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NATIONAL  
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CONCLAVE 2022

MEDIA &  
CULTURE

EDITOR

Prof. Upendra Padhi

# Media and Culture

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This publication is a compendium of full papers presented in the three-day National Media Seminar-2022 on 'Media and Culture' organised by Institute of Media Studies (IMS), Utkal University, Bhubaneswar supported by the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), New Delhi. The publication is expected to provide a high-level overview on the relationship between media and culture along with intellectual insights. This publication will be useful to students, researchers, academicians, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

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## Foreword

Culture is a multidimensional word - not so much for what it means but more so for its indelible impact on the collective ethos of a nation. In fact, it would not be an overstatement if we were to say that a nation's character is expressed through its culture. As ambiguous as the word is, it is important that one understands its basic essence before the current discourse is taken forward. Culture is the sum of a country's traditions, customs, ideas, and social norms. For a country as varied as India, the cultural mores change every kilometre. From its frozen periphery in Kashmir to its oceanic landscape in Kanyakumari and from its shallow wetlands in Kutch to its cloudy hills in Meghalaya - India is a land of countless communities. As some scholars have repeatedly pointed out, India is a nation of multiple nationalities. While one cannot deny the statement's political undertone, what is infinitesimally more important is its cultural ramifications.

Each of the nationalities or communities is marked by a unique culture. This incredible heterogeneity

makes up what we know as India - a land of glorious diversities. In a world marred by sectarian clashes, culture can be a unifying force and can bring people under the same roof.

The second half of the last century was characterized by a global push for homogenization. Prominent business organizations the world over got into an overdrive to create a seemingly all-encompassing global culture. There was a not-too-subtle push for the imposition of this ill-defined global culture on every community. However, the digital revolution that shaped the first two decades of the current century transformed earlier dominant narrative. There was a shift from a decidedly homogenous international aspiration to a distinctly organic yet globally oriented local aspiration. From global to glocal - the journey has been an arduous one.

Now that the cultural deck has been cleared, it is important that we look at the driver behind this transformation. Make no mistakes - we are indeed talking about the omnipotent, omnipresent, and all-embracing media. While media in its traditional form has been there for quite some time, the advent of the digital platform has practically redefined its meaning. Thus, print media, radio and television have been joined by new media. Therefore, a Facebook or a Twitter or an Instagram has become as important as a newspaper or a television channel. What was once the fiefdom of a select few, public opinion has truly become universal now. Thus, technically, a farmer sitting in a remote corner

of Assam has as much power as a politician from Delhi when it comes to sharing a piece of information. From essentially following the traditional top-down approach, the information ecosystem has transformed into a non-hierarchical one. The proverbial information barrier has been successfully broken. With internet penetration in India increasing at an exponential pace, digital egalitarianism doesn't seem to be a distant dream.

In the face of all these changes, the local cultures have been the biggest beneficiaries. Thanks to the emergence of Social Media, a Tamilian sitting in Coimbatore can enjoy the groovy Bihu Dance from Assam, or a Gujarati at his posh Ahmedabad residence can savour the Yakshagana from the hinterlands of Karnataka. The unprecedented popularity of the recent Kannada language blockbuster Kantara (2022) is a testimony to the growing popularity of local traditions. Even Over-the-Top (OTT) behemoths like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Disney + Hotstar are increasingly appreciating the importance of local content. An enormous amount of content is being produced in languages such as Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Bengali, Odia, and Marathi. Even popular Social Media platforms are recruiting vernacular language experts to beef up local content.

However, like everything else, this mini cultural revolution, spurred by the different media platforms, also has its downsides - crass commercialization, cultural misrepresentations, malicious and harmful content, trolling and so on and so forth. All the

changes - both desirable and non-desirable - have resulted in a churning of sorts.

The 6th National Media Seminar-2022 was conceived to chronicle this churning in a scholarly fashion so that a specific trajectory is created for the future - one that would help media platforms to project an authentic and more nuanced image of India's cultural mores. From popular media to folk media and from OTT platforms to cinema, the chapters in this book encapsulate the multiple dimensions of media's tryst with culture in general and Indian culture in particular.

The chapters in this book have been drafted by some of India's leading media thinkers, who have played critical roles in giving a specific direction to the discourse around culture and media. If the book eventually succeeds in engendering a critical and analytical conversation, we shall consider ourselves successful. Happy reading!

**Prof. Upendra Padhi**

*Conclave Chairman & Director of IMS,  
Utkal University, Bhubaneswar*

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# Cultural Dimensions in the Indian Media Ecosystem

*-Prof. B.P. Sanjay*

## ABSTRACT

**C**ulture is an integral part of communication and media studies. It has been highlighted in many approaches to the study of communication problems, including the landmark international commission for the study of communication problems by Sean MacBride (MacBride Sean, 2003). The cumulative concern expressed in the report and many communication scholars around that period (Schiller, 1981) posited the spread of media systems across the globe and pointed out the lack of content software in many developing countries. The massive expansion of television in India echoed similar concerns.

The covid Pandemic, by default, spawned a viewing culture across India that, apart from other needs such as education and work from home, also impacted the screen industries in India and the deepening of the OTT (Over the Top) dynamics. A significant part of this paper will analyze the viewing cultural aspects brought about during the lockdown and the recovery part.

Post-globalization and developments and reforms in the media sector in India, including the formulation and implementation of the digital India initiative, have changed the ecosystem in India with an extraordinary reach of the broadcast media as well as the spread of mobile devices that can engage our screen time to as much as 3-5 hours a day if not higher.

It will touch upon the recurrent dimension of language and its importance in media content, as well as both state and non-state concerns of culture in media.

### **FULL TEXT**

The media landscape in India is hybrid concerning the coexistence of legacy and new or digital media. The genre distinction between journalism and entertainment media is sharp, notwithstanding the argument that too is packaged as infotainment for competitive reasons. India's celebration of a long history of cinema nest only to print media reflects the continuity of cinema as a medium of communication throughout the nationalist struggle and the political and cultural factors that spurred its growth post-independence. Developments in broadcasting, particularly television, have reinforced the cross-over impact and importance of the screen industry in the overall content matrix of India.

### **A SHIFTING VIEWING CULTURE**

Nationwide lockdown during the Pandemic forced the population to be indoors and space out their activities based on their working, educational and cultural needs. Print media distribution was also affected by an apparent reliance on broadcast media and Wi-Fi-enabled content through the web

and OTT platforms.<sup>1</sup> For competitive purposes and gaining market share, the telecom dimension enabled a robust distribution of content through mobile devices that moved from free to optimized affordable access levels.

Transformation towards Platformization (Nieborg & Poell, 2019) as the new normal for the screen industries will form an axis to explain how the closure of formal cinema viewing venues, theatres, and theatres, shifted the consumption of content via television, both brilliant and ordinary sets. It is universal that screen-based content forms a sizeable portion of entertainment time via television, and India is no exception. Big-budget Bollywood films or their regional variants migrate to small screens after their run-in theatrical releases. OTT platforms that are subscription-based or free via telecom companies that offer trial periods moved in quickly to generate habits for content across several genres, including packaging of old and current serials, domestic and foreign. Rely on their repeated reruns that did not get them the advertising revenue on the scale they desired. The transitional dynamics of OTT will explain how the industry realigned its interests and production strategies, and this will be based on the kind of content and their popularity charts. These indicate the audience preferences for which the OTT platforms have specific strategies.

### **DYNAMICS OF TELEVISION AND SHIFTS TOWARDS OTT ACCESS**

During Covid and its dormant aftermath, India (those who could afford it) recognized that subscription-based

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*<sup>1</sup>By the end of March 2022, India had 97 million over the top (OTT) video subscribers, according to a report by Media Partners Asia*



consumption was a better alternative for the industry struggling with its existing advertising support patterns that were also impacted due to Covid. Did the viewing patterns of the individual and family change regarding television, and what strategies did they adopt? What happened to the cinema-based content was that channels could not rely on their repeated reruns, which did not get them the advertising revenue on the scale they desired. The transitional dynamics of OTT will explain how the industry realigned its interests and production strategies, and this will be based on the kind of content and their popularity charts. These indicate the audience preferences for which the OTT platforms have specific strategies. Some content intersected with governmental and moral aspects of society that interfered with terrains of creativity, freedom of expression, and the balancing acts within the country.

Screen industries struggled to be afloat and depended on OTT exposure and television premieres in a pay-per-view model. What will be then the emerging reality of screen industries in India will be answered provisionally based on interrogation of several data sources, including credible media reports that get validated through publication across several outlets.

Taking entertainment as the critical variable and the lockdown as a compulsive reality, theatrical attendance and concomitant economics is purely an academic matter. It was said, "There is no more going to cinemas with family and friends and enjoying hot popcorn and cold drinks! As if the Pandemic itself was not enough, its second wave has halted the audience, trickling back to movie theatres in early 2021 (Bharadwaj, 2021)." The impact on the film industry

was the halting of big releases, serials, and other shooting halted, affecting the INR 183 billion industry (Shekhar, 2020).

The lack of opportunities for theatrical releases impacted the film industry across the country, including Mumbai, the commercial hub of the Indian film industry measured by the number of films and language as in Hindi. They turned to OTT. Compared to Hollywood during the period, it has been pointed out that " If there were no OTT technology, the creative talent involved in the film industry would have been stifled, and the market for the film industry would have languished. The 'double bill' will ensure that OTT will promote new talents and experiments, which will contribute to the cinema in time, and of course, the films released through theatres will also find a second audience later OTT" (Adhikari, 2021). It was not as if the situation was without conflict when Amazon, for example, decided to release seven new films on its platform. The comparison by Shyam Benegal: "The cinema offers a larger-than-life experience. That cannot be replicated easily by television or OTT platforms. Films can be seen by several means. However, going to the cinema hall adds an important dimension - it becomes a social occasion and a collective experience. The OTT platforms will not match up with that"(James, 2020). Economics of the film industry regarding comparison to theatrical releases as against OTT. Twenty-six films due for theatrical release shifted to OTT due to Covid. At that juncture, the selling of rights to OTT is reported to have been beneficial for the producer (Sharma, 2021).

## **THE INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND REGIONAL DYNAMICS OF HOME ENTERTAINMENT**

Indian entertainment or media space is constantly analysed in national and regional frameworks, a distinction that is politically not palatable in certain parts of India that are contending with language as a primordial identity. Debates over the amicability of a three-language formula, as in Hindi-English and regional languages, recur now and then when other contending issues also crop up. However, English channels and content in both news and entertainment genres have a marginal share of viewership compared to Hindi and primarily regional channels. The TV landscape, as well as M&E industry figures, endorse

Each side will consolidate the other, and the financial aspect will soon fall in place. Other significant entertainment hubs are Tamil, Bengali, Malayalam, Marathi, and Kannada. While outdoor movie-going habits declined, there was an increase in media consumption that jumped to 60 percent in the self-isolation phase (Shekhar, 2020).

Television and other devices, especially mobile phones, became the hub of content consumption that included learning across the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of education.

### **IS THE SHIFT TRANSIENT?**

Television as the focal point of family content consumption has gained substantial ground in India since its introduction in the mid-1970s. Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) provides an estimate and metrics suggesting that the population of 1.3 Bn people is spread across 300 Mn households, out of which 210 Mn households have television sets that it calls the television universe

(BARC, 2021). Nine hundred fifteen television channels are permitted in India, and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is the nodal ministry that regulates their licensing and other relevant policies.

The distribution of television is a combination of free-to-air, cable distribution of satellite signals and direct-to-home (DTH). The balance between advertising and subscription revenue has tilted towards the latter in recent years, with better opportunities for advertisers through niche outreach opportunities.

While over-the-top (OTT) content providers had made a beginning earlier in the Pandemic phase, many observers are unanimous that the consolidation occurred during the Pandemic. Industry reports point out that OTT platforms registered a spurt in their subscription in 2020 and 2021, becoming one of the fastest-growing sectors, \$1.8-2.2 Bn, in the media and entertainment industry. Compared to 100 Mn who watch films in theatres annually, streaming content subscribers alone are 40 Mn, and this is in addition to bundled content of the OTT that television subscribers get estimated to be about 250 Mn (Lau Yvonne & Mukerji Biman, 2021). An Ernst and Young M&E assessment during the Covid in India indicates that about four hundred films were released in 2020 against more than 1500 films in regular times. E&Y team suggests that the "Media and Entertainment industry in India in 2020 witnessed a shift in demand patterns as consumers actively sought alternatives and had the time to try new things. However, the compelling content created around news and escapism, and the passion for building some of India's most powerful brands remained resolute" (Pherwani, 2021). The report also indicates that

India's entertainment industry had degrown by 24% during the first phase of the Pandemic.

While at-home entertainment became the norm, television could not provide its daily fare except news and reruns of serials have their limitations. In this context, the content producers found OTT as a viable option. For example, an analyst notes: "Over-the-top streaming platforms have successfully placed themselves in everyone's system and schedule in the last few years. The feasibility of choosing from a wide variety of content developed with fresh faces and loved talents played a key role in bringing these applications to everyone's device. The one year became a little survivable for all of us with their presence. 2020 was rough but balanced for most people with some noteworthy releases on OTT platforms" (P. Das, 2021). There were similar projections for 2021 also (Nast, 2021)

Thus, an unforeseen nationwide or global pandemic presented a queer situation of enhanced need for content in entertainment-intensive contexts such as India, and delivery platforms got added to television screens among the population that could afford subscription-based content via OTT or bundled DTH offers. Although the dynamics of the entertainment industry shifted during the Pandemic, there was continuity in industry circles that promoted their form of democratizing digital culture. For example, Reliance group, a multi-sector mega corporation in India that is also in the news and entertainment sector, provided a phone with a data plan that was aimed at digitizing the democratic culture (MoneyControl, 2017). There are about fifteen subscription-based OTT platforms in India and four free platforms, including YouTube. India's single theatre

and multiplex screens are around 6300 and 3200, respectively.

## **HOPE AND ANTICIPATION OF A REVIVAL OF THEATRE CULTURE AND OTT PROJECTIONS**

Progressively since last year and more so in 2022, including a temporary restriction during the second wave, theatres have been allowed to operate at total capacity. This also brings the erstwhile dynamics of a theatre or cinema viewing culture. As a sociological and political construct, cinema has been the subject of numerous studies and academic discourses.

While the revival of the cinema hall economy is an essential dimension of the economy, the shift towards home and OTT viewing will alter that. Many new films in Hindi and regional languages have belied the otherwise gloomy projections for cinemas. While the current levels of OTT subscription are within reach of families as a unit of consumption, there is bound to be disruption if big-budget movies opt for theatrical releases and OTT movies and web shows develop their economics and viewing patterns.

Industry assessment that highlights about 25 features of OTT platforms that includes a sixfold increase in subscription base by 2024, the digital entertainment sector will be the second largest in that segment, nearly 90 % of OTT content consumption is by the age group 15-35, low cost of mobile data is driving phone based consumption of OTT content (ReelNReel, 2020). As a critical variable in OTT, advertising may change the nature of subscription models from higher ad-free subscriptions to a lesser tariff with advertisements popularly known as the YouTube model that provides ad-intensive free content versus paid ad-free

content. Two years of lockdown has seen many upheavals on all fronts, including the more significant loss of employment, migration woes, and impact on children's education. Entertainment may not be a priority, but the economic variable of this industry required a framing in this period.

### **CULTURAL DYNAMICS IN DIGITAL INDIA**

Its journey and transformation into the digital era are seamless. It is one of the few countries where obituaries for the legacy media have not yet reached the epitaph stage. Digital India is a formal flagship programme in India with clear-cut guidelines and policies notwithstanding issues and concerns in the implementation. The coexistence of legacy media and their overlap into digital spaces leads to the paradox of contending with policies enunciated in the dominant mass media framework. The concerns and issues posed by the inevitable rise of user-generated content across the burgeoning social media platforms reflect universal and context-specific approaches to new media regulation of content and structures supporting its distribution. Journalism and other media content have gone through a disruptive phase and, many a time, transcend sacred spaces of conventional understanding for freedom of expression apart from the spectre of fake news (Al-Zaman, 2021) that can have alarming consequences in a fragile social structure with multiple layers of differentiation and identity

The key aspects are technology, communication, and culture. In a parallel but historical sense, this triangulation formed the basis of rampant colonization by European powers, with India referred to as the jewel in the crown. The colonial experience saw the advantages colonizers derived

from communications technology, such as the telegraph for messages and railways for freight and passenger traffic. Post-independence faith and belief have continued with a varied pace of adoption and introduction of communication technologies, including broadcasting and a more comprehensive telecom policy. Digital India subsumes various approaches and policies that reflect a substantial and monetized shift to data-based transactions and reconfiguration of communication and media services and institutional arrangements. How these have shaped and worked will be part of the Indian dossier content. The resilient dimensions of culture incorporating the concerns of its definition or connotation in the present context and what cultural identities can be derived or understood will form the explanatory framework.

The global players in technology and their strategic alliances in digital India will form the basis of understanding what is being communicated by whom and at what price, and with what effect in the context of the digital divide and asymmetrical power and economic relations. The digital landscape will help us understand content's spread, access, and nature and how it impacts data, news, and entertainment. With a sizeable comparative database available, the dossier can respond to specific queries and provide a context-specific analysis of the digital India, vision, and reality checks.

The Indian media ownership structure that subsumes their digital editions and platforms has raised several concerns (TRAI, 2013), including the dimension of the Habermasian public sphere. "There are 12 major producers of news content in India; eight business houses have



significant presence in multiple sectors and dominate specific market segments. The emerging oligopolistic nature of the Indian media sector is examined. Using ownership patterns as a proxy for control over the media and the information it disseminates, the control that prominent media companies exercise across various markets in which they operate" is important to understand (Bhattacharjee & Agrawal, 2018; CHHETRIA, 2019). Culturally too such ownership patterns notwithstanding the fact that many are in Indian languages as well is interpreted as curbing the voice of the voiceless. However, there are expressions that have come about through the community radio policy and few stations (Radhakrishnan, 2020).

The availability of spaces to express and the phenomenon of territorializing and networking have sharpened identity issues. The issues about this question, from the Nehruvian conception to reactionary responses (Parekh, 2006) to the identity question, have been raised and debated, including the contentious dynamics of the recent movements and articulations for religious affirmation. Electoral politics and the nature of media control and allegiance have raised several manifestations of identity and culture regarding women's entry to temples and the question of wearing hijab in schools with norms for wearing uniforms.

Responses to mass content such as films, based on specific historical eras, have been varied, causing concerns about creativity and how the State can deal with protests and threats from different quarters. Such instances are more frequent (IFF, 2021). "But presumption, rumour, gossip, and a majoritarian dumbing down of artistic sensitivities seem

to have taken centre stage in a section of contemporary India. And this has repeatedly reared its ugly head, demanding the pulping of books, threatening to stop the release of films, desecrating paintings, and other works of art, to name just a few of such obnoxious and Goebbelsian excesses, all undertaken in the name of preserving one's social, religious, or cultural sensitivities (S. K. Das, 2017). The opinion on such acts is divided.

While debates about resistance and reaction to media content rear its head now and then and, at times, are strategically positioned to add to the publicity efforts of the industry, there are other aspects that the State, as in the government, takes up in the realm of culture.

Observers regard it as a continuous activity in the realm of cultural diplomacy. Keeping with this tradition, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken a big leap further in promoting India's cultural diplomacy and transforming India's global image through the five pillars of his foreign policy, namely - Samman (dignity), Samvaad (dialogue), Samriddhi (shared prosperity), Suraksha (regional and global security), and SanskritievamSabhyata (Cultural and civilizational links). He has transformed India's global reach by polishing, in the words of Joseph Nye, the 'ability to get what you want through attraction than through coercion or payments.' (Srivastava, 2019). In a different context, scholars have also talked about media and its soft power (Thussu, 2013), examining the processes from Buddhism to Bollywood. According to Thussu, a panoramic overview of India's soft power, ranging from the strengths of her cultures to cuisines, Bollywood to Yoga, dance, and music, and finally to the presence of millions of admired Indian diasporas that

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are spread all over the World. He underlined that India's rich and syncretic culture has the potential to be a beacon of inspiration for other countries. Indeed, from Buddha to Mother Teresa, India has produced many of the World's most influential leaders and thinkers whose writings and teachings have influenced the lives of billions across the World. "(VIF, 2016).

### **INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING TO PROMOTE INDIAN CULTURE**

More recently, UNESCO has positioned specific festivals in India and partnered with Netflix to celebrate the rich Indian cultural heritage. "Netflix and UNESCO have recently come together to celebrate the rich cultural heritage of India, both tangible and intangible, through a cartooned series titled *Mighty Little Bheem*. The series captures India's culture through the adventures of a young boy, from cooking Pongal to flying kites in his village. Over the next year, a new series of fun short videos called 'One Country, Incredible Diversity' will shine a light on India's cultural journey, including living heritage, with a diverse representation of performing arts, social practices, rituals, and festivals such as Dussehra, Diwali and Holi (UNESCO, 2021).

### **CONCLUSION**

Communication, media, and culture are manifestations and vehicles of representing content in the broader realm of understanding the issue as a way of life as leading scholars have defined culture. Developing countries' issues and concerns were raised in the context of one-way and dominant information and content flows. They were identified as concerns of imperialism as well as autonomy. The network

dynamics of media in the present context have shaped what can be described as the viewing culture and the impact of Covid. There are other specific concerns in content and how people react in and across social media platforms. The State is also conscious of the enormous soft power of culture and is pursuing it. Some of these concerns are discussed in the context of this conclave.

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## **Religion and Humanity: Media Ethics and Values for Atmanirbhar Bharat**

*-Prof. N. Usha Rani*

**M**arshall McLunhan's concept of global village facilitated interaction between lifestyles of diversified cultures by transcending the geographical boundaries. Unfortunately this perception has assumed a dubious distinction perpetuating 'one world and one culture' phenomenon. Even Ted Turner once propounded the theory of global citizenship. However, media giant of Turner's stature who perceived world as a conglomeration of different neighbourhoods feigned ignorance of freedom of speech and expression in order to pitch his cable tent in China, the huge market for media products. The same with Mark Zuckerberg who wants to connect the world not to produce global citizens but to capture huge market in China. Obviously, in the mad race to establish media access and plurality, the socio-cultural factor has been relegated to the background. It is appropriate to quote Herbert I. Schiller (1976) who sees cultural domination as an offshoot of globalization. According to him, "Cultural domination means also adopting broadcasting systems that depend on



advertising and accepting deregulatory practices that transform the public mails, telephone systems and cable television into private profit centres...The domination that exists today, though still bearing a marked American imprint, is better understood as transnational corporate cultural domination".

"In a film of Rainer Fassbinder's there is a nightmare vision in which a single company runs all of Germany's media from an antiseptic office tower", exclaims Leo Bogart (2005) while drawing attention to the danger of media monopoly. In an era of global communication network where the marriage of computers and telecommunications has shrunk the world to the size of a football this nightmare of Leo Bogart could turn into a reality. Invasion from sky has resulted in two contradictory developments. Firstly, it has enormously increased media access and reach. Secondly it has facilitated increase in cross media ownership controlling variety of media platforms propounding homogeneous media culture in a multicultural pluralistic society like India further reducing the levels of voices. In both totalitarian and democratic countries, the once bonded viewers of government-controlled media today have a mind boggling variety of media to choose from. It was inevitable for any country to have succumbed to the technological onslaught. However, this unconditional surrender to media aggression has far reaching consequences. It is in this context, culture, ethics and values assume significance.

### **RELIGION AND HUMANITY**

The goal of every religion is to serve the humanity. Religion professes practice of peace for the survival and well being of the humanity. Media play an important role

in the portrayal of image of any religion, community, political leaders, or people. Navasky said that: "It is based largely on journalism that we make up our national mind" (Navasky cited in Zelizer & Allen, 2002). The images of race, caste, community, and religion as perceived by the media have long been of interest to researchers as they signify the attitude of majority communities towards smaller groups. No religious community has generated so much heat and debate than the minority religious groups in every culture. Minority groups particularly Muslims have invariably become part of negative discourses (Hartmann and Husband 1974). Media marginalizes minority voices, thus, they are virtually ignored or invisible (Saeed 1999). In a multi religious country like India religion is part of everyday life but with the political developments in the country religion has moved into the public sphere. Media therefore has to have a policy owing to its sensitive nature as it may pose threat to peace and harmony in the society. Indian Nationalism integrated with religion is accepted as a genre as far as Indian cinema industry is concerned but the same cannot be said about print and electronic media. Divine presence of Gods and Goddesses may sell cinema but it cannot be replicated in news media. Globally there is rise of religious movements and are crossing political boundaries transforming ideologies. Secularism forms the core of Indian philosophy and media is no exception as violation of this cardinal principle will lead to the establishment divisive society the signs of which are already visible in some of the democracies. There is yet to see a good research study that examines the Political approaches to religion in Indian media. Culture is an

expression of religious beliefs, values and emotions shaping the psychological, social and moral structure of the humanity.

### **MEDIA AND CULTURE**

Culture is a significant variable in human communication process and it received a more central place in the 70s consequent to James Carey's 'ritual model' defining communication more than mere transmission of information. Carey gave a new perspective to traditional transmission model of communication with the premise that culture is a process and is part of communication. He opines that, 'social life is more than power and trade....it also includes the sharing of aesthetic experience, religious ideas, personal values and sentiments, and intellectual notions - a ritual order (McQuail,2010 ). It changed the perception of communication as Carey defined communication as, ' a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed (Cited by McQuail 2010).

Mass culture is an offshoot of mass communication. The rise of mass society theory paved way for the theory of mass culture which was defined as mass media culture, a distinct culture popularized by mass media. Users of mass media were regarded as ' a new form of social collectivity' (McQuail, 2010), who consumed mass media products for entertainment called popular culture marketed by media industry. It was criticized for the production of programmes of low quality and poor taste abandoning cultural roots.

Initially culture was perceived to be a liability than an asset branding societies as undeveloped owing to traditional culture, beliefs and values. For a long time media studies defining the process of human communication suffered from

cultural vacuum. The beginnings of Critical Cultural Theories exposed the shortsightedness of media theories by drawing the attention to the social structure distinguishing the differences between western and eastern perception of society. The studies of development in Third world were the turning point in understanding the significance of socio cultural diversity in defining the concept of communication per se.

Cultural anchoring of communication theories received an impetus when scholars from Africa, Asia and Latin America questioned the rationale behind the theories of development propounded by the western scholars. They felt that "A discussion of development must include the physical, mental, social, cultural and spiritual development of an individual in an atmosphere free from coercion or dependency. Also, greater importance would need to be given to preserving and sustaining local traditional cultures and other artifacts as these are usually the media through which the people at the grassroot structure their reality of the world around them (Melkote, 1991)". The resurgence of interest in culture denotes the need to give cultural anchor to the process of communication. Earlier development in communication parlance was wrongly perceived as an instrument of deculturalization.

Today the original concept of mass society and mass culture has been dismantled and media theories are into studying the criteria that defines Popular Media Culture as common people like elites have access to variety of cultural experiences through different media platforms. Thanks to technological effects on cultural experience, now people have access to virtual mediated cultural experience.

Linguistic and religious minorities who were replaced by the culture of the dominating group have found means of survival amidst the process of deculturalization.

Popular culture promoted by media neglected the free expression of cultural and linguistic diversities in mass media for ages. However, communication technology has given access to cultural beliefs, customs, rituals and practices changing the perception of media culture in modern world. The rediscovery of cultural perspective in media has led to the study of cultural identity which is influenced by variety of factors including religion, race, ethnicity, language, nationality and gender. Globally, there is resurgence of interest among cultural groups to recognize and preserve cultural identity in multicultural society with the aim of sharing collective knowledge about the cultural practices.

### **ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT**

Government of India has an exclusive web portal on Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan or Self Reliant India- a flagship programme of rightwing government launched in 2020 at the centre propounding the concept of self-reliance aiming to empower people to become independent through financial policy reforms. Initiatives like Special economic and comprehensive package of Rs. 20 lakh crores, which is 10% of India's GDP, was earmarked to fight the pandemic COVID19 in India. The model of this programme is built on creation of five pillars namely, economy, infrastructure, system, vibrant demography and demand. Administrative reforms were effected to implement the ambitious programme to make India self reliant in all important sectors. Crucial financial policy reforms were announced to implement this programme paving the way

for the ordinary people to become entrepreneurs and change makers.

Using social media the government has created portals for the participants or beneficiaries of this programme to share their stories of self reliance. Over 1.82 million people have participated in this programme and many successful stories have been shared in the portal ([aatmanirbharbharat.mygov.in](http://aatmanirbharbharat.mygov.in)).

Many consider this as a political success in giving an economic vision to the people in times of recession (The Print, Jan 2021). Despite criticized for being political, over 46% of participants have accepted it favourably says survey reports. This sloganeering not only caught the attention of media but sustained by remaining in spotlight because of its socioeconomic perspective. A novel economic empowerment concept was created within the reach of working class rooted in cultural ethos.

### **MEDIA ETHICS AND VALUES : ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT**

Self reliance is the mantra of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. The post pandemic programme reached media at a time when Indian media was reeling under the effects of COVID19 suffering job loss, decline in circulation and shutdowns. Atmanirbhar Bharat received no major attention as over 20% of workforce in media and entertainment industry is estimated to have lost owing to death, loss of job and low salary perhaps for the first time in the history of independent India. Digital media changed the attitude and priorities of mainstream conventional media as most of media houses in general and print media in particular suffered decline in circulation rendering journalists jobless.

Except digital media which saw a rise in reach, all other media were in deep financial crisis.

This programme needs large space in media as Atmanirbhar Bharat attacks the roots of poverty. UN states that poverty is not about low income but a deprivation of opportunities. Media should be proactive in reaching the ordinary people. Mission self reliant is also an economic package that has changed the perception of job. It advocates people's participation in creating employment opportunities in their backyard. It has liberated colonial mind from subjugation to earn a living. The programme is Indian and is wedded to Indian cultural ethos respecting inclusivity and equality.

However, heavily battered media operating revenue generating business model has lost focus and is indulging in peddling personalized coverage of news creating conflicting social environment through trivializing issues and undermining public participation and is blind to social inequalities. UNESCO has warned the countries of this kind of media environment where media becomes not only a structure but exploits its role as an agency.

Media should believe in Atmanirbhar Bharat concept and is expected to conceptualize content promoting this mission. Political leaders are expecting media and entertainment industry to champion the cause of ABC. It is suggested that language press should generate more jobs in the field of content creation reflecting local culture and values. The programme was implemented when media was facing massive challenges during COVID19 and hence one cannot expect media to prioritize self reliant mission.

Ironically, the mission came as a blessing in disguise to media wanting to produce digital products creating job opportunities for journalists who suffered job loss. Mainstreaming of OTT and YouTube platforms has empowered young millennials who have flooded industry with huge volume of content in local languages and local stories and have achieved success promoting regional cultural economy. According to Google, 97% of its YouTube content is dominated by local languages and is reflected on OTT platform too. Self reliant mission is reflected in the growth of regional media consumers who come from different socio-economic and cultural background breaking media stereotype. This narrative endorses the premise of earlier studies that have shown that communication technology which was feared for losing our culture has ironically lead to the strengthening of multiculturalism with the domination of production of media content in local and regional languages.

### **ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT AND SOFT POWER**

The term soft power was coined by Joseph Nye in 1990 in his book titled, Bound to Lead. Nye interprets soft power encompassing both cultural and political strategies but it is widely interpreted to mean only cultural issues. The concept of soft power as visualized by India under Atmanirbhar Bharat is applicable not only to Yoga or Ayurveda but also to political ideologies like Gandhism and dewesternisation of political thoughts and ideas. It is a vision to build new India with a new political approach in the world's largest democracy. ABC assumes importance as a political soft power and has potential to emerge as a vision document with strategies to win elections. Nye in his book soft power identifies three key sources of a country's soft power; its culture, its political



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values and its foreign policies (Nye, 2004). India intends to nurture soft power in the fast changing international relations with its huge potential in both cultural and political values.

India is the hub of soft power and has the potential to enrich cultural experiences across the world. Indian cinema, religion, culture, Gandhism, literature, spiritualism, Yoga, and Ayurveda are some of the significant products of soft power that can empower the humanity. Atmanirbhar Bharat is a socio cultural and economic vision that has potential to generate job opportunities and space of variety of people hailing from marginalized classes irrespective of caste, religion or creed. The road map to Atmanirbhar Bharat lies in tapping existing models of soft power and seeking people's participation. It can tackle poverty as it imparts ideas, skills and financial support rather than freebies. Since the concept of soft power requires persuading young population to participate in activities conceived by civil society rather than government, it is based on people's talent and ability to do things independently. The concept of soft power is based on freedom of ideas, creativity and talent rather than coercion.

Media has an important role in the portrayal of soft power through Atmanirbhar Bharat mission as there is growing appreciation for India's soft power in the world. The mission has given an opportunity and space for localized ideas and India with a strong history of great civilization is the appropriate platform for nurturing soft power.

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## **Cultures of Space, Time and Communication in 18th Century Pondicherry**

*-Dr. Gopalan Ravindran*

**H**istory becomes history because of communication that is mediated in the spatialities and temporalities of the past and present. History is related by many of us in the academia as a discipline that provides us contexts of using it as a suffix or prefix to locate the centrality of our individual disciplines in an intra-disciplinary mode. However, history does not meet its other disciplinary counterparts in the inter-disciplinary plane. For instance, when we seek to engage with communication history or history of communication, we end up using history more as an approach that is more often than not, chronological and uncritical. It is uncritical as the implications of true history or the Meta history on the disciplinary histories are not revealed as the engagements under the ambit of prefix and suffix. It is futile to read history or engage with history from the side of narrow prisms of native disciplines, disciplines to which we seem to belong because of our institutional affiliations.

History becomes history when we traverse from the vantage points of true history, which does not belong to any

discipline, including what passes as history as a discipline. True history is beyond the grasp of either the discipline that seeks to assert itself as history or other disciplines which seek to have their own versions of history. True history is also not the sum of aggregates. It is more like the universe which is unfathomable because of its nature and size. It is there, but not revealed in its entirety. We need to rethink and reconstruct the borders and objectives of history as a discipline as well as disciplinary histories. Disciplinary histories are at the moment constructed solely on the basis of what connects the fundamental developments in a particular discipline over a temporal period.

For instance, in the case of communication, history of communication implies history of communication technologies or history of human discourses as communication or history of the implications of the communication technologies on the history of human discourses. What passes off as disciplinary histories are either, in most cases, pedantic and chronological constructions of the key developments in a discipline or what is sourced from the historically grounded approaches of a few geniuses in other disciplines? While no revelation or transformation can happen with the former (pedantic and chronological constructions), the latter is faced with two challenges, despite its relative merit - a remarkable potential to enable us to rethink the orientation of the discipline itself.

The first challenge is borne of the ignorance that disciplines have their "own" histories. This seeks to avoid any approach that contests its ignorance. In a sense, ignorance seeks to prove it right wrongly. Resulting from this approach is the history of communication that locates

communication history only within the domain of communication and not in other disciplinary domains. This approach does not recognize the spirit of the origin of the discipline as a cross-discipline that sprang from everywhere. This approach values the chronological developments regarding the emergence of technologies and tools of communication, besides co-locating such developments with the developments in the theoretical domain. For instance, we have a string of models and theories explicating the implications of mass media effects on individuals and society. What is problematic in this approach is the obstinate insularity it entails in preventing the deployment of a true canvas of communication research that belongs to no one discipline and a site that is "cross roads", as Schramm (1963,p.2) posited when he said "communication research is a great cross road where many pass, but few tarry". It is, in fact, everywhere, not just at the "cross roads." When we invoke the metaphor of "cross roads", we are proving that our ignorance of the true nature of the communication canvas is being eroded, but not erased completely. There is also a certain ethnocentrism when we seek to see everything from the "cross-roads" perspective, as this was the response of the North American scholars to the implications of the communication wars Germans fought creatively against the Allies.

Encountering the second challenge is the need of the hour. The second challenge stems from the availability of abundant research done by pioneers in disciplines as varied as sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, philosophy, mathematics and political economy. The availability becomes a challenge when it is not recognized

as worthy of incorporation into the canvas of communication. The insularity that results from the ignorance pointed above comes in the way of recognition of these abundant and veritable gold mines of communication contexts which are sure to change the way the "cross roads" approach entails.

The second challenge is also faced with traps in the form of selective appropriation of the work done by pioneers in other fields or the preferential treatment of a few as the "greats" at the cost of overshadowing the true "greats". For instance, when we are influenced to invoke the notions of Marshall McLuhan in the coursework frameworks in communication departments, we are also influenced to close our eyes to read the works of the man who inspired him (Harold Innis). When we choose to include Lazarsfeld, we are made to forget the pioneering spirit of Robert Park in transforming not just sociology, but sociology of communication as well.

There is a strong need to learn from the true pioneers who provided true revelations of what is communication, what is communication history and what are the sites that stand as linkages of communication between and among various domains that envelop human beings as socio-cultural, historical, political and psychological beings.

This paper would approach the diaries of Anandarangam Pillai (1736-1761) from the vantage points revealed by these pioneers and would, in the process, reveal a new facet of Anandarangam Pillai, not just as a dubashi, or a diarist of 18th century, but as a communication genius who succeeded in deploying a different historical canvas of communication, without sounding theoretical or ideological.

Unlike contemporary cities which are defined by the crowded presence of skyscrapers, dense movement of people through the arterial spaces of roads, shopping districts and downtown, 18th century Pondicherry was defined by the movement of ships in and out of its harbour and the the intermittent fleeing of its people due to the battles between the French and British.

Space is a site of production of the social body and vice versa. The essentialism of production of space as the social as well as the production of the social as space (Lefebvre, 1974/1991) is lost in the rhizomatic scheme of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), where one moves away from both the binary relationship between the Foucauldian sites of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1978). It is also lost in the binary relationship posited by Carey (1988) between sites of transmission and ritual modes of communication and Rendell's distinction between spatial practices and critical spatial practices (2006, 2011 and 2018). Rhizomatic relationships are on account of the non-essentialism of multiplicitous assemblages without hierarchical relationships.

18th century Pondicherry's spatiality was made possible by the prospects of commerce of the colonial period and the burden of the colonial collective, where the subjects in the natives had to endure the struggles of food scarcity during times of violent conflicts between the French and the British in Pondicherry. For instance, On September 14, 1760, (Pillai, pp.292-293 vol.12), Anandarangam Pillai was asked by Monsieur Leyrit, who was the Governor General of Pondicherry between 1755 and 1758, whether the people have left. Pillai replied:

*"Yesterday only you ordered. They left only two or three days before. Some returned. After you ordered, yesterday too some left. In two to three days, the majority would leave". He asked me, 'How much paddy is left in town.' Where is paddy in town? ...those who left eight to ten days back sold their paddy stocks and left. Those who bought them have consumed them. 200-300 houses may have stocks left for another 10-15 days. 10-15 houses may have stocks for 40-50 days."*

The spatiality during the end point, the fall of Pondicherry, was also influenced by the problematic of the unpredictable temporalities. One of these was causing nightmares for Monsieur Leyrit, Monsieur Lally and the other French elites of Pondicherry. This was the promised arrival of a large contingent of French ships to save Pondicherry from falling to English. Monsieur Leyrit was very nervous about the delay and was hoping against hope that the ships would arrive before the D day. When Anandaranga Pillai met Monsieur Leyrit on a routine call, on September 11, 1760 (Pillai, pp.287-288 vol.12), Leyrit starts the conversation. "What's the information?. Pillai said, "What's there to inform you, everything is obvious." Monsieur Leyrit was shaking his body and said,

*"Ships will arrive anyhow. I am telling this on the basis of the letter that came from there. ...as the situation here is known to them, the ships will arrive according to the letter from Mauritius. The letter said, 'We are sending the ships from here after readying them and are also sending little money.' "Hence, the ships will come for sure."*

Pillai said, "I am also praying to Lord that the ships should arrive." This unpredictable temporality was different



from the unpredictable temporalities caused by natural phenomena such as storms, which sank ships on busy trade routes and when the ships survived they reached shores of the French territories late. In contrast, there was a predictable temporality, as per the calculations, the time persons and goods took to travel overland within Pondicherry. Here the spatialities of the places are distinguished importantly by their temporal co-location on the distance scale.

Communication and culture are also deceptive sites as far as their overlapping contexts of collective encoding and decoding are concerned. The difference between the two statements - communication is culture and culture is communication - are in the subtleties of their overlapping contexts. The material and spatial markers of communication and culture inhere in these subtleties as much as the sites of communication and culture which make them possible. In our pursuits of knowledge seeking of the academic kind, we are compelled to hit a conceptual roadblock on account of the tendency to get away from the problematic of the deceptive sites of macro frameworks such as communication and culture and ground ourselves in the exploration of the specific sites which appear as distinctive entities. The problematic that is posited here is both native to native philosophies of south India such as the materialist philosophies of asivikam and ulagaayutham (lokaayutha) and the western philosophies of materialism and idealism.

Thisaivaraidhal refers to the ancient Tamil Jaina construct of cardinal directions. It prescribed the spatial boundaries one has to adhere to as regards their spatial movements. There were different kinds of spatial prohibitions for men and women. In general, women were

barred from going outside their territory in the company of their husbands, particularly, when the later had to go outside the territory for trade and livelihood related purposes(Gnanamurthy, 1977, pp. 74-75).If one keeps in perspective the construct of thisaivaraidhal to relate to the unsanctioned (as per the thisaivaraidhal) journey of the lead character of Tamil epic, Silapathikaram (c.100-250 AD), Kannagi(with her husband, Kovalan)from her hometown (Puhar) to Madurai and the consequences (their death) that are blamed on the violation of the prevailing religious philosophy, one gets a more pragmatic perspective of the spatial and temporal journeys of material goods and people in a different temporal and spatial order, 18th century Pondicherry.

The dubashi, who served the French colonial regime in Pondicherry, Anandaranga Pillai, recorded in his diaries details about the emergence of temporal-spatialities on account of the contestations between the native and western conceptions of temporalities. During Duplex's period, when Duplex asked Anandarangam Pillai about the route to be taken to go to Thevanampattinam, Anandarangam Pillai provided a creative and substantive mode of engaging with the route plan by mixing the temporal with the spatial and giving birth to the macro and micro contexts of spatialities and temporalities. The macro context explains the total time taken to cover the distance between Pondicherry and Thevanampattinam,(Pillai, pp.325-326 vol.4). The micro contexts delineate the nature of temporally governed distances/spatialities among nine places. In this scheme, the absolute distance is measured in absolute time, without making obvious the absolute distance on any other scale.

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Here is an instance of spatiality where the temporal scale reigned supreme. "He asked me what is the travel route to be taken to Thevanampattinam,. Regarding this, I wrote in French and gave him the following:

◆ Between Ariyankuppam and Karukalampakkam 2 Nazhi distance

◆ Between Karukalampakkam and Selluncherri 1 ½ Nazhi distance

◆ Between Selluncherri and Thukkanambakkam 1 Nazhi distance

◆ Between Thukkanambakkam and Thirupanambakkam 2 Nazhi distance

◆ Between Thirupanambakkam and Kuruvinatham 1 Nazhi distance

◆ Between Kuruvinatham and Poovarasankuppam ½ Nazhi distance

◆ Between Poovarasankuppam and Pathirikuppamsavadi 1 ¾ Nazhi distance

◆ In between two rivers, Pennaiyaru and Kedilam are flowing

◆ Between Pathirikuppamsavadi and Thirupadiripuliyur 1 Nazhi distance

◆ Between Thirupadiripuliyur and Thevanampattinam, 1 ½ Nazhi distance".

On the temporal scale, the distance between Ariyankuppam(a suburb of Pondicherry) and Thevanampattinam(a port town), as given by Anandarangam Pillai, is 12 ¼ Nazhi. Nazhi is the now forgotten measure of time used by Tamils and equals 24 minutes.It is 294 minutes or 4 hours and 54 minutes. This example proves that there was a temporal bias in engaging with spatialities

during this period. This temporal bias was necessary as the means of transport were slow and the routes were treacherous. This bias became an advantage in sending and receiving letters as well as trade goods through traders and couriers at designated time. In contemporary times, we are more oriented towards a spatial bias in measuring the distances between places and the time taken to cover the distance becomes secondary or the two measurements stand apart as temporal and spatial.

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# **Empowering Indian Higher Education through Social Media & ICTs: An Empirical Study in Select Colleges in Hyderabad**

*-Dr. P.V. Satya Prasad*

## **ABSTRACT**

**R**esearch Background: The increasing use of information and communication technology (ICT) and social media tools in higher education in India has been explored mainly about students' attitudes towards their adoption and usage in the universities and their impact on their academic performance. However, there is a lack of empirical research in the Indian higher education domain to improve the academic performance of students through the utilisation of ICT and social media that enables desired outcomes. The use and adoption of ICT and social media tools in higher education institutions across the country is a domain that has not been explored and investigated thoroughly. Therefore, the current research will explore the use of ICT and social media in higher education in our country with specific emphasis on its adoption and influence on student performance.

**Objectives:** The main objective of this study is to evaluate the factors that influence students' attitudes towards using ICT and social media at select colleges based in Hyderabad.

**Methodology:** To meet the specified objectives, the current research deployed primary data collection methods for gathering the relevant data. A close-ended questionnaire was distributed among students of post-graduate college, Secunderabad and the Sardar Patel College, Secunderabad to comprehend their attitudes regarding the use and adaptation of ICT and social media for learning. The Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS software by performing factor analysis and ANOVA test. For qualitative data, thematic content analysis was performed to reach conclusions.

**Keywords:** *Social Media, ICT, Higher Education, Student Attitudes and Academic Performance*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology (ICT) can be defined as social networks which organise communication and interaction among people through various social networking sites and social applications in cellular phones. In the last decade, social media has become a central part of every individual's life. Their use increased rapidly among people of all ages. In particular, college students have become more captivated by these sites than any other group, and the importance of social media has been increasing enormously. While Social Networking Sites (SNSs) have a huge impact on today's electronic world, they are overused or misused.

Although people have been using the internet to connect with others since the early 1980s, it is only in the

last decade that electronic services have proliferated, and their use has become a widespread practice, particularly amongst (Horizon, 2009).

This research examines the relationship between social media and its impact on empowering students in higher education institutions. Today, messages can spread across audiences targeting groups in real-time and generating changes and tendencies. Many people use social media to connect with various parts of the world. According to Susan Greenfield, an Oxford

University researcher, in her article, *The Quest for Identity In The 21st Century*, on Daily Mail UK, as a growing number of people discover the possibilities of the World Wide Web in which they become integral parts of it. As technology becomes more advanced, extended, handy and sophisticated, current forms of communication will renovate and will take advantage of the crowd-sourcing phenomenon.

With the rapid increase in the research of Information and Communication Technology, the main focus has been on the implementation of technology instead of examining the possibilities on how ICT can contribute to broader developmental objectives (Thompson & Walsham, 2010). In the research field of social media, studies have been conducted with a focus on the user's motivation, personal characteristics, adaptation to new online contexts and their use of social media in higher education.

Social media enables educational institutions to provide stakeholders with information about new research programs, changes to policies, events, job vacancies, alumni engagement and institutional news. Some colleges



and universities also use social media as a tool for recruiting students. Social media provides a perfect platform to highlight new courses, research and teaching staff and campus facilities to attract more students.

To gain a more comprehensive overview of the usage of social media for empowerment, it is essential to look at individual experiences. In examining the perceptions of college students from authentic examples provided by them, this study aims to give the users a voice in this discussion. Although generalisations cannot be made based on a limited number of individual experiences, by examining the perceptions and opinions of the users, this study aims to contribute to the general understanding of the use of social media platforms, particularly in a developing country like India. The purpose is not to judge whether ICT and social media have a positive or negative effect on society, or the lives of the individuals being interviewed. Instead, the main objective is to gain an in-depth understanding of how social media is perceived and the possibilities and dangers of their usage. It has also been pointed out that if a deep understanding of the use of social media is required for higher education development, it is important to examine the ways social media is being utilized (Wyche et al., 2013a). It has been suggested that studying the use of already popular platforms and building on the existing practices is more beneficial than implementing new ones (Wyche et al., 2013a). Indeed, by enhancing the existing platforms to fit the usage and by building on the actual usage, one is more likely to find sustainable ways how social media could be utilised for Higher Education Development (Wyche et al., 2013a).

Other researchers studied the role of social media. Smock, Ellison, Lampe, and Wohn (2011) investigated why people use Facebook by adopting the gratification model. Among the reasons were social collaboration, professional progression, and entertainment.

Further research performed by Hyllegard, Ogle, Tan and Reitz (2011) found that several social media websites are being utilised by companies to communicate with customers. Customers can express their views about a company or brand. LaDuque (2010) discovered that companies use social media websites to link directly with customers, increase brand loyalty, to create sales leads, and raise publicity through this medium. Furthermore, social media sites are being used for marketing research by both companies and customers (Casteleyn, Mottart, & Rutten, 2009). In addition, customers can obtain relevant information and can also investigate companies and brands on social media websites (Barnes, 2008).

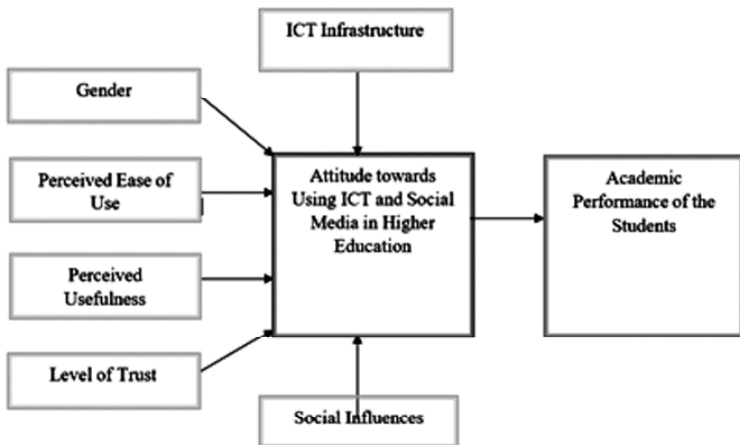
The purpose of this research paper is to analyse the impact of social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, on students' consumption patterns in higher education institutions and how in turn, this leads to the empowerment of these students.

This research paper also examines if the role of social media on consumption patterns differs in terms of gender. For example, are males or females more or less likely to use promotions offered by higher education institutions that they follow?

The final research question seeks to outline whether word-of-mouth recommendations made via social media

platforms have varying impacts based on the frequency of usage. The research objective of this study is to understand the concept of digital education and to establish Social media as the transformation tool in imparting quality higher education in India. For this, an analytical approach was used, and a questionnaire was prepared to collect data to analyse the impact of social media platforms in higher education from the perspective of a student.

