

# T V Serial

## Dadima Nahin Jagi

The only serial in the national hookup that is not a sleep inducing drug is *Dadima Jagi* every Friday at 9,15 p.m. The delightful Dadima with her huge family and retinue of servants keeps us entertained for half an hour which is a miracle when one thinks of other national programmes. The acting is brilliant and the dialogue piquant.

Dadima woke up from a long sleep of some years and her waking seems to be metaphorical, indicating recognition and acceptance of social changes that are taking place around her. Not only does she accept these changes but she also makes other recalcitrant family members look at each problem from her point of view. She also takes the initiative in auguring change when the situation requires her to do so.

However, behind the veneer of social equality and fight against corruption—she exposes a tax dodger even though he happens to be a close relative—lurks the real Dadima who makes as many compromises as she probably did before she went to sleep. Only her tactics have changed, her dictatorship is more diplomatic. This helps her pull the wool over the eyes of her fans, which reminds us of you know which lady.

For instance, when Dadima engineers the wedding of her grandson Lalitmohan with the gardener's daughter, Radhiya, two birds are killed with one stone. Here is a dowryless marriage which is also based on the principle of social equality. But would Dadima have allowed the marriage if Radhiya were not so decent, well mannered and beautiful? I doubt it.

Again, when her second granddaughter, Bimla, runs away from her husband's home because she overhears a plot to burn her, Dadima hatches a plot which results in Bimla's father-in-law falling at Dadima's feet and Bimla's husband tendering an open apology. Bimla goes back to her husband's house. But does this apology ensure that he will not harass Bimla in future? If Dadima is as progressive as she pretends to be, why could she not get Bimla a divorce and help her remarry or lead an independent life?

Dadima's third granddaughter, Sarla, is a doctor. Dadima guides her to go and practise in their village. To help her, Dadima gets Sarla's father, Chandu, to construct a full fledged hospital in the village. No doubt this is a welcome plea to doctors to practise in villages where there is a dearth of medical services. But Dadima does not know or does not remember that hardly any doctors are so fortunate as to have a hospital built for them where they can have all the freedom and equipment for the full fruition of their aspirations. If they were, the problem would not exist.

Earlier, Sarla had broken off with her doctor fiancée because his fondness for the family wealth was becoming increasingly evident. However, he undergoes a sudden change of heart and decides that instead of going abroad with Sarla's father's money he too will dedicate his services to the health of the villagers of India. Make no mistake—out of the five lakh villages in India, this young medico happens to choose the same village where Sarla's hospital stands.

Amala, the youngest granddaughter, dedicates herself to a dancing school in a rear part of the building gifted to her by her father, again under Dadima's instructions. She does this not because she is a dedicated dancer but because she is sulking over an affair that turned sour when Dadima discovered that the dancemaster lover was a married man with children.

In other words, the serial reinforces the idea that marriage is the be all and end all of a woman's existence, even though it does so under the guise of progressiveness.

One should also note that Dadima's son, Chandu, though devoted to his mother, does not shrink from humiliating his young second wife, Parvati, in front of his children by his first wife. The filial hierarchy is clearly constructed. Dadima is the dictator matriarch whose word is law and who is almost the only thinking person in the family. All the others merely echo her thoughts and if they do not, they are made to do so by clever manoeuvres and soothing reprimands. The servants are just that—servants devoted to serving their employers, because the game of social equality begins and ends with Radhiya. Every installment of the serial ends with a group photograph of the family with a laughing Dadima at the centre.

The serial smacks of the Hindi film with the family wallowing in wealth, and the characters being either lily white or pitch black without any shades of grey. One viewer also pointed out that the serial could well be a clever allegory of the Congress high command in general and Indira Gandhi in particular. If a woman controls a family so well and is so efficient an administrator then the country is obviously safest under the administration of a mother or grandmother figure. Again, a well meaning Sikh gentleman is introduced as a family friend. One wonders why an Assamese was left out. Got the message?

—Soma Chatterjee

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### Ties Of Affection

Recently, Manushi received a very sweet gesture of affection from a supporter. Poonam, who has been reading Manushi for a long time and has also occasionally helped out with work, came to us for help when she was being harassed by an unwanted suitor. After discussion with all of us, Manushi lawyers, Pinky and Geeta, sent him a legal notice.

On the eve of Raksha Bandhan, the festival when sisters tie a thread round their brothers' wrists as an expression of affection and a solicitation for protection, Poonam brought a *rakhi* thread and a box of sweets for Manushi. This seemed to us a beautiful expansion of the festival's significance.