

INDIAN POPULAR CULTURE

Lecture35

Webseries

Now, we will discuss the emergence of web series and its impact. As we previously explored how certain series have a significant influence on audiences, we will now analyze web series to understand the mentality and psychology behind the genres people are drawn to. This exploration will offer insights into the thought process of the Indian population as a whole. We can extend this analysis to connect it to the broader study of popular culture, examining how dominant subcultures emerged from deviant cultures, and linking this to our prior discussions on popular cultural studies.

To begin with, the emergence of web series: the first Indian web series was *Permanent Roommates*, produced by The Viral Fever (TVF). This web show premiered on YouTube in 2014 and became the pioneer for other web series in India. What made *Permanent Roommates* so intriguing was its fresh take on live-in relationships, a topic rarely, if ever, discussed in mainstream Indian media, particularly television. The show follows Tanya and Mikesh (popularly called Miki), a young couple, as they navigate the complexities of their relationship.

Following the success of *Permanent Roommates*, multiple seasons were released, setting the stage for a wave of web series that catered to a more diverse and modern audience.

TVF was a success, especially among youngsters. After *Permanent Roommates*, TVF introduced *Pitchers*, which focused on corporate professionals planning to venture into startups, highlighting Indian startup culture. This show became one of the most praised in the recent Indian entertainment scene.

In 2016, TVF continued its success with *Tripling*, a show about three siblings navigating their relationships with each other and their parents. The three siblings—Chanchal, Chandan, and Chitwan—are named after characters in a famous Hindi song. Chandan, the oldest, works in the US, marries a foreigner,

and then gets divorced. Chanchal is married into a royal family, and Chitwan works as a DJ. The show portrays their struggles humorously, and it was well received.

Following this, TVF expanded further, launching additional networks like Girliyapa, The Screen Patti, and The Timeliners, further broadening their reach.

They have also successfully launched web series, contributing significantly to digital entertainment. Panchayat is another popular TVF series. When we look at the genres prevalent on OTT platforms, one of the primary ones is drama. A prime example is Sacred Games and Made in Heaven, both of which had two seasons.

Sacred Games, based on a novel, was directed by Anurag Kashyap and contained a lot of violence and obscenity. However, it also delved deeply into societal issues, particularly how individuals navigate life. The show follows a Sardar police officer whose father was a courageous policeman. The son, however, is torn between moralities, adding layers of complexity to the story. It also touches upon the issue of Godmen in India, exploring scandals and the growing attention around such figures.

Made in Heaven, on the other hand, is episodic, with a recurring cast across both seasons. The show focuses on a marriage event planning company, which brings everything together for weddings. While they celebrate the union of couples, the planners themselves grapple with complex and messy personal relationships, including broken marriages.

The comedy genre is also well represented, with Permanent Roommates and TVF Pitchers being prime examples. Lastly, we also have thriller and suspense as another significant genre on these platforms.

Mirzapur is set in a town in Uttar Pradesh and revolves around the dominance of a local goon who does everything to ensure no one surpasses him in power. The show heavily features violence and sexual content while also exploring the agency of women in a repressive society, making it quite compelling.

Breathe, on the other hand, is about a father's desperate attempts to save his son, going to extreme lengths in this suspenseful thriller.

In the romance genre, we have shows like Little Things and Broken But Beautiful, which depict how the younger generation navigates love and relationships, particularly in an era of dating apps where forming romantic connections is seemingly easy but emotionally complex.

For science fiction, Leila and Ghoul stand out. Ghoul blends horror with elements of a military thriller, while Leila is set in a dystopian future under a totalitarian regime, with strong science fiction and fantasy elements.

In the historical period drama genre, Bard of Blood and The Forgotten Army explore key moments in Indian history, with the latter focusing on the Indian National Army led by Subhash Chandra Bose.

Lastly, the crime genre is represented by Asur, which had two seasons, blending mythology and crime in an engaging narrative.

Then we have Delhi Crime, based on the infamous Delhi rape case. Asur is particularly interesting as it focuses not on a killer's transformation, but on how a child methodically plans his killings, starting with his own family. The darker side of religion is also explored in Asur.

In the horror genre, two popular shows are Typewriter and Betaal. Betaal translates to "ghost," while Typewriter, directed by Sujoy Ghosh, follows a group of curious children investigating a mysterious house in their neighborhood. The titular typewriter seems to trigger supernatural events whenever anyone tries to move it.

Lastly, in the youth coming-of-age category, we have Kota Factory, which delves into the struggles of students preparing for competitive exams.

How one gets into the landscape of Kota when they are preparing for IIT. Kota Factory, another TVF production, explores the intense environment of Kota as students prepare for IIT. Then there's Flames, which focuses on young adults navigating relationships. In the documentary or docudrama genre, we have Bad

Boy Billionaires, which delves into the lives of tycoons involved in fraud cases, highlighting how greed and corruption led them to flee the country.

Another notable entry is Crime Stories: India Detective, set in Bangalore, where police investigate four cases. In the action genre, two standout dramas are Special OPS and The Family Man.

Both Special OPS and The Family Man are interestingly placed, with Special OPS focusing on Indian government operations and The Family Man also delving into government involvement, especially in its second season, where it extends to the Sri Lankan Civil War and the LTTE.

We have the anthology genre, represented by Love Stories and Ray. In Love Stories, each episode features a unique story with different characters, directed by various filmmakers. Ray is based on the life and works of Satyajit Ray, showcasing his remarkable contribution to the film industry. These diverse genres offer rich content that addresses a wide range of social, cultural, and personal themes.