**Fig. 1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**



(Refer Fig 1 Conceptual Framework)

## 2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

### AIM

This study aims at identifying the critical factors that influence the attitude of college students towards their use of ICT in learning in select colleges in Hyderabad, namely, Post-Graduate College, Secunderabad and Sardar Patel College, Secunderabad. It primarily focuses on assessing the impact of social media on their academic performance.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- ◆ To determine the factors influencing students' attitudes towards using ICT and social media at both colleges.
- ◆ To evaluate the impact of using ICT and social media on the student's performance at both colleges.
- ◆ To explore the use of ICTs in both colleges.
- ◆ To recommend suggestions regarding the effective use of ICT and social media.
- ◆ To ascertain the amount of time invested by students on social media networks

## **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

College students regularly use social media. Students make use of online communities which specialise in academic assistance and support (Lusk, 2010). The availability and accessibility of such communities enable the students to use networks effectively. Social media can provide many benefits to college students. They provide a virtual space to explore their interests or discuss their problems with others who share similar thoughts thereby strengthening online communication skills and knowledge. Students who may be reluctant to get involved in class interactions can participate in online discussions and blogs and write blogs for real audiences. There are newly developed web tools that can enhance learning (Brydolf, 2007). Regardless of these advantages, using social media can result in poor academic performance. About two-thirds of the students reported using social media while in class, studying, or doing their homework (Jacobsen, & Forste, 2011). This type of multitasking increases distraction while ultimately lowering academic performance.

While social media like Facebook, youtube and Twitter continue to gain popularity, this has resulted in disturbing situations wherein students adopt an indifferent attitude while performing essential tasks. For instance, in a survey that include 102 students, 57% of the participants stated that social media have made them less productive. This is mainly because social media makes them engage not in their lives but also in the life of others. Constant comparison between one's life and the life of others makes the student distracted, which therefore triggers a lack of concentration among the students.

Another study by Ohio State University contributed to the literature of the relationship between college students and their academic performance. According to the research, students who regularly use social media platforms are less likely were less likely to perform academically well, while students who were not interested in these websites gained better grades (Kalpidou, Costin, & Morris, 2011). Moreover, according to a new study by Karpinski and Duberstein (2013), college students who use "Facebook" had lower grade-point averages (GPAs) than those who did not. Nevertheless, another study found no correlation between social media usage and grades. There was no significant difference in grades between heavy users of social media and those considered light users. Additionally, there was no connection between grades and the social media platform used. For example, almost the same number of heavy and light users of both Facebook and YouTube received the same percentage of high and low grades.

Concerning the relationship of social media usage and college students, concurrent with past studies find that

online communication is linked to time spent in offline relationships. Findings of previous studies indicated that the use of social media and cellular-phone communication did not replace offline social interaction; instead, it facilitated it (Jacobsen & Forste, 2011). Students in these studies stated that these modes of communication were necessary for making friends and for supporting each other in the university. These modes of communication also helped the students connect with their counterparts in other universities (Oradini & Saunders, 2007). Furthermore, the relationship between social media and education has become encouraging over the college years, probably because upper-class students use social media to connect socially with their peers and participate in college life (Kalpidou, Costin, & Morris, 2011). Therefore, we need to keep in mind that the benefits of this interactive technology compensate for the risks when used positively; it can be an excellent tool (Brydolf, 2007).

There are some important technological factors for the success of ICT during implementation in Higher Education institutions. According to Warschauer (1998), teachers take a leading position that can help enhance students' motivation (Liu, 2009). Poor academic preparation, low awareness and inadequate training in using e-learning facilities and problems with internet connections can affect e-learning services and eventually discourage students from using them.

Hence, it has been argued that adequate technical support is an important part of the implementation and integration of ICT in an education system (Rhema et al., 2014) & Sifeetal., (2007)). Various studies have shown that numerous

elements of ICT support which affect students' interests and attitudes towards incorporating ICT in learning. Rhema & Miliszewska (2010), reported that Libyan higher institutions lack access to adequate network facilities.

Also, the study found that technical support was almost unavailable, resulting in delays in the installation, operation, and maintenance of equipment. The authors argued that these hindrances regarding ICT support severely discouraged its use by users.

#### **4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research was conducted using a specific framework in mind to achieve the overall objectives of the study. A descriptive survey design was employed to investigate the amount of social media usage among college students and its leading results. The current study will use primary data. It was completed by 150 college students to determine their use of social media and its effect on their academic performance. The survey will include closed questions. The questions were designed on 5- Likert scale and were distributed to obtain responses from students from PG College and SP College.

The survey focussed on recording data in the context to the use of social media among various students. This data showed the factors that influence the use of social media among college students. Some questions were asked to compare their academic performance before and after engaging in the use of social media. These questions will lead to a data analysis that reports the student's academic performance in both colleges.

A triangulation approach is used for data analysis. The quantitative data were analysed using SPSS software by

performing factor analysis and ANOVA test. For qualitative data, thematic content analysis was used to draw conclusions.

## 5. RESULTS

In this section, hypothesis testing was done on the data collected from questionnaires. The data collected from 150 students of Post Graduate College, Secunderabad and Sardar Patel College were tabulated and analysed to study the connection between the use of ICT and social media in colleges and its students. A linear regression analysis was applied by using SPSS software to test the hypothesis.

### HYPOTHESIS 1:

◆ H0A: Perceived ease of use is a contributing factor towards increasing the use of ICT and social media.

◆ H1A: Perceived ease of use is not a contributing factor towards increasing the use of ICT and social media. To determine whether there is a significant difference in the perceived ease of use between the respondents, a chi-square test for equal proportions was applied.

Table1: Utilization of technology in enhancing learning, flexibility and efficiency in curriculum delivery

	ObservedN	ExpectedN	Residual
StronglyDisagree	24	37.5	-13.5
Disagree	6	37.5	-31.5
Neither agree nordisagree	38	37.5	.5
Agree	82	37.5	44.5
Total	150		

Table 2

Chi-Square	84.133a
Df	3
Asymp.Sig.	.000



**INFERENCE**

From the table above, the value of the chi-square statistic was 84.133, and its corresponding p-value is 0.000<0.05. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we can conclude that Perceived ease of use is not a contributing factor towards the increasing use of ICT and social media. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

**HYPOTHESIS 2:**

◆ H0B: Gender is a factor in the increasing use of ICT and social media.

◆ H1B: Gender is not a factor in the increasing use of ICT and social media.

To determine whether there is a significant difference in gender between the respondents, a chi-square test for equal proportions was applied using SPSS.

Table 3: Gender

	ObservedN	ExpectedN	Residual
Male	91	75.0	16.0
Female	59	75.0	-16.0
Total	150		

Table 4: Test Statistics

Chi-Square	6.827b
df	1
Asymp.Sig.	.009

**INFERENCE**

From the table above the value of chi-square statistic was 6.827 and its corresponding p value is 0.009<0.05. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we can conclude that Gender is a factor towards the increasing use of ICT and social media. Therefore, an alternate hypothesis is accepted.

**HYPOTHESIS 3:**

◆ H0C: Students consider the level of trust before making use of ICT and social media

◆ H1C: Students do not consider the level of trust before using ICT and social media.

To determine whether there is a significant difference in the level of trust between the respondents, a chi-square test for equal proportions was applied by using SPSS.

Table 5: Student's competence in transversal skills (learning to learn, social competences, etc.)

	ObservedN	ExpectedN	Residual
Strongly Disagree	6	37.5	-31.5
Disagree	8	37.5	-29.5
Neither agree nor disagree	20	37.5	-17.5
Agree	116	37.5	78.5
Total	150		

Table 6: Test Statistics

	ObservedN	ExpectedN	Residual
Strongly Disagree	12	30.0	-18.0
Disagree	8	30.0	-22.0
Neither agree nor disagree	12	30.0	-18.0
Agree	112	30.0	82.0
Strongly agree	6	30.0	-24.0
Total	150		

**INFERENCE**

From the table above, the value of chi-square statistic was 222.16, and its corresponding p-value is  $0.000 < 0.05$ . Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we can conclude that Students consider the level of trust before using ICT and social media. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

**HYPOTHESIS 4:**

◆ H0D: ICT infrastructure is a contributing factor in the deployment of ICT in higher education.

◆ H1D: ICT infrastructure is not a contributing factor in the deployment of ICT in higher education. To determine whether there is a significant difference in ICT infrastructure between the respondents, a chi-square test for equal proportions was applied by using SPSS. (Refer to Table 7 or 7.1)

Table 7: Colleges do not provide fast internet services

Table 7.1: Test Statistics

Chi-Square	281.067c
Df	4
Asymp.Sig.	.000

**INFERENCE**

From the table above, the value of the chi-square statistic was 281.067, and its corresponding p-value is  $0.000 < 0.05$ . Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we can conclude that ICT infrastructure is not a contributing factor in the deployment of ICT in higher education. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

**HYPOTHESIS 5:**

◆ H0E: ICT and social media provide perceived usefulness to students.

◆ H1E: ICT and social media do not provide perceived usefulness to students.

To determine whether there is a significant difference in perceived usefulness between the respondents, a chi-square test for equal proportions was applied by using SPSS. (Refer to Table 8 or 9)

Table 8: Students use social media as an excuse of work in college

	ObservedN	ExpectedN	Residual
Strongly Disagree	8	30.0	-22.0
Disagree	12	30.0	-18.0
Neither agree nor disagree	32	30.0	2.0
Agree	82	30.0	52.0
Strongly agree	16	30.0	-14.0
Total	150		

Table 9: Test Statistics

Chi-Square	123.733c
Df	4
Asymp.Sig.	.000

### INFERENCE

From the table above, the value of the chi-square statistic was 123.733, and its corresponding p-value is  $0.000 < 0.05$ . Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we can conclude that ICT and social media provides perceived usefulness to students. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

### HYPOTHESIS 6:

◆ H0F: Social influence is a contributing factor towards decreasing the academic performance of students.

◆ H1F: Social influence is not a contributing factor resulting in a decrease in the academic performance of students.

To determine whether there is a significant difference in social influence between the respondents, a chi-square test for equal proportions was applied by using SPSS. (Refer to Table 10 or 11)

Table 10: Social media have connected students to many new friends resulting in shortage of time to study

	ObservedN	ExpectedN	Residual
Strongly Disagree	24	30.0	-6.0
Disagree	12	30.0	-18.0
Neither agree nor disagree	23	30.0	-7.0
Agree	77	30.0	47.0
Strongly agree	14	30.0	-16.0
Total	150		

Table 11: Test Statistics

Chi-Square	95.800a
df	4
Asymp.Sig.	.000

Notes. a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 30.0.

### INFERENCE

From the table above, the value of the chi-square statistic was 95.8, and its corresponding p-value is  $0.000 < 0.05$ . Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we can conclude that Social influence is a contributing factor towards decreasing the academic performance of students. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

### HYPOTHESIS 7

◆ H<sub>0</sub>G: Attitude towards using ICT and social media in higher education is a contributing factor towards decreasing the academic performance of students.

◆ H<sub>1</sub>G: Attitude towards using ICT and social media in higher education is a contributing factor towards decreasing the academic performance of students.

To determine whether there is a significant difference in Attitude towards using ICT and social media in higher

education between the respondents, a chi-square test for equal proportions was applied by using SPSS.

Table 13: Test Analysis

	ObservedN	ExpectedN	Residual
Strongly Disagree	18	30.0	-12.0
Disagree	12	30.0	-18.0
Neither agree nor disagree	18	30.0	-12.0
Agree	100	30.0	70.0
Strongly agree	2	30.0	-28.0
Total	150		

### INFERENCE

From the table above, the value of the chi-square statistic was 209.867, and its corresponding p-value is  $0.000 < 0.05$ . Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we can conclude that Attitude towards using ICT and social media in higher education is a contributing factor towards decreasing the academic performance of students. Therefore, null hypothesis is accepted.

### 6. DISCUSSION

ICT is found in all workplace sectors in developed countries, and it is becoming increasingly used in the developing world. Today, children, at the very least, need to become aware of the potential of new technologies in all aspects of their lives. While the benefits of learning through the application of ICTs and social media have become increasingly evident, and the role of teachers in harnessing these technologies in favour of students pursuing higher education in developing countries has also come under focus (Selinger, 2001c). This researcher collected data from 150 students of Post-graduate college, Secunderabad and Sardar Patel College, Secunderabad.

Quantitative questionnaires were provided to the students wherein questions regarding the impact of ICT and social media on their academic performance. The findings of the research are mentioned below.

### **6.1.1 USE OF ICT AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

The respondents were asked about the use and time they spent on social media in a day. Another question asked was about the sites they used the most. According to the analysis, 60% of the respondents use social media, and 37% devote 1-2 hours daily to social media. The most used social networking site is found to be Instagram which involves 16% of the total respondents. College students regularly use social media. College students use online communities for academic assistance and support (Lusk, 2010). The availability of social media helped develop networks by making them easily accessible. Social media could provide many benefits for college students, which include providing a virtual space for them to explore their interests or problems with individuals of similar thought processes, academic support while strengthening online communication skills and knowledge.

### **6.1.2. NEED FOR ICTs IN HIEs**

According to the literature review, college students can use online communities for academic assistance and support (Lusk, 2010). The availability of social media helps to develop networks. According to the analysis of the data collected by the students of both colleges, it found that 57% of the respondents agreed that there is a need to implement ICT in colleges to acquaint students with technology; 58% agree that ICT helps students to prepare themselves for jobs that require skills in technology; 79%

agree that there was a need of ICT in colleges to improve performance and effectiveness in teaching, management and many other social activities; 55% agree that ICT was needed to enhance learning, flexibility and efficiency in curriculum delivery.

### **6.1.3. POSITIVE IMPACT OF ICTs IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

According to the literature review, students' connection with other students is essential, especially within the first few weeks of college. According to them, these social media platforms help them to connect well with their fellows (Oradini & Saunders, 2007). Furthermore, the relationship between social media and well-being seems to become encouraging over the college years, probably because upper-class students use social media to connect socially with their peers and participate in college life (Kalpidou, Costin, & Morris, 2011). Therefore, we need to remember that the benefits of this interactive technology compensate for the risks, but when used positively, it can be an excellent tool (Brydolf, 2007). According to the data analysis of the study, 68% of the respondents agree that there is a direct impact of ICT on student's motivation; 56% agree that there is a direct impact on student's achievement; 54.7% agree that ICT enhances students' higher order thinking skills; 77.3% agree that it enhances the students' competence in transversal skills.

### **6.1.4. NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF ICTs IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

According to the literature review, new web tools are developing all the time that are enhancing learning (Brydolf,



2007). There is a negative side attached to the use of social media, which is poor academic performance. About two-thirds of the students reported using social media while in class, studying or doing homework (Jacobsen, & Forste, 2011). These distractions lower the academic performance of students. According to the findings of this research, 52% of the respondents agree that the use of ICT lacks face-to-face communication; 60.7% of respondents agree that the use of ICT in colleges gives rise to excessive use of mobile phones by students; 54.7% agree that that students use social media in college as an excuse of work; 51.3% agree that easy access of information makes them dependent on the internet.

#### **6.1.5. DEPLOYMENT OF ICTs in Post Graduate College & Sardar Patel College**

According to the literature review, Warschauer (1998) pointed out that teachers occupy a top position in enhancing students' motivation (Liu, 2009). Poor preparation, awareness levels of the instructor and training in using e-learning facilities, availability of fewer connections, slow downloads, etc, can affect e-learning services and eventually discourage students from using e-learning. Hence, it has rightly been argued that adequate technical support is an integral part of the implementation and integration of ICT in an education system (Rhema et al., 2014) & Sife et al., (2007). According to the findings of the research, 74.7% agree that colleges do not provide fast internet services; 52% agree that teachers do not use interactive whiteboards; 58.7% agree that laptops do not work correctly in colleges; 56.7% agree that there is no proper lighting to improve the vision of projectors.

### **6.1.6. EFFECT OF ICT AND SOCIAL MEDIA ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

According to the literature review, a study released by Ohio State University reveals the relationship between college students and their academic performance. According to the research, students who regularly use social media platforms are less likely to perform academically. In contrast, students not interested in these social media websites gain better grades (Kalpidou, Costin, & Morris, 2011). According to the findings of the research, 50.7% agree that there is a lot of influence of social networking sites on students; 51.3% agree that social media have connected students to many new friends resulting in a shortage of time to study; 66.7% agree that students are becoming lazy because of easy access to information; 49.3% agree that in the process of being updated, they leave their studies behind.

### **7. CONCLUSION**

ICT has the potential to either enhance or disturb the social interactions upon which the process of learning primarily depends (Noss and Pachler, 1999). The process of accommodating ICT into colleges may make teachers and students different, sometimes accustomed to assumptions.

As per the hypothesis of this research, perceived ease of use is a contributing factor for the increase in the use of ICT and social media; social media contribute in the decrease of use of ICT and social media; gender does not contribute to the increase or decreasing use of ICT and social media. Students consider the level of trust before making use of ICT. Unsatisfactory infrastructure while

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implementing ICT leads to the deployment of ICT in higher education. ICT and social media provide perceived usefulness to students. Attitude towards using ICT and social media in higher education is a contributing factor towards decreasing the academic performance of students.

Thus, there is a direct relationship between the use of ICT and social media and the academic performance of students. The study points out that the development of education infrastructure is required for developing digital education across the country.

Government of India has also taken major Initiatives for the development of digital education in India like opening of IIT's and IIM's in new locations as well as allocating educational grants for research scholars in most government institutions.

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# **Our Democracy, Our Revolution: From British-India to Gandhian-India**

*-Dr. Neeraj Khattri*

## **ABSTRACT**

**A**ll we have today is a mixture of Congress, Bhartiya Janta Party and Aam Aadmi Party in the name of democracy. While we are still finding answers about Democratic System in India, the story is not yet over. In our struggle for democracy, we have not exactly done what is required. To bring a change in the system and give our legend a happy ending, our revolutions have left a lesson to learn- "People shouldn't be afraid of their government. Governments should be afraid of their people." This paper tries to explore Indian Democracy with three different kinds of Democratic revolution.

***Keywords:** Democracy, Revolution, Political Party, Movement, Opinion*

## **INTRODUCTION**

India is the seventh largest and the second most populous country in the world, with around one-sixth of its population, of about a billion and a quarter. It is the world's largest democracy. It is one of the world's oldest civilizations yet,

a very young nation. Despite holding great records of revolutions, the question still remains unanswered- Is India a Democratic Country? The story of democracy in India till date has been played over three reels. Let us get back to the basics.

## **STAGE I. ESTABLISHMENT OF INDIAN DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM**

### **The Coming of Gandhi**

While India ruled under the British crown, a man of principles Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi returned to India in 1915 from South Africa after being racially discriminated against. Gandhi, a young Indian lawyer working in South Africa, refuses to comply with racial segregation rules on a South African train and is forcibly ejected at Pietermaritzburg. He faced similar problems in his own motherland. Gaining courage to stand up against the evil of autocracy, he launched the "Satyagraha Movement" accentuating the power of truth. Giving birth to democracy in India, he became the father of the nation; divinely known as Mahatma Gandhi.

Surprisingly, all his Satyagraha movements were performed obeying laws of Ahimsa (Non-violence). Gandhi said- "Ahimsa is not the weapon of the weak. It is the weapon of the strong. Weak cannot practice Ahimsa. It involves active participation and presence of Mind."

From 1919's "Rowlatt Act", movements began to spread across the nation. The beginning of the revolution started with the "Non-cooperation movement." The movement was started with the deliberation in mind that the British rule had lasted in India only because of the cooperation by Indians. If Indians refused to cooperate then India would gain

Independence. The name of Mahatma began spreading around. People started following him in all parts of the country. However, the movement could not continue as anticipated but Mahatma Gandhi said this movement inspired him and he asserted that India could be liberated only by the use of force.

Then came The Salt Satyagraha; "Dandi March" started by Mahatma Gandhi in 1930 from Sabarmati Ashram until Dandi where he manufactured Salt. He broke the Salt Law and started a nationwide Civil disobedience Movement. An important feature of this movement was the large-scale participation of women. Moved by Gandhiji's call they began to see service to the nation as a sacred duty of women. This movement undermined British authority and united India's population in a step for independence under leadership of Indian National Congress. It signaled the struggle for Indian Swaraj (self-rule) and marked the commencement of democracy in India.

When the patience reached heights, Gandhiji launched the Quit India Movement. This was the last mass movement organized by Gandhiji with the famous slogan of 'Do or die'. India on 15th August 1947 attained independence. Thus, without any bloodshed, war or violence, India could achieve freedom and the joy of Poorna Swaraj was raised. The Constituent Assembly completed the work of drafting the constitution and on 26 January 1950 the Republic of India was officially proclaimed.

The Constituent Assembly elected Dr. Rajendra Prasad as the first President of India. Under the governance of Indian National Congress though India was freed from British autocracy, the leaders of the party misused the power



and weakened the democracy in India.

## **II. STRENGTHENING OF DEMOCRACY IN INDIA**

### **The Arrival of Lok Naik**

In 1974, came the JP movement against the authoritarian rule of the Congress that shook Indira Gandhi's government, churned out a new generation of leaders and tried to instill honesty in political life. It was one of the largest people's movement in independent India started by Jayaprakash Narayan, a charming and fiery leader, who also took part in India's struggle for Independence. His role as the leader of the movement earned him the title of Loknayak-People's Leader.

The movement provided the people an important channel through which they could express their resentment over many issues-rising prices, unemployment, food scarcity and corruption. Political dissent, public anger, the energy of the youth, and a vision for a society built on lokniti (peoples' participation), rather than Rajniti (political power) powered the movement. He brought together these diverse sentiments and differing political positions into a mass movement which was Anti-Congress, striving to establish the rule of law and strengthen the Indian democratic system. His movement was a non-violent struggle by the people "Sampoorna Kranti " to fight against the abuse of democratic institutions in India.

The origins of the movement also lay in the NavNirman Movement of the youth in Gujarat in 1973-74, with a demand for the government to be dismissed and the assembly dissolved. Simultaneously, of far greater significance, were the events in Bihar in March 1974, where the student's union sought the resignation of Chief minister Abdul Gaffur and the dissolution of the assembly. Narayan was requested to

provide leadership. He agreed on the condition that the protesters would not use violence. On April 9, 1974, he led a silent protest in Patna. The protestors had covered their mouths and many had their hands tied. Despite Narayan's intermittent ill health, protests continued with people demanding that the Congress government adhere to standards of public conduct and reform electoral laws.

Narayan persuaded the crowd against resorting to violence, saying: "Friends, this is a total revolution. This is not a movement merely for the dissolution of the assembly. We have to go far, very far." It was at that moment that the youth of the Bihar Action Committee conferred on him the title Loknayak. When Narayan was suffering from severe injuries due to police action, the Allahabad High Court said Indira Gandhi could not remain in office and nullified her election on grounds of electoral malpractice. While Narayan proclaimed Total Revolution to bring about a social revolution, Emergency was declared on June 26 and in a pre-dawn sweep, Narayan and other leaders were arrested and the press censored. Twenty months of opposition to the Emergency saw the movement spreading to academic institutions, with common people joining in along with the administrators.

The entire Opposition was united. After the Emergency in 1977, the Janta Party came to power under JPs guidance. The Janta party was voted into power and became the first non-Congress party to form government at the centre. Having challenged the abuse of power, Narayan himself turned away from it. His expectation, "Power is such a glue that it binds together", was clearly disproved when cracks appeared in the government and the party, first in Bihar, and

then subsequently at the national level.

The return of the sunlight of democracy due largely to the defiance of a 73-year old Jayaprakash Narayan, a congenital democrat. The Emergency was not only the defeat of JP and his movement against corruption, inflation and misrule, but also of the entire population that loved freedom. The state power of Indira Gandhi lost whereas the moral authority of JP won.

Vulnerability of India's institutions of governance and how effectively the President, Union Cabinet, Parliament, Supreme Court, Governors, State Assemblies, senior civil servants, police and intelligence agencies and the Press were manipulated by a dictatorial prime minister. More than 30 years after the movement, JPs total Revolution remained a pipe dream but there are two significant issues still talked about are-the quality of leaders it generated, and the ease with which many student leaders, such as Lalu Prasad Yadav and Nitish Kumar changed the political association.

To be fair to JP, his intentions were noble. His movement raised the larger question of propriety and morality in public life as well as of corruption and sought a solution to it. "As I diagnose the root cause of the country's critical state of health, I identify it unhesitatingly as corruption and a precipitous are major fall in the moral standards of our politics and public life," he wrote about his movement.

### **III. REFRAMING THE INDIAN DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM**

**The return of the so called Gandhi's avatar; Anna Hazare**

Anna's Anti Corruption Movement, 2012- A new

landmark in the history of independent India, a new path paved by the Veteran anti- corruption campaigner Anna Hazare. His struggle against corruption was a gentle reminder of Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha. His fast-unto death, the five day fast has shown the world what Gandhism still exists in today's world.

The power of Gandhi's non violence will never cease to exist in the ages to come. While the world is getting ready for wars, a respected social activist in India; Anna Hazare, was waging a peaceful, non violent war against corruption. His urge was to free India from the greatest evil that is corruption. This fight against corruption staged at Jantar Mantar was not a one- man show. People from different parts of the country gave their support to Anna Hazare. The greatest merit of this nonviolent struggle was that no political party was involved in it. Anna Hazare and his supporters were not influenced by any political party.

The fast ended on a very positive note when the idea of Jan Lokpal Bill was accepted by the Government of India. According to the Jan Lokpal Bill, there will be a separate body to investigate and curb the ugly face of India-CORRUPTION; where people have the right to raise their voice against corrupt politicians. The Right to Information Act was passed due to the thrust laid by Anna Hazare.

According to the right to information act, the citizens of India have the right to get information on any matter concerning the country. According to Anna, a very effective way to end corruption is to reduce the money power in elections. Crores of rupees are deposited as black money by many influential people abroad. These reformations if enforced can provide that extra impetus needed to curb

corruption along with the Lokpal bill. The Lokpal bill is cent percent legitimate and it upholds the spirit of the constitution because its main aim is to create a corruption-free India. But unfortunately, Anna's movement was bound by loopholes.

Yet there is a sense of foreboding that the movement of 2011 is headed the same way as that of the Lok Nayak. It has already got entangled in the politics of the day. The political forces at play have their own selfish motives and agendas in place. The fact that none of such participants stands on a higher moral ground on the issue of corruption should be a big worry for Hazare. The original issue has started getting sidelined now. To make matters worse, the tone from all sides has gone shriller, the scope for sane voices has got squeezed and the possibility of a compromise is getting more distant. Anna has already called it the "second freedom movement."

There are lessons from JP's movement which Anna's agitation could take. Winning over public sentiment and mobilizing people are easy - there will always be support for a good cause - but the real challenge lies in staying in control and taking the cause ahead. It requires a lot of flexibility and a mature and pragmatic handling of issues which, unfortunately, look impossible in the currently vitiated atmosphere. The government has a vested interest in making the issue political.

Civil society is a difficult opponent to handle; taking on political enemies is far easier. The challenge for civil society now is to undo the damage. In Team Anna they have invested a lot of trust. Moreover, it has a genuine goal to achieve and it should deliver this time. The government of

the day will feel threatened by what we perceive as the arrogance of the government is actually its fear. It is scared of the consequences of the ongoing movement. But there has to be a way to convince them that the movement is not aimed at overthrowing the government but to bring about change the country so desperately requires. Unfortunately, there's a lack of moderate voices on both sides to ease the tension and play a constructive role.

Anna's movement had support of 24x7 televisions to spread the message across, but its reach was but at the same time, media attention and aggressive public support are a dangerously addictive combination. Both are detrimental to a reasonable debate. However, Anna did make efforts to clean the system. It was like a cold war between Gandhi's avatar and the Gandhis in Congress. Towards the end of 2012, Hazare and Bedi reformed Team Anna, while Kejriwal and some others split from the erstwhile a political movement with the intention of forming what was to become the Aam Aadmi Party which again is making efforts to win over the Congress powers.

All we have today is a mixture of Congress, Janta Party and Aam Aadmi Party in the name of democracy. While we are still finding answers about Democratic System in India, the story is not yet over. In our struggle for democracy, we have not exactly done what is required.

In a democratic form of government political parties are key actors. A political party may be defined as an organization oriented towards achieving legitimate control of government through an electoral process. Political Party is an organization established with the aim of achieving governmental power and using that power to pursue a specific

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programme. Political parties are based on a certain understanding of society and how it ought to be. In a democratic system the interests of different groups are also represented by political parties, who take up their case. Different interest groups will work towards influencing political parties.

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## **Understanding Media Pluralism**

*-Dr. Mihir Ranjan Patra*

### **INTRODUCTION**

**I**n any nation, there exists a multitude of cultural pluralities along with varied opinions on various political or economic issues. India is known for its diversities, from religious diversities, regional heterogeneity, linguistic multiplicities to diverse and distinct cultural practices. Naturally with such diversities emerge even greater differences in opinions. And yet despite of all these differences, we stand as one nation.

And this oneness may stand strong only as long as these differences are celebrated. That they are acknowledged and fairly represented. This representation is made possible through a link, a bridge between the government and our diverse population. A bridge that only the media can sustain. But it is argued that there must exist multiplicity in media, allowing it to give voice to the voiceless and thus represent a multitude of voices.

### **DEFINING MEDIA PLURALISM**

The argument on 'Media Pluralism' in the recent years has gained much gravity in the context of media and

democracy. This term is regularly used in evaluation of balance in media and in arguments for public intervention in media markets. But despite being at the heart of debates in academic theories and contemporary media policy debates, only a handful of people are acquainted with the multifarious concept of media pluralism. Media pluralism in simple terms may be understood as the presence of numerous distinct independent voices with varied political opinions and representation of different cultures of a nation in the media. But the concept of pluralism may be understood in multiple ways.

In their book 'Media, Pluralism and Diversity'; Peggy Valcke, Miklos Sukosd and Robert G. Picard discuss the concept as follows:

'The term (Media Pluralism) is employed so loosely that it allows varied interpretations to be attached, and this ... lack of clarity is the consequence of indefiniteness of the term. The term is derived from 'plural', an indistinct quantitative concept indicating the existence of more than a single thing. This alone allows the term plurality to be used in various ways when applied to media.'

As suggested by the text above, there remains an air of ambiguity in the term as it does not indicate the quality of its multiplicity. The media may be plural in any given sense. It may be defined in terms of media outlets, media ownership or of media operation. Further study of the same book reveals:

'For some it means a plurality of media outlets. This is indicated by having multiple types of media and multiple units of each media, and the existence of a range of print, broadcast, satellite, and Internet content providers can also

represent pluralism. For other observers, pluralism means plurality in ownership, that is, a range of owners and different types of ownership.'

The Committee of Experts on Media Concentrations and Pluralism set up by the Council Of Europe member States explain pluralism as follows:

"Media pluralism should be understood as diversity of media supply, reflected, for example, in the existence of a plurality of independent and autonomous media and a diversity of media contents available to the public".

This definition speaks of two aspects of pluralism in media. One in terms of ownership and the other in the content available.

At a broader level the concept of pluralism has two main connotations - political pluralism and cultural pluralism. Political pluralism includes the co-existence of differing political views and opinions which are important ingredients to a healthy democracy and the lack of which could pose a potential threat to democracy. Cultural pluralism highlights the need for expression of a variety of cultures, in the media, thus reflecting the diversity within society. This is important as its absence poses a threat to social inclusion and cohesion.

But the number of media, its ownership, outlet, or operation, however, do not exclusively define pluralism. Rather these usages are only shorthand semantic tools. The phrase 'media pluralism' enshrines benefits of free flow of information, ideas, and opinions. This simply denotes freedom of expression and the right to a variety of opinions. Thus, the idea of pluralism far exceeds the mere existence of multiple media owners and the availability of varied media content. But rather it speaks of variety in expression in terms

of different opinions and ideas along with an environment receptive of free flow of information and different voices. In a nutshell, pluralism allows the media to become a 'voice for the voiceless', a 'mouthpiece of the marginalised'.

### **MEDIA CONCENTRATION: A CONTENTIOUS ISSUE**

Media concentration refers to the domination of supply of media content by a few firms in the industry. High concentration of media ownership is seen as undesirable for it may result in over representation of certain political views and values and /or certain forms of cultural expression (most likely those backed by the dominant media owners given its commercial considerations or ideological grounds) at the expense of others. Hence media concentration is set to reduce the multiplicity in media content produced by the media firms.

There may be two major arguments to the discussion of media concentration. One that denies its existence by claiming that the current age is at the peak of pluralisation of voices in the media, with greater emphasis on social media. While on the other hand there exists another line of thought that defends media concentration arguing that concentrated ownership gains greater freedom over efficient usage of resources (be it financial or cultural or social) and hence are better set and better motivated to produce content in greater variety.

Kari Karppinen in his book 'Rethinking Media Pluralism and Communicative Abundance' (2009) has the following argument:

'In contrast to longstanding concerns for homogenisation of content and concentration of media

power, many accounts of the contemporary "communicative abundance" present an image of almost infinite choice and an unparalleled pluralization of voices that have access to the public sphere.'

Scholars of media studies have categorised the present-day media environment as the "communicative abundance" (Keane 1999), "age of plenty" (Ellis 2002), "supersaturation" (Gitlin 2002), or "cultural chaos" (McNair 2006). As there is relatively more information available in public today, concerns for multiplicity in media are not only challenged, but some, consider it as much as analytically obsolete. Researchers such as Kari Karppinen pose the question if it even meaningful to speak of diversity and pluralism when the institution of media as a whole is characterized more by abundance than scarcity.

The first argument stands true only in the context of the emergence of social media. This new form of media allows anyone to speak of anything, essentially reflecting the idea of 'free speech'. It provides a platform to everyone to have an equal say. This feature of the new media has inundated the platform with a multitude of voices. But such multiplicity is achieved at the expense of credibility as well as consistency of the sources and information.

In contrast to this, while the latter argument recognizes the existence of media concentration, it also justifies it by stating the benefits of replacing a number of independent media suppliers. These arguments question if the idea of media pluralism is concerned with diversity of information and free flow of opinions or rather the existence of multiple owners of different media firms?

Following is an excerpt from 'Media Concentration and

Pluralism, Dr Prashant Kumar (2014), supporting the argument in favour of media concentration:

'High level of market domination implies fewer competing suppliers and fewer competing suppliers imply a more cost-efficient utilization of resources. The latter implies greater availability of resources for innovation which in turn would result in an increased range of output and hence greater pluralism.'

### **DIFFERING DIVERSITIES**

All arguments in support of media concentration highlight only its benefits (in replacing independent media suppliers) in the context of optimal resource utilisation, spread and hold of a few influential media owners in the society and the resultant efficiency in management of the media system. But the ill effects of such tight grip of a handful of media giants over the business, are blatantly overlooked. With that the emergence of social media, had the majority of the public convinced that access to this new form of media was the answer to their struggles with underrepresentation or complete suppression of their voices in the mainstream media. While the public is kept busy in the social media allure, the pluralism in mainstream media has been spiralling downwards. Ever since the beginning, there have been only a few big names practicing much control over the production of media content. With that, the massive sell off of media firms to the business giants in the past couple of months has yet again added another level of complication to the problem of media pluralism.

### **MEDIA PLURALISM IN INDIA**

The media in India, especially the main stream media is facing its darkest hour. Despite being a leader in terms of

media production and media consumption, India is lamenting at 150th position in the world-press-freedom-index, only four places ahead of Russia and Afghanistan. With massive monopolisation of media-content, today the Indian-press largely presents partisan and prejudiced content to portray and pursue planted agendas.

The plurality of platforms has been on the rise but the plurality of points-of-view has seen a sharp plummet. While the cries of dissent have been side-lined into a spiral of silence. On the other hand, an army of ill-informed public as unquestioning followers is being built.

### **MEDIA PLURALISM AND DATA PRIVACY**

Mediapluralism may only stand the test of political sways and money power if public be granted with personal data privacy. In 2017 the Indian Supreme Court constituted data privacy as a fundamental right. But after 5 years in the making the PersonalDataPrivacy Bill, 2019 was withdrawn from the parliament in August, 2022. Despite of a record of rather poor executions India has always been renowned for its remarkably well-deliberated legislations. But personal-data privacy has been bereaved of even an 'onpaper' legislative backing.

### **CONCLUSION**

Democracy of the nation has been crippled by its corrupted fourth pillar of strength, the media. The institution of media has been traded off at the expense of freedom of expression. The watchdog has been stifled. Many experts claim that the media is a puppet publishing the propagandas and pufferies of the politically powerful. The arrest of press freedom has essentially blindfolded the public. With every voice silenced only the echoes of media-owners remain.

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And the stories of their glory as the only source of news for the public.

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## **Awadhi Folk Songs: A Comparative Study Between Traditional Media and New Media**

*-Aanchal Praveen &  
Neeraj Singh*

### **ABSTRACT**

**I**ndia is a land of cultural diversity. At every milestone, the language and culture change. The oral lore and the folk lore connect to most of the population. This folk culture of India has evolved a lot and has been through a large variety of traditional mass media. This conversion is quite visible in fairs and festivals. The forms of these traditional mass media however remain constant. The content keeps on changing with the audience, the medium and the message. This too is mass communication but not in the sense we understand it. It is not immediate, instantaneous, one-way, and overpowering in its audio-visual impact. It is more of a two-way interpersonal communication. Awadhi as a folk language has been used in several traditional mass media and now there are several new media platforms using Awadhi as their mode of mass communication.

This paper tends to draw a difference and seek commonness between the traditional means of mass

communication and new mediums of mass communication when it comes to the usage of Awadhi folk language. The objective of this paper is to find out how the new media has given a reboot to Awadhi folk songs. In this research we have done a comparative study between Bollywood songs and YouTube channels that have been working on Awadhi folk songs in the last five years. After the several steps taken by the government for the enhancement of regional languages, this paper will be very helpful in revamping the status of Awadhi language in form of folk songs.

**Keywords:** *Awadhi Folk, Bollywood, Culture, Media, New Media, Traditional Media*

## **INTRODUCTION**

India is a land full of cultural variations. It is a land of rich and diverse cult across the boundaries. This nation has several tribes and non-traditional communities. Across the nation, in various states and territories, there are infinite number of folk cultures, traditions, castes, festivals, languages, customs, ceremonies and other micro and macro elements joining together making a culturally rich and diverse nation. These things derive their credibility from the various religions followed by people in India. Right from the puppetry, the jatakas, the Natak, the rath yatra, the Ras Leela, the Ram Leela, the Yakshagana and many others have their roots in the religious scriptures found in the country. These are the affordable means of communication used by local people, villagers etc. India has been successfully transmitting these values from generation to generation from last many centuries. Known for one of the oldest cultural practices, India has enriched its oral and folk culture through several movements in history. Evidence establishes that most

of the early traditions were carried orally and verbally. The "shruti parampara" has given us one of the most trusted upon literature of Kabir Dasa. Now, with the advancements in scientific innovation and information communication technology, the oral traditions can now be documented in forms of Audio-Visuals. These advancements have resulted in the decentralization of cultural values. The wave of this cultural transmission moves from zero to infinity and vice versa.

### **THE CONCEPT OF FOLK MEDIA**

Folk means the race of people across the globe. The old, traditional ways of amusement or communication comes under folk mediums. These trends are carried orally from generations to generations. It becomes a slice of daily life where locals use the popular culture to propagate existing ideas and values. Folk media is a very powerful tool for grass root level of communication as the locals adhere much to their cultural practices, customs, and celebrations.

### **TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA**

There is no grammatical structure as such in which the folk media can be performed. It is largely dependent on the oral and functional transmission and so the source remains unknown. Mostly found in any religious gathering, traditional folk media is seen during keertanas, Durga Puja festivities, chhath puja, ramleela, ras leela, wedding songs like banna-banni, sohar, kajri, faag, biyah geet etc. These are the songs that celebrate daily happenings in the lives of people.

Folk art is a form of self-expression that satiates the hunger of moral values with entertainment which is full of drama and cult practices. The basic characteristic of folk media is that it preserves the tradition and culture of the

ancestors. Puppetry, dance, songs, drama, and others are the basic forms of folk culture in India. And because Indian economy is largely based of agriculture and cottage and small-scale industries, the communication can be fruitful only when the grass root level is achieved. These ways are helpful in the rural development.

### **FOLK SONGS**

The locals have a great connection with their folk culture and songs whether it is keertanas, jagratas, mata ki chauki, sohar, banna banni, kajri, faag, naktaura etc. getting more closer to them we can find these folk songs popularly sung in wedding functions, birth of a child, exhibitions, fairs etc. These songs are mostly in local dialects, can be seen singing in farms while harvest etc. This is an easy way of communicating with the locals. Folk songs helps extension and outreach programmes. These songs are composed on the subjects which are to be communicated to the people. They are in the form of a story with some moral. The tune of the song is usually popular and local to which the villagers are accustomed to.

### **THE CONCEPT OF NEW MEDIA**

As the name implies, the term New Media is a newer form of media including digital modes of transmission and use of computer technology of course. This is because the new media is a by-product of Information and communication revolution. New media can be anything that involves the usage of digital modes of communication. Any web portal, any audio-visual content, blog, social media platforms etc. are a part of new media. With the fast-running lives these days, people find it very hectic to take out time for reading books or newspaper or sit back to watch

television. For the saviour, comes the new media which gives access to all these utilities in a single click system. While driving a car or while working at office or while cooking at home, new media gives us all in a very less time and a lesser space. Everything is available to us inside a single smartphone.

The concept of New Media is more specified when a comparison between the traditional and new means of communication is drawn. Today the most popular means of communication is Internet which gives power in every hand, and this is what it makes it different from other modes of communication. In even easier ways we can say that the content distributed through the means of internet, best known as a New Media.

### **THE CONCEPT OF AWADH AND AWADHI**

Awadh, the region of modern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, earlier known as Avadh or Oudh during the British reign. Primarily synonymous to the scriptures of Jain, Buddha, and Hinduism, the Awadh is bounded by the Ganga Doab in south west and by Rohilkhand in Northwest, Nepal in the North and Purvanchal in the east. The natives of this area are known as Awadhi or Awadhiya. Awadh has its roots back in Mughal Empire and was later ruled by Nawabs. The capital of Awadh was Lucknow, which is the current capital of modern Uttar Pradesh.

The region of Awadh is popularly known for its Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb, a cultural mix of Hindu and Muslim religion. It can be better understood as the fusion of Hindu religion under the Indo Persian culture. The region of Awadh has a vast population of Hindus and a strong presence of Muslims in the urban belt of the area. Established in 1722, Awadh had

Faizabad as its capital before Nawab Asif-ud-daula shifted it to Lucknow. This area historically was very famous for the Nawabi lavish lifestyle which majorly included the culture of having courtesans and dancers in their area. This gave birth to new forms of music and revamped many old styles. The ghazals, thumri, qawwali and other folk music forms came into existence in this area.

Not just bound to the walls of court, the folk music came beyond and was majorly sung during the festivities or ceremonies. The Awadh region is a very culturally rich area of the state which performed several folk arts. These art or dance forms were largely based on the stories of Lord Rama who was born in Ayodhya and Lord Krishna who was born in Mathura (not a part of Awadh, but the stories of Lord Krishna's childhood are popularly sung in folk songs).

Awadhi folklore is majorly derived from the daily deeds of society. The Vedic description of human life is divided in to four major ashrams:

- ◆ Bramhacharya
- ◆ Grihastha
- ◆ Vanaprastha
- ◆ Sanyas

And all the folk lore which is considered as the major media for communication is derived from the various rituals performed during these four stages of life. It ranges from the birth to the death. All the solah samskars of Sanatan Dharma are different rituals and stages of human life on which these folk songs are made. The Hindu Mythology talks about the life dominated by work. We have always read about work being worship. The results of our deeds follow us throughout the seven lives which a human is believed to have

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in Hindu Mythology. It is mentioned in Mahabharata "कर्म प्रधान विश्व रचि राखा."

The Hindu Mythology talks about various different stages of human life, right from its conception to death. These are known as solah samskara. These solah samskars are-

1. गर्भीधान
2. पुंसवन
3. सीमन्तोन्नयन
4. जातक्रम
5. नामकरण
6. निष्क्रमण
7. अन्नप्राशन
8. चड़ाकर्म
9. वद्यारम्भं
10. कर्णवेध
11. यज्ञोपवीत
12. वेदारम्भ
13. केशांत
14. समावर्तन
15. विवाह
16. अंत्येष्टि

Awadhi folklore has stories and songs for all the above-mentioned stages of life

### **AWADHI FOLKSONGS**

Most popular genre of Awadhi songs

- ◆ Sohar
- ◆ Badhayi
- ◆ Chhathi

- ◆ Annprashan
- ◆ Devi geet
- ◆ Vivah geet
- ◆ Naktaa
- ◆ Sawan etc.

Sohar: This is mainly sung on the birth of child. Sohar has a great importance when it comes to folk songs. These, according to rituals are divided into major two parts. One includes the satirical description of the relationship of a lady with her in-laws, whereas other includes the songs of rites performed after the birth of child.

जा दिन लालन तुम भये, मैं बलि जईहौं रे  
चनन केरी पलकिया गज ओबरी बिछाबहु रे

Badhayi: This is sung when the child is born, and father's sisters come home with gifts and sweets. This is sung by them to congratulate the mother.

देखो बिरज मा बाजे बधईया  
कौने छुरवा ते नारू छिनायो, काहे के जल अन्हावायो ।  
सोने के छुरवा ते नारू छिनायो, जमुना के जल अन्हावायो ॥

Chhathi: These songs are sung after the six days of the birth of the child. On this day the entire family is invited for feast. The cooks are hired for them, food isn't cooked at home. In Awadhi region, it is mandatory to cook Urad daal vada on this day. It is said that on this day child breast feeds his mother for the first time. Also, the mother eats food after six days of delivery. Meanwhile she is fed with other healthy and nutritious ayurvedic foods.

अलबेली जच्चा मेरी खूब बनी, बेटा जाई जच्चा मेरी खूब बनी ।  
पियारी जच्चा जैसे रेशम लच्छा जच्चा केरे केस बने ॥



**Annaprasan:** This is one of the most important samskar of the 16s. On this day the child is fed cereal for the first time. Usually celebrated after the six months of birth as per the best day and time, this ritual is celebrated at a grand level by family. Any kind of cereal before six months will be harmful to the infant. All these rituals are also having scientific validations.

को मोरे चाउर बेसाहै औ गौँँ दुहावै ।

को मोरे खिरिया बनावै लालन कै पसनिया ॥

**Devi Geet:** Also known as chachar, devi geets are sung at usually all the occasions. These songs are made all in the praise of Goddesses.

दरसन देयो माय, मोर मनु लागो दरस कयिहाँ ।

मैया छंह तौ नीकी नीम्बी केरी जहाँ जुडली बयार ॥

**VIVA AH:** - Usually sung during the various rituals of Hindu Marriage in the Awadhi region.

बाजन बाजे दुआरे, श्री रघुबर जी बियाहन आये

गईया के गोबरा से अंगना लिपाओ, गावो मंगलचार

श्री रघुबर जी बियाहन आये ॥

**Nakta:** It is one more marriage ritual where when all the male members of the family go to baraat, all the female members play different games and dramas for their entertainment.

फुलवर मंगवा दो बाहरे बलम ।

कलकत्ते ना जायो, बम्बई ना जायो, नखलऊ से मंगवा देओ बाहरे बलम ॥

**Sawan:** Sung during the sawan month of Hindu calendar which falls during July to August according to Gregorian calendar, is a kind of song celebrating the feel of love and romance during monsoon. This is also based upon the relation of a daughter with her father's home.

पांच पेड़ निम्बिया लगाय कै मोरे भईया चले परदेस रे  
बारहिं बरस भईया बाहुरे, सासू काह बैठन का देयुं रे ॥

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

To understand the various aspects of Awadhi language and for doing a deeper analysis we need to divide the history of Awadhi language into timeline. The history of development of Awadhi language dates to thousands of years. It is as older as the history of Hindi and it's a quite tough task to divide them both. Dr. Jagdish Piyush, the founder of Awadhi Akademia and Priyadarshini Mahila Vidyapeeth has formulated the timeline of Awadhi as follows:

- i) Ancient Awadhi Literature: 11th century to 14th century
- ii) Medieval Awadhi Literature: 14th century to 19th century
- iii) Modern Awadhi Literature: 1900- 1960
- iv) New Awakening Era: 1960 - till date

As per the Awadh Granthawali part 2 by Dr. Jaddgish Piyush, published by Vani Prakashan, "Awadhi serves an area which has been historically important from ancient times. Here stands Ayodhya (also known as Saketa), the capital of the Kosala kingdom which was very important up to the Buddhist period. Faizabad and Lucknow played a very important part during the reign of the later Moghals. The Nawabs of Oudh have been famous for their culture, gaiety and splendor. The Rulers of Rewa have not only been great patrons of learning and art but have themselves been poets and literary men. TanSen, the Prince of Indian musicians, was in the court of Maharaja Ram Chand Singh from where he was taken away by Akbar. The literary field Awadhi stands immortalized in the Ramacharita-manasa of Tulsidas.

## PROMINENT WORKS

The prominent works done in the Awadhi language starts from the works done by Ameer Khusro and goes to Malik Muhammad Jayasi and Goswami Tulasidas. Ameer Khusro better known as the father of Quawwalli has started the genre of Ghazals in India. He has done a lot of work in Awadhi language.

“खुसरो दरिया प्रेम का, उल्टी वा की धार

जो उतरा सो डूब गया, जो डूबा सो पार”

Kutuban has done his works in "Premakhyan" in Awadhi which can be termed as Romanticism in English language. "Mrugawati" is one of the most famous works of Kutuban. It is a tale of a king and his two queens. It is a romantic tale of love and sacrifice.

“रुकमिनि पुनि वैसहि मरि गई । कुलवंती सत सों सति भई ॥

बाहर वह भीतर वह होई । घर बाहर को रहै न जोई ॥

विधि कर चतित न जानै आनु । जो सिरजा सोजाहि निआनु ॥”

Manjhan has written Madhumalti in Awadhi which is again a romantic tale whose key characters are played by apsaras of heaven. They are the planners of entire love and separation.

“देखत ही पहिचानेउ तोहीं । एही रूप जेहि छँदरयो मोही”

Kabir Das, a mystic saint and poet of 15th century has done great works in Awadhi language. He was being critical to both Hinduism and Islam.

“साधू भूखा भाव का, धन का भूखा नाहिं ।

धन का भूखा जी फिरै, सो तो साधू नाहिं”

## AWADHI SONGS IN BOLLYWOOD MOVIES

Awadhi songs are not all over the Bollywood, they are often being overlapped by Bhojपुरी. Here are some popular Awadhi songs in Hindi movies in many years:

- ◆ Inhin Logon Ne - Pakeezah.
- ◆ Hamari Atariya - Dedh Ishqiya.
- ◆ Ambwa Taley - Javed Bashir & Humera Channa-Coke Studio -Pakistan.
- ◆ Paayaliya - Dev D.
- ◆ Hare Hare Baans - There are many versions of this folk song, the coke studio version is quite good. \*originally by Ameer Khusro which was a mix of Awadhi and Braj.
- ◆ Chaap Tilak: a graceful mix of Awadhi and Braj written originally by Ameer Khusro.
- ◆ Rang Barse - Silsila. \*sung by Amtitabh Bachchan and written by Harivansh Rai Bachchan.
- ◆ Palanhare - Lagaan. All songs in Lagaan have a strong Awadhi influence.
- ◆ Kaun Disha Mein & Sanchi Kahein - Nadiya Ke Paar.
- ◆ Kahe Ko Byahi Bides - Umrao Jaan. It has a beautiful version sung by Malini Awasthi too.
- ◆ Ek Rahen Eer - Amitabh Bachchan.
- ◆ Mangal Bhavan Amangal Hari - Geet Gata Chal.

