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FORMAL AND IDEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF
SHORTLAND STREET and JUNOON (STUBBORN):
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts in Media Studies and Communication
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ABSTRACT

This is a comparative study of New Zealand soap opera Shortland Street with an Indian soap opera Junoon (stubborn). The purpose of this thesis is to explore the similarities and differences between these two soaps within the context of the cultural practices of each country. The study includes a brief historical summary of the evolution of the serial genre from novel to radio and to television to provide the context for analysis of each soap opera. The research undertakes to examine three important areas (style, narrative structure, and ideology), as means of analysing how significant the contrasts in the cultural practices of New Zealand and India are reflected in these texts.

The first part analyses the conventional differences between Shortland Street and Junoon by examining their formal presentation. This includes a close investigation of the respective country’s soap opera production process, the role of camera in mediating between the fictional world, and the world of the viewer. The second part deals with the characteristics of both soap operas, such as openness, multiple plots, characterization, non-ending closures and cliff-hangers to outline the contrasting patterns in their narrative structure. Some of the arguments in this section are derived from the viewers’ familiarity with soap opera conventions. The final part combines elements from the differences in style and narrative structure and examines the ideological aspects of both soaps. This includes a close analysis of the influential social issues amplified in the narratives contrast to the cultural practices of New Zealand and India. The research method is based on the close examination of both texts which utilizes textual analysis within a formalist framework.

Essentially it is argued that, though Shortland Street and Junoon outwardly share some of the serial conventions of the soap opera family, they have significant variations which are culturally specific to their country of origin. Despite the fact that Shortland Street frequently incorporates topical issues of contemporary New Zealand in its narrative, the
program borrows many qualities from its Western counterparts. On the other hand, Junoon draws its narrative pattern by interweaving the conventions of popular Indian cinema with the soap opera norms. The social problems expressed through the formal pattern of Junoon are inimitable to the cultural practices of India.
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