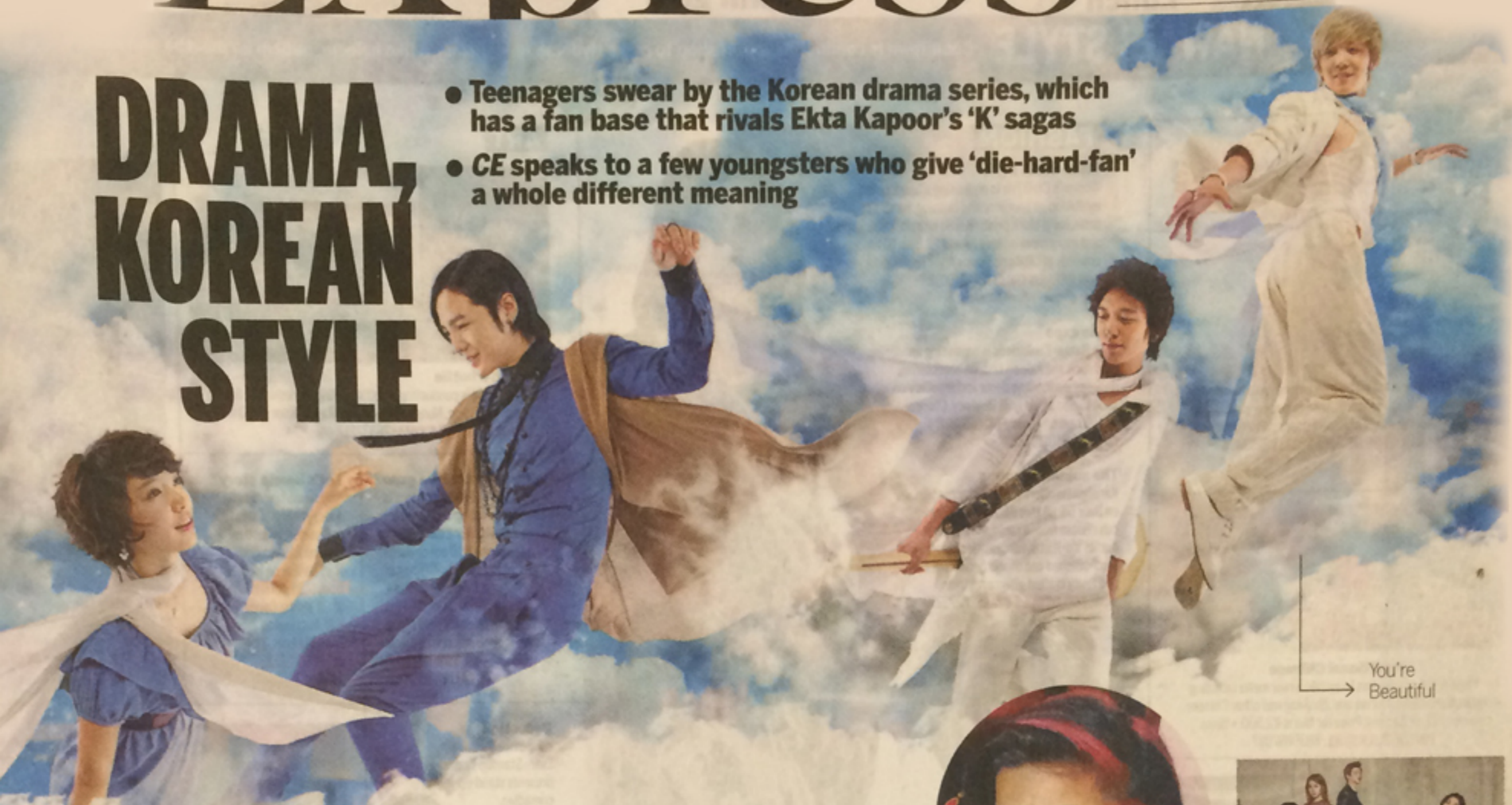


DRAMA, KOREAN STYLE

- Teenagers swear by the Korean drama series, which has a fan base that rivals Ekta Kapoor's 'K' sagas
- CE speaks to a few youngsters who give 'die-hard-fan' a whole different meaning



You're Beautiful

● **Kirthika Suresh**

TRADE MATTERS

The term Hallyu, which means 'flow of Korea', refers to the worldwide sweep of Korean entertainment via pop music, TV dramas and movies. South Korea has emerged as a major exporter of popular culture and tourism, which have become a significant part of its burgeoning economy. There are several websites and YouTube channels, which stream the K-series.