The instrumentation of this paper involves the content analysis of the Awadhi language songs in Bollywood and Awadhi language songs channel on YouTube during the time period of last five years. This starts from year 2017 till 2021, where I have tried to compare the rise in Awadhi language songs channel on YouTube which is a new media platform to the usage of Awadhi songs in Bollywood movies.

### **BOLLYWOOD MOVIES IN 2017**

In the year 2017, the total number of films made by Bollywood are 126, out of which following are the top-rated movies of that year

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1	Secret Superstar	₹.977 crore
2	Tiger Zinda Hai	₹.570.83 crore
3	Hindi Medium	₹.334.36 crore
4	Toilet: Ek Prem Katha	₹.311.5 crore
5	Golmaal Again	₹.311.05 crore
6	Raees	₹.308.10 crore
7	Judwaa 2	₹.227.59 crore
8	Tubelight	₹.211.14 crore
8	Kaabil	₹.208.14 crore
9	Badrinath Ki Dulhania	₹.200.45 crore

While 115 other films were made, we could find the usage of Awadhi background in the movie Jolly LLB 2. Begum Jaan, a period drama made on the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, showcased the lives of courtesans and their homes situated at the borders of both the countries. As already discussed earlier the area of early Awadh, especially during the British reign, predominantly saw the culture of having courtesans. This film has a song Prem me tohre aisi padi main... sung by Asha Bhonsle is originally the song of famous singer of Awadhi folk, Begum Akhtar.

#### Bollywood Movies In 2018

The year 2018 witnessed the making of 103, where the highest grossing films of the year were-

1	Sanju	₹.586.85 crore
2	Padmaavat	₹.571.98 crore
3	Andhadhun	₹.456.89 crore
4	Simmba	₹.391.68 crore
5	Thugs of Hindustan	
6	Race 3	₹.303 crore

7	Baaghi 2	₹.254.33 crore
8	Hichki	
9	Badhaai Ho	₹.221.44 crore
10	Pad Man	₹.212.02 crore

Amongst the above-mentioned films, Padmavat was based on the epic Padmavat written by Malik Muhammad Jaysi in Awadhi. Padmavat (or Padmawat) is an epic poem written in 1540 by Sufi poet Malik Muhammad Jayasi, who wrote it in the Hindustani language of Awadhi. In the 93 other films, around 4 films were shot in the background of Lucknow including Mulk, Raid, Mukkebaaz and Saheb Biwi and Gangster. Although there is no such mention of any Awadhi folk song or even the use of Awadhi language in these 103 films in year 2018 made by Hindi film industry.

### **BOLLYWOOD MOVIES IN 2019**

The year 2019 saw the making of 125 Hindi films. The following films have the highest collection during the year 2019.

1	War	₹.475.50 crore
2	Saaho	₹.433 crore
3	Kabir Singh	₹.379.02 crore
4	Uri: The Surgical Strike	₹.342.06 crore
5	Bharat	₹.325.58 crore
6	Good Newwz	₹.318.57 crore
7	Housefull 4	₹.296 crore
8	Mission Mangal	₹.290.59 crore
9	Gully Boy	₹.238.16 crore
10	Dabangg 3	₹.230.93 crore

In the above and the other 115 films, we the film Ram ki janmabhoomi made by Jitendra Narayan Singh Tyagi, made on the controversial Ram Mandir and Babri Masjid issue. The film's plot is set in Ayodhya which is an eternal part of the Awadh region. The keertan-bhajan and the sound score of the movie is given by T-series, which is completely based on Awadhi music. A film, The family of Thakuranj directed by Manoj K Jha was shot in the Awadhi background but no mention of the same language is there. A few parts of the film Bala was also shot in Lucknow.

### **BOLLYWOOD MOVIES IN 2020**

In the year 2020 the Hindi film industry made 104 films, the top rated among whose are following-

1	Tanhaji	₹.368 crore
2	Baaghi 3	₹.137.05 crore
3	Street Dancer 3D	₹.97 crore
4	Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan	₹.86.39 crore
5	Malang	₹.88.50 crore
6	Chhapaak	₹.55.44 crore
7	Love Aaj Kal	₹.52.63 crore
8	Jawaani Jaaneman	₹.44.77 crore
9	Thappad	₹.44.54 crore
10	Panga	

The year 2020 could not see much of theatrical releases due to pandemic COVID-19. The releases started happening on the OTT platforms which is yet another form of New Media. The film Gulaabo-Sitaabo was released on Amazon Prime Video on 12 July 2020 which is entirely shot and set in the areas of old Lucknow. The film showcases the Awadhi lifestyle and Nawabi culture. The set of the film is an old

house of Nawabi Architecture situated in the Kaiserbagh area of old Lucknow and is known to be a heritage site, a home of successors of Nawabs.

### **BOLLYWOOD MOVIES IN 2021**

In the year 2021, the Hindi film industry popularly known as Bollywood, produced 103 films. The highest collection films at box office were-

1	Sooryavanshi	₹.294.91 crore
2	83	₹.193.73 crore
3	Antim: The Final Truth	₹.59.11 crore
4	Bell Bottom	₹.50.58 crore
5	Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui	₹.41.23 crore
6	Tadap	₹.34.86 crore
7	Roohi	₹.30.33 crore
8	Mumbai Saga	₹.22.29 crore
9	Bunty Aur Babli 2	
10	Radhe	₹.18.33 crore

This year could not see any production in Awadhi or any involvement of Awadhi as a language or folk or even culture in the films. Although a film Ramprasad ki Tehra Vin was plotted in a family at Lucknow which could not say much about the Awadhi culture.

### **THE YOUTUBE CHANNELS AND AWADHI FOLK SONGS**

The New media platforms give powers in the hand of common man. This makes everyone, a content creator. While looking for the YouTube channels in Awadhi I found that there are uncountable number of channels on which the Awadhi folk content is available. I am hereby presenting the data of most popular five channels of Awadhi folk and their statistics.



**-Malini Awasthi with 1,58,000 subscribers**

Official YouTube channel of Legendary Folk Singer Malini Awasthi. Joined Apr 9, 2011, and currently having 19,388,404 views. This channel has a playlist of more than 1000 folk songs of Uttar Pradesh which includes Awadhi, Bhojpuri and Maithili too.

**-Indian Desi Folk with 11.6 thousand subscribers.**

Joined Apr 26, 2017 has currently 3,267,174 views. This channel has a playlist of more than 500 folk songs with an identified playlist of Uttar Pradesh that has over 38 Awadhi folk songs. This channel includes the folk songs of the following folk artists - Sangeeta Roy, Menaka Misra, Pradeep Singh, Shipra Dayal, Mithilesh Tiwari and many more.

**-Sharda Sinha with 20.5 thousand subscribers.**

Joined on 15 October 2018, currently have 1,791,507 views. She has also sung the song kahe tose saajan tohri sajaniya from the film Maine Pyaar kiya and Taar bijli se patle hamare piya from the film Gangs of Wasseypur 2. She has also won Padma Shri for her contribution in the folk songs.

**-Folk singer Rashmi with 19.9 thousand subscribers.**

Joined Jul 23, 2017, currently have 2,800,210 views. Her channel has a playlist of all major genre of Awadhi folk songs.

**-Awadhi Kai Arghan with 7.61 thousand subscribers.**

Joined Sep 26, 2017, this channel has 789,227 views. Solely made for Awadhi folk content, this channel gives a complete solution to all kinds of Awadhi folk songs which are usually sung by locals and not by any particular artist.

**CONCLUSION**

After seeing the data available to us following points came as a result-

1. The Hindi film industry has a lesser contribution to the enrichment of Folk cultures of India. This implies that Bollywood is making lesser films on regional areas and its content.

2. The new media and especially platforms like YouTube gives immense power in the hands of locals to generate local folk content.

3. New mediums are easier, cheaper and affordable ways of generating more content. These contents are reliable when we refer to verified handles.

4. In the last few years Bollywood has done lesser regional films. Although the OTT platforms are coming up with newer and more localized content, it is still a part of new media no matter who is the content producer for it.

5. The traditional media has been overshadowed by new media platforms which are more affordable and has a wider reach. To watch a movie, we have to go to cinema hall or multiplexes or wait till the movie is broadcasted on television. But in case of platforms like that of YouTube, the access is in every hand and a common man is both the producer and the consumer of the content.

6. Giving a new media platform like that of YouTube to commoners will definitely enhance the chances of bringing folk songs into mainstream.

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# **Contribution of Media in the Preservation of Indian Art and Culture: An Exploratory Study**

*-Anumika Bahukhandi &  
Prof. (Dr.) Fakira Mohan Nahak*

## **ABSTRACT**

**A**nation's art and culture speak volumes about its ineffaceable historical events, practiced customs, religious convictions, and beliefs. With a history as great as that of India, the heritage which our ancestors left for us is truly celebratory and exemplary. Be it Mithila's famous Madhubani Art, Tamil Nadu's Bharatanatyam conceptualized by Natya Shashtra, rhythmic notes of the immemorial Indian classical music, regal Banarasi Brocade emboldened by the Mughals, or the artistic prowess presumably inherited by our sculptors from Lord Vishwakarma, India has never lacked connoisseurs. Ever since Hindustan came into being, its pages have been inked with extraordinary and myriad accomplishments. What makes India's cultural diversity unique is the spiritual involvement of its people irrespective of their religions, communities, castes, or social standings. The multifarious cultural and art forms such as paintings, sculptures, theatre,

folk dances, music, handicrafts, and various festivals are not limited to specific geographic locations but have been incepted in different states of the country. A glimpse of our age-old traditions and practices can be caught through these art forms and their splendour has also acquired international recognition.

Recently, Kolkata's Durga Puja was featured by UNESCO in its list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (ICH). Rich with aesthetic perfection and artfulness, it is a marvel that India tasted such creativity at a time when technology was non-existent. Spanning centuries, the possession of such rich works of art has been influenced by various themes such as weddings, wars, celebrations, gods and goddesses, fantasy, fertility and so on. The researchers have attempted to highlight the various forms of art and culture prevalent in India through this study and the measures which the media has taken to preserve them for the current and upcoming generations. Because, if not kept fresh in memory, the same may get lost in history, the study elucidates the efforts being put in by the Indian media to immortalize the distinct types of art forms and cultural practices of India. To conduct the study, the researchers have made use of the 'Historical and Ethnographic Research' methodology and has examined data available on various digital platforms such as that of the Ministry of Culture, Centre for Cultural Resources and Training, official pages of various Indian artistic forms, and other culture-centric informative pages.

**Keywords:** *India's Art & Culture, Art Forms in India, Indian Media, Indian Art, Indian Culture, Culture in India, Indian Religious Practices, Indian Festivals, UNESCO,*

*Indian Cultural Heritage, Dance forms in India, Indian Textiles, Indian Paintings, Ancient Indian Culture, Indian Sculptures, Cultures of Indian State, Art forms of Indian States, Indian Cultural Heritage*

## **INTRODUCTION**

As a weapon of mass influence, the media's role in preserving India's art and culture has been quite noticeable. With multiple government digital platforms, e-books, e-libraries, documentaries, radio, and other sources promoting and highlighting India's age-old practices, skills and talent, media has been putting great efforts into sharing the nation's cultural treasure with the world. It is enthralling to note that each state and region in the country has something distinct to offer, which has a fascinating history. Summing up India's Art and Culture is an arduous task as the topic is exceedingly large with manifold branches and sub-branches. The article, therefore, considers some of the major art forms and cultural practices of certain regions of the country, throwing light on their history and relevance. The paper also elaborates upon various initiatives the digital media has taken to keep India's ethnic accomplishments alive in the common man's heart and soul.

Human evolution and phylogeny have been interesting phenomena, with communication ripening from non-verbal gestures, primitive art, and the use of words to mass communication with the help of audio, video, and then audio-visual means. It is nothing less than a wonder how the man who once struggled to convey his thoughts even to his own tribe/ family members has now reached out to the entire world through the latest technologies and digital means.



In 'Role of Social Media in Revolutionizing Communication in India' media has played a prominent role in revolutionizing young minds by spreading awareness relating to our country's inception, history, development as well as rights (KV & Jayaprakash, 2019). A country's essence resides in how well-sustained its cultural norms, practices, traditions, and creativity are. Being well-acquainted with our roots is imperative for the enhancement of the already existing art forms and social customs as well as for new future discoveries. With the media's power seeping into every nook and corner of the nation, it is no more hidden that even the rural dwellers have all the basic electronic and print facilities (television, newspapers, radio) which connect them to the world. Even social media websites have been serving as great platforms for binding distinct cultures together and helping people acknowledge the same. People are getting aware of each other's unique beliefs, rituals, traditions, and art forms. But still, there are many of these crafts and art forms which are not extinct and need to be revived for future generations.

### **REVIUEW OF LITERATURE**

◆ **Role of Media in Preservation of Culture: A Comparative Analysis of Primetime News Bulletins of Two Regional Television Channels** - This study addresses the importance of media, especially television regarding the promotion of our culture. Two of Odisha's different regional TV channels have been taken into consideration (Nahak, n.d.).

◆ **The Impact of Social Media Usage in Art and Culture: A Qualitative Study** - This particular research study evaluates the advancement of social media and how productive it has

been in putting emphasis on the art and culture of India (Sharma & Nayyar, 2019).

◆ Preservation of Tribal Culture and Tradition: An Appraisal - This paper has analyzed why tribal culture and traditions are important and why they should be preserved (Kumar, n.d.).

◆ Effectiveness of Community Radio in Preservation and Promotion of the Indigenous Culture - The focus of this paper is the state of Rajasthan and what role the community radio stations have played in preserving its indigenous culture (Sharma, L., et al., 2021).

◆ Media and Culture in Indian Society: Conflict or Co-Operation - India's media-culture framework has been studied in this paper and efforts have been put to find out a link between the two (Reddi, 1989).

### **METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

The researchers have majorly taken digital media into consideration for their study. A total of six digital media sources, including social websites, have been acknowledged to analyze the importance of media in preserving India's art, culture, and traditional practices. Content has been compiled after going through different websites set up by the government of India and the facilities and information they offer. The details provided on these websites have been examined and it has been well thought over if the same has been of any help or not. Information about the four states in focus has been collected from various authentic web portals dedicated to the art forms mentioned above in the article. The researchers have also tried to find out the contribution of mainstream Indian news channels in promoting the nation's culture and art but could not find any concrete

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evidence which reflects efforts towards spreading much awareness about these.

## **FAMOUS ART AND CULTURE OF INDIAN STATES: UTTAR PRADESH, RAJASTHAN, BIHAR, AND UTTARAKHAND**

### **Uttar Pradesh**

Known for its mannerism and exotic cultural and artistic variants, Lucknow's historical city of Nawabs is a hub of piquant poetry, royal cuisine and other well-preserved archaic art forms which garners international attention due to its old-world charm. Believed to be incepted by the Mughal empress, Nur Jahan, the city's Chikankari Embroidery is one of the matchless and most uncommon styles that has existed. 36 distinct types of stitches are used for this work, which is done on fabrics such as doriya, muslin, silk, chiffon, etc. (Culture and Heritage, n.d.). Apart from this, other famous forms of embroidery include Zardozi and Kamdani. For the unversed, the art of kite-making too prospered in Lucknow under the Nawabi patronage. The city also offers a treat for the taste buds with its royal Awadhi dishes such as Chicken Korma, Galouti Kebab, Shami Kebab, Sheermal, etc. What cannot be missed out is one of India's most graceful classical dance forms Kathak which took birth in Lucknow in the courts of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah.

### **Rajasthan**

With traditions abound, Rajasthan's Pink City or the city of Jaipur has a history of lively and high-spirited culture. A master in handicrafts such as traditional jewelry, handmade juttis, blue pottery, puppetry, etc., the city has an endless variety to offer (Arts & Culture, n.d.). Once

upon a time ruled by both Rajputs and the Mughals, the love for art and craft remained a common denominator. To strengthen their trade relations with foreign nations, the royals roped in some of the very talented overseas artists. The state holds many cultural events monthly to celebrate and showcase its myriad dance forms such as Ghoomar, Kalbelia, and other tribal dances such as Bhopa, Gair, Chari, etc. Mughals also gave birth to miniature paintings in Jaipur in 1555 which mainly depicted religious practices, events, folk tales, and the royal lives of the kings. Inspired by the creativity, later, Rajasthani locals took motivation from the same and created their own art inspired by local themes. Artistic prowess also got reflected in the famous Bandhani Art, Sanganeri Block Printing, Kundan and Meenakari work, and the likes.

### **Bihar**

Acknowledged as one of the oldest places with human settlement, Bihar's Mithila and Madhubani paintings are world-famous and rich in themes which hold great value for the common man such as rural scenes, gods and goddesses, celebrations, life events, animal forms, and much more. The history of centuries-old Madhubani paintings goes back to the time when womenfolk of villages used vegetable dyes to paint the walls. (Art, Culture and Youth Department, n.d.) Bihar's folk songs such as Ropnigeet, Sohar and Katnigeet are a recital of the regular daily events which affect an individual's life. A Bihari festive event is incomplete without these beautiful folk songs. Another traditional practice which is a major event in the state is Chatt Puja, which is observed by local women for paying gratitude to Sun God for maintaining life on earth.

## **Uttarakhand**

Be it the exquisite Tehri (Garhwal) Nath, the intricately designed Kumaoni Pichoda, the hand-carved wooden artefacts or the Garhwali/ Kumaoni pahadi dances, the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand is culturally diverse, with quite a different experience to offer to the tourists. Majorly dominated by the Kumaoni and Garhwali art and culture, the region boasts of a plethora of visually rich ingenious art forms and practices. The lesser-heard Barada Nati, Pandav Nritya, Jagar, Bajuband, Mangal Geet, etc. are all examples of the state's folk music and dance (Art and Culture in Uttarakhand, n.d.). The state has numerous embellished beauties in the form of temples, located in different regions, which are dedicated to different Gods and have marvelous architectural styles. Kumaon's Aipan or Alpana is a popular art form, which is made by drawing complicated geometrical designs depicting nature, gods and goddesses on walls, cloth, and floors.

"India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great-grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only." - Mark Twain

## **ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA IN PRESERVING INDIA'S ART & CULTURE: INITIATIVES**

The government of India has diligently made use of digital media in helping the citizens as well as non-Indians learn about the nation's great historic culture, practices, and traditions. To protect our regional cultural practices, dance forms, paintings, music, food, and other significant art forms, it has created many online websites and digital

platforms. This has yielded good results as people from across the world can now read about the culture of any Indian state or region with just one click, especially if they are unable to visit the place physically.

Some of the digital initiatives undertaken by the Indian government are listed below:

### **Ministry of Culture, India**

The Ministry of Culture's website [indiaculture.gov.in](http://indiaculture.gov.in) is a platform to highlight India's cultural diversity and plurality. Its objective is to safeguard and govern the country's cultural heritage and promote the same globally. It also works towards developing a sense of pride and aesthetic liking in people towards the heritage left by their ancestors (Website of Ministry of Culture, n.d.).

### **National Museum of India (Website)**

The National Museum of India, located in Delhi, has a dedicated website which serves as a virtual museum. The website has various videos and photo galleries which display historical artistic objects along with their history and purpose (National Museum New Delhi, n.d.). People can visit the website and get enlightened about India's artistic achievements and accomplishments.

### **Centre for Cultural Resources and Training**

The centre bridges the gap between education and culture and is an autonomous institution backed up by the Ministry of Culture, India. Its website [cctindia.gov.in](http://cctindia.gov.in) has been imparting cultural knowledge to students, teachers, and educationalists to staple it with national identity.

### **Incredible India**

This is the Ministry of Tourism's website ([incredibleindia.org](http://incredibleindia.org)) is an interactive digital platform which

has come into being to India's holistic cultural and spiritual heritage. Furthermore, the ministry has also joined hands with Google Arts & Culture and created an online hub for promoting the nation's many festivals, visit-worthy destinations, museums, etc.

### **National Databank on Indian Art and Culture**

Another digital pilot project which has been a prerogative of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, the databank was conceptualized by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts by partnering with the Archaeological Survey of India (National Databank on Indian Art & Culture, n.d.). Its aim is to make resources related to India's culture and art digitally available to the world on a single window. One can flip through various rare books, take a virtual tour of India's archaeological wonders and attend travelling exhibitions from the comfort of their home.

Apart from digital awareness, the media has also been proactive in making use of the social media websites such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc., in bringing people from different geographical locals together virtually and helping them gain knowledge about each other's culture. Media conglomerates such as India Today Group, Times of Indian Group, Hindustan Times, etc., have time and again shared visuals from different festivities occasionally on their official web handles. Many times, campaigns are also run to help small business artisans earn an extra living with the help of donations or actual purchases. Facebook pages like Indian Culture and Tradition was founded on April 11, 2012 and it already has more than 50,000 followers (Sharma & Nayyar, 2019).

Even radio stations broadcast programmes based on folk art, music and culture frequently in interactive formats which ensure the community participation and engagement (Et al., 2021).

## **RESULTS, DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION**

Although the media has helped the government to a good extent in promoting our cultural heritage and traditions, it has been observed that the role of major news channels has been negligible. Apart from circulating occasional news on different festivals, advertising regional art forms and showing glimpses of some selected art forms and local events, nothing much has been done in this regard. It is sad that apart from Doordarshan, which majorly focuses on the promotion of Indian culture and artistic practices, none of the biggies made any major contribution because of how crucial it is to bind the knowledge of our ancient customs to our hearts.

Even the regional news channels such as TV9 Bangla, MAHUAA TV, ABP Asmita, Mangalam Jain TV, Mathrabhoomi News, ETV Oriya, and OTV have performed better than the nationally renowned ones, with the latter broadcasting culturally rich shows and dramas relevant to the local audience at least. Both ETV Oriya and OTV often air special episodes and go for live broadcasts of different cultural issues which helps in propagating the cultural heritage of the state to a wider global audience (Role of Media in Preservation of Culture, n.d.).

It is yet to be deciphered as to what the reason is behind the big media agencies neglecting such an important piece of awareness when they are aware of their wide-reaching influence and reach. Hours of discussions and talk shows



are hosted for movies, which are either controversial or flops, but no dedicated intellectual or interactive show runs for the sake of the nation's artistic development or progress. No wonder today's young generation is more interested in visiting fun parks, gaming zones, and video game parlours rather than yearning to visit museums, art exhibitions, cultural fests, classical musical concerts, handicraft markets, religious places, and other historically relevant and rich destinations. The Indian culture of today is diverse in form, full of dichotomies and contradictions, where the individual's link is to family, caste, and locality without a strong sense of an overall society (Reddi, 1989).

It remains questioned why electronic media has time and space for propaganda and irrelevant shows and programmes when the priority should be something different and productive. India is globally acclaimed as a culturally prosperous nation, with a grand history and line of skillful accomplishments. But if no attention is paid to the glorification of its culture and art forms passed down from the ancestors, the future generation is prone to remaining oblivious of how great the country was with the term 'cultural declination' featured as a new topic in their academic books. Changes brought through modern and scientific attitudes are healthy sign for their development, but at the same time attention should be paid to preserve their traditional systems, which have immense value (Kumar, n.d.).

### **WAYS INDIA MEDIA CAN ADOPT TO PROMOTE ART AND CULTURE: SUGGESTIONS**

◆ A culturally dedicated daily show, spanning 15-20 minutes, should be aired by major news channels daily for the consumers. The show can focus on the cultural practices

and art variety of different Indian regions which lack attention, and which are slowly fading away.

◆ More documentaries should be made which should promote our ancient heritage, its history, relevance, and prospects.

◆ Railway Stations, bus stands, airports, and passport offices to have outdoor and indoor hoardings displaying visuals from the local culture and festivities.

◆ Cinema halls should run a culturally rich short advertisement before the commencement of the movie.

◆ News channels can offer customized subscriptions to their audience on social media official pages so that they directly find posts and pictures related to their choice of topic on their feed.

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**Social Movements and Mobilisations  
Mediated by the Catholic Church:  
A Study on the Vizhinjam Port Project**

*-Arathi C Babu*

**ABSTRACT**

**F**ishing communities protesting developmental projects that affect their traditional livelihood practices is nothing new. The role of Catholic priests in organizing social movements on behalf of fishers is rather unique. Mukkuvar is a traditional fishing community located on the southwestern coast of India. Despite Kerala's successful performance in social sectors like health, education, and social welfare, the Mukkuvar community is among the most disadvantaged, socially and economically backward community in the state whose livelihood depends on marine fishing.

Like many other fishing villages in southern Kerala, Vizhinjam, a coastal village in the Trivandrum district, has a vibrant associational civil society largely mediated and leveraged by the Latin Catholic Church. The present study focuses on the cultural dynamics of the fishing community in Vizhinjam and tries to explore how Church, as the civil

society, spearheads the social movement within the community against the construction of the port. This study seeks to examine the interventions of the Church in social, political, and livelihood issues of the fishing community in connection with the ongoing international seaport at Vizhinjam.

Using in-depth interviews, the study attempts to understand the 'Cultural Universe' of the fishers and the central part of religion in the context of the Vizhinjam Seaport project. The study's findings suggest that even though the Church supported the project in the initial stage due to the pressure from the dominant discourse, it shifted its position later, opposing the project by mobilising the fishers. Changing power relations between the state and the religious civil society have resulted in the positioning of the Church in the development discourse.

**Keywords:** *Catholic Church, Civil Society, Fishers, Mukkuvar Community, Social Movement, Vizhinjam Port Project*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Fishing communities protesting developmental projects that impact their traditional livelihood practices is nothing new. The role of Catholic priests in organizing social movements on behalf of fishers is rather unique. The space occupied by religious and faith-based organisations (FBOs) in India is diverse, and the involvement of religious organisations in democratic politics often crosses the boundaries of 'Secular Spaces' (Raof, 2019). It is not uncommon for them to appear in public spaces as protesters against social issues, to engage in political mobilisations, and to participate actively in the implementation of state policies and programs.

Scholarly interest in social movements, particularly regarding communication, has grown significantly in recent years when ideologically constituted movements profoundly influenced public and social policy. Social movements are types of collective action, that arise in response to issues of inequality, oppression, and unmet social, political, economic, or cultural demands (Horn, 2013). People come together with a common purpose, often to address structural inequalities or protect individuals and communities' rights. The various organisations give identity, leadership, and coordination to the movement with a common aim of creating social change. Social movements, particularly those driven by NGOs and civil societies, tend to depend on the use of media and communication to attract public support and put pressure on governments (Obregón & Tufte, 2017).

The idea of a port in Trivandrum, the capital city of Kerala, was formulated during the 1990s. In 2015, the Kerala government approved the contract with the Adani group to construct and operate a port in the fishing village of Vizhinjam. The project, which will have an adverse impact on the lives of thousands of members of the fishing community in the Latin Christian heartland of Kerala, is being run by one of the world's wealthiest men. Since its inception, the port project has attracted widespread criticism and public scrutiny from different sections of society. Different class formations and intense desire for upward social mobility within the community resulted in a mixed response towards the project from the community members (Ashni & Santhosh, 2019)

Like many other fishing villages in southern Kerala, Vizhinjam, a coastal village in the Trivandrum district, has a

vibrant associational civil society largely mediated and leveraged by the Latin Catholic Church (LCC). This form of associational civil society served as a space utilised by the fishers to negotiate with the state as well as with the church. The Latin Catholic church spearheads the fisher's protest against the construction of Vizhinjam International Transshipment Deepwater Multipurpose Seaport by Adani ports.

The present study focuses on the cultural dynamics of the fishing community in Vizhinjam and tries to explore how Church, as the civil society, spearheads the social movement within the community against the construction of the port. This study seeks to examine the interventions of the Church in social, political, and livelihood issues of the fishing community in connection with the ongoing international seaport at Vizhinjam.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Civil Society and Social Movements**

Social movements are seen as being shaped and determined by social structure (Pichardo, 1997). Social movements have engaged with issues such as environment, racism, domestic violence, human rights, and communication rights. Social movements act as communicative spectacles because they provide spaces where many forms of communication are used to inform, educate and protest. Social movements seek opportunities for dialogue and discussion with the political authorities and society in addition to denouncing different forms of oppression and injustice.

Social movements are constantly changing due to multiple social, political, and cultural dynamics. Such



changes create new discourses to understand the complexity of communication dynamics in social movements (Obregón & Tufte, 2017). A new set of social actors has emerged in the current wave of social movements across the globe, and activism and social movement have gained importance. Scholarly studies point to the vital role played by the institutions of civil society in the origination of social change through citizen mobilisation (Dunlap & Brulle, 2015).

The internal organisational resources and capacities of civil society organisations are key to their socio-political role. Today, the concept of civil society advanced in the liberal tradition informs the discourse of all international and governmental development organisations, as well as affiliated practitioners and thinkers. According to the postulations of secularisation theorists, India was supposed to eventually transform into a secular society where religion is restricted to private spheres. (Hovland, 2008). India has diverse religious organisations, and their involvement in socio-political policies of the state often crosses the boundaries of their secular positions. At times, they appear in public spaces as protestors of certain issues and directly engage in political mobilisations.

### **The Fishing Community**

Mukkuvar is a traditional fishing community located on the southwestern coast of India. Despite Kerala's successful performance in social sectors like health, education, and social welfare, the Mukkuvar community is among the most disadvantaged, socially and economically backward community in the state whose livelihood depends on marine fishing. The social environment of the Mukkuvar community

is different from other agrarian, tribal, and caste communities due to their occupational nature as marine fisheries (Mary, 2018). It is a community recognised as a minority in the constitution of India and socially as marginal.

The coast is more than a mere dwelling place for the fishers; the coast and the sea make up their lived space and occupational space. The Mukkva Catholic community, better known as Latin Catholics, is part of an ethnic community with features such as syncretic culture, religious identity, and caste consciousness due to their occupational relationship with the marine ecosystem (Raju, 2022). Fishers' society in general, the Mukkuvar community in particular, suffers from various problems and experiences with a different form of marginality. Despite their traditional economic and social marginality, the fishers and the fishing community have a strong sense of their own identity (Sundar, 2012).

Mukkuvar people in the Trivandrum district of Kerala are members of the Latin Catholic Church (LCC). Those who converted to Christianity from the Mukkuvar cast were treated as 'impure' and downtrodden. Even under their religious identity as 'Christians', the fishers couldn't fit into the upward mobility on the social ladder due to their occupation, and thus, they stayed outside of the Kerala model of development (Kurien, 1995). They remain excluded from mainstream society regarding cultural, social, and even unequal access to opportunities for developmental means. These communities faced similar social stigmatization and the same miserable social reality. Being one of the marginalised communities in India, the voices of the fishing community have seldom made it across the periphery of their lands.

## **Latin Catholic Church and the Port Project**

The distribution of Catholicism along the west coast of India resulted from territory expansion by the Portuguese. Since then, the church has assumed multiple roles as a landlord, tax collector, religious authority, and intermediary between fishers and those who hold power (Sundar, 2012). The church is a key element of the identity of the villagers, shapes their faith, and carries a significant role in their everyday lives and struggles. The LCC confronted the state continuously regarding the everyday survival issues of the traditional fishing community, and they developed a relationship of influence with the fishers through this process.

To actively engage with the state for the rights of its community members, LCC adopted a trade union mode, negotiated for fisher's livelihood issues, discussed significant workplace changes, and provided legal and educational assistance to its members.

Fishers were subject to a tax from the church that usually amounted to 5% of their daily catches. Other occupational groups follow no such similar practice. The priest's responsibilities in the community extend beyond just spiritual or religious problems. They also participated in all secular issues, including advising the fishers on which political party to cast their ballots for when elections were held.

Farmers and industrial employees could organise under the trade unions of the major political parties, but there was no such provision for fishers. The Kerala Latin Catholic Fishermen Forum (KLCFF), the first fishers union, was founded in 1977 at Alleppey when LCC took up the problem

of organising fishers (Raof, 2019). Historically, Kerala has had higher levels of political participation and unionization than India as a whole (Sooryamoorthy & Renjini, 2000). Fishers in Kerala were politicised and unionised under the leadership of LCC. Contrary to its responsibilities, the Church took a stand in favour of the port project during the initial phase and mobilised the fishers to create an opinion in support of the project. This in turn influenced the residents of the village and Church supported organisations to take up the issue to demand for the port project. But later, in the background of the results of different impact studies on the port construction, the Church started to rethink its position in favour of the project and cautioned the fishermen about the possible livelihood loss and environmental damage due to the project.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

RQ 1: How and why the Catholic church intervened in a seaport development project at Vizhinjam?

RQ 2: How does Church as a civil society mediate and negotiate between people and the state with respect to the Vizhinjam seaport project?

### **METHODOLOGY**

Vizhinjam, a minor fishing harbour located on the southwestern coast of Kerala, constitutes the area of the present study. To explore the negotiations of LCC and the and to understand how social movements by the religious organisation mobilise the people, this study adopts a qualitative research method combining in-depth interviews and analysing data from secondary materials. By employing Hannigan's Social Movement theory (Hannigan, 1991), the paper try to study the negotiations made by the Catholic

Church and its role in mobilising the fishers to protest against the port project.

Data collection involved in-depth interviews with prominent stakeholders, such as parish priests, organization leaders, artisanal fishers, political leaders, and NGO members. Various secondary materials in circulation were also consulted, including church journals, circulars, and newspaper articles. The recorded interviews were transcribed, coded, and analysed thematically.

### **ANALYSIS**

This study sought to explore negotiations carried out by the Church between the state and the fishers. The coded data revealed specific themes at different levels.

#### **Church as Space of Empowerment**

Empowerment is a crucial element in explaining why participation in protests leads to more participation in future events. The more people feel empowered to take part in actions they think will succeed in bringing about social change, the more likely they are to participate again. Initially, the community's people were reluctant to organise and participate in the protest against the port project because they feared, they would be labelled as 'anti-national'. One of the young college students in the community said:

We are not against development. We are protesting for our survival. Our coast and livelihood will be gone forever after the completion of the port. The government must ensure proper rehabilitation. When we protested during the beginning of port construction, the media portrayed both the church and us as anti-development.

The past studies on social and religious movements, to a large extent, assumed that movement leaders manipulate

the members by providing some incentives. A new focus in the sociology of religion is conceptualizing religious participation as a collective and individual experience of power (Hannigan, 1991). When the LCC backed and spearheaded the protest against all the controversies, the fishers showed their full support and actively participated in the movement against the state. The fishers believed they had the power to influence their futures through collective action. The social movement against the port project became a source of spiritual and political empowerment. One of the participants expressed that those who were afraid to protest against the state, participated fearlessly under the leadership of the Church. She said:

We are protesting in front of the port entrance. Each day, members from different parish houses have to come and attend the protest. The Church itself will prepare the list. When my Vicar protests and leads hunger strikes, how can we sit idle at home? There will be pastoral letters read out in all LCC on every Sunday mass, urging fishing community members to protest until our just demands are met. If the church asks us to block the road, we will do that, if they ask us to start a hunger strike, we are also ready. No political parties have shown any interest in our welfare than our Church.

The church could not address the livelihood concerns of the affected citizens against the propaganda during the initial phase of port construction due to the political climate in India, where nationalist discourse has assumed an exclusivist Hindutva character. Most of the fishing families fall below the poverty line. Any disruption in the livelihood activities of such a vulnerable community would plunge them

into further deprivation and marginalisation. Hence, the Church started leading the protest by gathering community people as a mobilizational platform.

### **Collective identities: Given or Constructed?**

Collective identity formation is significant for social movements to sustain commitment over time. This concept has attracted many scholars in the area of the social movement who believe in structural, rationalistic, and goal-driven explanations for the emergence of movements (Fominaya, 2018). Many responses from the participants relating to the sense of identity, community, and indigenous society belonging revealed a strong sense of religious and caste identity among the fishers participating in the protest. One of the fish-vending women participating in the protest said:

I come to this protest every day. It affects my daily earnings through fish vending, but I chose to come here by taking bus tickets daily. This is not for my family or me. I am protesting for the survival and welfare of my community. Our identity will be lost if the port destroys our traditional occupation.

Fishers had an intense fear that they would lose their identity as fishers and have to migrate to certain places. The LCC shapes their religious identity, and the Catholic faith and identity are deeply rooted and thoroughly indigenised.

If our families are displaced to distant areas from here, we have difficulty coming here for fishing. Even if the authorities give us land and cash for houses, we have problem to go for work. As a fishing community, we live on the coast. All aspects of our lives are depended on that. No one can deny our right to live in our habitat. We obey the rules of

the Church and give one share of our earnings as tax to the Church. The Church will involve in any community-related issues and try to solve them.

The collective identity of a social movement is never completely given or fixed but is constantly renegotiated as it encounters new environmental challenges, influences, and experiences. The LCC initially took a position in favour of the port project contrary to their commitments to the livelihood of the fishers. A parish council member of the Church said he believed in the development, social mobility, employment generation, and overall development of the area. He said:

Both the government and the church told us that the construction of the port would create new employment opportunities and change our way of life. We were promised to get a job after the construction of the port. So, we wholeheartedly welcomed the project and listened to the decision of the Church. There have not been any jobs so far. We are struggling to survive without income since we cannot find fish here due to dredging and piling activities.

An old-age fisherman who participated in the protest against port construction shared that there have been awareness campaigns about the project's benefits conducted by the Church to mobilize the fishers in favour of the port project. The Church carried a crucial role in constructing favourable public opinion for the port in the initial years. These campaigns created a collective identity of fishers that supported the port project. The fishers believed that port construction would uplift their social ladder positions. He said:

The Church has small BCC units in which all families are members. Regular meetings will be held each week in the houses of BCC members. When the discussions on the



port construction were taking place, our Church asked us to stand together for regional development through the port project.

Collective identity can exist as an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community through action and interaction. The concept of collective identity fails if individual beliefs are not linked to collective action.

#### Dissemination Agent Against the Dominant Discourse

Despite a unifying religious identity and the presence of the church as a unifying institution, the responses to the Vizhinjam project from the local population were diverse, mainly due to how this project had been presented in popular discourse. One of the parish priests who led the protest by the members of his Church said that the authorities promoted the image that the port project would create multiple employment opportunities and induce development in the area. So naturally, through the moral authority of the Church, he started making positive responses from the Church members regarding the port plan. He said:

The state government assured everything, including the compensation and the rehabilitation of the fishers' community. We were convinced that the port construction would benefit the fishers more than anyone else. To ensure the full support from the members of my Church, brochures and pamphlets were distributed among them describing the changes that would occur in the village with the construction of the port.

Another Priest, who is the convenor of the fisher's protest, said that when the Church realised the port construction would severely affect the livelihood and habitat

of the fishers, they started to inform the community members through its various social spaces. This triggered the political parties favouring the port, and they labelled the church as anti-national. He said:

When we started opposing the project and created dissent among the fishers on the port construction, we faced severe allegations from different corners. We were propagated as the agent of foreign forces being funded by international lobbies by the media and the political parties. We are not against development. This project destroys the houses and livelihoods of our people along with the coasts. We are protesting for livelihood and survival. We will protest until our demands are met.

When the Church spearheaded the protest and shifted its role from an ambivalent stance on the construction of the port to strong opposers, it impacted the relationship between the church and the fishers in Kerala. Motivated by the priests and the Church, fishers began to mobilise in an organised manner and stopped the working of port construction for a temporary period. One of the community members said:

The Church is giving us great support by leading this protest. The sea and coast are our birth right. We would live generation after generation by practicing our traditional livelihood method. Without understanding our pain, the government is moving forward with the project as they wish. Because of the Church's involvement, our issues are getting public and government attention.

### **DISCUSSION**

This section presents the findings of the study and discusses them in view of the literature on social movements

and negotiation by the Catholic Church. The first RQ of this study deals with reasons for the intervention and mediation of LCC in the seaport development project at Vizhinjam. This study used data from the multiple community members who participated in the protest. These data reveal that Catholic priests have a significant say in mobilizing the fishers into organized action to motivate the people to their own interests. Catholic priests and social workers active in several coastal localities motivated the creation of fishers' cooperatives and unions in the past decades, to direct the people's anger into organised actions to defend their interests. The fishers consider Church more trustworthy than politicians because of its commitment to supporting deprived communities (Raooof, 2019). Since religious leaders and the Church played a crucial role in the villages, it was difficult for the political parties to mobilize the fishers. The LCC had to change its approaches to the port project, which is an ongoing process of renegotiation with the state and the community. In addition, the LCC viewed the state's policies on the fishing community critically and took a stand against politicians and the state who did not address their concerns. This allowed the LCC to expand its role as a conventional religious institution to a more politically active group, which has the power to mobilise people for common concerns by accelerating their faith boundaries. These results are consistent with those (Ashni & Santhosh, 2019) who observed that the shift in the approach of the Church as more than a religious institution started when the Church promoted the establishment of fishers' cooperatives and unions and tried to break down the existing social ladders in the villages. Church utilised the

social spaces of faith-based organisations such as KCYM (Kerala Catholic Youth Movement), Parish councils, and BCCs' (Basic Christian Communities) in gaining public acceptance across socio-religious and political groups.

Misztal, in his book, describe civil society that it is not the state that conditions and regulates civil society, but civil society that conditions and regulates the state (Misztal, 1985). The church as a social institution played a dominant role in the Catholic fishers' political, economic and social life. As leaders, volunteers, and material resources, religious institutions bring many assets to civil society. They can mobilize people around crucial social policy issues (Miller, 2011) Under certain social circumstances, it can be argued that, cultural/religious factors may play a decisive role in political mobilization. The Church as the civil society mobilized and mediated to the state representing the issues of the fishing community. The contemporary social movements by the religious institutions focused on constructing new grievances, identities, and modes of association by collective actors (Polletta & Jasper, 2001).

The findings of the second RQ reveals how church through its influential role in the community and through social movement, mediating, mobilising and negotiating the people in the community and their issues with the state. Religious institutions are fertile soil for social movement birth and growth because they are face-to-face groups built around shared values (Mayer & John, 1987).

### **CONCLUSION**

It was evident from the responses of the participants that the LCC played an active role in negotiating and mediating with the project by mobilising the community members under

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the banner of common religious identity. The protest which is carried out by the people was successful in drawing the attention of the state and other stake holders but failed to meet their demands. Initially the Church was weak to counter the propaganda against it as 'anti-national' and they had to negotiate with state by approving the construction of the project. The Church also had to consider people from different social class within the community who shared aspirations of social mobility, and development which was originated from the dominant discourse on the port project. This study shows that the church negotiated and countered the dominance and resistance over 'development' through the social movement. Even though the Church had to reinforce the hegemony of the state and private capital in the initial stage, through the collective identity formation it shifted its position by firmly standing with the livelihood rights of the most affected and least advantaged sessions within the community. The church started acting as the agency promoting changes in the existing social relations within the villages, instead of practising their traditional role only as representatives of the institutional church and the current social order. The Church can be seen both as the agents of state in its neoliberal policies and also as the platform to unite and mobilise the subaltern sessions in the society against the dominant centred developmental projects which will worsen the socio-economic conditions of the underprivileged.

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## Trolls, Toxicity and New Cultural Malaise

*-Arindam Basu*

### ABSTRACT

**K**aran Johar has recently bid his nearly two million followers on Twitter goodbye to "make space for more positive energies". He is not the only one to go this far in search of a digital detox. All kinds of people, especially celebrities the world over, have prioritised their peace of mind and chosen to get rid of the negativity brought about by trolls.

As cliched as it may sound, social media is a double-edged sword that cuts both ways. No one in their right frame of mind can deny that the very foundation of social media in its algorithm has been designed to be addictive and toxic at the same time. The liberty to express often crosses the lines of decency and freedom is misinterpreted as the license to lash out. And this mindless trolling is taking a toll on the mental health. Be it the body shaming of a school kid by his peers or Rupankar Bagchi's merciless social media trial after his general comments on the KK show that unfortunately became the latter's swan song, trolls have become a Frankenstein that is now running riot.



Experts are now advising people to take a break from social media, asking people to put down their phone or even better if they can have a heart to delete their social media accounts to get the mental boost to start all over, feel better and do more in a disconnected way of life.

Trolls have a herd mentality like a pack of wild dogs pouncing on a prey at the first signs of blood and they thrive on their relative anonymity afforded to them in this system. Not many have the guts to stand up and protest. And those that do often are doing the right thing. It is called constructive criticism, where an opinion is criticised with logic, counterpoints and on merit, and not the person. But most of the people, who engage in trolling as a way of life use social media to vent out the negativity they are experiencing in their own lives.

This paper will try to look at trolling as a phenomenon and the toxicity it spreads as part of a growing malaise in the society and look to find ways to redeem the society of the moral policing and kangaroo courts, they hold across the social media platforms be it Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram.

***Keywords:*** *Troll, Social Media, Culture, Toxicity, Addiction*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Trolls, a term that originally came from a fishing method online thieves use to find victims has quickly morphed to refer to the monsters who hide in darkness and threaten people. In scientific language, internet trolling is defined as a malicious online behaviour, characterised by aggressive and deliberate provocation of others. Trolls seek to provoke and get into a barb. They often do that by upsetting

the person, destabilising the self-esteem, and harming the self-confidence using inflammatory messages and posts most of which could be slanderous just because the victim is not in sync with the troller's point of view. Trolling is also a social measurement of the continuous eroding of a pluralistic point of view on a subject. The fact that a person has a right to speak his mind on a topic and that may not be to the majority's liking is the basis of democracy. And that is being pummelled thanks to the easy way out - a sniper attack via trolls.

That being said, all trolls are not bad. Some are humourous, some sarcastic and some good critique on a subject. But majorly trolling is a malevolent behaviour, where the troll wants to hurt their victims.

Many scholars argue that trolling is essentially an umbrella term for a spectrum of multidimensional, antagonistic, antisocial, or deviant behaviours and motivations that surface online. Some feminist and antiracist scholars argue that trolling can often be a form of identity-based harassment, typically in the contexts of trash talking. Thus, trolling can be associated with a range of behaviours from hacking, to releasing private information, posting satirical comments, posting redundant information to disrupt a conversation, to hate speech and cause mental trauma in most cases.

Indeed, nothing can be completely bad and redundant and trolling isn't. Trolling is also a necessity to keep check on the society and call spade a spade. But the problem arises when one's spade becomes someone else's axe. And the aggression demonstrated in those trolls is not by accident but by design. It is a strategy to get what they demand and at

the same time earn a feeling of status and lording online over their victims. There is a pack mentality in trolling where each troller feeds off the other upping the ante in a show-off of who is the most abrasive in their attack.

### **UNDERSTANDING TROLLS**

There has been a lot of talk about trolling. But we need to take a closer look at why people troll. A study in Australia by Evita March explored gender, psychopathy, sadism, and self-esteem as predictors of engaging in malevolent trolling. Here psychopathy was defined by traits of callousness, deceitfulness, and a lack of personal responsibility, while sadism was delineated by characteristics of enjoyment of physically and/ or psychologically harming other people. The study recruited 400 participants via social media advertisements. Almost 68 per cent of the participants were women, 43 per cent were Australian, while the average age was 25. They completed an anonymous, confidential online questionnaire, which assessed personality and self-esteem.

The results were disturbing. The results showed that gender, psychopathy, and sadism were all significant and independent forecasters of malevolent trolling. It was concluded that if a troll was a male and had high psychopathy or high sadism, he was more likely to troll. The most powerful predictor of trolling was sadism. The pleasure of hurting others with words, pictures and insults were incentives for their trolling. Men are more likely to be trolls than women.

Significantly self-esteem was not an independent factor behind trolling. It was found to be a catalyst that interacted heavily with sadism. The lower the self-esteem the more probability of violently interacting with the other factors.

Thus, cyberbullying, and low self-esteem complemented each other, according to the study.

Another research by Stephanie Ortiz yielded another side to the trolls. The pack mentality. To pounce on a victim in herd and brutalize from the safety of the anonymous online hideout. Ortiz concluded that trolling was a collective form of harassment with a malicious intent to provoke another user. Trolling was a collective phenomenon, in that despite being undertaken by individuals, the strategies used by trolls were shared beyond that individual person or one interaction. Analyzing respondents, Ortiz suggested that trolls activated group position and exercised power in their efforts to target people. And trolls uniformly attempted to cause emotional and psychological harm and give physical threats over time and across contexts. When based on social identities, this harassment activated discriminatory practices in the differential treatment of some groups over others.

### **TROLL MARKET**

Online trolling used to be funny, but now the term refers to something far more sinister. It seems like internet trolling happens everywhere online these days - and it's showing no signs of slowing down. Everyday hundreds in India are trolled. Some for a comment as innocuous as liking a definite brand and sometimes as virulent and violent as faced by Indian cricketer Arshdeep Singh.

Let us take Arshdeep Singh's trolls to understand that a variety of trolls hide within a giant wormhole of hate speech. Cricket fans woke up a day after India's defeat to Pakistan in Asia Cup with tweets and posts terming Team India bowler Arshdeep Singh a Khalistani by a series of trolls. The

campaign against Singh was not limited to Twitter as his Wikipedia page was also edited. In merely 24 hours, all the Indian references were replaced by Khalistan references.

India Today analysed more than 65,000 tweets that mentioned Arshdeep and were posted after 11 pm IST. The volume of tweets mentioning the India pacer peaked between midnight and 1 am and a second wave of such tweets was also witnessed the next morning. However, the tone of conversation kept changing. Despite the intensely propagated Khalistani angle, tweets that directly tagged Arshdeep's twitter handle with words such as Khalistan and Khalistani were not in the majority. They were a cluster of tweets that kept spreading hate speeches and provoked others to join the conversation. As the trend progressed, words such as 'request, better, young, proud and stop' also started gaining prominence in the conversation.

It was also noticed by India Today that the cluster of handles with declared Pakistani affiliations used the hashtag #INDvsPAK2022 along with Khalistan to propagate a separatist tone. The campaign took efforts to sow the seeds of a separatist tone through the word Khalistan and started a conversation on an issue completely unrelated with the game of cricket. Some 450 separate posts soon after the match began moving in different circles gaining more reactions around it. This hate campaign with ulterior motives used memes, pictures, and creatives in order to attract netizens and allow the conversation on a completely seditious topic go viral. These trolls pushed a wider conversation around Arshdeep with several influencer accounts joining the discussion.

