individuals.

Results

The mythological genre was always a part of Indian cinematic history, beginning from the first Indian silent movie, “Raja Harischandra” by D. Phalke, in 1913. [9] Throughout the course of development of popular Indian film, however, we can see a very intimate relationship between the mythological and the social genres, namely their capability to integrate the elements of both of them in their narratives. With the emergence of such a new television genre as the series, it became possible to film the traditional epic in full. Since Indian culture has intrinsic love for large literary forms, the series as a genre easily took root in Indian cinema. The most iconic film adaptation was the 1987 series Ramayana by Sagar Arts Studio. Despite the fact that the narrative of the Indian mythological series does not reflect either historical or modern reality, it can be attributed to media communication. We define mythologicals as serial drama related to traditional stories about characters such as deities, heroes, and fanciful creatures. According to M.K. Raghavendra [9], giving a higher meaning to the truths of the epic and the Puranas than to empirical reality has the consequence that the world of each film is perceived not from the point of view of realism, but as having a transcendental meaning, which it should broadcast. Some studies reveal that Indian television programming content across television channels was constructed to evoke an identity of post-colonial ‘nationalism’ that drew upon the ‘collective sense of familial and cultural heritage’. The concept of familial values, however, was deeply rooted in the patriarchal history of India and contributed to creating a certain type of content that alienated the creators even further. [10]

Table 1. The list of the TV series studied in the paper.

No	Title	Genre	Years of the release	Director	Channel	Production company
1.	Ramayan	mythological	1987-1988	Ramanand Sagar	DD National	Sagar Arts
2.	Luv Kush: Uttar Ramayan	epic	1988-1989	Ramanand Sagar	DD National	Sagar Films
3.	Ramayan	epic	2008-2009	Anand Sagar	Imagine TV	Sagar Films
4.	Ramayan: Sabke Jeevan Ka Aadhar (Ramayana: The basis of everyone's life)	mythological	2012-2013	Mukesh Singh Pawan Parkhi Rajesh Shikhre	Zee TV	Sagar Pictures
5.	Siya Ke Ram (transl. Sita's Ram)	mythology	2015-2016	Nikhil Sinha Dharmesh Shah Baldev Raj	Star Plus	Triangle Film Company
6.	Mahabharat	epic	1988-1990	Chopra Ravi Chopra	DDNational DD Bharati	B R Films

7.	mahabharat	mythology	2013-2014	Siddharth Anand Kumar, Amarprith G, Mukesh Kumar Singh, Kamal Monga Loknath Pandey	StarPlus	Swastik production
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In a country with a low literacy level of the population, the most effective means of propaganda and agitation cannot be a newspaper or a leaflet. It can be an image, a movie, a serial drama. Literacy rate in India, 1980-1990 accounted for 43-52%. It is worth mentioning that 70% of the Indian population still belongs in rural areas with lack of digital infrastructure leading them to depend on television as its single source of entertainment and information. [12] The television series speaks directly to the mass consciousness, reaching a larger audience at once than at any other time in history. It crosses all borders, even cultural, even ideological, or any other. Series “Ramayana” 1987 was filmed and shown at a time of transition for India, when the Indian National Congress (INC) was losing ground and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was coming to power. The recreational role of the media clearly illustrates constantly changing nature of their functions, when, for example, political and social ideology is revealed behind the facade of entertainment. In the situation of constant re -encoding of some functions into others, caused by the action of universalized subsystems external to the media itself, it is almost inevitable to talk about any kind of autonomy of the “fourth estate”.

Discussion

Each film crew tries to bring new information to their serial drama in order to make it more attractive to the viewer thus performing an entertaining and enlightening function. For example, in the 1987 TV series, Ramanand Sagar tried to conform to the content of the text as much as possible. The film crew of the 2008 series of the same studio have already allowed themselves more excursions from the main texts, some stories from local versions have been added. Serial drama “Ramayana” of 2012 is the director's attempt to enlighten a foreign Western audience, to enter the world film market.

The mythological film can combine entertainment with religious purpose thus “Ramayan” of 1987 is a clear attempt of Ramanand Sagar to present a type of Hinduism that, in many respects, is conservative and patriarchal but also suited to modern society [2,12,13, 14] The message of Ramanand Sagar’s serial was not only religious; it was political as well. Lutgendorf asserts that during the education of Rama and his brothers in Vashishtha’s ashram the contents of the sage’s teachings are revealing: a blend of yoga and the Hindu Vedanta philosophy (illustrated by cakra graphics and out-of-the-body special effects), Gandhian nationalism and an idealized Vedic socialism [2].