Anyo", Vinothini Krishna Priya greets us with the Korean word for 'hello'. A fervent K-series (Korean drama) fan, the 19-year-old learnt to speak the Korean language fluently because of her love for K-series and K-Pop bands. And she is among the many in the city and the rest of the country to have been bit by the Hallyu (means Korean) bug. She has even adopted the Korean way of life like bowing down to greet people, eating Korean food, wearing leather jackets, colouring their hair red and wearing hairbands. "I first started watching Hindi series in Class 9, because I like to learn about different cultures. Later, my sister and peers hyped about the K-series, which introduced me to this fantasy world," she says.

K-series has crawled its way into the Chennai entertainment scene, competing with English series to the extent that *Puthu Yugam* is screening it regularly. K-series has 16-21 episodes and that's the appeal for impatient, Instagram-loving millennial generation! Vinothini recalls days when she would binge-watch an entire series within two days.

Most K-series follows the evergreen relatable storyline of supernatural elements or high school love stories that became instant favourites among teenagers. "For the past five years, K-series has

been my stress-reliever. Whenever I want a break from the real and busy world, I open the door to K-series — myths and miracles in the real world," she laughs.

Boys Over Flowers, released in 2009, seems to top the list of all K-dramas, and is often the initiator for many into the world of Korean dramas. Dhanusha Kishore (19) says, "This is a favourite among most fans! It's a story of a poor girl loved by two rich guys. She does not know who she wants to be with, and you find yourself rooting for both men! Now, who wouldn't like such a story!" she shares.

Vinothini agrees, and adds, "It was easy to connect to the story because that was the heroism needed in society today, protecting the girl from the 'Bad Boys'."

Some K-dramas become popular due to the actors themselves. Rhea Kumar (18), who has watched 25 series in the past two years, says, "I started watching *You're Beautiful* because of the protagonist Jung Young-Hwa; he is one of the lead singers in CN Blue Band. Many Korean singers are actors too. The best part of the K-series is that there are fewer intimate scenes, unlike English series."

To bring together all Korean drama, band and culture fans in India, Sanjay Ramjhi, a 34-year-old Korean-English translator, founded the K-drama club eight years ago. The group, now 800 members, meets often in any city and participates in competitions, watches series together or simply hang out. Sanjay feels that while starry-eyed Indian teenagers can't stop gushing over Korean drama series, the native Korean teenagers don't understand what the fuss is all about! "I talk to 40-50 Korean students everyday and they don't feel cool being a fan, just as Tamil students don't feel cool about watching Tamil series," Sanjay points out.

Koreans also feel embarrassed by the exaggerated villainy and heroism common in K-dramas. "Some series create misconceptions of economic class discrimination in high-school. It's like how *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) created a notion that India has only slums," says Sanjay. "Korean students love Bollywood movies and songs, especially blockbusters like *3 Idiots* (2009) and *PK* (2014)."



Goblin



My Girlfriend is Gumiho



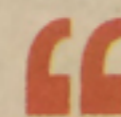
Heirs



I have watched Korean, Japanese, Indonesian, Hindi, English and Tamil series. But among all, Korean series have that spark to steal anyone's heart. I watched them because they were new, but now I can't stop — Vinothini



Members of the K-Drama Club



Just like other Asian countries, Korea also has senior-junior bullying but not as violent as shown in the series

— Jaey, a 21-year-old Korean



Boys Over Flowers