However, tweets showed a process of natural recovery also. The next day conversations around the cricketer began

growing against the initial trolling driven by Pakistan-based information operators with many mentioning their location as Pakistan. But this took time and these 24 hours that trolls took to recover must have been traumatic for an Indian cricketer who had just debuted for the national team merely two months before.

India Today concluded that the rookie cricketer was likely targeted by 'covert actors with a history of information operations associated with Pakistan's army'. The IP address used for making changes to the cricketer's Wikipedia page was associated with an Internet Service Provider (ISP) named Pakistani National Telecommunication Company (PTCL) that operates out of Pakistan, the India Today research said.

Further, using the same covert profile, the term 'India' was intentionally replaced by 'Khalistan' at several places on the Wikipedia page at 12:28 am IST, the research added. This research brought to light trolls have myriad motives to surface. Here below are some of them:

1. **Politician Backed Trolls:** This is the worst kind of trolls. They pretend to be unbiased, but just follow instructions and philosophy of their political masters. These trolls bombard the timeline no sooner you are even mildly critical of their party line. Major political parties have an army of trolls, who operate out of their so-called war-rooms and are paid to drive their agendas, which basically means nothing but abusing anyone and creating a net of hate speeches against those who opposes them.

2. **Patriot Trolls:** This is the most hypocritic of all trolls and are of the most virulent kind. They act as moral judges and pass their verdicts on whether each sentence that one tweets was nationalist or anti-nationalist. Their definition

of nationalism is so narrow and jingoistic that it comes across as ultra-minded. Their definition of anti-national is anyone who criticizes India or the government even when a move is fit to be criticized. An example of this is how college student Gurmehar Kaur, whose father, an army officer, made the ultimate sacrifice in the Kargil war, was trolled when she went online with her plea against the cruelties of war itself.

3. Sanghi and Jihadi Trolls: These are die-hard Hindu or Islam supporters who hate any question and think nothing good could happen in absence of their religious beliefs. They often interpret history and religion to their benefits and often troll people who go against the dictum of the high priests of their beliefs. These trolls are always ready to ban stuff, think secularism only means appeasement and that only they have a copyright to be true, honest, and nationalist.

4. Ultra-Liberal Trolls: They are pole opposites of the former. They are in constant fear that the country they live in could become modern versions of Fascist Italy or Nazi Germany and an Emergency could happen in India at any point of time. These ultra-liberal trolls hate anything that is religious, custom oriented or traditional. They believe nothing good could come from following one's religion or living by religious relief completely disregarding any other evidence.

5. Self-Appointed Sanskari Trolls: These Trolls are culture watchdogs. They will go to any extent, including abusing a person and their entire family, under the guise of protecting our culture. They have little understanding of the ancient openness of India, and this land's capacity to embrace of all forms of thoughts ranging from religious diversity

and complete atheism. They refuse to accept that culture is a living evolving phenomenon. For example, many of the things that we take as Indian culture today, like our mainstream regressive attitudes on sex, reflect Victorian British culture. They do not reflect ancient Indian culture for which you needn't look beyond the beautiful temples of Khajuraho or caves of Ajanta and Elora. Finally, they compress Indian culture to Hinduism. Thus, by default vegetarianism is an issue with them, though statistics say 70 per cent Indians are non-vegetarians in a country where 80 per cent of Indians are Hindus.

6. Crusader Trolls: These trolls link everything to an issue. If anyone says anything that mildly opposes the issue they support, they take to Twitter like a pack of wild dogs. They also try and find a religious angle to everything and keep attacking any point of view that they think is anti-religious. But they fail to understand that not everything we say is linked to our religion, caste, or community. Thus, people like Swara Bhaskar, Kareena Kapoor and Sonam Kapoor got trolled mercilessly simply for expressing outrage over the horrific Kathua gang-rape case of an eight-year-old girl. These Trolls turned even a heinous crime into a religious issue.

7. Fake News Peddling Trolls: These are easily the most dangerous among all kinds of trolls. They purposely push a divisive agenda by deliberately creating false news items and pushing them into our news feeds. The Arshdeep case study is an example of this kind of malicious propaganda machine aimed to divide and evoke hatred to cause harm to a nation. However, they have their diametric opposites too. These are trolls, who immediately tag any news they don't



like as 'fake', irrespective of whether it is true or not. The only job of these trolls is to raise doubts on the credibility of anything that doesn't suit their interests, tastes, philosophy, or ideology.

8. Body-shaming Trolls: These trolls judge a person by his or her looks. They troll a person based on them being fat, thin, or apparently ugly. There is another version of them, who are racists and discriminate people based on their skin colour. These losers generally target celebrities, mostly just for its sick thrill. They don't bother to understand how offensive they are if they have their two minutes of attention.

### **MISOGYNIST TROLLS**

A wide range of terms have been used to describe gender-based online harassment like cyberbullying, hate speech, stalking, abusive language, smear campaigns, sexual innuendo-filled obscenities, doxing and sharing pictures or videos without consent that may be explicit.

In 2012, multiple Twitter users threatened Indian writer, poet, and activist Meena Kandasamy after she discussed a beef-eating festival in Hyderabad from her Twitter account. She was threatened with acid attacks and televised gang rape by a group of Trolls from the alleged extreme right groups, who also brought to the fore that she was a Dalit and questioned her Hindu status.

These trolls unleash a vitriol on the women and gender fluid people with maverick sexual orientations just for the established truth that the intensity of the majority can silence every voice that reacts unfavourably. Cruelty as a human trait has been explored expansively through an evolutionary lens, and the index of hatred by verbal or other behaviour is deeply tied to cruelty. Singer Sona Mohapatra found herself being

attacked brutally trolled after she criticised Bollywood Megastar Salman Khan for using the analogy of rape for his gruelling shooting schedule. Sona tweeted: "Women thrashed, people run over, wild life massacred and yet #hero of the nation. 'Unfair'. India full of such supporters."

Sona Mohapatra recalled in an interview: "I had gone through the most hideous trolling, including death threats and literally shit being delivered in dabbas (lunch boxes) in my studio, because I had called out Salman Khan for his misogyny and statements. My statements had gone viral. That was a two-month-long process where the Minister of Women and Child Welfare had to say that they are launching a hashtag called 'I'm being trolled' for better safety of women and children online because Sona Mohapatra has been facing vicious threats."

Psychological research has acknowledged individualities that are associated with online trolling behaviour, including that of dark tetrad of Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy, and everyday sadism. A prominent Delhi-based women's rights activist Kavita Krishnan was harassed and abused during an online chat about violence orchestrated against women on news website by a person using the handle @RAPIST. He kept on pouring poison in form of words and threats until she exited the discussion.

India has the largest gender gap when it comes to the usage of mobile phones with recent research putting it 79 per cent when it came to men and only 43 per cent when it came to women. And when they have access only about 12 per cent have access to internet. This automatically shows why women are vulnerable online. This gives a clear understanding why the magnitude of online violence is in

such great numbers when it comes to vocal women, women activists, influencers, celebrities, and LGBTQ individuals.

The News Minute's editor-in-chief Dhanya Rajendran after seeing the movie *Jab Harry Met Sejal* (2017) wrote that the movie was worse than Vijay's film *Sura* (2010) and that she walked out before intermission. In the next three days, Dhanya was called a slut, a whore, and a sex-worker allegedly by actor Vijay's fans. In Tamil, she's been called a *thevediya* (prostitute), *punda* (vagina), *motta punda* (shaved vagina), and more. She had been asked to upload nude videos and to reveal who she's giving blowjobs to. Trolling had crossed all boundaries and reached the perverse stage of sexual harassment and abuse.

Vijay fans created the hashtag #PublicityBeepDhanya to neatly contain all their attacks and trended it nationwide. That hashtag alone has over 30,000 tweets under it, and the cumulative tweets attacking and harassing Dhanya number well over 50,000. That too for a movie that was already seven years old by then and had lost all relevance in 2017 when *Harry Met Sejal* released. But it did not matter. A woman had criticised their hero, and it was their moral duty to avenge him.

Similarly, journalist Barkha Dutt had been trolled severely after she wrote that she was sexually abused as a child in her book *This Unquiet Land: Stories from India's Fault Lines*. The trolls went to the extent of calling her antinational. On Amazon, her book published by Aleph Books and Co. has over 4,000 reviews of which only 155 are positive.

### **TROLLS AND CINEMA**

When we talk of the Indian film scenario, we often mean Bollywood and it has not escaped online trolling. Talk of Hindi cinema's imminent downfall has dominated the

airwaves for months now. Failure after failure of big-ticket Bollywood films stoked fears of a downturn, or at least a significant churn, in the industry. A lot of this has to do with the systematic boycott trend that has grown in fashion.

Fuelled by the alleged Bhakts and Sanghis trolls have continued to dominate the Bollywood online space. Very recently these far-right trolls contributed towards films like Aamir Khan's *Laal Singh Chaddha* (2022) not doing well with repeated smear campaigns and calls to boycott shows. On the other side of the gamut is the growing trend of 'cancel culture' where every seemingly unpalatable tweet, post or comment by a celebrity is blown out of proportion and has become an excuse to call for cancelling or boycotting that celebrity, his works, films, TVCs almost forcing that person into submission and retracting in most cases. Bollywood star Ranbir Kapoor was the latest target when his innocent, albeit immature joke, about his pregnant wife Alia Bhatt's weight sent the netizens on a spin who immediately came out with their moral high-horse baying at Ranbir and called for boycott of his movie *Brahmastra* (2022). The fact that a scene in the movie showing the hero sporting shoes while in a temple only added fuel to the troll fire.

Celebrities fed up with these incessant trolls are quitting Twitter. Karan Johar quit searching for mental peace. Psychologists have suggested that taking a break, staying away from the phone and taking the next step and deleting your social media account could be the boost you need to start improving mental health and feeling better.

Perhaps that is what prompted Karan Johar to bid his nearly two million followers on Twitter goodbye, and 'make space for more positive energies'. The list does not begin

and end with him. There are many looking for a digital detox thanks to the heartless trolls. Now the celebs around the world have decided that mental peace was far more important than trending digitally. Trading muck racking and digital quagmire with silence and focussed work seems a better option for them.

Hina Khan threatened to quit social media fed up with a steady slew of trolls. Sonakshi Sinha deactivated her Twitter account in 2020 for a substantial period to block out the online hate and trolling. Saqib Saleem quit the microblogging site stating that there was too much bullying, hatred, and lack of kindness. Prince Harry and Meghan Markle were also disillusioned with the social media and expressed anguish at the online hatred.

Aayush Sharma concluded that he did not sign up in social media to face the sewage spewed by the trolls who had this nasty herd mentality: "280 characters are less to define a human being. But 280 characters are more than enough to spread fake news, hatred, and negativity." Director Shashank Khaitan called Twitter as a "breeding ground for hate and negativity" and quit. Millie Bobby Brown, Miley Cyrus, Pete Davidson, and several others left social media, either temporarily or permanently, being unable to handle negativity.

Celebs need to stay in public life and as a result kits easy to target and dissect everything they say or do. That is perhaps the prize of being in public life many would argue. Sure, criticisms are good, but not at the cost of personal attacks, body shaming, discriminations, and pummelling someone under the flag pole of morality.

## **TROLLS AND BRANDS**

Social media trolls have the capacity to heavily tarnish a brand's image and significantly impact the brand's marketing plans to promote any newly launched product or service.

In an age and time when access to internet is super easy, people love sharing their unfiltered opinion on social media considering it as their freedom of expression whether it's a compliment for the brand or a complaint. Sometimes they do it out of impulse, sometimes it's a well thought out move as they don the crusader mantle. But no matter what the mindset is, a simple complaint or pointing out a fault could gather troll-moss. Brands today need to have a social media presence, period. It's the easiest way to reach an exponentially large target audience they need to sell their products to. And with a sea of positives that social media brings, there also comes a few rogue waves of trolls! And some of them are so giant that they can sink a brand under its toxicity.

2021 can easily be labelled a year of outrage as many brands were made to pull off their ads. A case in point was Tata's jewellery brand, Tanishq, that faced an online backlash for its advertisement showcasing their new collection Ekatvam that promoted an interfaith baby shower. The brand got heavily trolled for promoting inter-faith marriages or love jihad as it is commonly called. While the brand crashed and burned in the swirling flames of hate speech and provocative tweets and posts, the boycott agenda soon gained trend as well. This led to a fall in stocks for Titan. Tanishq, whether they wanted or not, pulled the video down, even though the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI)

said that there was nothing indecent or vulgar or repulsive in the advertisement.

Brands can't risk public ire. They can't risk loss of stocks. They can't afford to see their stores vandalised. So, they give in, to the lip-smacking success of a small yet virulent group, who don the bandana of social media crusaders.

Another case that got a lot of traction was Manyavar's Mohey brand's TVC Kanyamaan. Bridal brand Mohey came out with this concept in a TVC featuring Alia Bhatt. The TVC addressed the disrespect towards women through the age-old custom of Kanyadaan and sought to replace it with a term Kanyamaan.

Kanyadaan has been a ritual where brides are given away by their father to her new family as if she were a property. This TVC tried to break the glass ceiling of women being treated as Paraya Dhan (someone else's property) and tried to replace it with the word Kanyamaan means respecting women and carried the tagline Tradition Wahi, Soch Nayi. Though some people applauded the brand for talking about the banality of patriarchal practices, a sizeable trolls called it out as 'anti-Hindu'. The trolls alleged that Mohey was hurting religious sentiments by starting a conversation about a sexist practice in Hindu marriages while not talking about convoluted practices of other religions.

The result was the same as Tanishq. The TVC was pulled down in face of vicious trolling that threatened to boycott the brand. Similar incidents happened with Dabur's Karwachauth TVC, Sabyasachi's Mangalsutra Collection and Fab India's Jashn-e-Riwaaz TVC. In all the cases the trolls won by a country mile because brands were easy preys. They

might have left a sense of distaste in the social palates of the sober, who also tweeted and wrote within the civil limits but failed miserably before the pack mentality and the characteristic to throw caution to the wind of the nasty trolls.

The brands gave in as these trolls could heavily tarnish a brand's image and make a telling impact, and a negative one at that, on the marketing plans to promote any newly launched product or service. Besides the brand's message also gets lost in the barb and chaos achieved by the trolling and might in some case miff the consumers who are there with genuine intent.

Thus, the toxicity flow unabated and we are encumbered in a social flow that is dipped in a poison tongue hissing around to strike.

### **HOW ARE TOLLS RUINING OUR LIVES?**

Once internet was a nerd in a good way with lofty principles about the free flow of information. Now, its just a mechanism you need to upgrade your user speed where the web is far more eager to help with technical details. But if you are trying to mouth out that you're struggling with depression, it will try to goad you into killing yourself. Psychologists call this the online disinhibition effect created by factors like anonymity, invisibility, a lack of authority and not communicating in real time. Bit by bit like a pack of Deathwatch Beetle it eats away at the social mores and values from within that this society spent millennia building. And to our utter ignorance, the malaise flows out of our smartphones into every permissible and non-permissible aspects of our lives.

A Pew Research Center survey published two years ago found that 70 per cent of 18-to-24-year-olds who use the



internet had experienced harassment, and 26 per cent of women of the same age had been stalked online. This is exactly what trolls want. This is exactly what trolls are getting. A 2014 study published in the psychology journal *Personality and Individual Differences* found that the approximately five per cent of internet users, who identified and took pride as trolls scored extremely high in the dark tetrad of personality traits like narcissism, psychopathy, Machiavellianism and, especially, sadism. Unfortunately, we are feeding them our society right out of our hands by reacting and responding to their behaviour.

But even if we leave out this small percentage of people, who are the rest of the trolls? They are common people like the one who sit beside in a share cab or accidentally bump into in a mall or even better share a row in the dark movie theatres, completely unaware of what web of words are being spun from their smartphones they wield in their hands.

"Trolls are portrayed as aberrational and antithetical to how normal people converse with each other. And that could not be further from the truth. These are mostly normal people who do things that seem fun at the time that have huge implications. You want to say this is the bad guys, but it's a problem of us," said Whitney Phillips, a literature professor at Mercer University and the author of *This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things: Mapping the Relationship Between Online Trolling and Mainstream Culture*. A lot of people enjoy the kind of trolling that illuminates the gullibility of the powerful and how these common people have the capacity to bring them down to their knees and make them respond or even better yield.

It took us thousands of years to figure out how to live with one another. Laws and social norms, developed slowly and painfully, enabling us to form societies. Armed with rulebooks, and a list of dos and don'ts, we try and exist in relative peace. Unfortunately, this is true only for the real world. The online space is still a mediaeval jungle.

The world-wide web might have begun its journey with vaunted philosophies and started as messiah of a medium that would create a world with a free flow of communication and information and market place for meeting and exchange of ideas and cultures and tradition. But has taken them a little over three decades to shred itself of its loftiness and take a more bestial nature giving way to an evil harvest. Bullies have always existed, antagonising, and hurting those around. But internet like that energy drink we all know gave them wings.

The meteoric rise of Trolls has been well documented. The digital space has given them the protection of anonymity. And they formed a lethal potion for those looking out for some trouble. There was a time when trolls and their venom, sarcasm and darkness were contained within niche chatrooms and group forums. But the arrival of social media, unleashed them right into the middle of our lives. Now they are everywhere. Their presence is increasingly getting normalised. Like an evil that we must live with and accept. One more hazardous pit stops in the roller-coaster called life.

The range of troll behaviour is vast. From innocuous jokes and memes to name calling and goading children into suicide. Politicians, Bollywood superstars, sportsmen, celebrities, activists, journalists have all been targeted at

some point or the other and with a great degree of success. It is not just individuals, companies, events, and communities that have been attacked. Everyone or everything is a fair game.

Every single day, in the vast wild west of unbridled internet, women, minorities, people of colour and the LGBTQ community are being buried under a rubble of abuses, harassment and threats. The disproportionate targeting of these groups reflects an underlying sickness that is growing and spreading at the speed of internet creating social and cultural fissures and tension the society was not used to experience before the advent of social media. The term 'troll' is nowadays inextricably mixed up with identity, religion, and politics, that snowballs into a larger and a much more vicious force.

Trolls can be terrifying. They hunt in packs, altering social cohesion and bullying others into submission. There are many who choose to drop out of the conversation. We are already seeing a slow erosion of public discourse - we hesitate to put out our views on a sensitive subject, or a picture in shorts or micro-blogging sites uncertain of the kind of reactions it would bring from behind the evil subterfuge of anonymous trolls.

The biggest victim perhaps of the trolls is free thinking and right to speak out every point of view. No matter how unsavoury and opposed to someone's liking everyone has a right to a point of view and that is being choked and decimated at the hands of trolls.

### **CONCLUSION**

Will trolls be shaping the internet culture? Is this going to be the new normal?

It has only been a few years since the birth of the internet, and we are still in the process of navigating, managing, and understanding how it works. There are no rules, not yet. Law enforcement agencies across the world are struggling to adapt. And any attempt to control or moderate is not an easy task. Social norms in the digital space are still evolving. There must be a way to keep us connected and talking. It took time for us to get civilised in the real world. Hopefully, we will learn much faster online.

However, India is fighting back it seems. And the sliver of hope is enough.

Recently Rahul Gandhi during his Bharat Jodo Yatra had been trolled for walking while holding hands with an unknown woman. While a section of small ultra-right politically motivated group tried to build a story of character assassination around this picture, a sizeable number of tweets protested and questioned the taste of the specific Troll and their group. And the persistence put paid on the smear campaign that began around a public figure.

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## **Bengali Printing Press and the Development of Nationalism in Colonial Bengal**

*-Arnab Chanda*

### **ABSTRACT**

**T**he matter of this paper skims across the history of the Bengali printing industry in 19th-century India. Three themes persist throughout the article: the emergence of the Bengali printing industry, the expansion, and the development of Bengali nationalism.

As the time frame is huge and boisterous, the period is divided into three reasonable periods, each having common identifiable and significant characteristics. The first period (1800-1834) is dubbed as 'The Emergence', the second period (1834-1858) as 'The Expansion', and finally, the third (1858-rest) as 'The Arrival of National Imagination'. The paper is argumentative in nature. The methodology primarily depends on rereading the existing literature on Indian nationalism and literature related to the histories of the Bengali prose language, printing presses, and Bengali newspapers.

The primary agenda of this paper is to trace the trajectory of the Bengali printing industry during the 19th century by

analysing its vicissitudes and internal contradictions to examine its deeper consistencies in the process of building the Bengali national imagination. The article attempts to investigate Benedict Anderson's "print-capitalism" from an Indian perspective and mark the similarities and differences between the two to depict the unique nature of Indian nationalism.

**Keywords:** *Bengali Printing Press, Nationalism, Colonial Bengal, Print-Capitalism, Imagined Communities*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The central argument of this article claims that long before the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885, the moment considered the beginning of Indian nationalism by many national historians, nationalism had emerged in India. Only after establishing its sovereignty over the social and cultural sphere, the political nationalism and the battle against colonial rule began.

Early nationalists of colonial India started their project of claiming national sovereignty over the social and cultural sphere through the means of the print medium. In the early phase, they pressured the colonial authorities to reform the traditional Hindu institutions and customs, which they saw as obstacles to progress and the major reasons behind the defeat at the hands of alien forces. In the later phase, though not disqualifying the need for social change, there was strong resistance to allowing the colonial state to intervene in matters affecting the 'national culture'. The main purpose of this article is to highlight how the early Bengali press helped to construct a powerful modern Bengali nationalist cultural identity that is nevertheless non-western.



The first area where the nationalist identity claimed its sovereignty is that of language. Benedict Anderson correctly speculated that print capitalism created a new institutional space where a vernacular could be transformed into a modern national language (Anderson, 1983). In Bengal and other parts of India, however, the peculiarities of colonial rule were not in favour of the simple chronological development of European patterns.

A British civilian, Charles Wilkins, installed the first printing press in Hooghly, Bengal. Wilkins was also the first to develop the Bengali typeface, with the help of a local craftsman, in 1780. In the next decades, multiple printing presses, 17 to be precise, were established in Kolkata and its peripheries (Nair, 1987). The same two decades also introduced the idea of newspapers to the native-educated residents of Kolkata and Bengal. The early years of the 19th century marked the arrival of the first narrative composition of Bengali prose commissioned by the British East India Company. While the structural change of the East India Company from a trading body to a governing body and the "need" to spread Christianity marked the emergence of newspaper and Bengali prose writing, it helped the bilingual Bengali elites to experience the use of the two most effective tools of modernity more closely. During the first half of the 19th century, the Bengali bilingual elites considered reforming the traditional Indian society as the primary cultural agenda to give it a modern Outlook. One integral part of this cultural project was the modernisation of the Bengali language. Necessary linguistic elements were integrated to make the language suitable for modern cultural exchange. At the same time, replacing Persian with English

as the language of bureaucracy fostered the growth of bilingual Bengali intelligentsia. An entire institutional network of printing presses, publishing houses, newspapers, magazines, schools, colleges, and literary societies was created (Chatterjee, 1996).

On the other hand, the second half of the century witnessed a sharp turn from these trends. The bilingual elites started to think of the vernacular as belonging to the natives' internal domain of cultural identity and started resisting the colonial intervention in that space. Therefore, with the help of the printing press, the Bengali intelligentsia created a lingual space for the nationalist identity to declare its sovereignty and start transforming the society into a modern one, though non-western.

### **THE EMERGENCE OF BENGALI PRINTING PRESS (1800-1834)**

Hickey, despite his questionable career, was one of the pioneers of printing in Calcutta. Apart from Hickey, some other renowned personalities need mentions, like Nathaniel Brassy Halhed, Charles Wilkins, and Serampore Missionaries William Carey and Joshua Marshman. Among them was Charles Wilkins, under whose supervision the first Bengali typeface was developed by the renowned typesetter Panchanan Karmakar and his son-in-law Manohar Karmakar. Despite a few earlier attempts to print the Bengali language and the availability of the government printing press in the late 18th century, the year 1800 can be marked as the arrival of Bengali printing. That year, Fort William College and Serampore Baptist Mission Press were established. For the next 15 years (1801-1815), Fort William College played a significant role in modernising the Bengali language, and

the books printed by this institution were for academic purposes. Books like Kothopokothon (1801), Botrish Singhasan (1802), and Rajaboli (1808) were only read by young Britishers coming to India to work in the British East India Company (Barman, 2022). In the arena of Bengali newspapers and magazines, modern Bengali prose literature got its early form. However, it cannot be denied that the works undertaken by Fort William College influenced the early Bengali newspaper pioneers, like John C Marshman, Ram Mohan Roy, and Bhabani Charan Bandyopadhyay, to take on the task further.

38 years after the publication of Hickey's Bengal Gazette (1780), the first Bengali journal Digidarshan was published by Serampore Baptist missionary William Carey. In the next month, the first Bengali weekly newspaper Samachar Darpan (May 1818), started its journey, published from the same Serampore Mission Press under the editorship of John Clark Marshman. In the same year, another Bengali newspaper, Bangla Gazette, started being printed from Kolkata by Gangakishore Bhattacharya, a former employee of the Serampore Press (Roy, 1996). Though it is not clear whether Bangla Gazette was published before or after Samachar Darpan, it was certainly the first vernacular newspaper published by any native Indian. Ganga Kishore established the printing press on his own at Chorbagan Street in the northern part of Calcutta (Bera, 2022). Unfortunately, nothing much is known about Ganga Kishore; even the lifespan of his newspaper was short.

On the other hand, Samachar Darpan lived a relatively long period of time. The importance of Samachar Darpan lies in the fact that it was the first Bengali newspaper and

became the most important document to study the history of the early years of Bengali newspapers. In the pages of Samachar Darpan, one can often find mentions of other magazines and newspapers of that era. For many of these papers, the statements are the only way to learn about them. Well-versed in both English and Sanskrit, Carey and Marshman were the first to include the word Samachar in the Bengali vocabulary; as a Bengali translation of 'news'. Only the choice of the name is enough to understand their contributions to the development of the standardised Bengali script. Marshman appointed renowned Sanskrit pundits like Jaygopal Tarkalankar and Tarinicharan Shiromani to run the paper smoothly. Because of the coalition between Sanskrit Pundits and English missionaries, the Bengali language articulated by Samachar Darpan became entirely influenced by both the Sanskrit and English languages. In the upcoming decades, this form of Bengali language remained dominant within the bilingual Bengali elites of Kolkata. However, in the colloquial Bengali, the influence of Arabic and Parsi remained visible.

The journals published before Samachar Darpan had two important peculiarities. Apart from being English, these newspapers were published to cater to English citizens living in India. Neither of these papers had any Indian staff nor any Indian Readers (Bera, 2022). In the cases of Samachar Darpan and Gangakishore's Bengali Gazette, the primary readership was native Bengalis. These papers introduced Bengali natives to the process of newspaper publication. Understanding the competency of print media, many Bengali intellectuals started publishing newspapers to spread new ideas in society. Among them was Raja Ram Mohan Ray, whose 'clear and

energetic mind', according to James Long, "saw that the Vernacular press was a better vehicle than the tongue" (Long, Returns Relating to Publications in the Bengali Language 1857, 1859). Ram Mohan started publishing a Bengali weekly, Sambad Kaumudi (1821), from Kolkata, under the editorship of Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay. Besides the Bengali weekly, Ram Mohan also published an English newspaper, The Brahmanical Magazine, and a Parsi, Mirat-ul-Akhbar, magazine. Ram Mohan's immediate purpose in publishing Sambad Kaumudi was to propagate his reformist idea against the Sati Pratha. Bhabanicharan was a conservative Hindu brahmin.

Therefore, the contradiction between him and Ram Mohan was inevitable. Bhabanicharan left Sambad Kaumudi after the publication of the 13th edition and started a rival newspaper called Samachar Chandrika, which later became the mouthpiece of orthodox Hinduism. After the departure of Bhabanicharan, Sambad Kaumudi continued its reformist role until the colonial rulers lawfully abolished the Sati Pratha. It continued being published until 1836. Ram Mohan and Sambad Kaumudi proved the importance of print media to modernise society. They encouraged many early Bengali elites to publish newspapers in their vernacular languages. The reformist boom continued in many Bengali weekly published after Sambad Kaumudi, i.e., Dwarkanath Tagore's Bangadoot, Rashik Krishna Mullick's Gyananeshan, Ishwar Chandra Gupta's Sambad Prabhakar and Gaurishankar Tarkabagish's Sambad Bhaskar. Apart from the names and technicalities, the early Bengali newspapers mostly maintained independent characteristics from their English counterparts (Chattopadhyay, 2003). The owners or patrons

of these early Bengali newspapers were the newly developed modern Bengali entrepreneurs. The tendency of these papers to cater to their owners' interests becomes evident through their activities. Bangadoot openly supported the ending of East India Company's monopoly in India's trade with other Asian countries, like China, and always remained in favour of developing private capital in the Indian market (Bera, 2022). The major patrons of Bengali newspapers, like Dwarkanath Tagore, Rashik Krishna Mullick, Rajendralal Mitra, Prasanna Kumar Thakur, and Nilratan Halder, were financially established before the arrival of the Bengali printing press. On the other hand, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Gupta, Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay, and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar had gained bourgeois status on their own; even for some of them, the main source of income was through the publication of books. In addition to the development of the bourgeoisie class, the spread of education through the establishment of Hindu College and the cultivation of western thoughts in vernacular language via the initiation of Hindu College pathshala enabled the emergence of a reading public in Kolkata (Bagal, 1941).

However, all the newspapers published during the early years of the Bengali press were not progressive. As previously mentioned, Bhabanicharan's *Samachar Chandrika* was the mouthpiece of conservative Hindu Bengalis. Another important conservative weekly journal was Krishna Mohan Das's *Sambad Timirnashak* (Basu, 2018). The popularity of *Samachar Chandrika* among the conservative Bengali elites was quite high. *Chandrika* openly supported the Sati Pratha and even gathered British patrons, like Major Williams, who campaigned against the official banning of Sati custom.

Because of its large subscriber base spread across the Bengal presidency, Samachar Chandrika lived quite a long life (Bera, 2022). According to Swapan Basu, Samachar Chandrika continued being published until 1898 (Basu, 2018). While recording about Chandrika, Rev. James Long mentioned it as the "native times of Calcutta" (Long, A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Works, 1855). Besides being a newspaper publisher, Bhabanicharan has also published some popular Bengali books such as Vidyasundar, a tale of the Burdwan king's daughter, Anyadamongol and has written popular prose like Naba Babu Bilas.

The development of the Bengali typeface and the establishment of educational institutes like Fort William College and Hindu College encouraged many Bengali entrepreneurs to set up printing presses, foreseeing the future growth of the book publishing industry. It is possible to find the existence of 20 printing presses between 1820 and 1830 in Kolkata (Sen, 1984). In this decade, the centre of printing and publishing mushroomed around Chitpur Road in the vicinity of Shobhabazar, Balkhana, Darji-tola, Kumartuli, Garanhata, and Ahiritola (Khastagir, 2014). Later in the decade, these presses were started to be addressed as Battala press. From the authentic records, it is possible to locate a Biswanath Dev starting the first printing press in the area between 1817-1818 (Sen, 1984). Though the name Battala was first given to signify a bulk of printing presses in one place, later, the term, Battala, was used to denote a whole range of popular, nonsense, erotic materials published in the Bengali commercial presses.

The Battala presses were often accused of vulgarising the Bengali masses by the intellectuals. However, the

emergence of Battala is not an arbitrary event; it had an intellectual connection too. Hindu College was originally established on Garanhata street, neighbouring the vilified Battala. Despite being rejected by the elite class, the books published by the Battala presses were quite popular then. James Long also noted Bhabanicharan's *Vidyasundar* as the most popular Bengali tale (Long, 1855). The publishers of Battala presses had well understood the public tastes of the 19th-century colonial Bengal. Apart from being mythical, erotic, and pre-British content, the use of colloquial Bengali helped to increase their popularity as well. Many early workers of these printing presses later became the backbone of the rapidly growing Bengali book publishing industry. In that sense, it is not wrong to say that the Battala presses also helped the Bengali printing industry achieve technical excellence. Despite the division in Bengali society over the composition of the Bengali printing language, *Samachar Darpan* always held a positive opinion regarding the Bengali printing industry. *Samachar Darpan*'s 1830, 30th January edition says, "It has only been 16 years since men in this country first took the initiative in printing books for sale; it surprised us that in such a short time they have achieved such progress in the field" (Bandopadhyay, 1948).

### **THE EXPANSION OF THE PRINTING INDUSTRY (1835-1858)**

In 1834-35, two significant developments made the growth of the Bengali printing press more hindrance free. After becoming governor, Charles Metcalf abolished a decade-old Indian Press Censorship Act of 1821. On the other hand, English replaced Parsi as the official language of colonial bureaucracy, and Bengali became the second



official language of the colonial offices. As the chance of being punished by the colonial ruler was reduced, more native vernacular journals and newspapers started. These journals' content, writing style, and editorial policy were diverse. These papers began to cater to different sections of society. The emergence of Dhaka as another important printing base happened during this time. From 1835 to the Sepoy Mutiny, the Bengali printing press witnessed exponential growth. Until 1834, the circulation of Bengali newspapers was not too good. Most of their readers were from Kolkata. Not only in the rural areas but also the semi-urban spaces, the necessity to read news had not arisen. Only Samachar Darpan had some semi-urban circulation. Access to newspapers was circumscribed by the urban elites (Basu, 2018). The major reason behind the lack of newspaper reading public was the scarcity of institutionalised education. The situation started to change by the late 40s; many journals started publishing from semi-urban towns, some of them are Nilmoni Mukherjee's Rangpur Bartaboho from Rangpur, Keshchandra Karmakar's Gyanarunoday from Srirampur, Madhabchandra Ghosh's Sambad Bardhaman and Bisweswar Bandyopadhyay's Gyan Pradayini from the Burdwan town. The growth of the rural and semi-urban reading public was not a sudden development (Bera, 2022).

The development of new educational institutes in rural and semi-urban spaces and the urgent need to learn the language to remain in touch with the colonial modes of production worked as a major force behind the growth. The role of the Bengali commercial printing presses of Battala to popularise the practice of reading printed books cannot be denied. While publishing books in the Bengali language

with a Sanskritized vocabulary was an elite phenomenon, the means of the Bengali printing presses were not entirely under the authority of the elites. Unlike the Urdu press in North India and the Bengali press of Dhaka, which spring from newspaper publication, Calcutta's printing presses were built up to cater to commercial demands (Ghosh, 1998). Manuscript texts were quite popular in Bengal even before print appeared. The new vernacular presses, established around Battala, started to publish printed versions of those manuscripts and mythical books to maintain economic sustainability. The early commercial books were mythological tales revolving around popular deities like Shiva and Krishna, centred around the throne of Vikramaditya, romantic stories like Vidyasundar and Chandrakanta and love poetries such as *Rasa Manjari* and *Rati Bilas*. Although local entrepreneurs had started the book trade early in the 19th century, in the middle of the century, the coming of cheap printing technology and the growth of the reading public worked as a major boost to the industry (Ghosh, 1998).

As the colonial rulers replaced Persian with the local native language as the official language for local governance in the 1830s, the demand for learning the Bengali printing language grew. Workable knowledge of Bengali writing was essential to get a job in Calcutta and its peripheral areas. This demand created a new section of lower-middle-class, identified as the 'functionally literate' (Ghosh, 1998). They underwent training in elementary Bengali to serve in the government and commercial establishments in Calcutta. With this audience, Battala readers grew phenomenally in lower middle-class urban and rural homes. Growth in Bengali book

publishing was prominent in this period. James Long's 1854 catalogue estimated that fewer than two million Bengali books were issued between 1844-1854 (Long's 1954 catalogue in Roy, 2018). Though the figures mentioned by Long were very approximate, it clearly shows that by the mid-19th century, the book publishing industry had become a thriving sector. The number of printing presses had doubled. While three incomplete lists of Samachar Darpan show 21 active printing presses in Kolkata up to 1830, Long's 1852 catalogue mentions 49 printing presses (Long, 1852); among them, only three can be found in Darpan's list - Chandrika press at Kolutala, Mahendralal Press at Shankaritala and Prabhakar Press, established by Ishwar Chandra Gupta.

Interestingly, among the 49 printing presses mentioned in Long's 1853-54 catalogue, more than 20 were in the area adjacent to the lanes of North Kolkata, which was often identified as Battala. Until the second half of the 19th century, Battala remained at the centre of the Bengali book trade industry. The academic centre of book publishing, College Street, started to attract attention with the establishment of the Sanskrit Press in 1847 by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, later College Street became synonymous with Bengali good literature (Roy, 1996).

Besides the increased reading public, a new trend became visible in Bengal. As books became the means for recording and circulating thoughts and the number of literates were still limited, the act of reading emerged as a new form of urban performance. In his 1859 catalogue, Long wrote, "With Orientals, it is a common practice to be read to, and hence members who cannot read themselves listen

to those who can. Readers (Kathak) are often hired to recite or chant certain works, and most impressively, some of them execute this" (Long, 1859). Kathakata, a medieval task of recitation, found new life through the medium of printed books. Long was so enthusiastic about this new form that he speculated that six lacs Bengali books have a total of two million hearers. Here also, the number might be an exaggeration. Still, it gives us an idea of how printed medium was accepted as a reliable source of information among the natives and print medium was able to penetrate every section of the Bengali public.

The rapid growth of the market and the sharp increase in the scale of production significantly brought down the price of books. While Vidyasundar on back paper was sold at one rupee in 1825, in 1857, the same book printed on good paper was priced at two annas. Shishubodh, a much-used school text, came down from eight annas in 1825 to three pice in 1857 (Long, 1859).

This period can also be identified as a period of social change where intellectual battles were fought to make society more inclusive. One of the major areas where intellectuals thought reform was urgent was the condition of women in colonial Bengal. According to Meredith Borthwick, "they formulated their own critique of the condition of Bengali women and argued for the need for reform" (Borthwick, 1984). Apart from the struggles to ban child marriage and enactment of widow remarriage, a major section of Bengali intellectuals was keen on the widespread of women's education. As the Bengali women got the tiniest chance to acquire education, many of them, encouraged by their urge to gain knowledge, quickly seized the little opportunity that

came to them and started acquainting themselves with the wider world.

However, educated women were rare until formal women's education institutes emerged. William Adam's 1836 report on education in Bengal mentions that almost all Bengali women were illiterate, with a few exceptions (Adams, 1836). Some women from the families of Bengali Babus were literate enough to read difficult religious texts and manage their estates, such as Debendranath Tagore's mother-in-law or the women of Peary Chand Mitra's family. The only way women could learn enough knowledge to become literate was through the zenana system - a type of private tuition promoted by missionaries, where all the teachers were European ladies (Borthwick, 1984). The situation started to change with the establishment of schools dedicated to women students. In 1847, Kalikrishna Mitra, Peary Charan Sarkar and others, with the support of JED Bethune, established the first woman's education institute, presently named Barasat Kalikrishna Girls' High School, at Barasat near Kolkata (Bagal, 1956). Despite the legal and physical harassment by the Hindu orthodox community, the progressive local Bhadrals sent their daughters to the school, and the average number of enrolments was 20 per year. The school set up precedence for the public education of girls. In the subsequent year, another girls' school was founded in the village of Nibadhai, this time without opposition. The phenomenon became more rapid with the foundation of the Bethune School in Kolkata in May 1849. The Bethune school was blessed with all the advantages of a central location in Calcutta, government patronage, and adequate funding. Many eminent members of the Bengali

Bhadralok openly started to send their daughters to the school. The emergence of women's education further broadened the number of reading public for printed texts. The printing market experienced new demands.

Peary Chand Mitra and Radhanath Sikdar quickly identified the demand and started a literary magazine *Masik Patrika* in 1857. The short preface of the magazine's first edition introduced it as a magazine "published for the benefit of ordinary people, especially women. Articles here will be written in the language in which we ordinarily converse. If scholars wish to read it, they are welcome to do so, but this magazine is not really intended for them" (Roy, 1996). Tek Chand Thakur's (the pet name of Peary Chand Mitra) famous novel *Alaler Gharer Dulal* was published serially in *Masik Patrika*. Mitra and Sikdar rightly understood that to build a mass readership among Bengali natives, the Bengali language needs a form acceptable to both intellectuals and ordinary people. *Masik Patrika* can be considered one of the early attempts by the Bengali intelligentsia to relate the newly developed Bengali high culture to the popular world. This trend later continued; during 1885 Sanskrit press published many low-cost, easily written books for the daily passengers of the lower middle-class group (Sastri, 1903).

During the 19th century, the language of Bengali printed books was divided into two distinctive forms. Scholars like Tapati Roy and Sumanta Banerjee have identified them as the language of Bhadralok or urban elite and the other as the colloquial language of popular masses (Banerjee, 1989). Bengali printing language was a space where significant struggles for power took place among different social groups in the 19th Century Bengal. While members of Bhadralok

elites had tried to marginalise and discipline the popular colloquial form through different means, on the other hand, popular literature had often emphasised on the bigotry of the urban elites and mocked them in numerous ways. However, these internal struggles neither necessarily prove any distinct nature between their readers nor the influence of one form over the other as a one-way transaction. Some instances clearly show that their readership often overlapped. Even in Bankim's novels, written in Sadhu Bhasha, one encounters sudden verses written in the colloquial style. If one goes through the biographies of the famous nationalist Bipin Chandra Pal and the great writer Rabindranath Tagore, we will find that in their houses, they had easy access to the so-called trash literature of Battala. (Pal, 1932; Tagore, 1912).

Despite differences between social classes and their forms of language, the print medium built a common cultural identity and a community feeling among the Bengali masses. As this feeling started to increase, they began to resist the colonial intervention in their internal matters. Their unified resistance towards the colonial power's interference in their internal particles is evident even in the case of the Bengali Almanacks. Long's every catalogue identified the almanacks as the most sold books. In Long's words, an almanack is "as necessary for a Bengali as his hookah or his pan. Without it, he cannot determine the auspicious days for marrying (22 in the year), for first feeding an infant with rice (27 days in a year), for feeding the rice in the fifth month of gestation (12 days), for commencing the building of a house etc." (Long, 1859). In the new urban families, printed Almanacs took the

traditional place of the astrologer. Almanacks' purpose is to know the timings and rules of practising religious and cultural practices. Identifying the immense popularity and low quality of printed Almanacs, Britishers thought they should publish a rationally organised almanack to counteract the evils of the native Almanacs. However, they failed. When the Tract Society of Calcutta, with the help of missionaries from the Church of England, published the westernised Almanac, it did not sell. So, publication stopped within a few months (Long, 1859).

Before going to the next part of the article, it is important to note that during the same period, particularly during the regime of Lord Dalhousie as the Governor General of India, apart from the developments in the printing industry, other mediums of communication emerged - railways, telegraphic communications, and cheap postal rates were introduced. These inductions brought about a significant change in the hitherto archaic methods of collecting and transmitting news and distributing newspapers and other printed texts (Moitra, 1969). These developments were not limited to the publishing industry. The introduction of all three - railway, telegraph, and cheap postal service - had far greater significance in all the shades of Indian society. World scholarship was so enthusiastic about the developments that Karl Marx identified the Indian railway system as the true forerunner of modern industry. He further says, "modern industry resulting from the railway will dissolve the hereditary division of labour upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress and Indian power" (Marx, 1853).



## **THE ARRIVAL OF NATIONAL IMAGINATION**

Native Indians and villagers struggle against the native kings and zamindars, and colonial exploitation were continuously occurring during this period. These scattered battles took a cumulative shape, turned into long protests against European Indigo planters, and started the historic Indigo revolt of 1861. In Bengal, the growing Bengali middle class continuously supported the resurgent riots. Active sympathy from the middle class inspired the peasants to continue the fight with determination. The unity was formed between the Indian bourgeoisie and the toiled masses of the land. The central argument of this part is that due to the adequate connection of masses, both urban and rural, through the print medium, the peasants' bold resistance against the colonial hegemony set the fire of nationalism among the people of Bengal.

Indigo cultivation started in India in 1824, and under the charter of 1833, European entrepreneurs were granted the right to acquire lands for Indigo plantations. As the European subject did not come under the jurisdiction of local courts, the English 'profligate adventurous' started to commit crimes freely without any punishment. Understanding the gravity of the situation, Governor General Macleay decided to pass a law that would bring the European planters under the jurisdiction of local courts. Mr Bethune was tasked with preparing a draft act in 1849. However, the united and well-orchestrated protest from the European planters failed the effort. Understanding the necessity to counter the Indigo planters, Ramgopal Ghosh started to campaign in favour of the draft law and tried to mobilise Indian public opinion. He understood that to mobilise public

opinion, the print medium should be used to its full extent. Ramgopal Ghosh utilised the columns of the newspapers, like Gyananeshan and Bengal Spectator, to expose the hollowness of the European stand and condemn their self-proclaimed racial supremacy (Moitra, 1969).

The anti-Indian stand by the planters and Ramgopal Ghosh's critical speeches encouraged the Indian bourgeoisie to become united. An organisation, the British Indian Association, was formed in 1851 to uphold patriotism and the class interests of the Indian bourgeoisie. Raja Radhakanta Deb was made the organisation's first president, and Debendranath Tagore its first secretary. The prominent members of the organisation were Raja Kalikrishna Deb, Harakumar Tagore, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Jai Krishna Mallick, Ashutosh Mallick, Ramgopal Ghosh, Peary Chand Mitra and Raja Devendra Mitra. The situation was not limited to the Bengal province only. Around the same time, the Bombay Association came into being with Jugganath Sankersett, VN Mandlik, Dadabhai Naoroji, and Nowrosjee Furdunjee as its leaders. However, being an organisation with members from only the zamindar and bourgeoisie class, British Indian Association was not able to uphold the interests of exploited indigo peasants wholeheartedly.

The momentum started with the inception of the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857. While Sepoy Mutiny encouraged the East India Company rulers to establish stringent censorship rules, like the Suppression of Press Act 1857, it did not have a major impact on the native Bengali press, as most of the native Bengali press supported the foreign rulers in its attempt to suppress the movement. Though most of the Bengali press supported the Britishers, differences were

there - Samachar Sadhubarshan was one of them. Shyamsundar Sen, the editor of Sadhubarshan, was arrested and fined 20,000 rupees. Another paper that came under the Britishers' attempt to restrict the free press was Rangpur Bartaboho. On the other hand, many Bengali journals - Sangbad Pravakar, Sangbad Bhaskar, Sangbad Purnachandradway, Arunodway, Education Gazette, Uttarpara Pakhik - were in favour of the company. They never showed any restrictions to announce their open support for the Company's Government. After mutiny pacified, Sambad Pravakar wrote:

We have never used our writing against the government, so it doesn't matter to us whether there is press freedom or not. We were cautious while publishing the paper in the previous year. Now, there is hope that we don't need to be that much cautious anymore.

Following the Sepoy Mutiny, the Bengali press experienced a rapid expansion. From 1857 to 1878, when the Vernacular Press Act was enacted, 366 new Bengali papers were established. The unique thing that happened after the mutiny was the transfer of power to rule India from the East India Company to the British Parliament.

In the second half of the century, the native Bengali presses were more successful in portraying the public opinion of Bengal. James Long, in his 1857 Report of the Native Press in Bengal, mentions, "In the present position of India the native presses have become the exponent of the native minds." Though the Bengali native press was divided into groups based on the format of language and ideological positions, they behaved in a united and resolved manner during times of crisis and public anger. The first such

instance came in 1859 when the Indigo movement started to take a radical shape. The fighting peasants got tremendous support from the masses, and a clear sense of consciousness against colonial hegemony was on its rise. The Bengali newspapers started raising their voices against the Indigo planters much earlier in the century. In 1840, Sambad Bhaskar's editor Gauri Shankar Bhattacharya identified the European Indigo planters as 'ferocious barbarians' (Basu, 2018). This voice became sharper and more consolidated in the latter half of the century. One of the important Bengali newspapers, the first daily Sambad Prabhakar wrote:

The ordinary men know very well how Indigo planters torture their subordinate subjects; the people who have taken the advance for Indigo cultivation are under limitless pain. They were forced to worship the planters. Indigo planters tortured innocent peasants in countless ways (Basu, 2018).

The newspapers from the conservative side of the spectrum, like Samachar Chandrika, also expressed their support in favour of peasants. To depict the ground reality, Chandrika wrote, "How can an ordinary peasant protect himself against the mighty Europeans, who possess more than 200 to 300 armed fighters?" (ibid.)

Not only against the Indigo planters, but Chandrika also continued to voice its opposition against the immoral acts of the then police forces and the famous tea taxation. The extent to which the Bengali native journals expressed their opposition is evident in Rev. James Long's reply to the Indigo commission, where he says, "Indigo planting has been for the last 16 years the subject of incessant attacks in those native newspapers, and the opinion of those papers filtered down to the mass." (Oddie, 2017)

According to existing scholarly writings, Harishchandra Mukherjee and Hindu Patriot were important for organising the Indigo uprising. There is no doubt that the radical writings of Mukherjee attracted government officials' notice. It is certainly not true that the ordinary people's united stand against planters was because of the Patriot. The native Bengali newspapers covered the movement extensively. Sambad Prabhakar, Samachar Chandrika, Bharat Sanskarak, Education Gazette, Anusandhan and many other Bengali newspapers' extensive reporting on the atrocities faced by the Indigo cultivators generated mass sympathy in favour of the farmers (Bandopadhyay, 1948). The nation became united, for the first time in the colonial era, against foreign oppressors.

During this period, the Bengali book printing industry showcased changes in the types of books published. Apart from the poetry and translations of old works, a popular format of prose writing emerged. Previously emerged prose writings of Vidyasagar and Akshay Kumar Dutta were rich, but the excessive Sanskritization made them un-understandable to the ordinary mass. Peary Chand Mitra and Radhanath Sikdar's writings in the Masik Patrika broke the barrier. They gave birth to a new form of Bengali prose language - a mixture of newly developed Sanskritized Bengali and the colloquial. Despite criticism from Bengali literary society, they continued practising it. Shivnath Shastri mentioned this language as Alali Bhasha (Sastri, 1903). A more modified popular form of Bengali prose writing arose with the coming of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay.

Already massive readership of Bengali books witnessed further growth with the development of the railway system.

It became easier to transport books and newspapers from cities to their peripheries and vice versa. Bengali newspapers were transported not only around Bengal but also around India, even in some instances abroad. To explain the influence of the railway system, Prof. Anjan Bera noted how Somprakash, one of the influential Bengali weeklies started in 1858, transferred its printing press from Kolkata to Dakshin Changripota. Just before this transfer, the railway transport from Sealdah to Canning started. So Dakshin Changripota became directly connected to the capital (Bera, 2022).