There was even a strike in Punjab by sanitation labourers who belonged to a low caste calling themselves Balmikis, for an extension of the serial, so that it would include Sita’s exile and the education that Valmiki , whom they claimed as ancestor, gave to Rama’s sons. [2]

Here we see a taking-effect function of TV series as we can observe an overwhelming reaction to the release of serials not only in the form of comments and articles in the media, but also in the form of actions on the part of the audience.

The response to the protests was the appearance of the series Uttar Ramayan: Luv Kush in 1988. Permission at the state level of the release of some films and TV series and the prohibition of others, sharp criticism of others adds up to a comprehensible overall picture, where culture is primarily an instrument of political struggle that must be controlled. All the qualities of the television series in the form of danger, information and entertainment (and they also fundamentally exploit the emotional component of an event) are used by states when they need to transform the mass consciousness in the right direction. In this regard, it should be mentioned that during the period of general isolation in 2020, India resumed showing the 1987 legendary Ramayana series in order to inspire and unite the country in such a challenging period. Moreover, the series was shown not only on television, but also on advertising screens on the street.

Ramayana 2008 is a remake of the 1987 series. The same Sagar Arts Studio produced TV series of technologically better quality with an attempt to draw attention to women's rights, family values emphasizing that Sita and Rama are not only a divine couple, but also a family. Some feminist scholars have vividly emphasized on the usefulness of soap operas in demonstrating the issues that surround women in their everyday life. Serial dramas are mostly watched by women, but one should not forget that women play an important role in the social and political life of India. The series was shown during the election period in India, Ram was banned from showing and the creators of the series had to show an extended version of the story of Sita Rama's children - Lav and Kush, which significantly lowered its rating. The series becomes extended, so that the viewer feels close to the characters. The long narrative makes the lives of the heroes a part of the lives of the audience.

Sagar Arts was also engaged in the creation of the TV series of 2012 which was aimed to become a commercial project for ZEE TV, and now the series can even be watched on Netflix. It was attempted to enter the world film market and considering the reviews on the Internet and social networks, the TV series found its viewers. It is easier to watch because the narration is more dynamic unlike its predecessors, without too much didactics and philosophy. It is intended for those who are not familiar with the text of the epic (the names are repeated several times, just in case, if you forget, it explains that may not be understood by the western viewer). The subtitle of the series "Ramayan: Sabke Jeevan Ka Aadhar" - "Ramayana: the basis of everyone's life" gives it a certain pathos. Numerous criticism about the TV series is surpassed by one big advantage which states that a programme on "hallowed texts is much-needed when you think of the rubbish which is on the telly nowadays." [13] The TV series of 2012 invites the audience to immerse into a classic, uncomplicated plot on the subject of heroic deeds and the salvation of his beloved from captivity. It should be noted that the director removed the scene of Sita's fire ordeal from the narrative so that the triumph of justice and love in the finale wasn't ruined and not to raise unnecessary questions and disputes.

The entertainment function of serials is fundamental, because TV series, being a genre of mass culture, were conceived for entertainment, and only now they have acquired the status of almost the most influential genre. In our opinion, the entertainment nature of the Indian mythological series was not initially the main one, only in the course of time, the development of technology and the growth of competition in this area, the entertainment function began to increase.

The 2015 TV series *Siya ke Ram* is another endeavour to introduce new meaning in the Ramayana, its new interpretation, the traditional epic through the eyes of the main character. The creators of the series put the women's issue in the first place: the daughter's place in the family, the girls' education, the woman's ability to live alone and work outside the home, and not tolerate domestic violence. According to M. Smith soap-operas consistently reinforce the patriarchal value systems by demonstrating that it is the only sacrificial attitude of women that helps them to overcome conflicting situations. These conflicts are mostly planted inside homes, overtly posturing towards women's role as a homemaker. But *Siya ke Ram* shows another role model for women: accomplished, self-sufficient, liberated with free will. Media attention generates a reaction, naturally leads to discussion, exchange of views, which is already the key to success. However, there are certain limitations. Politics always raises a lot of questions, so filmmakers love history more than modernity, and Indian filmmakers also love myths and epics. It should also be added that some filmmakers use the term "historical" series instead of "mythological". History is changing, it has altered before our eyes many times, so that the heroes of myths, epics, Puranas have become more eternal in India than real heroes.

The invocatory, directing, motivating function promotes orientation in social values, cultural, historical phenomena, events, etc. The series become longer, thanks to which the viewer feels close to the heroes. Stretched narrative makes the audience to immerse into heroes' lives. And if we turn to Indian mythological series, we can see that they affect the life of their viewer. For example, watching the 1987 TV series turned into a ritual of worship and contemplation of God.

Another fabulous TV series *Mahabharat* of 1988 by Ravi Chopra is narrated by Samay (Time) because the epic is timeless. The director touches upon the topic of the country's independence, the struggle for independence and justice, trying to bring back the eternal values of India and he also did not skirt social topics. In TV series, there is enough time to analyse a view or a value. There is an occasion to interpret the points made by various commentators and writers who have researched the epics. When *Mahabharata* was made, the narrative was divided into more than 90 episodes of an hour each. There was ample time to elaborately spell out the values of the narrative, to establish the strengths and weaknesses of each character and to find reasons and justifications for each of their actions and decisions. Interpretation is the essence of the presentation of an epic on television. The characters don't have to be introduced, the audience experiences them. *Mahabharata* became a classic and was shown all over the world because of the dialogues, the perfect casting and the perfect coordination and interpretation of every scene. The Tribune writes [16]: "Rahi Masoom Raza wrote brilliant dialogues which linked eternal values from the epic to modern living and the result was almost electric. Even in Ramayana, the effort is to apply modern yardsticks to old values and to justify why characters took particular actions though they may seem incorrect in the present day context." *Mahabharat* had more dramatic value, leaving things ambiguous, and revealing a lot of uncomfortable truths. It contains something more than mythology, populated by believable beings, riddled by moral, amoral and more was coming to life. [9]

The series *Mahabharata* 2015 is built in a peculiar form of dialogue with the viewer. Lord Krishna addresses the audience with explanations, lectures, questions for reflection, sometimes interrupting the course of the plot, giving a kind of respite before the next equally eventful episode. As Rachel Dwyer says mythological stories are brought into the everyday world, where they are retold as part of daily life until the division between religion and the

mundane is blurred. Mahabharata is a portrayal of a society where the values collapsed and created the most violent confrontation between the forces of good and evil. [2, 16] To the above mentioned it should be added that visual aesthetics of Indian mythological can greatly impress the audience.

There is an apparent ambiguity in a controlling function that serial drama performs, because it is not entirely clear who controls whom. Here we are probably talking about a response to the series, i.e. the creators of the series determine the target audience to ensure the success of the show. On the other hand, the viewer can influence the course of filming, as was the case with the 1987 series, as well as control by those in power. It is proved by the example of the 2008 series. When the release of the series coincided with the Indian general elections in the country, it was banned at the state level showing the main character Rama on TV, and the show's ratings plummeted

The function of socialization involves the viewer in the achievements of society. Indian mythological series are filmed on the narratives of traditional, authoritative texts such as epics, puranas, etc. They evoke a feeling of patriotism that the viewer is part of this great people who created such masterpieces of literature. For example, Indians are very proud of their epic literary heritage, and watching TV shows is an opportunity to become familiar with the national heritage.

Conclusions

On the basis of the work made we have come to the conclusion that due to its characteristics, the Indian mythological series as media communication is able to solve such social problems [4, 9], as the creation of a general view of the world, creation of a view of a separate community. This proves that serials as media communications can bring with them a new way of living, new meaning within the framework of traditional culture, spreading it regardless of spatial and temporal remoteness. It is worth completing our research with the following quotation by Ravi Chopra, "Mahabharata" and "Ramayana" are fountains of eternal wisdom and immortal values. The narratives and the characters who play them out run in the blood of every Indian. Epics give a special fragrance to the Indian soil. They give all religions in India their soul and our culture is rich and scintillating because of them. Stories can be retold on television every decade without losing any freshness. [17] The results of the work show that Indian mythologicals have such a strength as patriotism. For this reason, it can be asserted that the model of the world, embedded in them, is its own local media communication with its own model of the world and with its own audience. According to certain parameters, the Indian mythological television series replaced books fulfilling their functions. Moreover, in some cases it was able to even gather up the function of intellectual growth. What makes it significant is that Indian mythologicals organize the semantic space of the world, which is beyond the personal experience of the viewer, thereby creating that subject-event framework that gives it supporting points in the space of communication outside the individual actual experience. Indian mythological serials, performing an informational and educational function, present information known and authoritative, but investing in it a new meaning.

Unlike news, advertising and newspaper and article information, which is fragmented, Indian mythological is a detailed and stretching storytelling, therefore, it requires a prolonged act of attention from the consumer. Dealing not with "real", but with "fictional reality", it is at the same time incommensurably more suitable for the purposeful broadcasting of patterns of behavior, value systems and images of social identity than other fragmentarily organized media that can only count on a cumulative effect. The latter, in addition, due to their very structure, are designed for the disappearing type of consumer with stable preferences (choosing only a certain newspaper, TV channel, etc.). In this regard, serial drama is the most optimal means for conveying sociological significance, namely, as models of behavior aimed at achieving certain goals and using certain

means for this, as well as for negatively evaluating deviant behavioral strategies.

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