Another change that appeared was the development of drama in Bengali literature. The first Bengali drama was written in 1856, *Kulinkul Sarbosyo*, by Sanskrit College's Prof. Ramnarayan Tarkaratna. The drama was performed with the support of Jatindra Mohan Tagore. Because of human involvement and visual appeal, within a very short time, the medium of drama became very popular in Bengali society. Many noted personalities become patrons of the medium, such as Ashutosh Deb, Kaliprasanna Singha, and the rajas of Paikpada - Pratap Chandra and Ishwar Chandra. The first theatre house was established at Belgachia (Sastri, 1903). Within a few years, Michael Madhusudan Dutta appeared. His writings created a major boom in the drama industry. The growth of Bengali dramas was very surprising. By comparison, while Long's 1857 list notified only eight dramas, 1865 Wenger's catalogue of Bengali books for sale mentioned 113 dramas. Almost 1400% increase in 8 years. Another trend we get by comparing the 1857 and 1865 lists was the sharp decrease in the number of reprints and translation works. Jatindramohan Bhattacharya's *Talika* also proves this trend (Roy, 1996).

In this prime moment, Dinabandhu Mitra's *Neeldarpan* was published. Mitra quite empathetically portrayed the oppression faced by Bengali peasants. Because of the existing massive readership, the ongoing peasant struggle against Indigo planters, and the emerging popularity of the drama medium, the *Neeldarpan* became an instant hit. The people started to relate to the oppressed Indigo cultivators of *Neel Darpan*. Shivnath Shastri, in his book *Ramtanu Lahiri o Tatkalin Banga Samaj*, wrote, "It has never been imagined that a book can create so much entropy in the society" (Sastri, 1903). The dialogues of *Neeldarpan* were so popular that they became part of people's everyday life. The drama became a matter of pride for the Bengali community. Even after more than 100 years, it used to be performed in local events. Despite multiple attempts to pacify the movement, the Bengali peasants stood firm, this time with complete support from the Bengali community. The campaign united the ordinary Bengali people.

### **CONCLUSION**

In the first decade of the second half of the 19th century, colonial Bengal witnessed three revolts against the colonial power. The first Santhal Rebellion started in 1855, led by four sibling brothers - Sidhu, Kanhu, Chand, and Bhairav. The revolt was against the revenue system of the British East India Company, usury practices, and the zamindari system in India (Chandra, 2016). The second was the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, and the last but not the least was 1859's Indigo movement that continued for many years.

Among the three, the first two - the Santhal movement and the Sepoy Mutiny - neither got support from the Bengali native presses nor from the Bengali masses. On the other

hand, the agitating ryotwari peasants of the Indigo movement not only got support from the Bengali elites and middle-class people but also many of them took an active part in the movement. The question of why the Indigo movement got massive support from the Bengali masses, while they remained half-hearted of the previous two movements, always remained an inquisitive area for scholars. Scholars have often argued that the involvement of Bengali literati and the excellent coverage by Bengali print media had turned the spasmodic rebellions into a mass movement. Narahari Kaviraj argued that the Bengali liberals could not turn their back on the peasant question of colonial Bengal as they were inculcated with the European principles of social equality. On the other hand, their ties with the Britishers limited them from demanding radical change to throw out the British Raj. As the Indigo movement was not so radical against the Raj, the peasants only wanted to exorcise the Indigo planting from the land of Bengal; the Bengali elites considered it the perfect opportunity to pressurise the colonial government and widen the scope of constitutional struggle in colonial India (Kaviraj, 1958).

According to Ranjit Guha, all the Bengali liberals wanted was to expand liberalism in society and validate the constitutional struggle method to get more market share while supporting the significance of British rule. Throughout the movement, the liberals sufficiently constructed the narrative of good Englishmen, such as James Long, JW Bethune, other missionaries, and the bad Englishmen (the planters). They viewed Neel Darpan as a vehicle to do so when planters filed a libel case against the drama. To justify his argument, Guha showed the way Dinabandhu's drama, from starting to end,



remained faithful to the Raj. The play was about the Basus of Swarapur, whose faith in the Raj did little to save them from disgrace and ruin. Guha further goes on to argue that the function of Neel Darpan was to generate an illusion about British Rule in India as a good thing with only a few faults. Thus, the Bengali bourgeoisie converted a massive, well-organised, armed uprising of the peasants into a mere legal battle. To do so, the drama enthusiastically glorified the law-practising profession (Guha, 1974). Similarly, taking a cue from Guha's analysis, Subhas Bhattacharya manifests the way liberal Bengali Bhadrals failed to recast the Indigo movement into an anti-colonial, anti-imperialist struggle. However, Bhattacharya ends his article with a question on whether it was ever possible for a colonial intelligentsia to become truly radical (Bhattacharya , 1977).

The arguments made by eminent scholars like Ranjit Guha have much truth, but they failed to address the nationalist aspects embedded within the Indigo movement. It was not a movement started by Bengali Bhadrals. A major part of the movement was organised by the ordinary Bengali people living in different districts of Bengal. The fight against the Indigo plantation did not emerge suddenly. It continued from the first half of the century. What changed in the second half was the development of a network of colleges and secondary schools throughout the Indigo districts (Guha, 1974). With the spread of schools came a cluster of reading public who gathered books and newspapers published in Kolkata and its adjacent areas. With the spread of schools emerged a critical number of the reading public, not only in Kolkata and its peripheries but also in other districts of colonial Bengal. On the other hand, the Bengali

printing industry, primarily controlled by the emerging bourgeoisie, secured a massive surge. Day by day, printed books became cheaper and reached more and more people. The printing industry turned out to be one of the biggest trades in colonial Bengal, with more than 11,000 workers (Roy, 1996). The vernacularising thrust of Bengal's capitalism, blended with the reformist agenda of the then intellectuals, quickly created large numbers of new reading publics - not least among the lower middle class and women - who typically did not know Sanskrit and English. Likewise, the abolishment of Parsi as the official language and a specific focus on vernacular for official purposes worked as a major force in the erosion of an already fading imagined community of the Mughal era. The growth of print language and a substantial amount of reading public gave the masses of Bengal, divided into multiple dialects of the same language, a unified language. The spread of print media enkindled the advent of the monoglot mass reading public; to profit from selling printed texts, the print capitalists needed a big market with monoglot mass.

The interplay among the erosion of local dialects, communication technology, and capitalism created a mechanically reproducible Bengali print language for distribution in the market. Parallely, due to the educational boom, a critical number of masses were introduced to the Bengali print language. This progress initiated a unified field of exchange and communication for the masses. The non-elites who could not communicate in English, Sanskrit, or Parsi now became capable of understanding one another's points of view. The advent of the railway, postal and telegraph systems made the communication process swifter. They

came to be aware of the millions of people belonging to their same language community, who believe in the same myths, practice similar rituals, and must go through similar hurdles in their lives. These fellow companions, to whom they were connected through print, formed the Bengali imagined community. They started to relate to each other, often learning from each other's experiences. Because of this interconnectedness, the exploitation of the Bengali peasants by indigo planters began to be regarded as the exploitation of the whole Bengali community. The agitating ryotwari peasants' cause metamorphosed into the National cause. The continuous pressure from the masses forced the Bengali intellectuals to join the struggle.

It was true that the agenda of this movement was not to dethrone colonial power. Nonetheless, this fact does not necessarily imply that the movement was not nationalist. This article argues that the Indigo movement gained momentum in the first decade of the second half of the 19th century because of the arrival of national consciousness as an outcome of the spread of print capitalism in colonial Bengal. Before the Indigo movement, the Britishers rather smoothly suppressed every rebellion under native leadership because they had a better internal line of communication than the revolting natives. As the printing press became popular in the second half of the century, the native people got united and native leadership understood how to use the expanding vernacular print market to educate, organise and agitate the masses against the colonial hegemony. Bengal showed the direction, other states quickly followed, and the political propaganda war raged across India for the remaining period of British rule. At the same time, the Bengali mass

did not support the previous two movements - the Santhal Rebellion and the Sepoy Mutiny - because the communities themselves and their struggles were not in conformity with the Bengali imagined community created by the Bengali printing press.

The unavailability of the National bourgeoisie class and the dependence of native capitalists on the colonial ruler limited the nationalist political struggle from becoming radical. For a long period, the Indian bourgeoisie maintained a compromised anti-colonial stand. Even a major part of the Indian anti-colonial struggle, not only the Indigo movement, was passive in essence. The function of the vernacular printing press in developing national communities across India was so massive that the colonial rulers were forced to enforce stricter censorship for the Indian vernacular presses in 1878, though repealed in 1880 due to widespread protests. The national consciousness triggered by the Indigo movement became more ardent in the upcoming years and achieved its ultimate form during the anti-partition movement of 1905. The arrival of radical nationalist writings, like *Anandamath*, remained just a matter of time.

The other major reason behind the passive nature of Bengali nationalism was, as Partha Chatterjee has argued, its more spiritual nature than the material cause (Chatterjee, 1996). Unlike the western countries, the development of Bengali national consciousness was neither organic nor unself-conscious. The peculiarities of Bengali National consciousness came from the combination of, on the one hand, the Britishers', and Christian missionaries' agenda to widen its hegemony over the Bengali masses, on the other hand, Bengali intellectuals' self-conscious mission to

modernise the Bengali society and culture. It was not that the Bengali mass became united based on common modern values. The spiritual nature becomes prominent in the efforts to resist the alien ruler from intervening in internal religious matters, like the institution of Kulinism. Despite several attempts, Vidyasagar failed to pass legislation against Kulin polygamy. One of the important characteristics of the debate on Kulinism was that the opposition against the legislation did not defend polygamy. In this case, both the progressive and conservative camps argued that the institution of Kulinism was rapidly dying out, so there was no need for British intervention (Chattopadhyay B. C., 1873). Samachar Chandrika wrote"

Though by this rite, families are broken and weakness increases, facts which in themselves should lead to its abolition, yet we are to be the Judges our opinion is that government should not interfere. The rite is allowed by the Shastras, and if the government interfere, they break the engagement into which they entered when they took the country. We would not uphold the custom; all that we say is let not Government act injudiciously by interfering but let the more enlightened of our countrymen rise and determine to put a stop to this pernicious habit. We hope Mr Boulnois, a member of the council, who is anxious to introduce the bill to put a stop to it, will take our hint and drop the matter (Basu, 2018).

Similar notes appeared in so-called liberal journals, like *Banga Darshan*, *Somprakash*, and *Education Gazette*. According to them, with the spread of education, people would become conscious, and the institution would cease to exist. So, there is no need for a new law. Kulinism was

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not the only case where Bengalis unitedly resisted British intervention. The trend continued in the debates against child marriage, casteism and alcohol consumption.

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## **Transgender Characters in Malayalam Cinema: A Breeze of Freshness**

*-Ashwini &  
Prof. (Dr.) Sapna M. S.*

### **ABSTRACT**

*"Cinema is not only about making people dream.  
It's about changing things and making people think". -  
Nadine Labaki, Lebanese Filmmaker, Artist, and Activist*

**T**he above words precisely express what movies should do. Cinema is the most popular 'industry' and the amount of money being invested towards making movies is insane. When it has turned out to be a billion-dollar industry and efforts of hundreds are involved in the process of making movies; what also becomes important is the way it is perceived by the audiences. To understand this, it also becomes necessary to analyse what is being communicated through the movie by the director. Movies can have tremendous impact on public mindset. It can lead to changes in attitude, beliefs, behavioural traits, and even ideologies. Further, the changes can be in areas pertaining

to political, social, economic, cultural, linguistic, and religious aspects. The power and influence of cinema has been accepted by people across geographical boundaries. Movies have the power to make or break a society. Constant feeding of positive thoughts through movies can have a constructive effect while constant feeding of negative messages can be detrimental to a society. One interesting aspect of movies has been the study of gender representation. Transgender representation in movies had been neglected for long. But lately it has gained prominence through a few movies. This paper tries to look at how the Malayalam movies perceive transgender and transsexual characters. A detailed content analysis of 3 Malayalam movies - Ardhanaari (2012), Aalorukkam (2018) and Njan Marykutty (2018) will be done by the researchers.

**Keywords:** *Cinema, Impact, Constructive, Detrimental, Transgenders, Perception*

## INTRODUCTION

Movies constitute a major source of entertainment for the audience. It has grown out to be a successful industry. Though movies can offer knowledge, information, and education to the audience; it is mostly associated with fun and entertainment. What becomes important is to understand techniques adopted to deliver fun to the audience. How are the characters created, what are the types of dialogues written to create waves of laughter? An analysis of this brings us closer to the fact that several times gender-centric comedy sequences are majorly used to create humour. Movies are timeless. They are here to stay forever. Even after decades, the same movie, the same plot or the same jokes can be watched by audiences and laughed at. Such being the

scenario, it is also important for us to realise that the characters are going to stay in the minds of the audiences for decades.

Inclusion of transgender characters in movies did not happen overnight. To begin with, the characters were included as creators of humour. Most of the times, it was mere cross-dressing that existed in movies. This holds good to movies across all languages. Actual representation of transgender characters in cinema is a recent development. Several earlier movies had men dressing like women. A man imitating the body language, mannerisms, gait, and expressions of a woman was considered funny. Janaki Sridharan, Professor at the University of Calicut, says that male characters dressing in feminine fashion has often been used as a source of humour (2020). But one needs to observe here that the same comical representation has hardly been done about men. We hardly come across movies, where women dress like men and imitates their mannerisms. Comical sequences are not developed based on this. Another aspect is that the representation is always an exaggerated version of normal behaviour. Further, transgender characters and their representation has hardly been given any prominence. A few Malayalam movies that broke grounds and tried to talk about transgender issues are Aalorukkam, Udalazhaam (2018), Ardhanaari, Soothradharan (2001), Irrattajeevitham (2018) and Njan Marykutty. The researcher here aims to look at the way they are portrayed in 3 movies - Ardhanaari, Aalorukkam and Njan Marykutty.

### **OBJECTIVES**

◆ To analyse the transgender characters in three Malayalam movies - Ardhanaari, Aalorukkam and Njan Marykutty.

- ◆ To find out whether the movies have a positive or negative portrayal of transgender characters
- ◆ To understand whether there is an element of inclusiveness towards transgender community among Malayalam movies

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In her research article 'Construction and Contestation of Identity and Politics: Transgender People in Contemporary Malayalam Cinema' Anu Kuriakose analyses the transgender representation in two leading Malayalam films (Kuriakose, 2020). Talking about the increase in transgender representation in movies, she feels that politics and movement in Kerala led to more movies in the recent times with trans characters. She further says that unlike earlier films where trans characters were victimized, marginalized, and mocked at, a few films try to portray trans women in good light by depicting their struggles and how they finally emerge successful.

Transgenders have been silenced, marginalised and have been forced to be emigrate in search of identity and livelihood opportunities. The greatest hurdle for transgenders to come out with their identity has been the hostility of the public towards the community. But movies like Njan Marykutty and Aalorukkam reflect the reality that attitude is undergoing change in contemporary times. The conventional attitude is undergoing change and the shifting gender norms is visible (Kuriakose, 2020).

In the words of Anjali Ameer, a transgender who played the heroine against Mammooty opines that there is hardly any space for transgender characters in Malayalam cinema. Cis male like Jayasurya and Prithviraj get to play the

characters. Filmmakers do not think of taking someone from our community to play those characters (George, 2019).

Malayalam cinema too has not been righteous in terms of fair representation of the LGBTQ communities. But changes are visible, and attempts are being made to bring inclusiveness. Though changes are happening, the pace at which it is taking place is distressing. The issues that should be concentrated on are not getting much attention (etimes, 2022).

Though it is true that the transgender portrayal has not been very welcoming in Indian cinema as well as regional cinema, one cannot completely neglect that a few movies have tried to make a difference. A unique treatment and a realistic portrayal of transgenders have been possible in a few Malayalam movies. It is important to look at all three movies in detail.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study involves a detailed content analysis of three movies. The movies will be studied and the characterisation, dialogues, costumes, overall representation of the characters and message conveyed shall be discussed in detail.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **Ardhanaari**

Directed by Dr. Santosh Souparnika in the year 2012, this movie revolves around the issue of transgenders. The movie starts by providing details about the community. It clearly says that Hijra means 'holy'. Walking down the historical path, they say that transgenders once held prominent positions. It also gives the information that they are called as Pingala in Sanskrit. The movie depicts the story of Vinayan, who is confused about his sexual identity.

Soliloquy reveals the dilemma happening within him. "I have the body of a boy but the mind of a girl, who am I" is the reflection of every transgender person. They go through this phase of self-realisation which is not easy and lead to psychological stress. The movie depicts the bullying faced at school, physical abuse by his own family, feeling of love created by a friend in school and later rejecting him in the name of infatuation.

The movie depicts the plight of transgenders through Vinayan. All that he desires for is a normal life filled with love, care, and affection. But all that awaits him is rejection, humiliation, and pain. Unable to bear the physical abuse from his family, he elopes and reaches a Hamam. But life will not be a bed of roses even there. The lines by Vinayan "I always craved for love. Nobody including my family loved me" reflects the pain faced. Though rejected and abused by their own families; the transgender people have a bonding among themselves. The moral, emotional and financial support offered by them to other transgender people is an element of surprise. The openness with which they accept any other transgender (though an absolute stranger) is a lesson to be learnt by every human being. When family fails to stand by a person just because he/ she happens to be a transgender is inhuman. Who said blood is thicker than water? Life of every transgender proves this wrong. It is the family that fails to understand the physical, emotional, and sexual feelings of transgenders. But the community accepts them with open arms. This aspect has been brought on screen in the movie. They are even adopted and treated like daughters. The customs and practices relating to adoption are well depicted in the movie.

Several times, police officers who are the saviours of people in a society also end up being trouble causers. Indifference towards the community, arrogance, dislike, negligence, and contempt felt towards the community is expressed in the lines "Indian government itself has ignored you". Trying to instil fear and saying that law is not in their favour through the line "Do you know that you can be imprisoned for a man dressing as a woman?" and the mockery behind asking "Do you tick male or female in forms?" are all examples of what the community faces each day. These issues have been well depicted in the movie.

All attempts by a transgender to lead a normal balanced respectable life goes in vain. Circumstances always push them to extreme sadness or problems. The despair, pain, loneliness, and rejection seem to be an unavoidable part of their life. This fact has been reinforced by the director in the movie by providing various twists and turns and making the protagonist end up in despair. A transgender character is equated with Ardhanareeshwara, and reference to characters in mythology has been drawn. It tries to communicate that transgenders are beyond age, time, appearance, and sex. The movie ends with lines which reinforce the plight of transgenders in the current day society. "In the world where Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Prophet Muhammad, Marx and Gandhi were born; I am begging for justice".

Though the movie chose a beautiful subject, it has not used it well to create empathy among public. It discusses the emotional upheavals, and the way law treats them. The beautiful theme of the movie gets camouflaged in the bright glittering sarees, gold jewellery and red hued flowers (Nair, 2012).



### **Njan Marykutty**

In this Malayalam movie directed by Ranjith Sankar in the year 2018, Jayasurya (Marykutty) plays the lead role as a transgender. The movie revolves around the life and struggles of a transgender portrayed through the character of Marykutty. The movie starts with a protagonist writing a letter communicating his gender identity and leaving the house. With tears, Njan Mathukutty writes that she is a woman accidentally born in a man's body. His words further reveal the emotional and psychological trauma, the conflict faced by every transgender. "I am ashamed of this facial hair, talking to men, am male by sex but female by gender. I need to change my body, my identity" is the voice of the community. With a firm mind to transform his sex, he even burns all his photographs as a boy.

This scene beautifully depicts the rejection and hatred he had towards his boy identity. Then the transformation of Mathukutty to Marykutty and the problems faced form the crux of the movie. The first rejection comes from her own family when they see her as Marykutty for the first time at church. The social stigma, humiliation, agony, and rejection from her own family members get conveyed through their absolute non-communication. While the society and family rejects Marykutty for her new identity, she starts admiring herself. The director has successfully projected both the positive and negative ideas held by public about the transgender community. While the pope stands in favour of Marykutty and questions "When god has accepted people like him, what is your problem?", police officer speaks contrary to this by declaring "We shall not take people like you for police service". The absolute

rejection from family that the transgender community faces is depicted in a scene where the family treats Marykutty as a stranger when she steps into her own house unaware of the fact that a boy's family has arrived with a marriage proposal for her sister. The disgust and rejection from every member of the family except her mother holds mirror to real-life situations.

The movie has been successful in communicating a positive message through the character of protagonist Marykutty. Though she faces a lot of humiliation, gets ill treated by family and police officers, her determination and positive outlook towards life sends a constructive message. Her efforts towards creating a respectable life for herself; to become a sub-inspector remains unaltered. In reality too, police who are supposed to be protectors also end up harrassing transgenders, which has been portrayed on screen. Reference to transgenders in the movie as 'it' makes it clear that they are not treated as human beings but as lifeless things. Conversation of a police officer with Marykutty's father needs a mention here. "Why have you created such a creature? Why didn't you kill when the eunuch was born?" is a reflection of the level of hatred towards them. Further in a scene, the father too tells Marykutty to kill herself. Lack of empathy from everybody including the family, the lack of educational opportunities and job opportunities push us into prostitution. It is a slap on the face of the society when Marykutty says "We get into prostitution and begging because of people like you". Towards the end, lines said by Marykutty's father to her that he always lived in fear of society and relatives, and that he never tried to understand her narrates the crux of the movie.

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It's not a man's world; It's not a woman's world; It's a world of talent is the realisation that our society needs today. The movie successfully portrays the journey of a transgender from nothing to becoming a Sub Inspector. The hurdles she faces in the process, the rejection, torture by the Police Department, the determination of Mary to achieve her dreams and reach the goal is the message necessary for public. Though little cinematic at times, it passes a strong message to the society that they too are capable of achievements. If opportunities are created, they can make their dreams come true. The movie strongly says that it is the attitude of the public that requires a change. It does highlight good Samaritans, who come to rescue and help Mary. The movie parallelly takes the problems faced by the community and at the same time also tries to communicate that there are ways to overcome and make it big in this world.

The movie has the potential to change the mindset of the public in a non-preachy way. It inspires the transgender community who are victims of the system and society, who hold an unfair opinion about them (Sundar, 2018). As said by Vidhya Vijayan in her research article 'A Battle for Survival: Analysing a Transgender's Existential Crisis in Njan Marykutty', she is successful in representing the quest of transgenders for their individuality. Her determination and optimistic approach set hers apart from rest of the crowd and helps to find out the remedies (Vijayan, 2018).

### **Aalorukkam**

Directed by V.C. Abhilash, in the year 2018, Aalorukkam is a movie of great importance for various reasons. The movie raises a fundamental question. Will a father be able to accept his transgender son? An aged father who has lost

his son 16 years back starts searching for him and the reality is beyond his acceptance. Eloping from the house and undergoing a sex transformation surgery is not new to transgenders. This situation arises because of lack of acceptance of reality by parents. This forces and pushes young boys to elope and cut all ties with the family. Status in society, social stigma, humiliation, and disgrace are terms very frequently heard by children during teenage, when they are undergoing physical bodily changes along with psychological pressure and confusion. What might be the reaction of a father, who goes in search of his long-lost son comes face to face with the reality that his son is no more a man but a woman.

The movie has made a genuine attempt to showcase transgenders as normal individuals. It is free of unwanted drama, exaggeration, and humiliated depiction of transgenders. But the movie has made the transgender character Sajeevan/ Priyanka voiceless. Once she comes face to face with her father she barely speaks. She seems to understand the inability of her father in accepting her new identity. No attempt is made by her to express what she feels. The director has balanced it well by making the father Pappu Pisharady also remain silent. But there is a difference in the silence of father and daughter. Pappu Pisharady remains silent as a sign of rejection and unacceptance. However, Priyanka remains silent as she is at a loss of words for her sex transformation. Her inability to talk to her father and communicate all that she feels becomes evident in the movie. The tension between both is carried on till the end of the movie. Transformation in the character of Pappu Pisharady is also evident. From a humorous, witty, love-to-talk kind

of character to reticent, taciturn in the second half of the movie strongly communicates his stand towards transgenders. "Where is Sajeevan?" is the last line, he speaks directed to Sajeevan himself who has transformed as Priyanka.

The movie highlights the various problems faced by people from the community. Even after sex transformation and marriage, it becomes difficult to lead a peaceful life. Inability to find a house for rent and to adopt a child creates feeling of empathy. But the movie also successfully depicts the transformation from hostility to acceptance happening in the society. The understanding and supportive nature of her husband is a welcome gesture.

#### SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

◆ Transgender characters in movies should not be created merely to create humour or fun.

◆ Movies should come up with more realistic portrayals of transgender characters.

◆ Exaggerated make-up, costumes and body language should be avoided. More respectable characterisation can be beneficial to the community.

◆ Characters can be depicted to have an ambition or career dream instead of merely portraying them to be dependent on begging and prostitution.

◆ In the movies depicting inclusiveness of transgenders by family and society is the need of the hour.

#### CONCLUSION

One can understand that the days of horrifying, scary depiction of transgenders in movies are changing. The Bollywood characterization of transgenders too have not been highly acceptable. Depicting them as villains, owners

of brothels, inhuman and crude has existed for long. The Malayalam movies made during this decade has witnessed several changes and have tried to be inclusive towards transgenders.

Ardhanaari, though, can be appreciated for the selection of the theme has been greatly successful in touching the hearts of the public. The movie revolves around the already known condition of transgenders, the ridicule and humiliation faced by them. It reinforces the same idea but fails to differ and provide a positive outlook towards the community. It stresses on the belief that the life of transgender is nothing but a tragedy. It has been successful in making public familiar with the customs and practices of the community but fails in creating empathy towards transgenders.

Aalorukkam deserves appreciation for the treatment of the character. A highly balanced, well mannered, and natural treatment of a transgender character is not common at all. Exaggeration, unnecessary usage of shock responses, overrated body language, extreme make-up, camera zooming in are few techniques usually used to highlight and communicate that they are different. Aalorukkam stands different for not making use of any of these techniques. Priyanka is depicted as any other woman, who is married and has a family of her own. Everything seems normal and balanced. The conflict of her father in accepting her as a daughter is also well ended in the climax. By making Pappu accept his son as daughter in the last shot of the movie is a strong message to the society. Though not directly said; it is visually well narrated by the director.

Njan Marykutty is a symbol of unaltered dedication of a transgender to fulfil her dream and lead a respectable life. The hurdles she faces in the process forms the crux of the movie and is an inspiration to the entire community. Though not at all easy and she must go through toughest times to make her family, sister and society accept her; it leaves a hope for the community of being included into the society in the days to come. This film too has been successful in creating Marykutty as a respectable, independent individual without making them look awkward in heavy make-up or clothes, and exaggerated mannerisms. Making Marykutty clad beautiful decent cotton sarees has added dignity to the character. Such balanced and normal portrayal is a need for transformation to happen.

One observation made by the researcher is that there is a lot of difference in the treatment of transgender characters in the movies taken for study above. Ardhaanari made in 2012 differs in many ways from Aalorukkam and Njan Marykutty made in the year 2018. Ardhanaari has a more pessimistic approach and revolves around the problems faced by transgenders. But Aalorukkam and Njan Marykutty have an optimistic approach and has tried to establish transgenders as successful individuals. There has been an attempt to showcase them as people with an ambition. Njan Marykutty conveys that providing right opportunities and support to the community along with dedication and desire for a respectable life from transgenders can lead to a dignified and bright future for them. Aalorukkam projects a happy and beautiful family, which can be a reality for transgenders too. An understanding partner and sex transformation surgery can

make them have a family of their own. It also beautifully depicts the ways in which transgender can take care of family. The role of a caring homemaker can also be performed by transgenders, who always feel that they are a woman struck in a man's body. It becomes important here to understand that with the passage of time, the treatment and understanding of the community is also undergoing a change. There has been more inclusiveness and positive mindset adopted while making movies in 2018 compared to the one made in 2012. Though this cannot be generalised, the change must be acknowledged and accepted as a welcoming one.

To conclude, the researcher found out that change is evident in the portrayal of transgender characters in Malayalam movies. The characters in all the three movies are performed by cis male actors. Aalorukkam has Sreekanth Menon performing stunningly well in the character of Priyanka, Njan Marykutty has Jayasurya in the lead role as transgender and Ardhaanari has Manoj K Jayan and Tilakan in the lead cast. Creating opportunities for the transgenders themselves to perform in the movies hasn't been achieved greatly. Though few like Anjali Ameer in Malayalam and Anjali Varadhan in Tamil have created opportunities for themselves in the movie industry, it is just a beginning. Barely one or two get opportunities to perform the lead characters rarely while the major lot only get opportunities to be side artists only when necessary. They do not even get recognised for their performance and are soon forgotten. Finally, the industry can contribute for the betterment of the society and their status by making more realistic movies about the community. The attitude of the



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public can also be changed, and acceptance level can be increased by the same. It can also inspire and motivate others in the community to dream high and provide hope of getting their dreams fulfilled.

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# **Do Disclaimers in Indian Cinema Say Something about the Society? Analysis of Disclaimers in Indian Cinema**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

**N**ot many of us carefully notice disclaimers at the beginning of a movie. Movies have a variety of disclaimers regarding the story, animal usage, action sequences, smoking, etc. The Cambridge Dictionary defines Disclaimers as: "a formal statement saying that you are not legally responsible for something, such as the information given in a book or on the internet, or that you have no direct involvement in it" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). A disclaimer is a disclosure made with the purpose of clarifying, potentially misleading, or deceptive statements made within an advertisement or a mass media product (Stutta and Hunnicutt, 1987). The disclaimer is needed primarily to (i) avoid any possible sensitive or controversy creation in the present and future, and (ii) avoid backfiring of artistic licenses taken by the makers (Saxena, 2012).

An analysis of the type of message given in the disclaimer, the duration, placement, size of fonts used in the disclaimer could help in increasing the effectiveness of the intent. The disclaimer display can grab the viewer's attention and influence their belief formation; hence, the content creators should identify and be more specific in the structural aspects of presenting any disclaimer (Foxman et al., 1988). The various aspects of the effectiveness of disclaimer labels, especially in different mass communication mediums like cinema, needs extensive research (Ata et al., 2013; Tiggemann et al., 2013, 2017).

'Cinema' is an abbreviation for the art of motion-picture photography called 'cinematography'. Cinema thus is more inclined towards the technicality of capturing and projecting images with the medium of a celluloid film or digital sensor. Hence cinema is often synonymously used with terms like "film," "movie," and "motion picture" (Ponech, 2008). Cinema has eventually evolved as a billion-dollar storytelling business, with United States, India, China, Japan, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and France being its large market (MPA, 2020).

India releases more than 2000 movies yearly (CBFC, 2018). With a highly diverse cultural landscape, a trend of using disclaimers in Indian cinema with more than few lines is on the rise (Lal, 2019). Disclaimers are now lengthy paragraphs and can be up to five-six slides. It is interesting to note that there were almost zero disclaimers in the movies released till the 1990s. The sudden increase in the number of disclaimers in Indian cinema could reflect the changing dynamics of the Indian cultural landscape. There is something that has changed in the content creation and the

society. However, there are no studies on the use of disclaimer in Indian cinema, its impact on the audience and linkages to the societal changes.

Thus, this paper attempts to address the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: To understand the need and effectiveness of using a disclaimer in cinema and whether it has a desired impact on the audiences.

RQ2: Is the change in a society's socio-cultural environment reflected in number and type of text content of the disclaimers in the films?

RQ3: Importance of artistic expressions by the creators, the role of the regulatory body, judiciary, and censorship, in the socio-cultural environment in India.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The mass media can mold society and form a culture (Hall, 1980). Cinema, the most powerful medium of mass communication, can transfer meaning for audiences with its audio-visual narratives. The message that cinema conveys is understood even by an audience with little or no education. The enormous range of Indian cinema has been instrumental in shaping the popular culture within its diverse socio-cultural audiences (Booth, 1995; Chitrapu, 2012; Corbett and Wessels, 2017; Kakar, 1981; Pafort-Overduin et al., 2018; Rao, 2010; Sinha, 2009; Srinivas, 1998, 2016). An audience does not get transported to this illusionary world but applies the meaning from his everyday life to it and keeps moving in between those two (Schutz, 1972). The audiences tend to become 'more similar to' the absorbed content and do not make the content similar to oneself (Certeau, 1984).

Hence, the audiences are more prone to reacting negatively towards the content of cinema. People can easily be misguided by the content creators or by societal norms towards one particular direction. In such a scenario, the creators and the audiences are at a loss. The creators have financial losses by staying on the movie release, while the audiences lose on a beautiful artistic creation. The use of disclaimers can lessen these losses. Although sometimes these disclaimers seem like a hindrance in the creative process, an absence of these would lead to a negative influence on a large scale, especially to the young audience. By making disclaimers mandatory, the regulatory bodies help safeguard the interest of the ordinary people, trying to make them aware of the 'originality' of the information and preventing the content creators from spreading misinformation.

In India, the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) laid the guidelines on animal usage in the film sequence, caution for smoking, action scenes, rash driving scenes (MoIB, 2016). These guidelines for public exhibition of films and the filmmakers trying to explore a more sensitive subject with the potential to violate any of the mentioned criteria and the related controversies surrounding the final film, thus hampering its financial success, have led to the use of disclaimers in films. These disclaimers have come into practice due to many Indian societal norms regarding smoking and consumption of alcohol. Additionally, the disclaimers about the cruelty of animals are due to the interference of animal rights activists and organizations.

Extensive research on disclaimer use is present for advertisements but not for cinema. This gap leads us to the

question (RQ1) of understanding the need and effectiveness of using a disclaimer in cinema and whether it has a desired impact on the audiences.

The mass media often exploits and/or manipulates the audience, assuming them as passive, not using their minds, ignorant, without discrimination, lacking defense to the provided information, and naïve. However, an audience always has multiple interpretations of the provided content based on their cultural contexts (Livingstone, 2007). Since the understanding of a single audience member is formed based on their culture and connects with surrounding people who themselves are part of the 'audience group', understanding the dynamics between the audience would help understand the relationship between the people of the society (Livingstone, 1998).

The rise of digital and social media is mobilizing and mediating the young generation towards activities like ban or protest of almost every non-conventional ideology (Baker, 2011, 2012; Bute, 2014; Pond and Lewis, 2019; Singh, 2017). Such bans and protests are now becoming frequent in India and across different geographies (Fuchs, 2012; Glasgow and Fink, 2013; XIGUANG and JING, 2010). There has also been a demand for censorship over social media (Casilli and Tubaro, 2012).

## **THE PORTRAYAL OF SOCIETY AND COLLECTIVE VIEWPOINT IN INDIAN CINEMA**

Indian society and its cinema have evolved hand in hand. It is impossible to look into the development of choices of film subjects and the development of society separately. However, the liberalization of India's economy in 1991 opened the world cinema market for the conventional Indian

audiences. Thus, we can divide the societal impact on cinema into the pre-and post-liberalization era.

Indian film continued to be made since 1913 and before its independence from British rule. The films before independence focused on mythological or stories of mighty kings. Attempts were also made on the portrayal of the struggle of the poor and operation from the rich. During the 1950s, police officers and judges, who had come to represent the state's moral authority, acquired a new gravitas. The courtroom became sacred as the place where truth cannot be denied. Films also showed the social suppression faced by poor farmers due to the agrarian unrest and land reform in the 1950s. In contrast, during the 1960s, Hindi cinema retreated into social unresponsiveness for several years, and escapist entertainment - gadgets, foreign locations, and glamour flourished (Saran, 2014).

During the 1970s and 1980s, due to the political unrest, rampant corruption, and complete lack of effectiveness of state power and highly inefficient authoritative figures, the filmmakers made a mockery of state officials like police always arriving late on a crime scene. During 1990 and 1995, sex and violence were the dominant aspects of Hindi cinema. However, the years from 1995-1998 saw the issues on religious sentiments and incorrect showcasing public figures like politicians and police officers and ethnic and religious minority communities (Bose, 2010). Even post-2000, due to the country's socio-political environment and exposure of filmmakers to other international experimental cinema, many films have come up based on actual events/incidents. These historical events caused controversies and delays in the release of the films. Due to the socio-political



environment people face during the decade of 2010-20, many filmmakers attempting to make a movie on a sensitive subject are prone to face protests and questions raised even without seeing the film, or in some cases, even before the film is shot (Ghosh, 2018). The film then had to face the CBFC, Film Appellate Tribunal, Central Government, and in some cases, High Court and Supreme Court to get through the process for release.

Such a dynamic scenario for Indian cinema led us to the question (RQ2) about the change in socio-cultural environment reflected in the rise of disclaimers in the movies?

Hindi language films post-2010 had to put long and detailed disclaimers in the movie to exhibit them peacefully. In some cases, the governing bodies like CBFC, Appellate Tribunal would ask filmmakers to put the appropriate disclaimer(s) before certifying their film. In cases when the matter reaches High Courts (HC) and Supreme Court (SC), they also suggest putting disclaimer(s) to avoid any hassles and controversy. Different states are already having regulations for the exhibition of films in their respective states. Many such issues gave rise to the question (RQ3) about the importance of artistic expressions by the creators, the role of the regulatory body, judiciary, and censorship in India's socio-cultural environment.

### **METHODOLOGY**

We have conducted the research in three phases: (1) Survey of the cinema audiences (2) Analysis of various disclaimers in Indian Cinema (3) Case studies of few Hindi films and judicial intervention.

Indian cinema releases around 2000 movies every year in different languages; it is challenging to study these movies

through development in cinema since Indian independence. Hence, this paper restricts itself to looking into the disclaimers in Hindi language movies for the research. More than 200 Hindi movies release every year. The research uses internet articles and box office reports as criteria for selecting the movies. Since we needed to study 'disclaimers' of the movies, the preferred searches were for 'controversial movies', 'period drama', 'violent drama' etc. (Table 1). The study also considers overlapping of movies falling in top earners and controversial movies categories. It then distributes movies according to the type of the disclaimer (Table 2) and notes down the number of disclaimer slides and their duration on screen.

Table 1: Year-Wise and Genre-Wise Movies Selected

Year	Movie Genre	# of movies	Source
1947-2019	Controversial	70	(Mayer, 2017; Patwa, 2018; Rai, 2018; Verma, 2015)
1947-2019	Period Drama	11	(Sharma, 2018)
1980s	Best of the decade	47	(Ayaz, 2020; Rangan, 2019)
1990s	Violent	11	(Sarkar, 2017)
2000s	Best of the decade	22	(Menon, 2019)
2010	Top 10 earners	10	(BollywoodHungama, 2010)
2011	Top 10 earners	10	(BollywoodHungama, 2011)
2012	Top 10 earners; controversial	23	(BollywoodHungama, 2012; IndiaToday, 2012)
2013	Top 10 earners; controversial	18	(BollywoodHungama, 2013; IndiaToday, 2013)
2014	Top 10 earners	10	(BollywoodHungama, 2014)
2015	Top 10 earners; controversial	20	(BollywoodHungama, 2015; Verma, 2015)
2016	Top 10 earners; controversial	11	(BollywoodHungama, 2016)

2017	Top 10 earners; controversial	19	(BollywoodHungama, 2017; Sanap, 2017)
2018		14	(BollywoodHungama, n.d.; Shekhar, 2018)
2019		20	(BollywoodHungama, 2019; Mitra, 2019; Shrinag, 2019)

Table 2: Categorization of Disclaimers in Hindi movies

Sr. No.	Category	Examples
1.	None	Movies with no disclaimers at all
2.	General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ "All the characters and incidents in this film are imaginary; resemblance to any person dead or alive is purely coincidental." Under specific particular scenarios, these generic lines follow other cautionary words - "Neither the producer nor the director nor the artists, intend to outrage, insult, wound or hurt any religion or the religious sentiments, beliefs or feelings of any person(s) or class or community."</li> <li>◆ "Tobacco use leads to cancer, heart attacks, lung disorders, and other deadly diseases. The characters shown in this film or program do not support the use of any type of tobacco product such as Bidi, Cigarette, Khaini, Zarda, etc. or their promotion in any manner."</li> <li>◆ "The film is generated by shooting and computer graphics and no cruelty had been inflicted on the animal during the process of shooting."</li> </ul>
3.	Specific	Disclaimers that are not covered as in the "general" section give specific information about the story/ characters /movie/event or person on which it is based.

We surveyed (online) the Indian cinema audiences from Indian urban cities to observe the impact of disclaimers on their movie viewing experience. Apart from the standard

demographic information, the authors asked fundamental questions about their movie viewing habits and disclaimer use in cinema to the respondents.

We used case studies of five Hindi language films to understand the judicial intervention on the controversies surrounding them. It was based on the secondary literature available and respective court proceedings statements.

### **ANALYSIS**

For the RQ1, the authors surveyed 64 respondents online. They comprised 60% males and 40% females. Around 70% of the respondents were from the Indian cities Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Mumbai, Prayagraj (Allahabad), Jodhpur, Patna, Thane, and the rest 30% from other Indian cities. These respondents were students (38%), faculty (21%), service (19%), and business (11%), representing a diverse group of samples.

From the respondents, 41.5% have noticed some changes in present movies. The change noticed is abusive language (72.3%) and similar story patterns (53.8%). It implies a very subtle or more minor noticing of the disclaimer's use. The 43.1% respondents said of having a change in movie viewing experiences, while 40% were unsure about it. For reading the disclaimer clip, 69.2% read it, while 80% were sure about following the message in the disclaimer. However, a deeper probing is required to get a more accurate picture of following the disclaimer's message by the respondent.

The disclaimers about smoking (87.7%) and alcohol (63.1%) were the most recalled by the respondents. Only 30% of the respondents recalled the disclaimers on computer graphics and specific community related. Thus, it

seems that the general audience is indifferent to the presence of disclaimers in the movies.

For RQ2, we analyzed 316 Hindi language films (Table 2). The analysis shows the trend of putting disclaimers has increased post-2005 (Figure 1). Looking at the list of all-time controversial movies (Patwa, 2018; Rai, 2018), the number of disclaimer slides and the duration has increased. In the movies released post-2010, the number of disclaimers has increased to up to 5-6. Most filmmakers do this to protect their films from any controversy (Lal, 2019). The label of disclaimer includes both general and specific disclaimers. Looking at the distribution of the number of disclaimers and their average duration, we can see an apparent rise in movie-specific disclaimers and their duration in the movies (Figure 2).

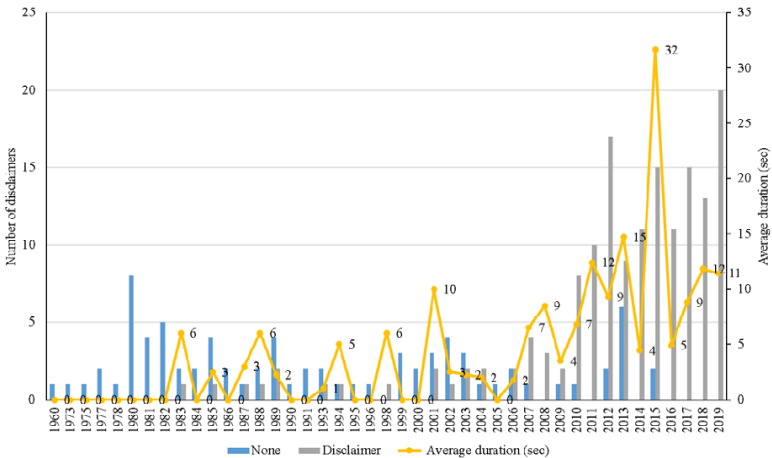


Figure 1: The Trend of Number of Disclaimers and Its Average Durations for Selected Indian Movies

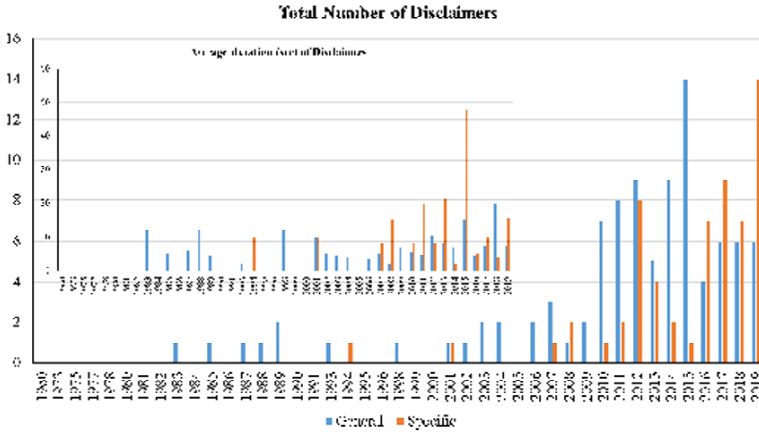


Figure 2: The Number of Disclaimers and Average Duration for General and Specific Disclaimers

It is interesting to observe that most of the controversial movies before the 2000s (Siddhartha (1972), Aandhi (1975), Ram Teri Ganga Maili (1983), Bandit Queen (1994), Fire (1996), Parzania (2007)) did not carry any disclaimer even though these films were certified as "A" by CBFC. Table 4 gives an example of some movies with longer disclaimers. We observed that films with a historical adaptation of stories require a disclaimer, and filmmakers take more time to explain their stand and artistic liberty to the audience.

Table 4: List of Recent Movies with Longer Specific Disclaimers

Movie Name	Genre	Year of release	Duration (sec)
Black Friday	Crime	2007	27
Jodha Akbar	History	2008	40
Gangs of Wasseypur Part 1	Crime	2012	40
Bajirao Mastani	History	2015	50
Uda Punjab	Drama	2016	15
The Ghazi Attack	Patriotic	2017	70

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Padmavat	History	2018	60
Kalank	Drama	2019	20
Article 15	Social	2019	20
Kesari	Patriotic	2019	17
Manikarnika: The Queen of Jhansi	History	2019	16

For the RQ3, we study five case studies where the movie's content had created an uproar in the people, and petitions filed against movie makers against certain objectionable content of the movie or the demand of banning the film's release (Lal, 2019).

## **2.0 (2019)**

Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) sent a notice to the makers of movie 2.0 alleging that the film has "obscurantist and anti-scientific attitudes towards mobile phones, towers, and mobile services". COAI also complained to CBFC and the Ministry of Information Technology & Broadcasting, Government of India. However, filmmakers had already put the disclaimer before the objection made.

### **Padmavat (2018)**

Judgement: Viacom 18 Media Pvt. Ltd & Ors v/s. Union of India & Ors. (Writ (C) No. 36/2018)

There was a lot of uproar regarding the exhibition of the Hindi movie Padmavat (HindustanTimes, 2018; TheIndianExpress, 2017) between the 'Rajput' community and the film's makers regarding certain sections of the film and claiming to hurt religious sentiments. These led to violent protests and riots in a few cities and banned film releases in some states.

After the Government of Rajasthan issued an order on 17 January 2018, under Section 7(1) of the Rajasthan Cinemas (Regulation) Act, 1952, banning the film exhibition, the matter

reached the SC of India for its final decision. The SC stated that "we have no hesitation in stating by way of repetition and without any fear of contradiction that it is the duty of the State to sustain the law and order situation whenever the film is exhibited, which would also include providing police protection to the persons who are involved in the film / in the exhibition of the film and the audience watching the film, whenever sought for or necessary" (SCI, 2018).

However, the film was released after the CBFC gave the film a clearance with minor changes like changing the original title to Padmavat. Still, in states where film never released, the audiences were deprived of the joy of enjoying the creation of art.

### **Udta Punjab (2016)**

Judgement: Phantom Films Pvt. Ltd. And Anr vs. The Central Board Of Certification (Writ Petition (L) No. 1529/2016)

The film is on the prominent drug issue based in the Punjab state of India. Many NGOs and political leaders had raised the question of showing Punjab in a bad light and glorifying drug use in the movie (TOI, 2017). In this case, the Bombay High Court held in Para 47 of the judgment that - certifying films may require censoring them, but the former is the power, and the latter is a permissible act that may have to be performed while exercising the same. All such power couples must uphold and not suppress the Constitutional freedom of speech and expression (BombayHighCourt, 2016). The film was eventually released with suggested cuts.

### **Chakravyuh (2012)**

Judgement: Prakash Jha Production & Anr v/s. Union of India & Ors. (2011) 8 SCC 372



The Supreme Court allowed Prakash Jha to release his film "Chakravyuh" featuring a controversial song that mentions (Indian industrialists) Tata, Birla, and Bata to show a disclaimer on-screen airing of the song. A bench headed by Chief Justice Altamas Kabir said that an audio disclaimer would also be aired before the song is played on radio and also cautioned the filmmaker to be "careful" in the future for not to hurt the sentiments of other people (TheEconomicTimes, 2012).

### **Once upon a time in Mumbai (2010)**

The Allahabad High Court has directed Ekta Kapoor, producer of the film, to show a disclaimer that the movie is not based on former Pakistani actress Rehana. The Lucknow bench of the court also directed creators to publish an order to this effect in five leading newspapers of the country and foreign newspapers (TheIndianExpress, 2010).

However, the judgment by Nachiketa Walhekar v. Central Board of Film Certification & Anr. passed on 16.11.2017 in W.P.(C) No.1119 of 2017 stated that "Be it noted, a film or a drama or a novel or a book is a creation of art. An artist has the freedom to express himself in a manner that is not prohibited in law, and such prohibitions are not read by implication to crucify the rights of the expressive mind. Human history records that many authors express their thoughts according to the choice of their words, phrases, expressions and also create characters who may look different than an ordinary man would conceive of. A thought-provoking film should never mean that it has to be didactic or in any way puritanical. It can be expressive and provoking the conscious or the subconscious thoughts of the viewer. If there has to be any limitation, that has to be as per the prescription in law."

## DISCUSSION

Filmmakers express through the medium of cinema and use their cinematic freedom to connect to the audiences. During the twenty-first century, and probably with the speed of spreading news and fake information through digital media through mobile devices, censorship 'duties' that police, authoritative bodies, or religious leaders take up have increased. The sense of power through 'freedom to censor' rather than prevailing right to freedom of expression has become the present democratic mantra. These so-called 'authoritative' bodies use different pressure tactics, like lawsuits, burning of effigies, intervention from police, vandalizing cinema hall property to rape and death threats to the artists involved, to exhibit their power of super censoring a creative work (Bose, 2013).

From the analysis of various disclaimers in Hindi language Indian films, it is evident that the post-liberalization era has witnessed a drastic rise in the use of disclaimers in films. Post liberalization, the audience, and the filmmakers became more liberal and explored every aspect of the social structure. The liberalization brought in the clashes of the modern views of the new generation to the more conservative views of the previous generation, especially on the topics related to sexual expression and violence. These topics were frequently represented in the films, leading to clashes and protest from the moral guarding Indian sentiments.

Moreover, the era was of the rise of religious sentiment fueled by political interests. The CBFC was rendered almost ineffective with the intervention of "common public" and authoritative political figures becoming the gate-keepers for the expressions of a filmmaker under different pretexts (Bose, 2010). During this time, the CBFC also controlled

the ordinary people with the setting up of media agenda in the name of guarding the culture with censorship.

This phase of control continued until the change of the century. During that time, the major political parties linked the 'anxiety' around the loss of India or religious culture to national identity in the public spheres. So, they used it to fulfill their political agenda. This selfish usage of people's anxiety was, in a way, attacking or trying to censor the voices which were either questioning or doing something different from the "traditional moral" flow of the society.

Indian films have always faced severe challenges for their content from the viewpoints of some sections of society. Filmmakers have to compromise with their cinematic freedom resulting in non-appealing work on their part. All protests/actions are initiated in the pretext to protect the culture and society. But are we able to succeed in that? The answer is no.

The Tribunal established under Section 5D of The Cinematograph Act, 1952 does not have more ample power in terms of the appeal (Section 5C) than other tribunals set up under the various laws. On the contrary, the Central Government has broader power regarding the review and revision of order. The government must not interfere (Section 5F, 6) to avoid any political influence on the movie's release when the tribunal mechanism is present. However, strengthening this tribunal is the need of the hour. Against the Tribunal order, an appeal to the Supreme Court for this amendment is necessary for the said Act. Presently, filmmakers are approaching the Supreme Court and High Courts to write petitions under Articles 32 & 226 of the Indian Constitution.

Filmmakers, too, should try to find a balance between the creative freedom of speech and subjects which might

lead to controversies. These controversies generally lead to damage and/or wastage of national resources, which the nation could otherwise use for some other purposes (Dhupdale, 2015). Applying self-restraint in choosing subjects by the filmmakers and restraints in protesting without thinking by the audience would help keep a healthy and peaceful society flourishing.

Theorists always argue on a need for a boundary for maintaining discipline and decorum in society which could be disturbed by a film's content. However, they should also consider the filmmaker's intent and the film's context while censoring (Narinder and Suhani, 2015). Not only would Indian filmmakers be restricted due to political censorship, but it will also restrict the international audiences from being exposed to the political scenario of different countries and eventually limiting the reach of the film (Banerjee, 2018).

With the exposure to the new content (OTT) platform, the rise in income and education level of the audience, and the rise in accessibility of social media, the importance of disclaimers in Indian cinema mainly emerged in the last decade. With social media, the audience can question the content created and reach out to the makers and authoritative bodies if they find any section of the content "offensive" to their viewpoints. There is a vital requirement of standard policy at the central and state level, so the exhibition of films is not delayed because of the state government's regulation on cinema.

Until the late 1990s, we used to see Indian films without any specific disclaimer(s). Still, nowadays, it plays a crucial role in the peaceful exhibition of films across the country. One of the primary reasons could be the unavailability of devices which can pause and rewind a cinematic exhibition. Earlier

people mainly were watching movies in the cinema hall or on national television. Since there were no recording or portable devices available, people had to watch the movie in one go, and hardly there was a rewatch of the film. Due to the digital medium, the audience can have a repeated viewing of a film and quickly pick up controversial topics. With the rise in the use of social media, people criticize the film and could stretch the issue for a longer time, which was not possible for earlier (controversial) films. It is also possible that only films with lead actors and high monetary expenses riding on the film are more prone to controversies and have a disclaimer.

Even in the new form of media, the content creators' connection and the audiences call for authenticity, credibility, and transparency (Dekavalla, 2020). With the media getting personalized with mobile devices and easy access to content availability, the new generation's group dynamics are changing. The media exposure today compared to what was in previous years creates a specific culture. The fidelity of the message has a significant impact on the audience.

The rise in putting disclaimers in movies is a positive step towards progress where both filmmakers and the audience will benefit by keeping both parties' interests intact. It will also help curb the misuse of film medium (by some makers) under cover of "artistic liberty", thus improving the rigor in the story narrative process and eventually maturing that process for betterment. Although makers might be keeping the disclaimer, the audience is registering it as just another slide. Thus, the use of disclaimers finally boils down to saving the makers from social outrage or legal hassles than the intended use of disclaimers. Eventually, the audiences should certainly raise their concerns about the films about

the portrayal of sensitive subjects in cinema. Still, they should not cross dictate or control the other person's freedom to express themselves. The audience always has a choice to watch or not watch content but should never have the power to dictate what a person should and should not create.

### **LIMITATION AND SCOPE OF FUTURE RESEARCH**

This paper is an analysis of the disclaimers in Hindi cinema only; it is limited to the number of films covered and not reaching out to other languages. There is a possibility of variation in disclaimers and their content in other languages films. The indifference by the audience towards disclaimers shows the importance of placing disclaimers, font size, and accompanying the disclaimer with an audio voice-over. This indifference can be an exciting area for further study of the effective use of disclaimers in cinema. This study does not take into account the disclaimers in the content of the OTT Platform. An analysis of the OTT audiences, a quantitative in-depth research study with the actual cinema-going audience, and content analysis of disclaimers across different languages could make a rich research topic.

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## **Fake Messages on Social Media and Crisis of Authenticity**

*-Chandan Saxena*

### **ABSTRACT**

**T**his study sheds light on how fake messages and multimedia which are disseminated over social media create a void in the credibility of Digital Media. The wide and wild access to digital media and social media has allowed everyone in the world to share their thoughts publicly to the world. Where this opportunity was foreseen to benefit the functioning of a democracy, with time, unfortunately, it turned out to be carrying more in stock than what was predicted and expected from it. As every coin has two aspects, Social Media came with two as well, a positive and a negative as well. The feature of giving access to anybody and everybody has brought along a threat which has a consequence of declining credibility in Digital media as one can hardly differentiate between a credible and non-credible source. People depend on social media for acquiring information and thus, it plays an important part in the decision-making policy of the common man. The study helped the researcher in knowing about the consequences

of fake messages' circulation over social media, and how common people perceive it. The researcher was able to conclude that the quotient of anonymity has given birth to serious threats and thus results in creating a trust deficit in the common men on the media and lowered the dignity of media and the communication processes carried out by media. Social media, which is a so-called daughter of digital media, has hampered the trust of media.

**Keywords:** *Digital Media, Social Media, Fake Messages, Fake Information, Credibility, Authenticity*

## INTRODUCTION

The Homo Sapiens or commonly known as the Humans are coined as 'the social animals' of this world, as only our race can socialize. To socialize means to interact with society. Humans have given rise to societies. A society is a group of people sharing something in common such as age, customs and laws, same geographical area, same occupation, traditions, religion, etc. Humans have developed and advanced skills of interacting with each other, and these social interactions have somewhere unintentionally laid the basic ground for social media. Humans create communities among themselves which help in forming opinions and decision-making policies. With time, humans evolved and tested their abilities by inventing and developing new techniques and technologies to connect. With the evolution of the human race, human civilizations have given birth to many unique technologies to interact and remain in touch with each other. These technologies have served as a medium for social interactions, and thus it can be said that the existence of social media can be dated back to early human civilizations when a pigeon was

used as a messenger to send and receive messages. "Throughout much of human history, we've developed technologies that make it easier for us to communicate with each other" (Carton, 2009). The earliest information encountered by the writers of this article (The Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship, 2011, Vol. 16, No.3) referred to 1792 and the use of the telegraph to transmit and receive messages over long distances (Ritholz, 2010)[1].

After the invention of the radio and the telephone in the mid to late-18th century, the communication process became more advanced. Radio and telephone became new mediums for social connectivity. With the advancement in science, newer technologies entered the market which targeted to enhance the efficiency of communication and socializing in society. During the 1960s, the public saw the advent of email (Borders, 2010). The invention of the internet in the late 19th century gave a boost to the process of emailing. Internet provided the platform for the users to connect globally with each other. And by the help of the internet, an enhanced digital world came into existence, where it got possible to transfer information within fractions of a second. The digital world also brought convergence with it, which made multitasking possible. Convergence has created tough competition amongst the traditional media for their run. Digital media emerged as a strong medium for users to send and receive not only text but multimedia files as well. Digital media also gave birth to Modern Social Media, where people form e-communities/virtual communities to connect and socialize. Social Media is now a big network having

numerous social sites giving you a platform to virtually connect and share information. With time, social sites have turned to be the key information provider to a mass population, thus it is safe to call them mass communication tools. In early time mass communication took place from one to many, but with the advent of digital and social media, the process has settled an equilibrium ground, where communication is now possible from many to many.

The Digital Media was once predicted to become the voice of common men who could speak and share their thoughts on the official authorities functioning and also by reporting/revealing something publicly, which was by all means hidden by those sitting in power. It was said to be a very beneficial tool for democracy. But unfortunately, the positive power was overshadowed by the negative power. The unbiased access to social media has created a big problem of authenticity amongst users. The users slowly and gradually grew dependent on social media for newsworthy information, irrespective of giving concern to the credibility of the source. Anybody and everybody have the power to publish anything, whether true or false, credible or non-credible, ethical or unethical, on social media, which can potentially lead to violence and hatred in society. These fake messages not only harm society but also lower the dignity of ethical practices such as Journalism and create a hole in the trust value of media. Social media has given rise to many controversies in the country. Social Media was expected to serve as a bridge between the higher authorities and common people.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. According to the "False Information on Web and Social Media: A Survey" by "Srijan Kumar and Neil Shah" , which provided a comprehensive view on the mechanism, rationale, impact, characteristics and detection of three types of false information - Fake reviews, Hoaxes and Fake news, clarifies the spread of false information is orchestrated using fake social media accounts like bots and socket-puppets that humans can easily be deceived into believing that false information is true when it is well-presented like information.

2. In the survey "An Investigation of Misinformation Harms Related to Social Media during Two Humanitarian Crises, Thi Tran, Rohit Valecha, Paul Rad and H. Raghav Rao" it is concluded that Social Media acts much faster than the other mediums and sources which if exposed to misinformation can lead to severe consequences. The paper assessed misinformation harms in the context of humanitarian crises and investigated the likelihood and the level of impacts of different harms derived from the literature as well as the individual differences associated with them which gives us the clarity on the impact of misinformation.

3. In "Social Media as Information Source: Recency of Updates and Credibility of Information by David Westerman, Patric R. Spence and Brandon Van Der Heide" - "These data also suggests that there are heuristic cues that people attend to when making credibility judgments about information presented through social media. The changing nature of risks and crises has contributed to concerns about the best ways information about them can

be obtained" which further raises the possibility of circulation of false information due to the presence of hundreds of sources and the lack of credibility of those sources in social media

4. "Kuldeep Nagi" in "New Social Media and Impact of Fake News on Society" verifies the circulation of fake news in various regions like Thailand and Europe and includes few examples from Thailand where Facebook is an essential part of the daily life. The research also shows the various statements and steps taken by some authorities to reduce and authenticate the fake news.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- ◆ To identify the dependence of people on Social Media.
- ◆ To identify the role of Social Media in the society.
- ◆ To identify the credibility of Social Media.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND TOOLS**

The research is descriptive in nature. The research is concluded on primary and secondary data. The research was comprised of two methods: a detailed study of scholarly articles and books and conducting a survey. A sample size of 100 was taken and studied upon in this research, by the researcher. The samples were randomly selected as the link of the digital survey was shared in numerous groups and on numerous sites. The samples include people from India, Mozambique and Kenya. The samples belong to different age groups and designations. The survey was created online by using Google doc forms. The link was distributed, and the survey was submitted online by the users. The common social media selected by the researcher is 'WhatsApp' in the survey, to study the phenomenon.

## DATA INTERPRETATION

Q1. Do you use Digital Media?

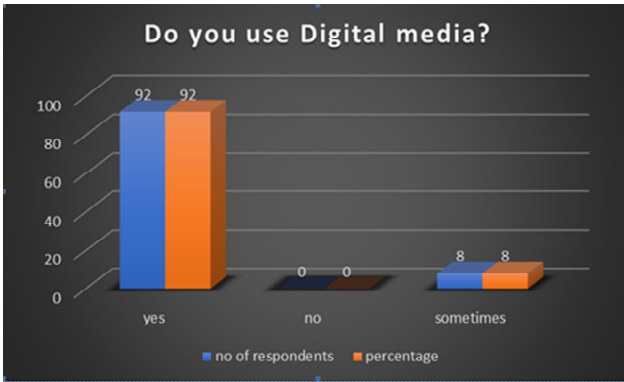


Image-1

The image-1 shows that out of 100 respondents, 92 respondents use digital media, and 8, are casual users. This interprets that majority of people are using digital media and are digitally active. Zero response to "No" shows that nowadays, everyone is digitally engaged in one way or the other.

Q2. Do you use social media?

Do you use social media?

100 responses

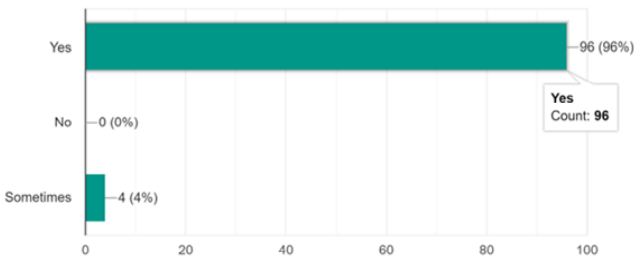


Image-2



The image-2 above clearly depicts that not even a single person amongst the sample is a non-user of Social Media. The majority of people, 96 out of 100 are social media users and only a minority of 4 out of 100, are not frequent users. This shows that social networking is a common phenomenon in today's time.

Q3. Do you own a social media account on different sites?

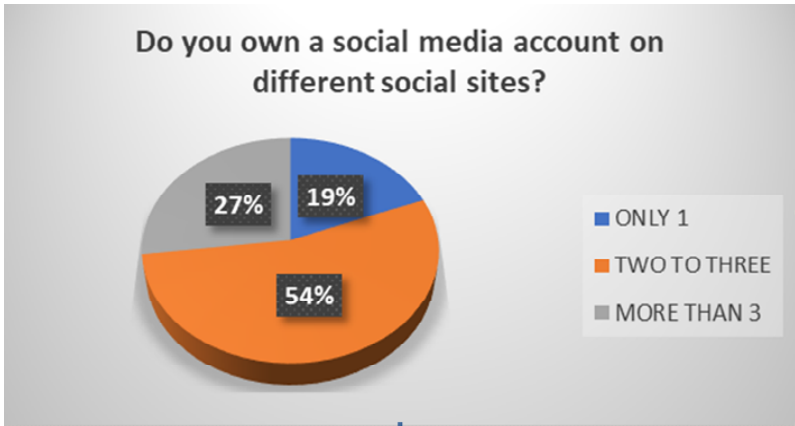


Image-3

Above image-3 in form of the pie chart shows that the majority of people, 54 respondents out of 100 respondents, own two to three social media accounts over different sites. And 27 respondents out of 100 respondents, have more than 3 accounts on social media sites. Whereas only a mere fraction, 19 respondents out of 100 respondents, have at least one account on social media sites. The data interprets that, nowadays everyone is an active user of social media, and use it for different purposes.

Q4. Do you depend on social media for latest information?

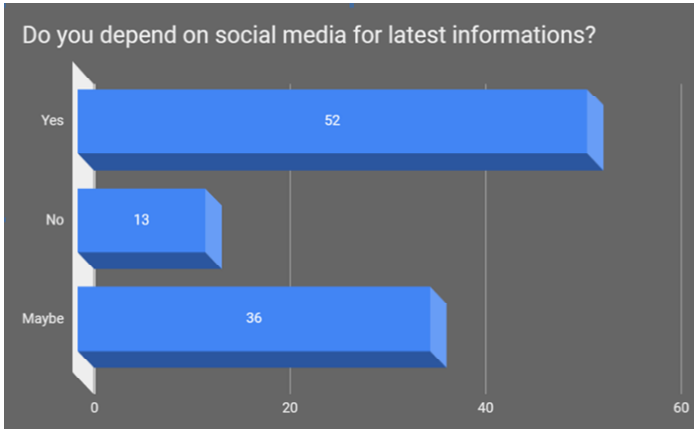


Image-4

From the above image-4, majority of samples, 52 repondents out of 100 repondents, are dependent on social media for the latest information, whereas 36 repondents out of 100 repondents depending on it sometimes, and only 13 repondents out of 100 repondents, do not. This tells that people are more tilted towards social media to update themselves, and it influences them.

Q5. Do you have an active WhatsApp account?

Do you have an active whatsapp account ?

100 responses

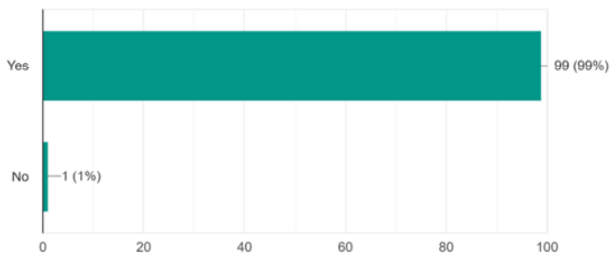


Image-5

The above image 5, tells us about the scenario that almost everyone is available on WhatsApp. 99 repondents out of 100 repondents, people have a WhatsApp account and only 1 repondent out of 100 repondents, doesn't. This tells that WhatsApp has become a social sensation in the Digital world.

Q6. How often do you use WhatsApp?

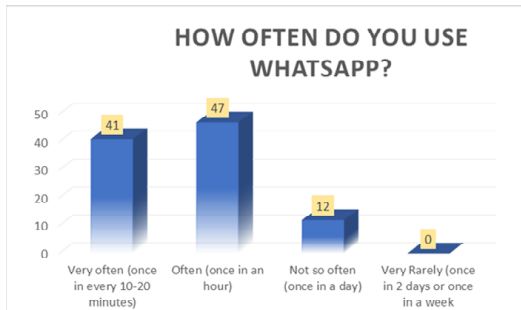


Image-6

The frequency of using WhatsApp once in an hour is high in the samples, as 47 repondents out of 100 repondents samples use WhatsApp once every hour. The second leading frequency of using WhatsApp is very often, i.e., once every 10-20 minutes, with a poll of 41 repondents samples out of 100 repondents. Zero samples rarely use it whilst, 12 repondents out of 100 repondents don't use it so often.

Q7. Have you ever received texts/audios based on religion aspects (haunting you about life or being baseless)?

Have you ever recieved texts/audios based on religional aspects (haunting you about life or being baseless)?  
100 responses

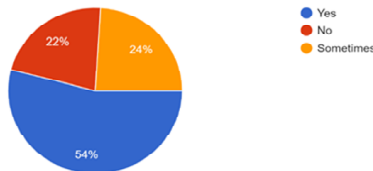


Image-7

The image-7 shows that 54 repondents out of 100 repondents, have received baseless texts in the name of religion. Whereas 24 repondents out of 100 repondents have sometimes received them and the remaining 22 repondents didn't. Which means there is a circulation of such baseless and fake messages?

Q8. Have you received text/audio asking you to help a poor or a patient by transferring money into his account or about a missing person or asking you to help find the parents of lost kids by forwarding the text?

**HAVE YOU RECIEVED TEXT/AUDIO ASKING YOU TO HELP A POOR OR A PATIENT BY TRANSFERRING MONEY INTO HIS ACCOUNT OR ABOUT A MISSING PERSON OR ASKING YOU TO HELP FIND THE PARENTS OF LOST KIDS BY FORWARDING THE TEXT?**

■ Many Times ■ Quite a times ■ Rarely ■ Never

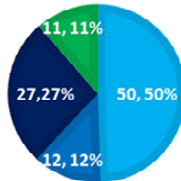


Image-8

It is quite clear from the above image-8 that the majority, half of the samples have received such texts many times and 27% have rarely received them, whilst 12% have received them quite a several times but remaining 11% didn't receive. The data interprets that even when the inconsistency in the frequencies of receiving such text, we can say that majority of people have received them, which means these are circulated more than often.

Q9. Have you received texts/audios asking you to forward it to 15-20 people for good luck and if ignored, you will have bad luck for 10 years?

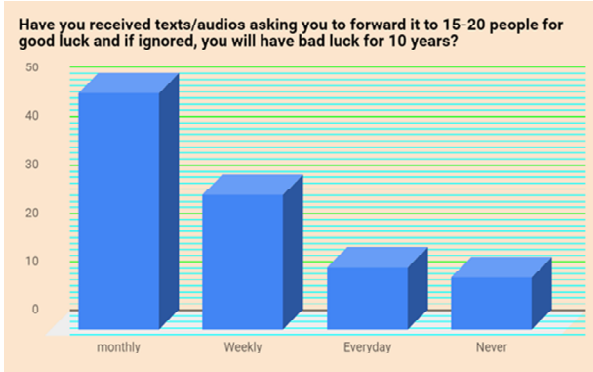


Image-9

The image-9 represents that, majority of the people have received texts/audios asking you to forward it to 15-20 people for good luck and if ignored, you will have bad luck for 10 years. such mostly on a monthly and weekly basis. Whereas only a short proportion of samples have never received any such texts.

Q10. Do you believe in these texts/audios?

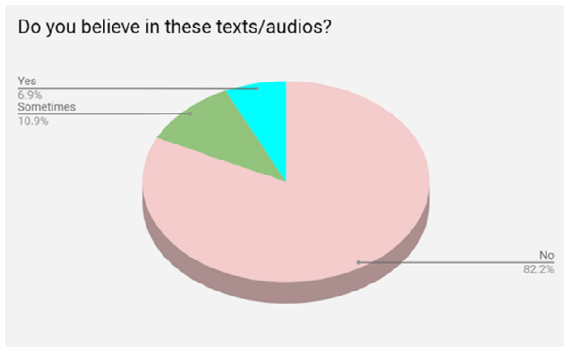


Image-10

The Image-10 shows, majority of 82.2% do not believe, in texts that surf social media, which implicates that the people do not consider it a credible medium. Only small proportions of 10.9% and 6.9%, believe them sometimes and always.

Q11. Do you check for credibility of these texts/audios?

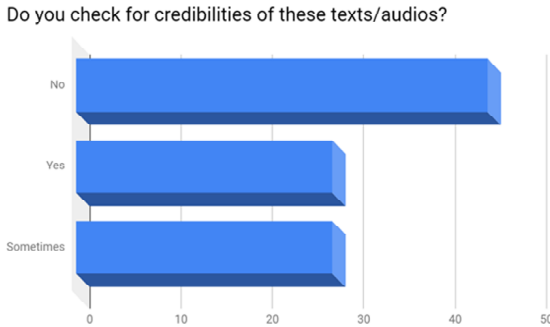


Image-11

The majority of more than 40% do not check for credibility and simply consume it, while more than 20% of the sample cross-check facts always or sometimes as per the responses received from the respondent in image-11.

Q12. Have you encountered fake accounts on social media?

Have you encountered fake accounts on social media ?

100 responses

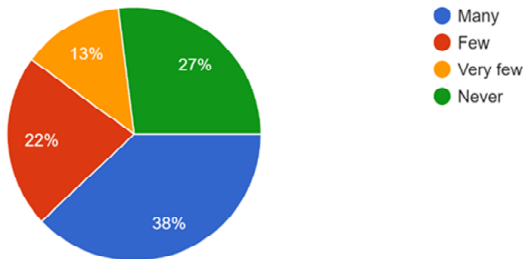


Image-12

The frequency of encountering many fake accounts on social media is higher which implicates that there are a lot of fake users on social media which endangers the authenticity of media.

Q13. Have you ever just for fun created a fake profile or started a prank over social media or started a fake text series or news?

Have you ever, just for fun, created a fake profile or started a prank over social media or started a fake text series or news?

100 responses

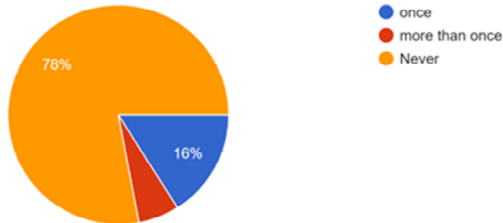


Image-13

Only a short percentage of people have just once created a fake id or text. While the majority denies it. This shows that not all people are misusing the social media, but only the few, who seek personal pleasures or advantages.

Q14. Attach a media file (screenshot) of a fake text or fake news or a text you believe to be fake, you received on social media.

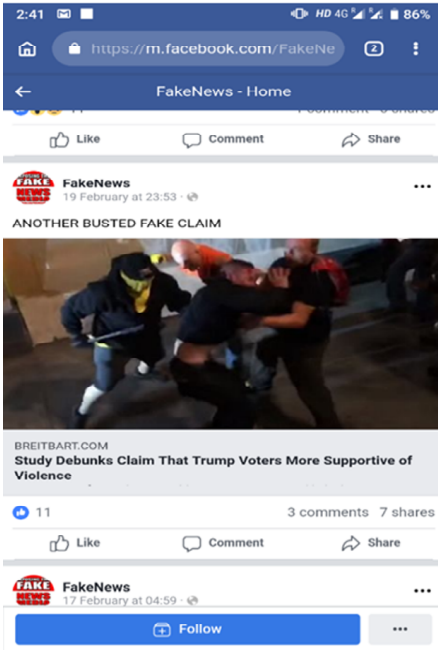
Responses- Here are the few screenshots of a fake text or fake news shared by the respondent



Screenshot-1



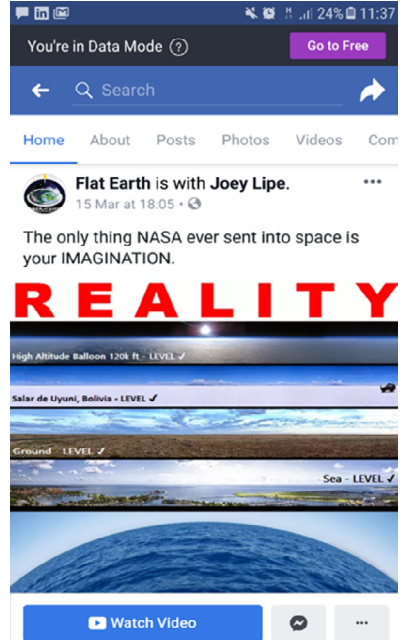
Screenshot-2



Screenshot-3



Screenshot-4



Screenshot-5

Screenshot-6



देखते ही शेयर करे दोस्तों, आज आपकी मनोकामना पूरी जरूर होगी, जय श्री गणेश



kapil sharma dies



OMG.... Kapil Sharma Is dead

KECH-HOT

2 years ago · 36K views



Screenshot-7

## CONCLUSION

Based on research through the proposed methods, it can be said that the circulation of fake messages, either in the form of texts or multimedia, have created a big trust issue in the Digital media user. There are millions of accounts registered under social sites, which means millions of people are using the social sites. By this fact, we can make out that the social site's owner cannot possibly verify every user. With the increasing number of social accounts on social media, it is almost impossible to verify the users, and thus this leaves an open door for the users to misuse these sites for personal advantages. The users create fake profiles and even hack into the real ones and post and publish anything they want, by taking the advantage of anonymity. Such people can use fake accounts to boost or lower the value of a product/company/service by writing reviews from different-different accounts. The fake messages and contents produced and disseminated over social media harm the credibility of media. The new trend of Memes, doing round over social media is now a popular phenomenon.

The memes often target the current situations and current affairs going around the country. Often these memes are valueless and present wrong data to the people, which misguides them. These fake contents have the potential to ignite wars as well. The credibility of the source is often ignored by the readers especially the uneducated population, which influences them and manipulates their thought process. WhatsApp is a social site where the user is more likely to add only personal known friends, and thus when these texts are forwarded by their trusted sources, they hardly cross-check the facts, which means they are more likely to

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subconsciously believe the text for instance, and later find out to be false. This leads them to not believing in the media and doubt the authenticity of it. After examining the survey and the research, the researcher concludes that fake messages on social media are a crisis to the authenticity of media.

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# **Role of Broadcast Media in Preservation of Culture: Comparing Prime Time Shows of Two Regional Channels of Himachal Pradesh**

*-Damini Sood &  
Prof. (Dr.) Fakira Mohan Nahak*

## **ABSTRACT**

**G**od has bestowed humans with great potentialities. With the passage of time, man has reached great heights of success in almost every field. Since ages, we have been able to preserve our rich heritage, culture, and traditions for the future generations all because of mass media and its reach. With changing times, some creations become outdated. So, we preserve them with traditional knowledge and transfer from one generation to the next. Media has revolutionized the world as it allows individuals to connect with others at the push of a button and is a great source of information. Television is one of the most powerful media that influence people and culture. We find that less attention has been paid towards the role of media in communicating awareness on conservation of heritage and cultural values. The present study aims to investigate

the air- time given to news related to the preservation of culture during prime-time news bulletins of two different regional television Channels of Himachal Pradesh. To understand the concept of two regional channels i.e., Pole Star Himachal and News18 Himachal, two months' content (August-September) of the selected news channels were recorded during prime-time news bulletin (7:00 pm). To conduct the study, the researchers have conducted content analysis.

The analysis conducted was also to understand the role played by the broadcast media in preserving culture and promoting indigenous cultural values in Himachal Pradesh. All the news stories covered by both the channels were divided into different categories for comparative analysis. The data analyzed is presented in a tabular form based on the analyzed information. The findings show impressive coverage of stories on the 'Preservation of Culture' on both the channels in the selected months. The findings also show that there is a huge difference between both the channels in terms of News Programmes where News 18 Himachal follows news bulletin format the most and has more news counts comparatively. The variety of news is fewer in Pole Star Himachal, however, and only specific news is highlighted there.

**Keywords:** *Preservation of Culture, Prime-Time News, Himachal Pradesh, News, Culture*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The way an individual lives, feels, celebrates, organizes herself/ himself or shares life is culture. Culture helps in introducing individuals to their cultural roots and spreads peace and harmony among each other. Our culture and

traditions teach us the values of love and peace. It is the invisible bond, which ties people together. It is all about beliefs, traditions, language, societal values, rituals, art, and ways of life. Culture shapes us and increases the wellbeing of both individuals and communities. Therefore, culture is what makes us human. Cultural heritage has been playing a vital role in human society since ages. Our ancestors have taught us a lot - be it traditional songs, customs, or languages. With passing time, we recreate and add new meanings to it and pass it to the next generation. That is how culture is carried and transmitted from one generation to the next. Heritage, culture, traditions - all are valuable assets that keep us connected to the soil. Since ages, we have been able to preserve our rich heritage, culture, and traditions for the future generations all because of mass media and its reach. Man has developed tremendously, and the evolution of communication has transformed humanity. In the ancient period, people used to communicate through signs, eye contacts, gestures, facial expressions, postures etc. The older methods of communication were carrier pigeons, smoke signals, symbols, and telegraph. Slowly and slowly with time, with the advancement in science and technology, communication became verbal. With the changing time, some creations become outdated. So, we preserved them with traditional knowledge transfer from one generation to the next. In the entire process, media has great contributions in disseminating the message. With the passage of time, cultures, customs, traditions become old. It is media, which preserves it and passes it to the generation next (Nahak, 2018). From the days of Vedas and Upanishads to edicts of kings and emperors like Chandragupta, Asoka to the medieval



Indian mass gatherings to the modern day's audio video and print media, media has always taken a pivotal role in shaping our society (Sood, 2018).

Mass- media creates awareness among the people, collects opinions, views, people's perspective, beliefs, and attitudes about certain issues. Media has been one of the most significant forces in modern culture, which reaches its audience at a large level and creates a huge impact on them. Thus, it works as a 'mouthpiece'. Also, media promotes trade and industry through advertisements.

In today's fast-growing world, electronic media holds great importance. Television is the most powerful and important medium of mass communication. It is one of the most wonderful inventions of modern science as it pleases both our eyes and ears at the same time. Television motivates individuals to develop skills as well as awakens both the nation and the society. Today television has become an important part of our life. It covers a vast section of programmes like daily soaps, news, movies reality shows, sports, weather forecast, religious programmes, music etc. (Singh & Singh, 2017). Television keeps us updated on the latest happenings of the world. It is the medium for education, entertainment, politics etc. It broadens knowledge of different cultures, inspires young minds via children's programmes and helps in spreading immediate awareness among people regarding weather forecasts and disaster. Television as a mass medium is quite appealing to common people. Television lures young and old alike and is growing worldwide.

Prime Time is the broadcast programming, which takes place during evening hours at a fixed time on different

television networks. Prime time is the most expensive time in television where networks air their new and big budget shows and attract large number of audiences especially when it is news bulletin as people give them more importance other than capsule programmes. Prime time holds great importance. The reason behind this is that the maximum number of individuals tends to watch television when they are at home and free after their routine work (Kumar & Kumar, 2021). We find that less attention has been paid towards the role of media in communicating the awareness of conservation on heritage sites. In this study, the researcher tries to find out the amount of time and attention given to cultural news of two regional channels (Pole Star Himachal and News18 Himachal) of Himachal Pradesh.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- 1.To investigate the amount of time given to news related to the preservation of culture of two different regional television channels of Himachal Pradesh.
- 2.To understand the role played by the broadcast media in preserving culture and promoting the indigenous cultural values in Himachal Pradesh.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

To conduct the study, the researchers conducted a content analysis for total 61 days (August to September 2022) during evening time prime time news bulletin of both news channels. In total, 122 news bulletins were taped for a particular duration of time (around 30 minutes). All the news reports are divided into different categories including Politics, Education, Trade/ Business, Sports, Health, Environment, Corruption, Disaster, Preservation of Culture, Travel/ Tourism, Agriculture, Road Transport, Social Issues,

and celebrities. Out of all these 14 categories, the researcher compared and analyzed all of them using comparative analysis.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

Pole Star Himachal is an infotainment channel showing information, news, entertainment activities happening in the state of Himachal Pradesh. This channel was launched in the year 2015. This channel focuses on current affairs, cultural festivals, local fairs, sports activities etc.

News18 India is an Indian media television channel owned by Network 18 and News18 Himachal is one of the India's leading channels and sister channels of News18 India. This channel was first launched in the year 2005 by Jagran Prakashan Limited. Again In 2013, it took its current name News18. This channel was then launched in 2014. News18 Himachal streams news related to Himachal Pradesh. Along with the news, the channel also has debates on contemporary topics and shows on special stories which are informative and interesting.

Comparative analysis of Prime-Time news of both the channels Pole Star Himachal and News18 Himachal is presented in a tabular form below:

Table 1: Comparison of News Content Coverage - Airtime Given to Different News Categories in (7:00 Pm) News Bulletins of Pole Star Himachal And News18 Himachal (August - 2022)

<b>Content Category</b>	<b>Pole Star Himachal</b>	<b>News18 Himachal</b>
Politics	1048	1346
Education	343	657
Trade/ Business	137	188
Sports	262	492
Social Issues	0	38

Health	602	750
Environment	145	510
Corruption	250	180
Disaster	379	312
Travel/ Tourism	202	165
Preservation Of Culture	809	958
Agriculture	1173	1148
Road Transport	64	109
Celebrities	0	169
TOTAL	5414	7022

Table 1 Shows that News18 Himachal performed much better than Pole Star Himachal in the month of August 2022. News 18 Himachal devoted 7022 news coverages while Pole Star Himachal dedicated 5414 news coverages. News related to the Preservation of Culture got 958 seconds in News18 Himachal. On the other hand, Pole Star Himachal dedicated 809s in the entire month. Besides that, Politics, Education, Health, Sports, and environment received better coverage in News18 Himachal. Pole Star Himachal showed poor coverage on news stories related to social issues and celebrities in the chosen 31 days.

Table 2: Comparison of News Content Coverage - Airtime Given to Different News Categories in (7:00 Pm) News Bulletins of Pole Star Himachal And News18 Himachal (September - 2022)

<b>Content Category</b>	<b>Pole Star Himachal</b>	<b>News18 Himachal</b>
Politics	1573	1761
Education	748	1322
Trade/ Business	212	354
Sports	344	206
Social Issues	111	69
Health	981	1218

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Environment	515	447
Corruption	274	644
Disaster	162	347
Travel/ Tourism	441	792
Preservation Of Culture	927	1108
Agriculture	303	581
Road Transport	33	89
Celebrities	48	56
TOTAL	6672	8994

Table 2 indicates that News 18 Himachal wins again in the month of September 2022 where News18 Himachal devoted 8994 seconds to different news stories in comparison to 6672 seconds in Pole Star Himachal. News 18 dedicated (airtime) 1108 seconds to the Preservation of Culture. On the other hand, Pole Star Himachal dedicated 927 seconds to such stories. Pole Star Himachal gives better coverage to news related to sports and environment comparatively. Both the channels show disappointing coverage of stories related to road transport, celebrities, and especially social issues.

Table 3: Evaluation of News Content Coverage - Total Airtime (In Seconds) Given To Different News Categories in News Bulletins of Pole Star Himachal and News18 Himachal from August to September - 2022

<b>Content Category</b>	<b>Pole Star Himachal</b>	<b>News18 Himachal</b>
Politics	2621	3107
Education	1091	1979
Trade/ Business	349	542
Sports	606	698
Social Issues	111	107
Health	1583	1968

Environment	660	957
Corruption	524	824
Disaster	541	659
Travel/ Tourism	643	957
Preservation Of Culture	1736	2066
Agriculture	1476	1729
Road Transport	97	198
Celebrities	48	225
TOTAL	12086	16016

Table 3 shows the total time (in seconds) given to different news categories in the (7:00 pm) news bulletins of both regional channels of Himachal Pradesh Pole Star Himachal and News18 Himachal from August to September 2022.

**AIR TIME GIVEN TO PRESERVATION OF CULTURE (AUG TO SEPT-2022)**

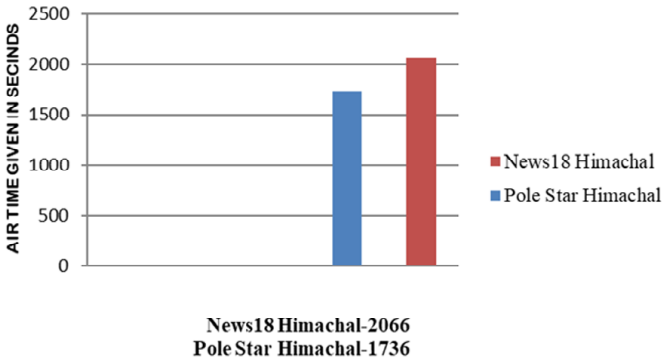


Figure 1

**FINDINGS**

**Similarities and Differences**

Both channels Pole Star Himachal and News 18 Himachal got equal chance to be recorded on each day.

Politics got the first position in news bulletins (7:00 pm) of both Pole Star Himachal and News 18 Himachal during August to September 2022. Coincidentally, Preservation of Culture got the second position in both the channels for the two months. Environment got the sixth spot in both channels. Out of all 14 categories, Trade/ Business got the 11th spot and Road Transport got 13th rank in both channels. Both Pole Star Himachal and News 18 Himachal gave least preference to news stories related to social issues, road transport and celebrities.

If we talk about overall performances of both the channels, News 18 Himachal gave more airtime to news stories during the sample period of two months (August - September 2022) as compared to Pole Star Himachal. News18 Himachal dedicated 16016 seconds while Pole Star Himachal dedicated 12086 seconds to news stories. The margin of total airtime between both the channels is quite huge. Pole Star Himachal had better coverage on news stories related to sports, politics, health, education, agriculture, and environment. Both the channels received unimpressive coverage on news stories related to Trade/ Business.

Apart from this, the findings show impressive coverage of stories related to preservation of culture in both the channels in the selected months. The findings also show that there is a huge difference between both the channels in terms of news programmes where News 18 Himachal follows news bulletin format the most and has more news counts comparatively. On the other hand, Pole Star Himachal prefers more discussions during prime-time slot and concentrate on limited topics only. Thus, variety of news is fewer in Pole

Star Himachal and only specific news is highlighted there. The present study also found that different regional channels have different preferences in terms of coverage of news. While one channel focuses on more news counts while other lays emphasis only on specific issues and present the news accordingly.

### **CONCLUSION**

We live in a society that relies on media as a source of information. Media has the power to groom the society. In today's world, Broadcast Media is playing a vital role in providing information about anything and anyone. Regional channels have made their presence felt worldwide with a widening viewership. Regional channels have improved a lot with time in terms of its viewership and are no less than national channels as they have manifested a lot in providing good quality content to its audiences. News Channels like Zee News, India News, and ETV Network etc. have both Hindi and regional channels on their networks, have sensed the change and introduced such shows. Each region has its own culture and value system. The indigenous cultural values are promoted by the media in Himachal Pradesh by both government-owned and private news channels. There's a lot to be done by the media to preserve the rich heritage and culture from facing the danger of being lost permanently in future. A lot more efforts are required to create awareness, appreciate, and take pride before our culture vanishes totally.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Television is a fantastic education tool that inspires the mind. News channels have broad reach and strong influence upon people. The researchers recommend that news channels should add more variety and feature stories, or programmes



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related to Preservation of Culture once in a week. It will help in making people aware and connect to their roots and culture. Television news channels should make maximum use of pop-ups and promos to grab the attention of viewers. More and more live broadcasts of different cultural events should be done to increase people's engagement and promote cultural values.

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**Cultural Communication Aspects in  
Public Speaking:  
A Case Study of Narendra Modi's Public Speeches**  
*-Dr. Ajay Suryawanshi*

**INTRODUCTION**

**T**he public speaking is an art of mass communication, which transforms people's mindset to reform, perform and transform India's future. Prime Minister Honorable Narendra Modi has cherished dreams of people through public speaking. Public speaking is speaking to a group of people in an organized way to give information, influence or persuade, or to entertain the listeners. Public speaking is an art developed for propagating political ideas in the democratic nation.

In this paper new light has been thrown on the cultural communication aspects in public speaking of Honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi's public speeches. In the Official TED Guide to Public Speaking the speaker is expected to contact audience with eye contact right from his start of speech with some light humor.

In the country like India plural society exists and cultural communication has become a complex phenomenon.

Similarly, the speaker has to maintain use of notes and scripts systematically for covering cultural content.

The public speaker creates effective space depending upon cultural background and social setting of the audience. He should know the background behavior and bonding of cultural roots of the people. The only he can consciously understand the background and can develop day to day communication pattern. People at large understand easy and simple language. Languages largely represent one's cultural linkages and disliking. The speaker should not use confronting messages because it becomes difficult. So, he has to rise above differences, and he can develop consensus about it. So public speaking on cultural line is very important in effective public speaking. It has been observed that "Research is a major part of the development of intercultural communication skill." (1) Prime Minister Modi has conducted research and developed effective public speaking packages

Before beginning the speech, the speaker should design the message effectively to be relayed to the audience and consider the pulse of the audience before him It says the speaker should first get attention, hold the interest level of the audience, arouse desire for the acquire actionable commitment from the audience. In this connection it may be noted that Modi has developed effective packages suitable for North and South Indian audiences.

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAME**

But concept Goguen Joseph observed that Concepts are defined as abstract ideas. They are understood to be the fundamental building blocks of the concept behind principles, thoughts and beliefs. The concepts play an important role in all aspects of cognition. As such, concepts

are studied by several disciplines in social sciences. The study of concepts has served as an important flagship of an emerging interdisciplinary approach termed as cognitive science. In this background the following concepts are prominent in this study.

- ◆ Cultural aspects: means the cultural content of the speeches which provide local background.

- ◆ Public speaking: means the effective delivery of speeches before the masses

### **OBJECTIVES**

Objectives are very important in social research. About objectives Kothari has rightly observed that "The purpose of research is to discover answers to questions through the application of scientific procedure."

For this study the following objectives have been set forth:

- ◆ To study the cultural communication content in the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speeches

- ◆ To understand cultural contents and its effects

- ◆ To examine the success of speeches of Honorable Narendra Modi in context of cultural communication.

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

For every research process there is need to use suitable research design. In this study descriptive research design has been used, which includes surveys and fact-finding enquiries of different kinds. The descriptive studies are the ones that aim at describing accurately the characteristics of a group, community, or a group of people. Wilkinson and Bhandarkar have rightly observed that "Descriptive studies often provide a jumping pad for the study of new areas in social sciences."

About descriptive research design it has been rightly opined by Kothari that "The major purpose of descriptive research is description of the state of affairs as it exists at present." In this study content analysis of 100 speeches delivered by Honorable Narendra Modi during 2014 elections will be conducted.

In this background content analysis of 100 speeches delivered by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been conducted.

### **CULTURAL COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE**

The present paper has been presented in cultural communication perspective. India is a vast country, and the North India is dominated by Hindi language and in South India there are different families of languages such as Kannada, Telugu, and Malayalam, which are known as Dravidian languages. The public speaker has to use intercultural approach in South India. Patricia Covarrubias has rightly opined that "Cultural communication is the practice and study of how different cultures communicate within their community by verbal and nonverbal means." Honorable Modi has tactfully used local languages in the beginning of his speech. Modi has developed Indian identity through his speeches because identity and culture are closely connected in the discipline of cultural communication. Snatching the pleasure of people is very important in using effective words. It is true that the communication theory also should consider the consistence, shifting and changing and nemesis in the society It is true that "Psychologists, scholars, and communication experts utilize the differences between cultures and individualistic versus collectivistic cultures to better understand language and the different

dynamics of cultures." Honorable Modi has ably understood all the facts through his public speaking. The study of intercultural communication requires understanding of local culture and the ability to understand and value cultural differences. Language is an example of an important cultural component i.e., linked to intercultural understanding. Honorable Prime Minister Modi has explained his ideas in South India by using their language and developing Hindi-English package known as Hinglish.

### **ART OF PUBLIC SPEAKING**

The art of public speaking is based on creative ideas as well as effective public speaking. There are certain principles of effective public speaking. Dale Carnegie in his classic book "The Art of Public Speaking" has opined that "The best way to become a confident, effective public speaker is simply to do it. Practice, practice, practice. And while you're at it, assume the positive. Have something to say. Forget the self. Cast out fear. Be absorbed by your subject. And most importantly, expect success." Thus, in nutshell confidence is very important factor in public speaking which is based on removal of hesitation and weaknesses. Confidence, message, preparation, use of eye contact, cutting ideas, research-based accuracy etc. factors help to overcome all problems. All these principles are rightly followed by Honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his landmark speeches.

As per The Official TED Guide to Public Speaking "The information includes try to make eye contact right from the start. Include humor to disarm the tension within the audience towards subject But no offensive jocks or corny puns."

For covering systematically, the relevant cultural content Michel Choinski opined that the speaker should "Keep a backup plan i.e., notes or scripts to use if the presentation technology goes wrong."

The speaker should possess acquire confidence, subject preparation, efficiency through change of pitch, poise, and power, feeling and enthusiasm, maintain voice, truth about gestures, influencing crowd, fluent oratory and memory training.

Courtland L. Bovee has rightly opined that "The AIDA model is about designing the message and delivering it effectively to the target audience. It says the speaker should first get attention, hold the interest level of the audience, arouse desire for the solution or the objective (appeal, theme, etc.) desired to communicate, and finally obtain action or actionable commitment from the audience." Honorable Modi has developed effective packages suitable for north and south Indian audiences.

In public speaking there are five important questions, which are often expressed as who is saying what to whom, using which medium, with what effects? Honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi successfully captured 2014's general election by applying tools and techniques of public speaking effectively.

About public speaking the Ancient Greeks called it as rhetoric; the Romans called it oratory until the late 20th Century. In public speaking there are five important questions, which are often expressed as who is saying what to whom, using which medium, with what effect. The Ancient Greeks called public speaking rhetoric; the Romans called



it oratory. Propaganda is another name for speech for or against some point of view. According to George Orwell "Propaganda is a reflection of prejudices and beliefs that colors people's aesthetic judgments."

The public speaking in India developed during Vedic period in the performance of "Yadnyas" through "Udgata". Kautilya was an effective public speaker at Takshila University. The modern Indian leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda and Dayanand Saraswati as well as V. D. Savarkar, Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar were public speakers at high eminence. After Indira Gandhi and Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Narendra Modi has proved as an outstanding public speaker. He has grasped Indian cultural values and roots. In every public speech during the election campaign Prime Minister Modi focuses on local culture and he utilizes cultural background to touch hearts of the millions of people. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is an exceptional speaker, and his speeches would make anybody a fan of his public speaking irrespective of his political views. We can learn lesson from the honorable Prime Minister when it comes to delivering intriguing, engaging, and mesmerizing speeches:

### **HONORABLE P.M. NARENDRA MODI'S PUBLIC SPEECHES**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's public speeches are full of speed, force, and effect. All of his 100 speeches studied during 2014 and 2019 campaigns, it revealed that the local cultural content is backbone of his success. The public speaker of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi used the formula of Logos, Ethos and Pathos as described by Greek thinker Leith.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speeches mostly relate to subjects like nationalism, Hinduism, and socialism. The following aspects were noticed in his speeches:

- ◆ His speeches were well designed, well planned, and well arranged.

- ◆ He begins his speeches in local language, by using Marathi, Kannada, or Gujarati as per local conditions.

- ◆ The local cultural content is essentially used to highlight the strong based of ideas in an effective manner.

- ◆ The reflections of local history, culture or myth shows that people have a sound appeal of his message.

- ◆ The question-and-answer method in his speeches is used which is outstanding rhetoric

- ◆ His speeches are based on philosophy of Hinduism, nationalism, and agenda of economic development.

- ◆ The cultural analysis shows that 10% of his speeches focus on local culture.

### **SALIENT FEATURES**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speeches were carefully and critically studied, and the following salient features are noted as under:

- ◆ These speeches are effective and have tremendous dynamism.

- ◆ The three principles reform, perform and transform are key factors in his speeches.

- ◆ RACE formula developed by I.V. Lee is also used by him. He conducts research for his script, which throws light on programs of action and communicates these ideas in a vibrant manner. He evaluates and examines these ideas in a systematic manner.

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◆ He has developed ACT formulation i.e., Act, Communicate and Transform. Transform ideas is his effective formulation.

### **SUMMARY**

The cultural communication aspect in the public speaking of Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conducted in this paper. It has clearly shown that Hinduism was the backbone of his speeches, and he has created a principle of integrated humanism championed by Deendayal Upadhyaya. The socio-economic development programs are very well conducted by him, and he has narrated all the development programs one after another in a systematic manner.

The public speeches are based on principles of Pathos, Logos and Ethos evolved by Greek thinker referred to above, Prime Minister Modi's speeches are based on Vedic traditions and philosophy of Kautilya. He has focused on value education and social change. The roots of his speeches are mainly focuses on local culture and tradition. Due to these reflections his speeches have become more effective and more appalling to the thousands of people to disseminate the message of transforming environment.

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# **Leveraging Digital Public Relations for Image Enhancement through Community Mobilization - The Business Way**

*-Prof. Dr. Ananya Mehta*

## **ABSTRACT**

An expounded period of almost two years of Covid-19 and the related recurring situations - lockdowns, fatality rates, uncertain market scenario, job loss, closing of businesses, loss of revenues for corporates etc. have put society and its elements few years behind. Indian businesses and corporates too have been at the receiving ends. The stage-wise unlocking process, the vaccination and now a complete accepted new normal scenario is helping the society, businesses and corporates settle down globally.

However, because of the backlog resulted from the global pandemic, businesses and corporates are not only grappling with the issue to handle business but also in maintaining their credibility and image with its stakeholders - Internal and External.

With the difficult current market scenario and sustained competition, for the businesses to operate and succeed, must leverage community mobilization to ensure that credibility

and trust is regained, and image is enhanced. Such can be achievable through use of digital public relation tools and techniques. Thus, the study.

**Keywords:** *Digital Public Relations, Business & Corporate, Image Enhancement, Community Mobilization*

## **INTRODUCTION**

An expounded period of almost two years of COVID 19 and the related recurring situations - lockdowns, fatality rates, uncertain market scenario, job loss, closing of businesses, loss of revenues for corporates etc have put society and its elements few years behind. Indian businesses and corporates too have been at the receiving ends. The stage wise unlocking process, the vaccination and now a complete accepted new normal scenario is helping the society, businesses and corporates settle down globally.

However, the functional challenges of maintaining infrastructure resources, man-power resources, financial resources, complexities of market, expectations of customer, increasing amount of raw material, expensive or no-availability of labour etc. remain and thereby denting the business. Furthermore, business houses with diversified target audience face an uphill task to communicate with them, maintain their interest and relationship especially with the rural community. The void in business revenues due to pandemic resulted into extreme situations and even the post pandemic times businesses are still grappling to overcome their losses and take up community work or involve them in the communication activities of business. This has further resulted in the crack in the image of business houses and loss of trust. There exist a credibility gap and to ensure that this trust is established and sustained, use of public relations tools and tactics is the solution.

As L.J. Wilson (1996) mentions, "public relations must begin to think of our publics and our organizations in the sense of community".

The use of public relations for goodwill and image enhancement has been fundamentally interwoven in the conceptual framework of community mobilization. While there are self-aid organizations who continuously try to advocate awareness but often their efforts are not enough to keep the momentum going. While many business houses at times, do take the help of these self-aid groups to inform and educate the community about their endeavours but still the magnitude at which public relations effort have the impact on communities is far more different and better. Businesses have realised that to stay afloat in the market, have competitive edge they will have to rely on public relations whose primary goals is to reduce the credibility gap and enhance the image of the business and establish strong relationship for mutual benefits. "Effective communications to specific target groups or publics is based upon an evolving relationship between an institution and its publics" quotes Bernays (1986).

The increasing importance of use of public relations strategies, tools, and tactics in last decade or so has resulted in setting up centralised public relations department or involving PR agencies by business to handle their PR mandate with simple goal - to enhance the image of the business and to generate support from the community and mobilise the community for development communication. The relevance of public relations in reaching out to community is emphasised by Kruckeberg & Starck (1988) - "Our theory is that public relations is better defined and

practiced as the active attempt to restore and maintain a sense of community."

With the advent of time, advancement of technology and heavy dependence on internet, the functional dimension of public relations has changed too in interacting with target audience. The new age PR has adapted itself to the new communication needs of the society. This new form of public relations through internet is classified as Digital Public Relations. Over the years, PR has been reliant of internet, social platforms to reach out and interact with community. The Micro, Small and Medium scale enterprises too are resorting to digital medium to communicate with its target audience, a strategy used by modern PR professionals and agencies as a mean of digital connect.

An effective mean to reach out to communities online, digital PR is widely used to promote product/service/brand/concept etc digitally. While the fundamentals of public relations remain the same including the conceptual clarity, the contextual applicability depends on the structure and need of the business house.

Public Relations has also undergone an evolution from the traditional era to the digital era. This evolution occurs in public relations' roles, functions, and tasks from the 1.0 to 4.0 era (Arief, 2019).

Although, in India still the gap of digital divide exists, it cannot be ignored that most of the rural parts relate to internet population there uses social media for their information and entertainment.

Avinash Gawai, Media4U's, Founder Director opines "business houses are part of society, and they are bounded by certain social obligations. Whether corporates or any



business irrespective of its nature and size should put the community's wellbeing first that will nurture goodwill surely. With the nature of With the difficult current market scenario and sustained competition, for the businesses to operate and succeed, must leverage community mobilization to ensure that credibility and trust is regained, and image is enhanced. Such can be achievable through use of digital public relation tools and techniques. PR changing to digital usage, the scope of PR has expounded multi-fold and beyond boundary's and within this community connect is a way to contribution to social cause and by mobilizing towards a cause is surely going to increase the visibility of the businesses and corporates".

### **UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY AND COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION**

The term community comes from the Latin verb related to communication and communis. The early use suggests the term community use in 14th century by French & Middle Eastern group. Community, in simple understanding implies, a group of people staying together as a part of larger community.

Community Mobilization is identified as a collective approach where different communities are involved in some strategic processes including some key decisions. Through community mobilization, there is a sense of involvement and belongingness amongst the member of community towards organization. This further strengthens the relationship between the public and the organizations.

The use of public relations becomes very vital here in establishing these relationships and meet the demands and expectation of the community.

L. Lundborg, in his book 'Public Relations and the Community' (1950) states, "Community Public is considered the most 'Tangible' and the 'Visible' public."

Harsha Chauhan working as Account Executive at Bangalore narrates "Community involvement has changed its course of interaction drastically. While we still use traditional public relations means, clients have been demanding to concentrate more on using digital public relations for targeting their audience. In fact, one of my clients (without revealing the name) has specifically asked for going digital completely and he caters to both rural and urban audience. He has a web presence, social media presence, has digital signage and this is done through the youth of village in vicinity. I think this is a good example of community mobilization"

This suggests that the use of digital public relations is increasing day by day in its popularity of use. This has resulted into increased brand awareness, brand visibility, increased web traffic presence, reaching out existing and potential customer base, make products available for online sale and has a space for feedback. Furthermore, the customer database is also enriched.

With the difficult current market scenario and sustained competition, for the businesses to operate and succeed, must leverage community mobilization to ensure that credibility and trust is regained, and image is enhanced. Such can be achievable through use of digital public relation tools and techniques.

Dr. Sonia Nagarle, Assistant Professor at Savitribai Phule University echoes similar sentiment. She states "while PR will identify the issues and approach it strategically through

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traditional means, the world is moving at a fast pace in the digital world. Image can take a deep steep in seconds and therefore, organization's point of view, role of PR, involvement of community and thereby maintaining the goodwill is crucial. Digital PR can help this in real-time scenarios where one on one communication and interaction is possible. This will surely help in times of crisis".

To conclude, with the audiences aware of the happenings and status of businesses, a well-planned digital PR approach which includes the members of society and thereby involving them in certain decision-making activities will have a strengthen relationship.

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## **Traditional Cultural Factors for Farmers' Suicides: A Communication Perspective**

*-Dr. Bhagwan Suryawanshi*

### **INTRODUCTION**

**T**he farmer's suicide is a complex problem, and it has manifold aspects. Here light has been thrown on traditional cultural factors in communication perspective. Despite various farmer welfare schemes, including a loan waiver in 2017, Maharashtra recorded 3,927 farmers' suicide in 2019 - the highest in the country. The problems continued and aggravated, which registered a total of 10,281 suicides in the farm sector last year, according to data released by NCRB. In spite of many other factors traditional cultural angle has remained neglected.

In this paper, various factors responsible for farmers' suicides have been discussed and among all other factors the traditional cultural factors have been highlighted properly. In this process it is interesting to observe that for the extravagance of the farmers the traditional cultural factors are very basic because the mindset of farmer is based on the older customs and traditions, and he is driven by these values. Here the farmer is rigid in the thinking,

and he follows the pathway or footprints of his forefathers and ancestors.

The farmer suicides in India in general and Maharashtra in particular refers to the national catastrophe of farmers committing suicide since the 1970s, due to their inability to repay loans mostly taken from private landlords and banks. The National Crime Records Bureau of India reported that total of 296,438 Indian farmers had committed suicide between 1995-2014. Out of these 60,750 farmer suicides were in the state of Maharashtra since 1995 and the remaining in Odessa, Telangana, AP, MP, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh, all states with loose financial and entry regulations.

Earlier governments had reported varying figures from 5,650 farmer suicides in 2014 to the highest number of farmers suicides in 2004 of 18241.

### **THE CONCEPTS**

For any study concepts play an important role. It has been rightly observed that "The concepts must be defined in abstract terms giving the general meaning they are intended to convey." In this background the following are the details about the key concepts adopted in this study:

### **FARMERS SUICIDES**

Death of farmers due to distress. Farmer suicide has been defined by many scholars and various committees. About farmer suicide New York Time observed that "Farm bankruptcy and debts have been the source of misery in India for decades. But experts say the sufferings have been reached new level in the pandemic. The problem is complex, and it requires scientific exploration. According to Web-page Public Vibe it has been pointed that "The back of the Indian

farmers is against the wall amid rising costs of inputs, climate change, induced risks and faulty market mechanism." These problems of farmers have been aggravated due to multiple reasons.

**Traditional Culture:** Here traditional cultural lifestyle has been carefully examined. Traditional culture can be related to superstitions and blind faiths based on religion. About traditional culture in agriculture, it has been pointed that "The traditional agricultural practices have been an integral part of food production in India since ages. These practices have potential to mitigate the adverse effect of climate change with spatial and sequential diversity." However, study of traditional factors can be examined in a systematic manner.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The following objectives have been set forth for this study:

- ◆ To study various factors responsible for farmers suicide in Maharashtra
- ◆ To throw light on the traditional cultural factors in Maharashtra
- ◆ To examine the role of media in this complex process
- ◆ To highlight the communication angle in a systematic manner.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Every research requires methodology to be adopted for conducting research in a systematic manner. Wilkinson and Bhandarkar have observed that "Descriptive studies often provide a jumping pad for the study of new areas in social sciences."

The paper has been prepared by using descriptive

research design for which oral interviews of 100 farmers were conducted and 10 experts in the field were personally interviewed.

## **FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR FARMERS' SUICIDE**

There are many factors responsible for the farmers' suicide. These are interrelated and woven among each other. In 1904, after Royal Commission Report there were many suicides. The history repeated in 2004-2005 and later on.

P. Sainath observed that "the farmer's suicide rate in India had ranged between 1.4 and 1.8 per 1,00,000 total population, over a 10-year period through 2005, however, the figures in 2017 and 2018 showed an average of more than 10 suicides daily or 5760 suicides per year. There are accusations of states manipulating the data on farmer suicides; hence the real figures could be even higher." The objective analysis seems to be more critical and requires balanced explanation of various factors. Further in Maharashtra farmer's suicidal rates were higher. P. Sainath further rightly observed that "The rate is 162 per cent higher than that for any other Indian states." About this observation there are many other explanations and arguments.

According to current Agricultural News website "India is an agrarian country with around 70 per cent of its people depending directly or indirectly upon agriculture. Agriculture had 15.4 per cent share in economy of India in year 2017." The farmer's suicide in semi-arid area like Vidarbha and Marathwada is affecting farmers' productivity and their life.

The remarks of Das Anindya are noteworthy when he opined that "Activists and scholars have offered a number



of conflicting reasons for farmer suicides such as anti farmer laws, high debt burdens, poor government policies, corruption in subsidies, crop failure, mental health, personal issues and family problems." In spite of these factors traditional cultural of farmers have not been properly highlighted.

I.J. Catanach and Satya Laxman D. have stated that "Historical records relating to frustration, revolts and high mortality rate among farmers date back to the 19th century."

In British period committee appointed for suicides of farmers described as "injuries" and it has been stated that "The death rate classified under 'Injuries' in 1897 was 79 per cent per 1,00,000 people in Central Provinces of India and 37 per 1,00,000 people in Bombay Presidency." Ironically it seems Britishers were not serious about the problems of farmers and the same problem continued in post independence period.

According to Ratna Reddy V. the decline in productivity and burden of loans is major reason behind the farmers' suicide in Karnataka, AP, and Tamil Nadu.

The New York Times in its issue dated 6th June 2004 published an article of Waldman Amy in which it stated that "the issue of farmers' suicides received international attention and a variety of steps taken by Indian government's initiatives.

All these factors are very significant to analyze the farmers' problems. These problems are complex and interrelated. There is need to study these factors seriously.

### **CURRENT DATA ON FARMERS SUICIDE**

The current data on farmers suicide suggests the significant trends and problems. This data is very useful to study these problems in nutshell.

Vilas Ade opined that "the farmers' suicides in some districts of Vidarbha revealed the economic consequences of suicides are fatal and includes loss of income. Asset depletion, and deterioration of human capital due to non-support of rainfall, lack of irrigation, lack of capital, faulty government policies, bank loans, dowry system, and wrong market mechanism for farmers products.

About farmers suicides in 2022, The Times of India remarked that 2498 farmers ended their lives in eleven months of 2022. The percentage of agricultural labor's suicide also rose to 18 per cent during 2022.

All these current trends show that Maharashtra is one of the leading states with farmers' suicides and the intensity increased during last few decades also.

### **TRADITIONAL CULTURAL FACTORS**

The traditional cultural factors in farmers' suicide revealed that the traditional factors are key aspects and lead towards blind faiths, misbeliefs and their traditional mindset is the major obstacle in their increased problems. They celebrated Kanduri, Barashe's of children and marriages by getting loans on agriculture. By such extravagant expenses the farmer on his own enters into vicious circle, which leads to suicidal situation.

For traditional cultural factors for increased loan burden on farmers and their suicides in Maharashtra, scholars have given various reasons such as

- ◆ Uncertain monsoon & climate change,
- ◆ High debt burdens of banks and moneylenders
- ◆ Surge in cultivation cost inputs
- ◆ Dearth of agricultural labor
- ◆ Faulty marketing mechanism for sale of products

- ◆ Deeply rooted misbeliefs, superstitions, and religious events

- ◆ Shortcomings in implementation of govt policies

Traditional mind is the major reason of the for farmers' indebtedness. Gopal Krishna Gokhale in his speeches in Bombay Legislation pointed that farmers in western India were spending lot of money on marriages, traditional festivals and religious activities which can be described as extravagant behavior. Lokmanya Tilak wrote various articles in Kesari on farmers' problems and drought conditions. He noted that due to the British policies both Kunbi farmers and indigenous private moneylenders (Savkars) both of them suffered due to adverse policies.

Thus, traditional mind and their spending on unproductive religious activities were responsible factors for farmers' suicides.

In order to overcome these problems traditional folk media should be used and farmers must be given proper training.

### **FINDINGS**

The findings of the study are as under:

- ◆ The traditional mindset of farmer is responsible for indebtedness

- ◆ Farmers' extravagant expenditure has increased due to rituals marriages, and "Shardha and Karma" after the death of an individual in the family. Further they spend money on "Kanduri" and other religious events from the loans sanctioned by banks for agriculture.

- ◆ Cultural education is needed to remove blind superstitions especially in rural areas in particular and in urban areas in general.

◆ The social workers and NGOs should take lead to educate people on rural level.

◆ The traditional beliefs and faiths are very dominant, and they are deeply rooted on their "psyche", which need to be removed.

◆ The graph of traditional mindset of farmers is touching new heights and there is need to scale it down by undertaking awareness drive on priority basis.

### **CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

The critical analysis of the problem reveals that the farmers' suicide is not carefully studied. The Government appointed committees have not touched the traditional factors seriously faced by the farmers. The traditional faiths and beliefs are deeply rooted on the plural societies in rural areas. At this level caste is dominant factor. As has been stated earlier the loan amount borrowed for agriculture is spent on household celebrations and religious rituals. The close relatives gather for celebrations and enjoy food and other gifts from the head of the family. The head of the family is not assisted by any close relatives while repaying the loan amount.

The co-operative bank recovery process is rigid and critical method, which the farmer has to face on one side. On the other side the private money lender wants to grab his farmland against loan through stamp paper agreement. Farmer pays back loans to some extent, but during the course of time the loan amount is found doubled because of heavy interest, penal interest and so on.

Thus, the farmer is cornered from all sides, and he has no other way than to end his life by committing suicide.

### **NEW LIGHT**

◆ The traditional factors of committing suicides problems are complex and they can be studied by adopting new approach.

◆ The sociological approach can be rightly adopted to solve the problem

◆ The farmers require psychological counselling for getting relief from suicides.

### **SUMMARY**

Maharashtra has been at the forefront, pushing agriculture reforms. The state had in 2006 enforced agricultural reforms, including contract farming. A senior official in the State Agriculture Department observed that of the 1.56 crore farmers in the state, not more than 50,000 have, so far, have taken up contract farming, The subsequent government, led by the BJP, too, had stressed group farming and extended financial incentives up to Rs 1 crore. In 2017 Government of Maharashtra announced the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Shetkari Sanman Yojna, a farm loan waiver scheme of Rs 35,000 crore for 89 lakh farmers. The NCRB data shows the number of farmers' suicides in the state has remained higher than 3,500 in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2019. There are many factors such as over burden of loan, scarcity, excess rains, and cyclonic effects. In spite of all these factors the more important factor is traditional cultural mindset of farmers. Farmers spend agro loans for traditional religious purposes such as rituals after death, marriages, and many performances like "yadna" for avoiding evil effects at "Navgriha" factors. These traditional cultural factors led towards extravagance at the farmers' expenditure.

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Thus, it is true that farmers commit suicides in Maharashtra State is very complex and the same needs a special treatment to solve them in a systematic manner. In addition to government measures, the awareness can even be developed among farmers through folk events, tamashas, Jalsas, short film shows etc.

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## **Marginalized and Social Media in Karnataka**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**C**aste is an ancient system of hierarchical segregation by birth. It is based on notions of purity and pollutions and routed in Hindu Doctrine. The Indian constitution uniquely identifies the Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes mostly comprising the Shudra and some sections of country religious minorities for affirmative actions. The national census of 2011 shows that Scheduled Castes 16.6% of Indian population and Scheduled Tribes 8.6% while the OBC population at around 50% rest of the listed under General Category and are them commonly described as upper castes. It is found that like legislative, executive and Judiciary. The mass media is not inclusive of marginalized group of our society. No significant effort has been going to bring diversity in all spheres of media till. In recent times, the issue has been raised by very few including people from media in a significant way. This issue of under representation of marginalized sections in media has not



been brought to the attention of government and by others. In this scenario media houses of Karnataka and the representation of marginalized has to be analyzed. This working paper is an attempt to analyze representation of Marginalized and their issues in Karnataka newsrooms.

***Keywords:*** Marginalized Group, Karnataka, Media

## **INTRODUCTION**

The social media revolution has changed the lives of the people in the globe. Social media have become all pervasive media of alternative communication, participatory communication, social networking, social capital development and empowerment of the people. Social media have provided public space and broadened the appeal of the technology and promoted the transitions back and forth from the platform to face-to-face engagement. The use of social networking sites interfaces through computer and mobile devices has become notable for social networking in the world. The social media have also become omnipotent sources and resources of social capital development and empowerment of the marginalized sections. The intellectuals, organizers, activists and civil society members make use of social media for multi-purposes. The present investigation was carried out in Karnataka state to examine the role of social media in the processes of social networking, social capital development and empowerment of marginalized sections. The demographic features of the sample, access to social media among marginalized sections, role of social media in social networking of marginalized sections, role of social networking in the social capital development of the marginalized sections and role of social media in the

empowerment of marginalized sections in Karnataka are analyzed in this chapter.

Media have become very useful sources and resources for social networking, social capital development and empowerment of marginalized sections in India and abroad. The social media are also extensively used for the purposes of integrated development, inclusive development, and sustainable development in the globe. The marginalized sections of society constitute the greatest majority in India. They are subjected to isolation, deprivation and annihilation by the system which is dominated by the vested interests and dominant powers in India. Dalits, Adivasis, OBCs and minorities are the victims of liberalization, privatization, globalization, and other processes. The social media are capable of promoting social networking, social capital development and empowerment of the marginalized sections of society in India. Social media applications have become an important part of the alternative media of communication and development of the marginalized sections of India. The role of social media in the social networking, social capital development and empowerment of marginalized sections was chiefly examined by the researcher in the present investigation.

### **ETHICS IN JOURNALISM**

◆ Honesty. Journalists have an obligation to seek out the truth and report it as accurately as possible.

◆ Independence.

◆ Fairness.

◆ Public accountability. News organizations should listen to their audience.

◆ Harm minimization.

- ◆ Avoiding libel.
- ◆ Proper attribution.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

With the role of social media in social networking, social capital development and empowerment of marginalized sections with special reference to Karnataka state being the thrust area, the research proposes to:

1. Assess the access of social media among the marginalized sections of society in Karnataka state.
2. Analyze the role of social media in the social networking of marginalized sections of society in Karnataka state.
3. Evaluate the role of social media in the social capital development of marginalized sections of society in Karnataka state.
4. Explore the role of social media in the empowerment of the marginalized sections of Karnataka state; and
5. Suggest appropriate strategies for better social media intervention for the empowerment of marginalized sections of society in Karnataka state.

### **EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

Media scholars have traced the evolution of new media in their writings. The Compu Serve, the earliest form of Internet was developed in the 1960s. Primitive forms of email were also developed during this time. In 1971, the first e-mail service began by connecting two computers. In 1978, exchange of data over phone lines took place. The first copies of early web browsers were distributed through Usenet in 1979 to enable the users to communicate through a virtual newsletter. The home computers were developed in 1980s as the basis for Internet in 1990s. The Geocities

were developed by David Bohnett and John Rezner which were the first web-based social networking site in 1994. In 1995, Stephan Paternot and Todd Krizelman developed The Globe.com which enabled the users to publish their contents and share similar interests. In 1997, AIM was invented in North America, as the leading instant messaging application. The Six Degrees.com was created as a social network service website by Andrew Weinreich in the same year. The social media network practically emerged in 2001 in the globe.

### **SOCIAL NETWORKING OF MARGINALIZED SECTIONS**

The traditional print and electronic media have not ensured judicious space and time for the discussion of the issues and concerns of the marginalized sections of society due to policy constraints and absence of social concern. These sections have depended on social networking sites to generate debates about their marginality and other constraints. These vulnerable sections make assertions through the online media and social media which have speeded the exchange of information between them in the world. The marginalized sections have also found new well-wishers and supporters from in the globe mainly due to social media revolution and expansion of opportunities for social networking. The social 18 networking sites also enable better social network development and connectivity between the weaker sections and stakeholders of empowerment of weaker sections.

### **EMPOWERMENT OF MARGINALIZED SECTIONS IN INDIA**

In India women, Dalits, Adivasis, backwards and minorities constitute the 'marginalized sections' due to

several factors. The social order is the basis for the educational, economic, and political statuses of the people. A minority of upper caste groups constitute the 'forward sections' while a majority of Dalits, Adivasis, backwards and minorities constitute the 'backward sections' in the country. The Hindu social order has also treated the women as the second-grade citizens and denied them human rights, fundamental rights and equal opportunities in all walks of life. The empowerment of marginalized sections of society in India is the basis for the integrated and inclusive development of the country.

### **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

The subject of empowerment of women assumes great significance in the present times. The question of empowerment of women is now on the international agenda. The empowerment of women can take place at a hierarchy of different levels individual, household, community and societal. The Indian National Congress (1917) and Muslim League (1918) had supported the cause of franchise to women in India before independence. The Government of India Act, 1935 enabled all women over 21 years to exercise their franchise. In the post-independence era, the framers of the Constitution of India had provided equal status and positive protection to women.

There are also other progressive legislations which protect gender justice and equity in India. The Directive Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Rights are the basis for making special provisions for the empowerment of women in India. The Government of India constituted Central Social Welfare Board in 1954 and State Governments constituted regional welfare boards to

facilitate the empowerment of women in India. The Government of India also created Department for Women and Child Development in all States and Union Territories in order to facilitate effective implementation of programmes for the benefit of women.

The State is required to play a crucial role in the empowerment of women by providing increased budgetary support and political representation. The policy makers and planners should understand the social, economic, political and cultural dimensions of women's empowerment. Women should be enabled to gain economic independence in order to enjoy the benefit of access to and control over production resources.

The goal of empowerment of women cannot be achieved in the absence of political will, progressive legislations, women-specific development projects and allied supportive measures. Inadequate political representation, budgetary allocation, leadership opportunities and scientific evaluations are primarily responsible for the disempowerment of women. The international and national stakeholders of empowerment of women can set right the imbalance.

### **EMPOWERMENT OF DALITS AND ADIVASIS**

The empowerment of Dalits had gained momentum with the formation of the Jain, Buddhist, and Sikh religions of India. The colonial forces had ensured the educational and economic progress of Dalits by providing them educational and employment opportunities. The Government of India had created several progressive constitutional provisions and implemented several programmes for the welfare and progress of Dalits in the post-independence era.

Reservation along with other measures of protection and upliftment of the weaker sections of society is viewed as an instrument of larger social policy of the State addressed to a long-term goal of creating a civil society through extending effective citizenship right to the vast sections of the population who have been historically deprived and marginalized. The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

The various safeguards for Dalits in the Constitution are classified under social, educational, political, and other safeguards. There is no proper monitoring and evaluation of welfare programmes implemented by the government for the betterment of the status of Dalits. Adequate developmental measures are not implemented in India to overcome the continued subordination, exclusion and exploitation of Dalits and other weaker sections of society.

A very large section of Scheduled Castes is engaged in rural and urban informal or unorganized sector. High incidence of landless and near landless households among the Scheduled Castes has created an enormously high level of manual wage labour among them. With high incidence of wage labour associated with high unemployment, under-employment rates, the Scheduled Castes are suffering 34 more from low income, low consumption and high incidence of poverty.

Ambedkar had fought for the integrated development of India and empowerment of women and weaker sections. He had firmly believed that social inequality would

jeopardize political freedom and democracy. He had also called upon the media to function as angel guardians of public interest. His perspective on the role of media in the empowerment of marginalized sections of society is widely acknowledged as highly progressive by the media scholars.

The politically dominant powers and economically privileged sections have coined highly attractive slogans and false promises upon Dalits in the country. They have facilitated the election of the slaves of the system in the name of Dalit political representation deliberately. Recently, the Supreme Court of India diluted the provisions of SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. The country witnessed a strong Dalit protest against this move. The Government of India persuaded the Supreme Court to prevent any kind of dilution of the spirit of the act. Lack of social, political, media and judicial activism has resulted in the disempowerment of Dalits in India.

### **EMPOWERMENT OF OTHER BACKWARD COMMUNITIES**

The Constitution of India recognizes Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Other backward classes as the three major segments of backwards in India. The category of OBCs includes the whole of middle bands of caste which is classified according to the strength of their economic, political and Bureaucratic power. The prevalence of four Verna system has denied equality to the backward classes in India. Caste system impeded the new social and economic order since it was against the natural justice and constitutional provisions.

Absence of fruitful collaboration between jurists and social scientists is primarily responsible for the



problems faced by the backward sections of society in India. The policy makers have not shaped appropriate policies of compensatory discrimination for the welfare and progress of backward classes. Constant judicial activism is essential for the empowerment of backward classes in India.

Until 1985, the affairs of the Backward Classes were looked after by the Backward Classes Cell in the Ministry of Home Affairs. The backward classes are described as socially and educationally backward classes. They are entitled to educational, employment and political reservation benefits. The term backward classes have been used in terms of the weaker section of society. The implementation of Mandal Commission Report by the government headed by V.P. Singh created necessary opportunities for the welfare and development of backward classes in India. The OBCs are entitled to 27% reservations in public sector employment and higher education.

The new backward class commission has been approved by the parliament and covers a wider spectrum of social groups. The commission is authorized to take necessary measures to achieve the goal of development of backward classes. The new commission should be equipped with the judicial powers to deal with the challenges of the empowerment of backward classes in India.

The new bill provides the constitutional support to the National Commission for Backward Classes. The new commission has the power to examine complaints regarding inclusion or exclusion of citizens or groups within the list of backward classes. The commission also has the power to look into specific complaints related to the rights of the

backward classes. The backward classes should get adequate representation and opportunity for inclusive development in India.

The National Commission for Backward Classes is established to examine the problems of the backward sections of society and suggest innovative measures for the welfare and progress of these disadvantaged communities. The commission needs to be strengthened in terms of manpower, facilities and punitive powers to achieve the goal of empowerment of backward classes.

### **EMPLOYMENT OF MINORITIES**

The informal care and the empowerment of minority communities with respect to health care and health promotion in the USA and the UK have gained recognition in the globe. Informal care is a significant force in health maintenance, health promotion, and disease prevention. An enormous potential exists to better utilize informal care because informal care is culturally more compatible, relatively low cost, and flexible. Empowerment of minority communities is important both demographically and historically.

India is not a nation of immigrants, but it is the land of indigenous people including minorities. The Indian constitution does not declare India to be multicultural. The minorities and majorities are seen to increasingly clash over such issues as language rights, regional autonomy, political representation, education curriculum, land claims, national anthem or public holidays. The caste system has denied the fundamental right to equality to the OBCs in India. The religious minorities are not protected and empowered due to several constraints.

Religious minorities are the most vulnerable section of the India in general and Muslim Minorities in particular. Muslim social exclusion can be seen in the form of segregation socially, politically, economically, culturally, educationally in India. The present Muslim social exclusion needs rectification through affirmative action. Muslim minorities deserve social justice and equity as much as other disadvantaged 46 groups including Dalits and OBCs. There is a need for inclusion of Muslim minorities in the mainstream of economic development of the nation.

There is a need for an unbiased proper review of several laws relating to the protection of minorities. The progress of minorities is possible only if India's state, local and Central Governments come forward with bold new proposals to correct the glaring deficiencies pointed out by like the Sachar Committee Report (Pal, 2012:314). The government must take the concept of minority in a holistic way while formulating its policies and more positive steps should be taken to protect the rights of the minorities in India.

The Muslims constitute the largest minority in the country and lag behind on all human development indices. The inclusion and empowerment of different socioreligious communities should not be viewed as welfare measure undertaken as a consequence of economic growth, but as a critical development imperative to ensure inclusion of different socio- religious communities and to ensure fulfillment of their social, economic and political needs.

The mankind has witnessed remarkable social media revolution, development and application in the new millennium. The social media have emerged as the alternative media of communication and development especially for

the marginalized sections of society. The present study evaluated the role of social media in the social networking, social capital development and empowerment of marginalized sections in Karnataka state.

### **COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT RELATED IMPLICATIONS**

◆ The policy makers should decentralize, democratize and localize the sources, resources and opportunities of communication and development.

◆ The policy makers should adopt progressive measures for the participatory communication, governance and development at various levels.

◆ The policy makers should implement the recommendations of MacBride Commission and decentralize the media in the country.

◆ The policymakers should adopt the Gandhian, Nehruvian, Ambedkar and Lohia models of development to facilitate the empowerment of marginalized sections of society.

◆ The policy makers should reverse the process of development from post-facto top-down to facilitate inclusive development of the marginalized sections of society.

◆ The policy makers should implement the Digital India programme to ensure transparency, accountability and responsibility in the fields of governance and development.

◆ The policy makers should improve the digital literacy to facilitate better social networking of the marginalized sections of society.

### **CONCLUSION**

In the new millennium, social media have seen a spectacular transformation, and application. Social media

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has become a viable alternative for communication and development This study presently Evaluates the role of social media in Empowering marginalized sections in Karnataka state Social media has positive communicating trails and abilities in the present era. Social media has been actively used worldwide and support social justice, economic equity, political mediazation, and the Empowerment of underprivileged groups.

The social media have emerged as the alternative media of communication and development especially for the marginalized sections of society. The present study evaluated the role of social media in the social networking, social capital development and empowerment of marginalized sections in Karnataka state.

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**Effectiveness of Online Advertisement on Stripling  
Lifestyle Product Purchasing Behavior:  
A Comparative Study of Urban and Rural College Students**

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**ABSTRACT**

**T**he 21st century is witness to drastic changes in the Indian marketing system due to the internet and technological revolution. In the country, people especially the young generation spend more time in online for different purposes. According to 2021 data in India, around 840 million people use the internet in which 448 million people use various social media, where online advertising grabs the attention of the internet user and creates a desire to purchase the product that the company wants to sell. On the other side, E-commerce marketing system provide all the goods and services through online portals according to the customer's comfort. Hence the study has taken to understand the effectiveness of online advertisement on stripling lifestyle product purchasing behavior. This study focuses on how online advertising



influences the young generation to purchase their lifestyle products. Also, the researchers examine the purpose of internet use, the reason for buy products, and also the study examine the striplings perspective on online and offline products trustworthiness. For the study, 200 respondents were selected from rural and urban colleges, and various techniques were used to analyze the data.

**Keywords:** *Online Advertisement, Purchasing Behavior, Social Media, Consumers, Stripling, Lifestyle Products, Rural and Urban.*

## INTRODUCTION

The amalgamation of new technology and the internet have changed the phenomenon of the world. The revolutionary changes in communication technology have made the global structure closer than before and accessible to each other through a virtual or digital platform. Aggravation into the digital dimension allows people to share knowledge, entertain each other and promote dialogue between different cultures (Marshall McLuhan, 1962), simultaneously it creates a wider platform to exchange the needful services. The 21st century is the witness to huge development in e-marketing services, providing accessibility to each sector of society. Due to significant changes in internet use, e-marketing has upstretched to around \$50 billion in 2021 in India, where more than 180 million customers have bought various products through different online sites.

Meanwhile, the influence of social media on e-commerce has changed the scenario of the marketing system and product purchasing behavior of people. Various form for social media networks viz; vlogs, podcasts, microblogs,

and content communities are contributing to an important shift from a traditional, objective, rational and intuitional perspective to a subjective, personalized, emotive, and human perspective (Kumara 2008:2). Over the past few years, social media has witnessed for remarkable growth with help of advanced technology (computer and smart mobile) to become part of the mainstream culture, society, and business (Odden, 2008), and it is a vital part of social individuals connectivity or communicate, stay in touch, keep on top of new development and connect with the world around them (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). According to the data (ITU), 4.74 billion people are using social media around the world, while globally around 64-66% of people use the internet. India is the second most popular country in the world using social media, with around 467 million people using social media in 2022, on average, spending about 2.36 hours on it daily, meanwhile 658 million people use the internet (The global Statistic). Social media influencers are using advertise the brands' products and services with various strategies to promote.

New media platforms are by character demanding, more information, more time-driven, content-intensive, and highly individualistic (Sheth and Mittal, 2004), so people used this platform after for their gratification. This scenario (Raaij, 1998 cited in Ivanauskas, 2009) demanding and changing the nature of consumer preference and selection have created substantial changes in consumer purchasing and decision-making as social media platforms facilitate purchase transactions, information seeking, and decision-making. Social media is quickly developing and increasingly (MiMi.hu Company, 2000) assuming a significant role in

the lives of consumers, especially the young generation, who aged between 18 to 24 years.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Since 1605 print media is a popular medium among people, which helped to create the marketing for the products, and it increased people's consumption level through disseminating printed advertising among readers and people who are interested in substantial issues (Rachana Kejriwal and Dr. Dipti Kumar Chakravorty, 2014). Prior to 1990, traditional media such as direct mail, billboards, fax, telephone, radio, television, newspaper, and magazines were used to reach customers (Pütter, 2017) and it was demonstrated by their inability to achieve a goal enterprise by creating markets, attracting the largest customers, and allowed them to access real communicative content (Schivinski et al., 2016, p.1). Beyond 1990, the world has seen a major boom in communication and technology, marketing (Silvia, 2019), and with it emerged intellectual trends that focused on the concept of a single international market (Hall, 2016) which means going beyond the concept of a small and fragmented market.

2007 witnessed the global financial crisis, which caused a fierce recession in the world markets, inflation spread, and the exchange rate of major currencies around the world fluctuated (Laksamana, 2018). This economic disaster created many negative effects on buying behaviors around the world (Hossain & Sakib, 2016) and, during that time, businesses suffered and fail to build open interactive relationships with customers and recapture the reputation and mental image of the customers (Almohaimmed, 2019). During that time, the revolution of the internet was the magic

tool that accelerated growth in all sectors, facilitate people`s lives, and increased options and opportunities to collect and store information that they wanted at the lowest possible cost (Pratama et al.,2019). The rise of media and communication channels has tremendously changed the advertisement business landscape (Ashraf Bany Mohammed and Mohammed Alkubise, 2012). While, to rebuild and strengthen the global economy, and to conduct and accelerate business (Kyule, 2017) communication technology has been used. It was incumbent upon the giants to change the opportunities and priorities reach to the international market (Jocz&Quelch, 2008), communication and technology-based marketing pay the attention to stimulate international action in marketing, (Islam et al., 2013).

Due to technological innovation and popularization, individual communication have been faster and easier around the world (Kaplan & Heinlin, 2010) and, Internet has changed the way of communication between consumer, seller, and institution (Paria, 2018), meanwhile social media has emerged in a way that has contributed to increasing the level of connectivity between peers, and it influences the decision of other with common interests, feeling and opinion (Alalwan et al. 2017). The studies prove that the existence of social media applications such as blogs, podcasts, virtual worlds, online gaming, and news sites have disseminated information and entrainment with multimedia content to social individuals, by which, able to change the form and ways of interaction, and the exchange of interests between individuals in many sectors (Yuksel et al.,2014). The digital era has benefited businesses and marketing, started tracking

the interest of the people who use social media and product ads have been pushed to the account of social media users to create a desire. Through this, the business has increased, and it creates a vast marketing for products across the globe. Many consumers, especially the young generation view social media as it provides them with a personalized platform for socializing and accessing entertainment content (Bhargave 2010), where the "push" strategy is adopted by marketers. This has created several opportunities for marketers.

Entertainment is a communicative function that provokes purchasing attitudes towards the brand and it increases the follow-up of customers to obtain positive impressions and opinions about the product brand (Kang, 2005), and studies show that social media marketing is considered a form of entertainment (Manthiou et al, 2013) enjoy the online purchasing experience is a strong view of the online consumer. Happiness while shopping also refers to the ability to meet personal needs in pursuit of escape from reality, aesthetic enjoyment, or emotional enjoyment (Harshini, 2015). As a result, the social media entertainment and entertainment feature enhance engagement behaviors, shows a positive response to a brand by users (Mir & Zaheer, 20012), and is also used to attract buyers and build durable relationships with them (Hair et al, 2010).

The study finding shows that fun contents are interesting to customers (Manthious et al 2014). Entertainment-oriented brand content spread via social media is an additional marketing incentive to stimulate and lubricate use engagement, thus creating exciting and entertaining activities (Ashley and Tuten 2015). Relational between online

purchasing behavior and entertainment (Kim &Ko, 2010), liked the frequency of shopping on the site where entertainment content plays an active role in exaggerating the visit of fans of the brand (Khan,2017), while other studies confirmed that enjoyment and relaxation are all major reasons for using social media (Muntinga et al., 2011).

Due to the popularization of social media and online sites, online advertisement companies would like to spend more on online advertisement than conventional method (Gaurav Bakshi and Dr. Surender Kumar Gupta, 2013). Companies extensively use online ads for the promotion of their products, but it is quite challenging for advertisers to make online ads more effective to generate a positive response from customers (Khong Kok Wei, Theresa Jerome, and Leong Wai Shan, 2010).

The studies confirmed that communication technology and social media applications are an influencer on the people who use social media rather than conventional media, as well as entertainment-oriented content can hold the attention of the young generation for more time, hence, advertisers are priorities website and social media platform to advertise their product and attract and create the desire in browsers, thus online and social media users get influenced by the ads which displayed through their likable online platforms.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study examines the effectiveness of online advertisements on rural and urban students to purchase lifestyle products. This study track college student behaviors towards purpose of internet use, their trustworthiness believes on the product which they would like to buy through online as well as offline mode, and the reason for buying products.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The current study investigates the effectiveness of online advertising on stripling lifestyle product purchasing behavior between urban and rural students. Since this is the exploratory nature of the study bearing in mind the factors outlined by Sekarn (2003) concerning the sample size, a non-probability convenience sampling survey method was used, and 200 respondents were deemed adequate. Due to the comparative study of the urban and rural students, the data was collected from the various urban and rural colleges in Mysore, Mandya, Kodagu districts, and also from North Delhi college, in which 96 respondents from the rural area and the remaining 104 respondents were selected from urban. The data was collected with help of a set of questionnaires, in which questions are categorized into four parts such as socio-demographics, economic profile, media exposure, purchasing behavior, and online advertisement. Questions were asked to the respondents in the close-ended method.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

The data was analyzed quantitatively employing the SPSS software considering frequency distribution. Since data was collected in the non-probability sampling method, the nonparametric method has been used to test the hypothesis. Mann Whitney U test has been used to elicit the mean value of two individual groups of rural and urban areas to understand the scenario of the effectiveness of online advertisement on a stripling lifestyle.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

General Objective: Study the effectiveness of online advertisement and purchasing behavior of rural and urban students.

1.To analyze the difference of online advertisement influence to purchase products among rural and urban college students.

2.To examine the purpose of internet use and reason for purchasing products by striplings.

### **HYPOTHESIS**

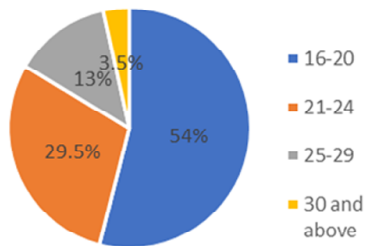
General Hypothesis: Measure the significance in the mean rating score [from a scale of one (one is lowest and 5 is highest) to 5] between rural and urban respondents on the different social media advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more products.

The hypothesis was tested based on general hypotheses on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and websites.

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

The data has analyzed with help of SPSS software, where various technics have been used to understand the various aspect of the research objectives.

Graph: 1: Age

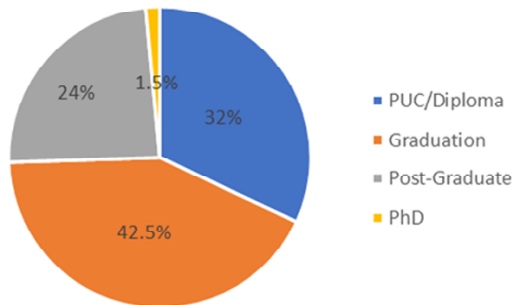


The study has focused on youth, hence, the data was collected only from the age group between 16 to 30 (Graph-1), in which out of 200, more than half of the respondents (54%) were aged 16 to 20, where 21 to 24 aged respondents were second highest (29.5%) in the survey. Followed by 25



to 29 and 30 and above respondents were 13% and 3.5% respectively.

As per the census-2011, out of the 1.21 billion population in India, of which 333 million were younger, consequently, it has the highest youngest population in the globe, meanwhile, most social media users in India are aged 27.1 years and millennials and Gen Z are the main contributors for social media usage. In India 52.3% of social media results come from millennials, 28.4% of social media conversations are from Gen Z, and 15.1% from those aged 35-44 (According to the Internet & Mobile Association of India). Survey says that (2022-Statista), approximately 58 % of online shoppers aged between 26 to 41 years always like to purchase directly through social networks.



Graph-2: Education Qualification

In the study (Graph-2) more than one out of three respondents (42.5%) pursued their graduation, followed by 32% PUC/Diploma holders, 24% of respondents had post-graduate, and only 1.2% of respondents had a Ph.D. degree. Education is one of the significant aspects when considering media literacy. In this study, most of the respondents pursued higher education (Graduation and post-graduation).

Table-1: Easier access to media

<b>Media</b>	<b>%</b>
TV	24.0
Radio	1.5
Print Newspaper	5.0
Website	5.0
Social media	55.5
Others	1.5
TV, newspaper, website and social media	6.0
all of above	1.5
Total	100.0

As per the present study, the young generation is slowly transforming from conventional media to new media. In the study area, the respondent (Table-1) opinioned that social media (55.5%) is one of the easier accessible media compared to any others, while the popular multimedia, television is the second most feasible media for the young generation (24%), whereas other traditional media like a newspaper (5%) and radio (1.5%) or not easier accessible according to striplings respondents. Surprisingly respondents opinioned that official websites (5%) are also not feasible to access. The respondent clearly described that social media is the most comfortable to use than any other media.

Table-2: Account in social media

<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Twitter</b>	<b>Instagram</b>	<b>WhatsApp</b>	<b>Snapchat</b>
Yes	118(59.0%)	63(31.5%)	170(85.0%)	196(98%)	154(77.00%)

In the study, (Table-2) popular messaging social media application WhatsApp (98%) has the highest account of the young respondent and one of the known entertainment-based

social media applications Instagram has the second highest (85%) accounts of the respondent, similarly, 77% of the respondent have an account in another messaging application Snapchat and a well-known social networking application Facebook has less account holders (59%) compare to other social media networks in the study area, whereas, microblogging social media application Twitter has only 31% of accounts.

According to data, Facebook users have declined, meanwhile, Instagram users have been increasing globally as well as in India, likewise, we can see the same scenario in the study.

Table-3: Purpose for use internet

Ranking	Chatting	Watching For movie- clips	For infor- mation	Social Media	Online Shop- ping	For down- loading	For posting reels
1	25.00%	11.00%	15.50%	12.50%	13.00%	12.50%	31.00%
2	8.50%	18.00%	8.50%	6.50%	11.50%	16.50%	14.50%
3	12.50%	14.00%	19.50%	8.50%	11.00%	14.50%	14.50%
4	14.00%	13.00%	13.50%	18%	21.00%	13.00%	8.50%
5	9.00%	13.00%	14.00%	18%	16.00%	17.00%	8.00%
6	8.00%	8.50%	11.50%	14.5%	13.50%	14.50%	7.00%
7	23.00%	22.50%	17.50%	22%	14.00%	12.00%	16.50%
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

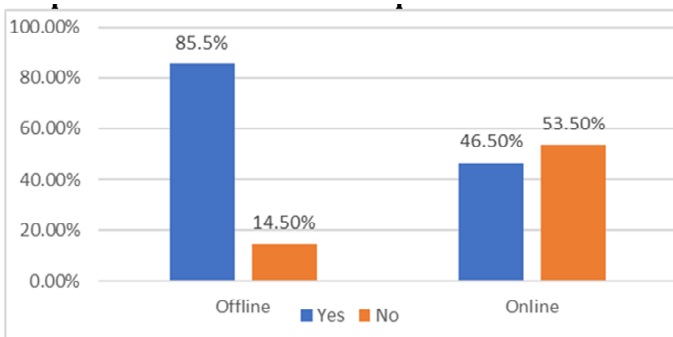
The present study also examines the purpose of internet use, in which the seven-point rating scale has been used to understand the scenario of the respondent (table-3), where the highest number of the respondent opined at the rating level one that, the internet has used to post reels or short videos (31%), whereas, 25% of the respondents are using the internet for chatting with their social individual groups,

followed by for information (15%), online shopping (13%), to use social media (12.50%), for download various things (12.50%) and watch movies (11%) respondent use internet respectively.

At the least raring level, (7) most of the respondents opined that the internet has been used for messaging to the individual social group (23%), social media (22%), and watching movies online (22%), followed by getting information, for posting reels, online shopping and download Internet has been used 17.5%, 16.5%, 14%, and 12% respectively.

The study describes that the young generation utilizes more internet for share their personal or reliable things in the form of text, video, images, and audio with their closer social group, further, they also like to share their activities through short entertainment-oriented videos or reels in their likable social media platform. Simultaneously, respondents were also given priority to get information, watch movies, do online shopping, and download the things they wanted.

Graph-3: Trustworthiness of the product



In modern human culture, we all buy new clothes, goods, and equipment from time to time, whether it's frequently or

rarely. When we shop, we consider all the available products, compare our options, and then purchase the one that best suits our needs, also everyone cares, and rechecks the worthiness of the product which they like to buy, whether it is in online or offline mode of purchase. So, the study has analyzed young buyers' opinions about the trustworthiness of online and offline products. The result shows that (Graphy-3) striplings were trusted offline products (85.5%) than online products. For online products trustworthiness, mixed opinions have been traced in the study. The respondents have almost similar opinions on online products' trustworthiness (trustworthiness 46.5%, not trustworthiness-53.5%).

Table-4: Reason for purchase

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Price%</b>	<b>Offers/ discount%</b>	<b>Festival sale%</b>	<b>Needs only%</b>	<b>Above all %</b>
1	18.5	9.5	15	18	23.5
2	13	16.5	13	14	10.5
3	24.5	21	28.5	19.5	25
4	12.5	23	19.5	19	12
5	31.5	30	24	29.5	29
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Buying products for a different purpose is a common tendency of people, but what are the factors influence to buy the products is examinable. So the present study analyses (Table-4) the respondents' opinion of the reason for purchasing products, in which the highest respondents (23.5%) opined at the rating level one out of five that, price, offers/discount, festival sale, and neediness of the products all are matter to purchase, while price (18%) and needs (18.5%) is the second factor to purchase any products,

followed by festival sales (15%) and offers/discounts (9.5%) are influenced to purchase products respectively. But, at the raking level five, respondents are given a similar opinion that price (31.5%), offers (30 %), needs (29.5%) and festival sales (24%) are a matter for buying products.

**HYPOTHESIS**

A hypothesis test has been framed to analyses the difference of online advertisement influence to purchase products among rural and urban college students, for which Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and website advertisement influence on the rural and urban students to purchase the products are separately tested.

1.Statement: 'Facebook advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product'

H0-There is no significant difference in Mean rating score [from a scale of one (one is lowest and 5 is highest) to 5] between rural and urban respondents on the statement 'Facebook advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product.

H1- There is a significant difference in the Mean rating score [from a scale of one (one is lowest and 5 is highest) to 5] between rural and urban respondents on the statement 'Facebook advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product.

Table-5: Mann-Whitney U test Paired

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Locality</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>P- Value Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
Facebook advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product	Rural	104.69	0.003561
	Urban	96.93	

From the Pairwise comparisons by Mann-Whitney U test results provided the opinion about Facebook in the study

area (Table-), it is observed that there is a significant difference in mean scores between rural and urban respondents on the statement 'Facebook advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product' ( $p=0.003561$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) at 5 percent level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted ( $H_1$ ).

The result summarized that, there is a different opinion between rural and urban respondents on the statement Facebook advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more products.

2.Statement: YouTube advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product'

$H_0$ -There is no significant difference in Mean rating score [from a scale of one (one is lowest and 5 is highest) to 5] between rural and urban respondents on the statement 'YouTube advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product.

$H_1$ - There is a significant difference in the Mean rating score [from a scale of one (one is lowest and 5 is highest) to 5] between rural and urban respondents on the statement 'YouTube advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product.

Table-6: Mann-Whitney U test Paired

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Locality</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>P- Value Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
YouTube advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product	Rural	104.690	0.333
	Urban	96.930	

From the Pairwise comparisons by Mann-Whitney U test results provided the opinion about Facebook in the study area (Table-), it is observed that there is no significant

difference in mean scores between rural and urban respondents on the statement 'YouTube advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product' ( $p= 0.333$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) at 5 percent level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected ( $H_1$ ).

The result summarized that there is no different opinion between rural and urban respondents on the statement YouTube advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more products.

3.Statement: Twitter advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product'

$H_0$ -There is no significant difference in Mean rating score [from a scale of one (one is lowest and 5 is highest) to 5] between rural and urban respondents on the statement 'Twitter advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product.

$H_1$ - There is a significant difference in Mean rating score [from a scale of one (one is lowest and 5 is highest) to 5] between rural and urban respondents on the statement 'Twitter advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product.

Table-7: Mann-Whitney U test Paired

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Locality</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>P- Value Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
'Twitter advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product	Rural	88.728	0.003963
	Urban	88.728261	

From the Pairwise comparisons by Mann-Whitney U test results provided the opinion about Twitter in the study area (Table-), it is observed that there is a significant difference in mean scores between rural and urban



respondents on the statement 'Twitter advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product' ( $p=0.003963$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) at 5 percent level of significance.

Hence, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted ( $H_1$ ).

The result summarized that there is a significantly different opinion between rural and urban respondents on the statement 'Twitter advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product'.

4.Statement: Website advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product'

$H_0$ -There is no significant difference in Mean rating score [from a scale of one (one is lowest and 5 is highest) to 5] between rural and urban respondents on the statement 'Website advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product.

$H_1$ - There is a significant difference in Mean rating score [from a scale of one (one is lowest and 5 is highest) to 5] between rural and urban respondents on the statement 'Website advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product.

Table-8: Mann-Whitney U test Paired

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Locality</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>P- Value Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
'Website advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product	Rural	96.141	0.315
	Urban	104.212	

From the Pairwise comparisons by Mann-Whitney U test results provided the opinion about Website ads in the study area (Table-), it is observed that there is no significant difference in mean scores between rural and urban respondents on the statement 'Website advertisement

influence on stripling to purchase more product' ( $p= 0.315$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) at 5 percent level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected ( $H_1$ ).

The result summarized that there is no significant difference in opinion between rural and urban respondents on the statement Website advertisement influence on stripling to purchase more product'.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The purpose of the study is to understand the effeteness of online advertisement on stripling lifestyle product purchases, thus, the social demographical profile of and media consumption behavior have been comparatively analyzed. In which the study found that the education scenario has been changing drastically in India. The younger generation showing interest to purchase their higher education in various streams, which would be remarkable for the future higher education revolution in the country. Because, according to previous data India had a 27.1% gross enrolment ratio in higher education, which lesser compared to developed countries.

In connection to the study objectives, Millennials and Gen-Z are active social media user because it is easier to access than any conventional media for striplings. Young's always like to see and post entertainment-related content in individual social groups because entertainment as social media helps to escape from the stress (Lee & Ma, 2012). While advertisers use social networks as an effective communication tool to process and develop relationships with customers (Kevin, 2012), and online ads are psychological motives that push to get rid of the state of

anxiety (Iyad A. Al-Nsour<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Arun Kumar Tarofder-2022) thus online advertisements are indirectly affecting young to purchase their lifestyle products. But significantly the study shows that offline products are more trustworthy than online products for the stripling, though they like to purchase their lifestyle product in online, here reason is, social e-shopping is an enjoyable experience for young adult female shoppers (e.g., Hartco and Baker 2004). Enjoyment is defined as the degree to which an experience is fun or interesting (Moon and Kim 2001), having three components: pleasure, arousal, and escapism (Mathwick et al. 2001; Menon and Kahn 2002).

The study also found that, for college students, various factor matter to purchase their desired products, they think about the price, look for the offers and discounts of the product which they like to buy, and also most of them purchase the product for their needs, while e-tailers use various offers strategy to fulfill the costumers' needs (Preeti Khanna, Brinda Sampath-2015).

The study comparatively examines the various online platform advertisement such as Facebook, websites, Twitter, and YouTube influence on Urban and Rural students. The result shows that there is no significant difference between studied platforms' online advertisement influence on the rural and urban striplings. Due to the affordability and smartphone, rural India is using 20% higher internet (Nielsen data-2021) compared to urban parts. There are 503 million active internet users across India, and social networking or chatting remains the top online activity. Video watching and online music listening are also among the top five internet activities. In rural India, 54% of the 440 million users watch

videos on the internet, and the number of social media users has drastically risen in urban India. Thus, the advertisements which are appearing on various social media platforms have equally effective for both urban and rural striplings to purchase their desired products. Motivating factors have a significant impact on the online purchase behavior of rural and urban areas consumers (Amandeep Singh, Amrinder Singh-2020). The students who intended to shop online for apparel products (Yingjiao Xu, V. Ann Paulins, 2005) had more positive attitudes than those who did not have the intention. The advertisement that appears on individual social media and other online platforms are stimulate stripling to purchase products, but various factors such as price, discount, neediness, and timeliness also matter to buy products.

### **CONCLUSION**

The technology revolution and internet affordability created an easy path for the common individuals of society to access and disseminate any content and services for their gratification without barriers. In another hand, since the scenario of marketing methods has been changing due to internet viability, entrepreneurs or goods and services providers have shifted their selling strategy from the conventional way to new methods, whereas online advertisement helps to create a feasible environment to boom the marketing. Since social media is the place where the highest number of the young population gather to gratify their content needs, advertisers use this social media platform to showcase their products in an effective manner, which stimulates and creates the desire in the young generation to purchase products. Here various factors such as price, discount, neediness, and timeliness determine the

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purchasing behaviors of the striplings. Marketers and E-tailers understand the nuances of customers' needs and provide goods and services accordingly.

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## **Digital Cultures and Platforms: Materialising Instagram and Gender**

*-Faheem Muhammed M.P*

### **ABSTRACT**

**W**hen we negotiate with the temporal and spatial transformations of the global order, being digitally connected is altering our communication practices across the globe. As social media platforms embed human lives and shape our societies, it also contributes to the growth of diverse digital cultures across the globe, with different forms and modes of materialities. The paper attempts to understand the materiality of g/local digital cultures with regard to the digital media platform Instagram. The paper explores how digital platforms and accompanying digital cultures reconfigure daily lives and practices in and through Instagram in India. By employing a digital anthropology approach to look at cultural productions, the paper will answer how gendered discourses are produced, shared, and consumed and all together constitute digital cultures. In doing so, the paper conceptualises digital materialities within the ensembles of



digital cultures and puts forward the concept of platform materiality. To conceptualise how digital platforms manifest and traverse gender discourses and their materialities, the paper analyses Instagram pages and contents manifesting gendered discourses by looking at themes including sexuality and body politics. This paper offers a conceptual analysis of digital cultures and materialities within the particularities of digital practices and phenomena in India.

**Keywords:** *Digital Culture, Digital Materialism, Instagram, Gender, Discourse, Digital Anthropology*

## INTRODUCTION

Digital solutions are reinvigorating human challenges - social, cultural, economic, and political- on a global scale. While the pandemic ushered in a new mode of digital living and a changing world, it is transforming our meanings and re-territorialising our spaces. As digitisation manifests production, dissemination, and consumption in the post-internet society (Mosco, 2017), researchers from social sciences, arts, and humanities have been trying to understand and interpret digital cultures and network societies from multiple perspectives. Digital technologies and media facilitate the emergence of novel digital practices, producing new cultures, simultaneously (un)mediating and remediating existing ones. The rise of social media is rethinking social discourses and practices, as a result, alternative practices are unfolding within digital platforms and spaces, blurring the binaries between physical and digital. A gendered analysis of digital platforms mandates the question of how dominant gender narratives and practices are reinforced and challenged in and through various digital platforms. Looking at feminist discourses on Instagram, the paper attempts to conceptualise

the entanglements of digital cultures and materiality. This article aims to provide a robust theoretical contribution to the study of digital cultures and digital materialism.

### **THE MATERIALITY OF DIGITAL CULTURES**

The massive entry of digital media and technologies into individual and collective lives is changing how glocal - globally shared norms, attitudes, behaviour, and actions, allowing individuals, groups, and organisations to make decisions and resolve issues locally (Mihir, 2022) - human societies communicate and form relationships. The socio-economic, as well as cultural politics are increasingly restructured by and through the association of the digital. The convergence of social lives with the digital has ushered social scientists to rethink digital and digitality, i.e., looking at human-machine interactions beyond the human-non-human. Bollmer identifies digital as computers and their processing of discrete, binary information, as opposed to analogue, which is continuous (Bollmer, 2018). The rise of the internet and digital technologies, accompanied by the rapid movement of people and ideas across physical and virtual spaces, accelerates the intersections of cultures and spaces for cultural articulation, production, and belonging (Lim & Soriano, 2016). The entanglements of digital media technologies and human societies manifest various social, economic, political and cultural practices, altogether constituting glocal digital cultures. These are shaped and established in and through varying material forms and assemblages of digital media and technologies, including social media, digital platforms and the internet. Digital cultures bring together the materiality of communication, the narratives about media and the practices and actions of

bodies as they use and are reimagined through new technologies (Bollmer, 2018). Punathambekar and Mohan argue that global digital cultures are formed at the intersections of infrastructures, platforms, and the public and are structured by profoundly uneven power relations (Punathambekar & Mohan, 2019). Though digital cultures rely upon global network infrastructures and communities, they are also located in specific cultural, social, and political settings and contexts (Goggin, 2016). It makes particular inquiries exploring material and relational linkages between global and local digital cultures imperative.

As the term signifies, digital cultures are not a singular entity; rather, they are formed by and through a multitude of networks and exchanges within varying specificities. Therefore, studying digital cultures demands particular modes of inquiry into the specific materialities we are looking into. Explorations of the digital cultures of a particular society should also look into the histories that shape and define their practices and attitudes. For Sreekumar, understanding everyday life in Asian societies owes to the Western colonial ontology of modernity. The cultural logic of existence and the negotiations and articulation in these societies' are largely shaped and determined by digital technologies (Sreekumar, 2016). At this point, detaching digital technologies from their socio-cultural contexts will disintegrate the relations and materialities moulding them. Hence, approaches to investigating techno-culture or digital culture should embody their relational materialities rather than disintegrate them. From a Deleuzian ontology, Marenko suggests that the status of contemporary techno-digital objects should be rethought

based on their materiality and the forms of intelligence this materiality expresses (Marenko, 2022).

The materiality of varying media and communication forms has always been a site of inquiry. Material culture studies is an inquiry into 'the nature of culture' (Miller, 1998). Approaches to material culture studies are derived from media and cultural studies, as well as social sciences. Material culture approaches have enabled researchers to analyse social worlds through their material aspects and features (Pink et al., 2016). It provides novel scopes for comprehending emerging materialities of things and their relations with society. With an ethnographic inquiry into the materiality of radio, Tacci has explained how radio fills a space with volume and substance and the resultant experiences of associated individuals and their relation to it (Tacchi, 1998). Looking at radio within the home space, she explores radio's role in manifesting and maintaining relationships between the self and others. Asserting listening to the radio as a social activity, she has documented how tuning into the radio becomes a tuning into sociality that shrinks the distinction between private and public. Similar is the case with digital media and technologies, they are not mere instruments or devices unaffected by material or immaterial relations. Technical media transmits and processes culture and engages in its own version of the continuum of 'natureculture' (Parikka, 2012). Bollmer has mapped how immediacy and instantaneity relations mask different temporal relations found in the materiality of storage, processes of data management, and human techniques for adjusting and relating to something that can never be fully brought into conscious awareness (G. Bollmer, 2015b).

When the distinctions between the material and immaterial or physical and digital are blurred, the materiality of digital as well as digital cultures makes an excellent case for scholarship. The digital, as with all material culture, is crucial in what makes us human, as becoming humans involves socialising within a material world of cultural artefacts, including order, agency, and relationships between things, which goes beyond relationships with persons (Horst & Miller, 2012). Bollmer has documented the material agency of technology to shape subjectivity (G. Bollmer, 2015b). Interpreting the materiality of the digital entails innovative approaches that can grasp the intricacies of software and hardware. The material turn in digital media studies witnessed the emergence of digital materialism, concerned with the material substrate of digital culture, which argues that there is no pure information: code is inscribed, and bits are written (Casemajor, 2015). Digital materialism is concerned with digital media's material aspects, features, conditions, and affordances (Reichert & Richterich, 2015). Digital materiality is, in a way, the human experiences and relations with the digital. Hui outlines the concept of 'relational materialism' as coherent with the technologies and history of thought as inquiries into the relations in the digital milieu are crucial to any social, economic, and political program (Hui, 2015). Through this analysis of relational materiality, a new understanding of 'immateriality' and digital materialism emerges, based on relations rather than substances (ibid).

### **LOCATING DIGITAL CULTURES ON INSTAGRAM**

The last decade has witnessed the penetration of social media platforms into everyday social lives (van Dijck &

Poell, 2013), altering human socialities and social organisations. Social media platforms and apps hold an undisputed space in human lives, while social media practices influence our decision-making. Social media are not mere technological manifestations of the human determination to connect and communicate; instead, social media produce the possibilities and limits of 'the human' through data management and network infrastructure (G. Bollmer, 2015a). Millions of people worldwide use digital tools and platforms to create and share cultural artefacts, Instagram among them (Manovich, 2017). Released as an iOS application (app) on October 6, 2010, Instagram came to exemplify the new era of mobile photography (ibid) and emerging visual cultures. Instagram shocked the world of photography as it democratised professional photography by bringing filters into it (Borgerson & Miller, 2016).

Instagram allows you to capture, edit, and publish photos, view photos of your friends, discover other photos through search, interact with them (like, comment, repost, post to other networks), enter into conversations with photo authors and others who left comments, create photo collections, change their order, etc. all from a single device (Manovich, 2017).

Owned by Facebook since 2012, Instagram is one of the world's most popular social networking platforms and one of the most exciting and used social networking sites that allow users to share stories and posts and use filters besides photo and video sharing features (Evecen & Güdekli, 2019). Though it started as a photo-sharing application, it has emerged as a platform that manifests divergent visual and digital cultures over time. Hundreds of millions of users

use Instagram in hundreds of different ways (Manovich, 2017). With its emphasis on online sociality, Instagram witnesses emerging modes of negotiations within and through multimodal digital practices that constitute digital cultures and Instagram itself. Leaver, Tim Highfield, and Crystal Abidin trace how this quintessential mobile photography app has developed as a platform and a culture (Abidin, Leaver, & Highfield, 2020). The authors found that beyond socialisation, social media has become a showcase of digital identities, as people online are invented by technological systems and produced through the material infrastructures of contemporary technologies. With the Instagram case, the authors conceptualised that digital cultures cannot be performed without questioning the technical materialities that produce so-called 'human' subjectivities.

Looking at the Instagram use of Indonesia's Hijabers', Baulch & Pramiyanti demonstrate how hijabers shape an Islamic bodily esthetic for middle-class women and simultaneously present this bodily aesthetic as a form of Islamic knowledge (Baulch & Pramiyanti, 2018). Examining how Instagram is mobilised in relation to death, studies have explored the differences that different media platforms make and how social media are tangled with the places, events, and rituals of mourning (Gibbs et al., 2015). By adding a material dimension to the discourse of online tribes, Gretzel and Hardy have unfolded the role of materiality in digital lifestyles and discussed how the seemingly opposite of materiality and mobility are reconciled (Gretzel & Hardy, 2019). Exploring involuntary childlessness online (ICI) in so-called trying-to-conceive (TTC) contexts on Instagram

and in blogs, Stenstrom analyse how blog posts and Instagram environments facilitate digital existence and 'digital life', as posts and discussions online manifest a form of digital materiality (Stenström, 2022).

### **PLATFORM MATERIALITY: GENDER AND SEXUALITY DISCOURSES ON INSTAGRAM**

Socio-cultural digital research has engaged with questions of gender and sexuality for most of its history (Burgess et al., 2016), as gender, sexualities, and sexual cultures have been digitally mediated and remediated in various ways. Social media have become a site of contest for gender and sexual politics, as spaces that produce values and norms about sexuality, deciding what kind of sexualities are supported, repressed, or disciplined, considering both material and symbolic operations of social media (De Ridder, 2017). Drawing on Latour's Actor Network Theory, Burgess et al. investigate Instagram selfies in light of their implications for the visibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ) people. The discursive practices of gender and sexuality in digital cultures cannot be isolated from the platformed sociality (Stenström, 2022) of digital media platforms. Using new materialist frames to reconceptualise the human feelings of 'community', 'belonging', and 'what really matters' in Instagram-based feminist art communities, Stenstrom argues that the feelings of 'community' and 'belonging', the key to human subjectivity and experience, are produced by more-than-human assemblages and are central to identity. Cultures and cultural practices of gender and sexuality that emerge out of digital platforms are, therefore, an assertion of digital materiality. Analysing dominant platform techno-cultures on Tinder, Instagram, and Vine,



Duguay et al. found that components of the platforms' architectures, including cross-platform connectivity, hashtag filtering, and algorithmic recommendation systems, reinforce techno-cultures (Duguay et al., 2020).

Digital platforms facilitate new ways and modes of production, dissemination and consumption of cultural artefacts. They are reinvented and renegotiated within and through emerging spatio-temporal relations between platforms and users, thus constituting platform materiality. Bodies and identities in digital cultures are produced and distributed through discursive practices and norms on gender and sexuality. The making of bodies in digital platforms is also performed by and through platform materiality. Digitally mediated male body practices have emerged as a means of negotiating the shifting fortunes of neoliberalism, revealing a feminising axiomatic (Hakim, 2019). Scholars have analysed the materiality of the feminist activist art community on Instagram (Willcox & Hickey-Moody, 2020). Through a lens of queer materiality, authors suggest that more-than-human assemblages can produce community. For the feminist activist and queer artists, community building through their art practice and online presence is a way of making a living, enabling them to connect with others through topics of gender, sexuality, race, and body positivity, which provides a place to feel, seen, heard and represented. By looking at the materiality of the digital world through a queer lens of live human and nonhuman intra-actions, authors reconfigure the boundaries of the human in relation to the feeling of community.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

" How does materiality work with regard to digital platforms and glocal digital cultures?

◆ How does culture unfold through human-digital assemblages? What materiality do these cultures have?

◆ What are the material and relational linkages between social and cultural productions and relations on digital platforms?

### **METHODOLOGY**

This paper attempts to conceptualise the materiality of digital cultures by drawing on new materialistic and posthuman approaches. The study will employ literature reviews and empirical analyses of practices and phenomena that shape the digital realities of India. Literature on the themes of digital materialism, digital cultures, social media platforms, gender and sexuality and Instagram is reviewed to understand and conceptualise how materiality works in relation to digital platforms and cultures. By employing Bollmer's digital materialism (G. Bollmer, 2015a), the paper conceptualises digital materialism within the materiality of digital media and cultures on Instagram. Daniel Miller's digital anthropology (Miller, 2018) is used to locate cultural productions on digital platforms. Instagram pages in India on Gender and sexuality are analysed to locate particular gender cultures -digital cultures specific to the geography. In doing so, the paper set forth the concept of platform materiality to theorise digital realities that emerge from and through digital platforms.

### **PLATFORM SOCIALITY AND EMERGING MATERIALITIES: GENDERING INSTAGRAM**

With their user-friendly interfaces integrated into smartphones, social media platforms like Instagram have simplified and democratised the means for visual creation, editing, and distribution (Caldeira et al., 2018). Social and

cultural productions in the platforms are reterritorialising our spatial and temporal relations. The materiality of digital platforms enables and institutionalises emerging forms of socialities altering how we engage with society. New modes of socialities are produced and endorsed in and through various digital media platforms. These digital transitions are changing the ways we negotiate spaces and relations. Socio-cultural practices and norms are reinforced, challenged, and altered within the materiality of digital platforms. The materiality of digital media can simultaneously facilitate and impede discourses and, thus, practices. Bivens and Haimson have studied how gender is reinforced through social media design, their materialisation in software spaces, and the recursive implications for society (Bivens & Haimson, 2016). Socialities on digital platforms have gendered and affective dimensions within digital sociality (Lavrence & Cambre, 2020). Social media offer networked infrastructures for reproducing popular representations with individuals' everyday identity performances (Duguay, 2016).

Krishnan explores how certain users of Instagram are working towards the effective reterritorialisation of an online reimagining of South Asia (Krishnan, 2021). Similarly, popular imaginaries are reimagined, and conventional mediations are renegotiated through platform sociality. However, it is difficult to assume whether platform sociality reinforces or helps overcome unequal gender relations. Platform practices tend to be conformist and liberating, depending on the social, economic, political and cultural context in which platform usages and users are situated. Instagram can reproduce and reinforce traditional gender roles as the platform's specificities and its

technological affordances can reinforce institutional policies (Caldeira et al., 2018). Researchers have demonstrated how censorship affects queer women's visibility as well as activities on Instagram (Duguay et al., 2020). Further inquiries have been made into how girls and young women negotiate contemporary discourses around the body, health and fitness through Instagram and the subjectivities the platform enables (Camacho-Miñano et al., 2019). Postfeminist scholars have studied how girls use Instagram and Twitter to 'connect, share, challenge, disrupt and refigure' the meaning of 'learning bodies' in both online and offline spaces (Retallack et al., 2016). With an emphasis on fitspiration on Instagram, scholars have explored collaborative gendered socio-cultural practices of mediated bodily display and the connections and disconnections they provide (Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2021). Similarly, girls and young women negotiate contemporary discourses around the body, health, and fitness shared on Instagram through the subjectivity enabled by its technology (Camacho-Miñano et al., 2019), i.e., platform materiality.

### **FEMINIST INSTAGRAM PAGES IN INDIA**

Feminism in India is an Instagram page breaking gender stereotypes in India, with an emphasis on intersectional feminism. With 170 k followers and 3777 posts, the page has been engaged in producing and disseminating comics, artworks, explanation posts, Instareels, status etc., with the tags of sexuality, pleasure, care, sex education, self-care, gender equality, women's rights, body positivity self-love, LGBTQ and so on. The page has prioritised unlearning gender as a key to challenging and breaking patriarchal gender norms and sexual discourses. A page in the Hindi language is maintained to reach

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a wider audience. The intersectional approach to feminism enables Feminism in India to address the two-layer problem of caste and gender. Indian women in history is an Instagram page moderated by Feminism in India to document and celebrate Indian women in history with a bilingual digital archive in Hindi and English. The page celebrates women freedom fighters, professionals, artists, writers, politicians, reformers, revolutionaries, etc. Documenting and celebrating forgotten or never remembered women of India can counter masculine and patriarchal narratives of male histories and bring alternative narratives replacing them.

Vitaminstree is an Instagram page for women and queer Indians. Vitaminstree creates and shares digital art, posts, stories, Instareels, photographs, memes, and explanation posts to educate their audiences on gender and sexuality. They use multiple tags including but not limited to pleasure-positive, sex-positive culture, sexual wellness, consent, female health, menstruation, period-positive, intersectional feminism beauty memes, LGBTQ India, learn with Instagram etc. Discourses on Vitaminstree are normalising different bodies, body types, skin types, colours, etc. Pink Ladoo Project, an Instagram page challenging sexism in South Asia culture, offers discourses on the grounds of gender and racism. The page contents include explanation posts, memes, Instareels, and digital arts etc., maintained by a woman, the page focuses on the racialised aspect of gender and sexuality from a macro geographic space of South Asia.

## **PERFORMATIVITY AND PLATFORM MATERIALITY**

Digital practices are largely shaped and determined by the socio-cultural settings in which they are situated. As a

result, digital practices may reproduce, challenge or resolve existing socio-cultural norms, values, and practices. Gender cultures on digital platforms are an example of this. Digital cultures have reproduced, challenged, and resolved traditional gender norms and values enabled by the platform materiality. Instagram has enabled the emergence of alternative gender discourses and practices, simultaneously making queer and non-binary genders and sexualities invisible. Though Instagram represents patriarchal discourses and practices, feminist activists and artists in India have managed to use the platform to raise awareness of gender and sexuality. Gender discourses and practices stemming in and from Instagram are challenging hetero-normative narratives and user practices. Gender cultures and practices have material aspects in how they engage with the users-platforms and the cultural changes they bring in. The platform materiality allows users and creators to freely engage with the digital content - cultural artefacts - and the possibilities to reproduce it. Rather than beginning and ending within the digital spaces, platform discourses are often made to people's social lives. Feminist Instagram pages have been thus rethinking hetero-normative narratives and bringing a paradigm shift in how we look at gender and sexuality.

Butler argues that gender is performative, that it is a certain kind of enactment (Butler, 2009). Gender is performed in and through digital platforms by human actors, constituting different digital cultures. These digital cultures may repress as well as facilitate gender discourses. When it comes to digital platforms, gender is performed in and through the materiality of platforms which enable users to

see, share and reproduce content and discourses. Various factors determine the materiality of digital platforms such as Instagram. Some of them include the general qualities of digital, like reproducibility, interactivity, sharability, virality (Payne, 2013), multimodality, hypertextuality etc. When multimodality enables platform users to engage with various forms of cultural artefacts, hypertextuality offers instant and unlimited mobility between contents. Furthermore, interactive design features based on Graphical User Interface (GUI) facilitate users to register their response to a particular content anytime. Though the materiality of gender and digital cultures are facilitated and enhanced by techno-digital infrastructures and hardware-software relations, researching digital materialities should not succumb to the techno-deterministic aspect of digitality or culture. When digital cultures materialise gender, it is simultaneously performed by and through human-digital interactions. It is not only the materiality of digital platforms that materialises gender, rather, there are human agents and agencies negotiating gender and culture through platforms. Therefore, it is crucial to understand that digital cultures and digital materialities are shaped and formed within and through human digital assemblages performing gender within them.

Feminist gender cultures on Instagram are negotiating gender and sexuality in and through the platform and building new narratives. They have managed to normalise gender and sexuality discourses and provide a platform for individuals to engage with and share their concerns. Body art-oriented Instagram content encourages women and non-binary users to participate in discussions with taboo-breaking remarks on body and body politics. Alternative gender cultures

challenging patriarchy are emerging from it. Gender discourses on Instagram in India are not merely constrained within the platform, they are inspired by social contexts in and beyond digital spaces and simultaneously shape how users engage with society in and beyond platforms. Digital cultures of gender are not an isolated phenomenon, they are diverse in nature and multiple in forms, and new cultures emerge from them. Global feminist narratives seem to be influencing gender discourses in India; however, they are produced and consumed within the particularities that make gender and sexuality in India. Local digital cultures have identical as well as differing aspects and features to the global digital cultures. Rather than two different entities, global and local digital cultures influence each other and co-exist mutually, resulting in the emergence of glocal digital cultures.

### **CONCLUSION**

The digital is not an abstraction but rather the creation of a plethora of quite concrete forms and processes. These are always encountered in the context of their use and consequences for particular populations, subject to cultural differentiation (Miller, 2018).

As digital mediation is altering the ways of human communications, relationships, and collectives, new ways of enquiries are required to understand and analyse digital cultures manifesting through digital platforms. Scholarships on digital media and cultures often rely on Western epistemology that overlooks local concerns and contexts in the Global South. It demands novel onto-epistemologies to critically engage with the digital media and cultural studies highlighting the particularities of India and the Global South



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in General. This paper argues that digital materiality is not an oxymoron to physical materiality. Rather, it stands for different forms and modes of materialities taking place within and constituting the digital. Digital materialities are formed within and through varying human experiences and interactions with digital media and technologies. Digital materialist approaches focus on the relations and negotiations during human-machine interactions rather than looking at digital objects devoid of context. The paper intends to build and reinforce inter-multi-disciplinary approaches to studying digital media, cultures, and communication. This paper further aims to rethink the digital, human and the digital human or human-digital to reconsider the imaginaries of what makes us human in the digital milieu. The paper concludes that research into digital materials and materialities is further interested in new inquiries, approaches, methods, and concerns to understand the human experiences with the digital.

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# **A Study on Transformation in Film Production with Virtual Set Technology**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**V**irtual set cinematography is as new as cinema itself. Riding on the wave of virtual production, the results of Virtual set Technology show new scope in Indian Cinema. Indian cinema has undergone a variety of technological changes during the past years. A question popped up during the Coronavirus scare - Does the cinematographer have the same role as before? With real-site filming being the largest stumbling block in Corona, the enchantment of virtual production appears to be engulfing the whole motion picture industry.

Is there a need to adopt new techniques to master Film Production work with a Virtual studio? In recent times, the Role of virtual Set technology has been given great importance by Indian filmmakers. Using a virtual set or virtual studio can seamlessly combine live characters, objects, photographs, and computer-generated surroundings

and things in real time. A fundamental feature of a virtual studio is that a real camera can wander around the set while shooting the presenter, whereas a virtual produces the background in real-time from the same perspective. As a result, the virtual scene must always adapt to the camera settings (zoom, pan, angle, travelling, etc.). This is what sets a virtual studio apart from the standard chroma key process.

Virtual Reality techniques used in Indian films represent a new era of technological involvement and the need for a virtual studio during shooting. Virtual production includes many activities. Virtual Production LED wall for in-camera VFX previz and more. It's the latest craze. Virtual production combines motion capture, real-time 3D compositing, VR, AR, and real-time pre-viz.

Before digital, most film effects were camera tricks or miniatures. This paper examines Virtual Technology from an Indian cinematographer's technical perspective. Indian cinema needs a virtual set to reduce outdoor shoots. To analyse how Virtual Studio is changing Indian filmmaking. Variables in this technique can be used to build a 4K LED wall studio and configure media and entertainment workflow pipelines. Virtual technology in film production is described. Virtual sets required VFX post-production, which required custom systems for real-time 3D compositing, keying, tracking, and providing final pixels. Indian films use visual effects and CGI. For convenience, we mix Visual Effects (VFX), computer graphics, and Characters on the virtual set. Each production system has a unique set.

**Keywords:** *Virtual Technology, CGI, VFX, Cinematic, Technological, Filmmaking, Indian Cinema*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Virtual set technology has brought a new revolution in film production worldwide. In the present scenario, cinema has been seen as a visual effects era in every film. Digital effects are great challenging work to blend with live action or CGI because it must look authentic on the screen. This research paper analysed how virtual production has become more popular, thanks to filmmakers' desire to see visual effects in real time rather than waiting for post-production. Virtual production is becoming increasingly crucial in Indian film and television production.

This research paper on virtual set technology and film production discusses how CGI is created digitally in Indian cinema. It focuses on the perspective of filmmakers, and how they produce a film in a Virtual studio with the use of Virtual techniques and with Visual Effects (VFX) cinematic narrative, filmmakers are trying to create Indian cinema.

The study is based on primary data collected from filmmakers and visual effect supervisors. After examination and discussion with filmmakers, the finding of the study shows that Virtual Set Technology is empowering Indian cinema. It was discovered that Virtual Set Production has provided Indian films with a new approach to constructing a Visual Story. Indian filmmakers have identified that Virtual set Technology is an excellent tool which helps to form a Visual Effects (VFX) cinematic appeal with Visual story content.

Virtual studios save money on production costs for broadcasts of any size, according to Cinema's Assistant Manager & Business Development Priyan Parab. This research paper examines the changes in Indian filmmaking



storytelling caused by Virtual Technology and Visual Effects (VFX) in different genres.

### **CINEMA AND USE OF SCREENS**

Let's take a closer look at the evolution of cinema, in particular how directors produced backgrounds when they were unable to capture the scene in real time.

Single screen behind an actor - Remember that Every driving scene in movies had those hideously fake-looking backgrounds? The background remained in the same perspective while the performers consistently manipulated the steering wheel in a jerky manner. Who drives that way?

The manufacturers of projectors began experimenting with adding projection backdrops to show the required scenes in the 1950s. The method was frequently employed for moving car sequences, exactly as Madhubala drove a car in the film 'Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi', which we have all seen. Films like 'Naya Daur' 'Awaara', and 'Shree 420', to mention a few, used the method.

Problems with single screen: Directors had to work with just one angle when filming a chase scene since they were unable to adjust the camera angle throughout the scene while the projected video could.

According to Keitan Yadav (COO - Red Chilies. VFX & VFX Producer), filmmaking technology has advanced significantly. Since back projections, there has been no chroma (the green screen). Before, actors performed in front of projections. Virtual production has changed much since then.

Bollywood has advanced significantly from 16mm cameras to colour cameras, from celluloid to digital cameras. In terms of the Visual Effects (VFX) division,

chroma was initially unheard of. However, audiences became familiar with these technologies because of Visual Effects (VFX) movies like "Ra. One," "Krrish 3," "Fan," and "Zero," which wouldn't have been feasible without Visual Effects (VFX).

More work remains. Bollywood uses advanced motion control tools like Techno Dolly & Bolt. So, we're not behind in technology. India has the latest cameras, motion control rigs, and other technology. We now have Hollywood-level filming technology.

As storytelling evolved, creators tackled bigger issues and expanded strategies. Slow-motion cameras and equipment like the Jimmy Jib, Panther, Dolly, and rigs also emerged. Lighting improved. "Digital Cameras" appeared when all film analogue cameras were retired. Red, Arri, and Sony have developed cutting-edge cameras that improve film quality. Color grading began with digital postproduction.

## **VIRTUAL TECHNOLOGY IN INDIA'S CINEMA CONTEXT**

Mahesh Bhatt and Vikram Bhatt have joined forces with K Sera Box Office to launch Studio Virtual Worlds, India's first virtual production studio. The business is persistently working to provide top-notch, cutting-edge, and inventive film methods to producers all around the nation.

There are various virtual production houses in India which provide their services and the following are the links for the same:

- ◆ <https://intellistudios.org/>
- ◆ <https://greenrain.io/>
- ◆ <https://cineom.in/>
- ◆ <http://liminal.in/vp-home>

➤ Guru Randhawa and Nora Fatehi are joined by Bhushan Kumar for India's First Virtual Production Technology-Based Song, "Nach Meri Rani."

➤ Radhe Shyam, starring Prabhas, is the first virtual production in Indian cinema.

Therefore, as was previously stated, technological developments have played a significant role in the development of Visual Effects (VFX), with Virtual Production being the most recent one to do so.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

David Allen, Executive producer, BBC Television Training (1995) studied the different ways of expression. He researched the virtual studio. According to him, combining real and synthetic images is called virtual production. Synthetic images are computer-generated 3D views of naturalistic or fantasy environments that can integrate live-action shots. 'Real-time' virtual production uses real and virtual camera positions. As the camera moves over the live-action scene (shot against blue), the computer drawing the virtual scene updates the virtual camera position. As techniques advance, real and virtual set elements can be combined. This will allow actors to be motivated without building the whole set. Designers, lighting directors, directors, floor managers, and technical crews will need new skills. Computer-generated sets may be essential for HDTV. Onyx computers typically display HDTV full screen.

Foss, J. (2009) examined Lessons from learning in virtual environments. According to the study, virtual world technology is used in film creation. Filmmakers are increasingly using virtual environments to create scenes. Object-based video will allow the incorporation of external

items (including viewers' avatars) into film/TV and virtual worlds in the coming years. These technologies will produce customised, interactive videos. While entertainment media (and advertising) will undoubtedly benefit from this development, training and educational media will too, especially when combined with other web services.

Gauthier, J. M. (2013). He researched, *Building interactive worlds in 3D: virtual sets and pre-visualization for games, film & the web*. Taylor & Francis. According to him, "Virtual sets change how film directors, dancers, scientists, medical researchers, architects, TV producers, and web designers simulate real-world situations. Immersive virtual sets described in this book range from 3D pre-visualization of a movie scene to decision-maker information systems. This book discusses using sensors and AI to create real-time audience-virtual actor interactions. I explain how to interact with virtual sets using live video, sound, and modern technology."

Bouville, R., Gouranton, V., & Arnaldi, B. (2016). examined several forms of expression. He researched acting with visual effects in virtual reality. He recommends using VR to practise visual effects scenes. Most VFX movies require actors to perform in front of a green screen, which requires different skills (a full-detailed scenery vs. a neutral green screen, real partners vs. virtual or symbolic partners, etc.).

Timing, posture, and gestures must be precise to avoid costly post-production CG adjustments. Interactive environments and scenarios are used in VR acting rehearsal. Actors can freely interact with virtual objects and characters. Interactive scenarios combine user and scenario actions.

Actors can focus on acting, not animation timing. VR and traditional rehearsal were compared. This study shows that VR-trained actors are as effective as traditional ones. Everyone preferred VR rehearsal. Virtual reality rehearsal can replace traditional rehearsal and provide more rehearsal flexibility. Our VR acting practise method combines an interactive environment and narrative.

The Media and Entertainment report from KPMG in India (2020). Utilizing technology across M&E Media businesses are increasingly integrating new technologies. The following new technologies have the potential to upend the status quo and are starting to gain more momentum and application cases across categories. The use of virtual production enhances storytelling, encourages the filmmakers' creativity, and lowers post-production costs. Currently, there is a shortage of trained workers and technology knowledge, but this is likely to change as the technology matures.

Kang, C. Y., & Li, T. Y. (2021, November). examined many modes of expression. He researched One-Man Movie: A System to Assist Actor Recording in a Virtual Studio. He claims they've created a cutting-edge virtual reality application that allows a user to play many roles as actors for a computer graphics film in a virtual studio. In their system, the user acts and communicates using wearable VR and mocap devices. They use time warping and motion warping to interact with the user's character in real-time. This is done by annotating drama script restrictions. They tested the technology in a demo and experiment. Positive comments are common. We also find that the system is more useful for creative amusement than professional training, which may indicate its future direction.

Lionel Sujay Vailshery (2022) analysed the global virtual production market that was estimated to be worth \$1,464 million in 2020 and is anticipated to increase to \$4,733 million in 2028; it is anticipated to expand at a CAGR of 15.9% from 2021 to 2028. Virtual production allows studios to experiment while controlling costs and schedules. Thanks to virtual production, production companies can begin Visual Effects (VFX) in preproduction. Avatar and The Lion King both used virtual production.

These are a few kinds of literature which depict the studies of virtual production, but major techniques related to virtual production are not studied. Hence, there is a research gap found on this basis.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To study the scope of virtual set technology in film production

2. To analyse the different virtual set features and virtual techniques in film production.

3. To identify various LED panels and in-camera Visual Effects (VFX) hardware been used in film production.

4. To study how camera tracking is enhanced in film production.

5. To identify different enhanced realities i.e., virtual, mixed, and augmented reality.

### **ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

#### **Scope of Virtual Set Technology in Film Production**

A virtual set can be used anywhere in the world to generate digital scenarios for reuse by another studio. Using creative content, a virtual set can produce engaging programmes faster and more affordably than traditional sets. Virtual sets simplify and redefine every stage of the

production process, allowing for new formats and special effects in hours rather than days or weeks. Sets can be developed, dressed, and outfitted on a computer screen, and camera angles can be mapped with keystrokes. Modern technology allows set designers to create a basketball court in a small room.

It differs from film or advertising post-production techniques that edit and improve sequences. The live characters, scenes, and computer graphics in a virtual studio are produced in real-time, eliminating the need for postproduction and allowing live television broadcasts. Most virtual studio productions use a blue or green screen. Real-time 3D graphics software creates the virtual background. Digital chroma keyers and a studio mixer are used to precisely position and scale the foreground and background images.

When getting ready for the bluescreen shot, the Virtual Studio should completely comprehend specific techniques and use them; The advantages for the virtual studio include:

**Natural Lighting:** Because green screens require certain lighting conditions, the scene lighting options are limited. Dark, moody scenes are difficult to capture on a green screen, requiring post-production work. In virtual production, ambient light from LED panels gives the scene a genuine feel and reduces post-production work.

**Set Design:** There is no need to forgo design in favour of props when adopting virtual production in an LED volume. Because the directors and their crews have total creative control over the final product, there is no need to budget for post-production changes.

**Background Design:** Gaming engines can be used to alter the landscape, including the trees, homes, and mountains, or they can be used to keep a light on all day.

**Budget Control:** Virtual production allows for more accurate budgeting. Unexpected events like bad weather, site unavailability, or a faulty green screen effect caused past projects to go over budget. This clarity is due to the ability to edit content while recording, the elimination of pricey reshoots, and the elimination of post-production rendering to ensure realistic lighting.

**Planning:** Because virtual production encompasses the complete process of making a movie from scratch, you may precisely plan out scenes and shots by the director's unique aesthetic vision. This makes it possible to plan every last element in-depth. With maximum creative freedom, while still adhering to practical limitations, virtual production's adaptive technology enables on-the-spot testing and iteration without harming the production or budget.

**Real-Time Production:** Directors and actors can see what they're doing replayed in real-time and changing as they go because of a combination of LED, camera tracking technology, and real-time render engines.

This study investigates virtual production, a substantial divergence from traditional production techniques. With virtual production, the director has complete control over everything from the use of extended reality technologies to build realistic worlds with endless beauty and detail to the more practical benefits of predictable costs and clear planning.

## **VIRTUAL SET FEATURES AND TECHNIQUES IN FILM PRODUCTION**

**Virtual Set Features:** Resolution-independent: HD, 4K



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and higher, Built-in libraries of sets, materials, and textures, Editing of virtual set materials, Track Free TM, 3D Presenter, Tele Transporter, Hand Tracking, Firewalking, Feet Shade, Magic Windows: Video Gate, Magic Windows: Video CAVE, Virtual camera detaching, Dynamic Virtual Shadows over virtual elements, High Dynamic Range (HDR) I/O, Physically Based Rendering (PBR).

Virtual Techniques: Graphics software can be used to construct virtual sets and virtual elements, or it can import them from other graphic applications like Unreal Engine or a number of others. For the virtual studio application to produce a convincing or at least reasonable 3D set, controls for precise texturing, lighting, shadows, and model features are needed.

Actors are filmed while moving around a chroma set. Real-time graphics software can build virtual set-in time with camera view using optional sensors. The ability to move backdrop and foreground components in real time allows actors to move inside virtual objects. Other methods, including trackless virtual sets, are also viable if the virtual set software is powerful enough to convey the movements to the virtual cameras.

To avoid jittering or bouncing, the virtual camera needs exact position data from the real cameras. Virtual compares real and virtual space coordinates. Real-world coordinates require XYZ, pan, tilt, roll, and distance units. As cameras pan, tilt, or zoom, camera tracking technology sends a steady stream of data that real-time graphic software uses to create the virtual set.

## **VARIOUS LED PANELS AND IN-CAMERA VFX HARDWARE USED IN FILM PRODUCTION**

LED Panels: In-camera VFX depend on the LED stage's

architecture and use. The rest of the hardware setup depends on the number and arrangement of LED panels. Arc-shaped LED panels improve ambient lighting and actor reflections. LED ceilings add ambient lighting and reflections to a scene. To create a fully virtual set, productions may need a 270-degree enclosed volume. If most of the set is physical and the virtual world is only needed for set windows, a one-sided or curved wall can be considered. The design of the LED stage may also be influenced by the manufacturer's budget, space limitations, and panel availability.

**In-Camera VFX Hardware:** This method is supported by several technologies in Unreal Engine, including Display, Live Link, Multi-User Editing, and Web Remote Control. The components required for this approach are covered in this guide, along with tips for designing a set for an in-camera VFX shot.

## **STUDY OF HOW CAMERA TRACKING IS ENHANCED IN FILM PRODUCTION**

**Camera Tracking:** To transmit the position and movement of the camera from the actual world to the virtual world, camera tracking is required. This method renders the production camera's accurate perspective in relation to the virtual surroundings. When using in-camera VFX, there are numerous options for camera tracking.

The tracking system is a collection of several devices that send information on camera motions to the 3D graphics computer. They are transmitted to the computer using a serial port or UTP and one of the current data protocols. Then, a virtual camera is made using 3D software that, even down to applying the optical distortion that comes with lenses, simulates every movement and position of the real camera.

This necessitates a calibration process, which differs slightly depending on the type of track we're using.

The two different types of Tracking systems are Mechanical and Optical tracking systems.

**Mechanical Tracking System:** This system keeps pulse records for each movement using an encoder. There are various types of mechanical tracking systems like PTZF, Pedestals, Cranes and Rails.

◆ **Pan Tilt Zoom Focus (PTZF):** A sensorized head positioned on top of a tripod, which must maintain a fixed position, makes up the most basic tracking system. Only the Pan, Tilt, Zoom, and Focus actions are observed.

◆ **Pedestal:** The pedestal can move around the set while being tracked for its XYZ position using a method similar to PTZF systems. A few miniature cameras are typically used to see a zero point on the ground, such as a painted cross or even a few white straps, and then internal encoders count pulses from that zero to determine the distance travelled.

◆ **Cranes:** They upgrade the basic PTZF by including two more sensorized axes, pan, and tilt on the crane's arm. Depending on the model, the position might or might not be tracked.

◆ **Rails:** A PTZF tracking camera is positioned along various tracks. The length of those rails is also tracked in terms of position.

**Optical tracking:** "The optical tracking device locates the camera in 3D space and sends the data to the virtual set or 3D software. Active and passive optical tracking exist. Active tracking triangulates camera position by pointing an infrared camera at the ceiling, which has targets with different codifications. The camera needs at least three to

triangulate position and orientation. Passive infrared targets are placed along the video camera while other infrared cameras cover 3D studio space. Tracking will follow the camera as it moves around the studio. Optical tracking uses wheels or encoders for both systems. Recent optical tracking systems rely on spatial reference using reflective studio dots or image analysis."

### **IDENTIFICATION OF DIFFERENT ENHANCED REALITIES I.E., VIRTUAL, MIXED, AND AUGMENTED REALITY**

The phrase "Augmented Reality" has recently been used to refer to techniques for enhancing visual perspectives or views in several media, including PCs, headsets, and mobile phones, by adding information like advertising or cultural context to images or maps. When information visuals are added to television broadcasts and placed in the context of actual shots, we would use this phrase.

Virtual Reality (VR) is a technique for displaying fake pictures alongside real ones, nevertheless. Recent publications and businesses have begun to discuss mixed reality, which is essentially just another way to explain virtual reality. Mixed reality is defined as the mixing of virtual and real surroundings.

Therefore, by extension, we could think that traditional chroma key could also represent a form of Virtual Reality, as the resulting image is not real but the result of compositing different images, either real or virtual.

Keeping with this idea, Any film, song, or similar medium could be considered VR. AR is a type of VR because not all VR images are AR. Augmented reality requires the interplay of sets, talents, and virtual objects, many of which

were made from outside data sources. When placed in the set, these data-driven objects allow presenters to visually explain the data. Data bars, statistics, and news, sports, or entertainment programmes can interact with performers on election night to create an augmented reality atmosphere.

Some may assimilate or confuse Augmented Reality with "Digital Signage", bringing confusion to both terms. Digital Signage is a method to display advertising in public spaces using digital media such as screens, tablets, or PCs.

Although Augmented Reality could be used in Digital Signage to attract viewers, Digital Signage is not necessary for Augmented Reality to be transmitted to viewers or presented. Any type of the aforementioned "realities" is frequently referred to as "Enhanced Reality". Others refer to the images created by fusing real and virtual imagery as "Mixed Reality," notably 3D items that are "improving" or "augmenting" the real footage. In this essay, we shall use the term "augmented reality" to refer to any of the aforementioned "realities".

## **CURRENT SCENARIO ON GLOBAL VIRTUAL PRODUCTION MARKET**

The global virtual production market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 17.8% from 2022 to 2030. Filmmakers can interactively explore digital scenarios using virtual production, including realistic virtual characters, 3D graphics, and a virtual studio environment.

The introduction of solutions that allow filmmakers to transfer an actor's motion-captured movement to virtual characters is the result of years of virtual production advancements. These tools help filmmakers organise and express their original ideas logically.

The market is expected to grow faster than expected due to rising demand for visual effects (VFX) in movie studios and increased use of virtual production in commercial ads. NBC, MTV, and ABC used cloud busting to photograph actors remotely during the 2020 pandemic.

Virtual production has grown exponentially since COVID-19 and is expected to continue. Virtual production has allowed filmmakers to keep making movies and other content.

The market is expected to grow faster than expected due to rising demand for visual effects (VFX) in movie studios and increased use of virtual production in commercial ads. NBC, MTV, and ABC used cloudbusting to photograph actors remotely during the 2020 pandemic.

Some of the most well-known players in the market include Technicolor, NVIDIA Corporation, Pixar (The Walt Disney Company), 360Rize, HTC Corporation (VivePort), Arashi Vision Inc. (Insta 360), Autodesk Inc., Epic Games, Inc., Mo-Sys Engineering Ltd., Side Effects Software Inc (SideFX), Adobe, HumanEyes Technologies, BORIS FX, Inc., Panocam3d.com, and Vicon Motion Systems Ltd.

### **LIMITATIONS OF VIRTUAL PRODUCTION**

Virtual production has challenges despite producing better-looking, cheaper movies. Lack of education and experience hinders creativity and technicality. Virtual Production elements must blend with live action. Realistic surface textures, lights, and shadows simulated a movie set. Final product is affected by animations, objects, textures, materials, and real-time engine capacity. It requires talented artists.

The largest issue for virtual set software is Making actors appear fully engaged in a computer-generated set is

the biggest challenge for virtual set software. Real-world and virtual camera and lighting compatibility must be ensured. Actors should be oriented and interact with a virtual environment.

The camera tracking system must be exact in order to appropriately match viewpoints of the real foreground and virtual background. Lens and camera calibration, which determines how the data provided by the camera-tracking system converts to the virtual camera parameters, is a contributing factor in the problem.

New tools are needed to help performers use a virtual set. Chroma keyers should support an external matte signal for distance keying and the virtual blue box to prevent colour matching issues. Two colours should be keyed simultaneously for pattern tracking. Switchers should offer real-time computer control interfaces with the option to delay actual switching.

Developing software for virtual sets clearly meets the most difficulty. It must involve a wide range of disciplines. Camera calibration is necessary to make the actual and virtual worlds coincide. Set creation requires

- ◆ Modeling,
- ◆ 3D scanning or re-creation of the 3D models from the real objects,
- ◆ painting and 3D painting,
- ◆ lighting simulation and advanced rendering, and
- ◆ animations. Moreover, virtual set production involves
- ◆ camera blocking and tracking.
- ◆ Real-time display of the created set.
- ◆ motion capture and performance animation.
- ◆ Real-time data input and business graphics.

◆ controlling studio equipment such as chromakeys, switchers and routers, and video and audio.

◆ coordination of computer-controlled lights, chromakeys, and virtual set lighting

### **CONCLUSION**

What is feasible with this ground-breaking technology is still in its infancy. When technology is no longer a constraint on creativity, things will start to get interesting. Virtual production has already been used in conjunction with other technical advancements, for example. Real-time photorealistic 3D graphics are possible to produce via video game engines.

You can now film and perform in real-time in a public setting. Access is being democratised by technologies that are free and simple to use, such as Epic Games' Unreal Engine. The setting that performers experience when working in a virtual "real" world as opposed to a green screen is far more realistic. It makes it possible for visual effects to be given live on location, thus cutting down on the time needed for post-production. However, you require far more pre-production planning, which calls for the development of fresh pipelines and procedures.

Virtual production will become more prevalent as time goes on. With all of the advantages it offers, more and more shows, movies, and even commercial enterprises will come to rely on it. This indicates that as time passes, demand for these technologies will rise and the influx of new programmers will help drive down production costs. Visual effects artists will be educated to carry out their jobs in real-time on the set as the technology becomes standard practice.



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Jobs for artists won't be directly impacted. Their expertise will be required throughout pre-production and production rather than post-production, which is what will happen. They will need to implement change more quickly and with greater assertiveness, but those are skills they will learn during their training.

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## **Impact of Social Media Influencer on Brand Awareness: A Study on College Students of Kolkata**

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Dr. Manali Bhattacharya*

### **ABSTRACT**

**S**ocial networks have emerged undoubtedly as a powerful mode of communication. Social network platforms allow people to set up a personal page or profile to which they could post updates regarding product/service reviews. This has led to the rise of human idols referred to as Social Media Influencers (SMIs). These 'hidden persuaders' inform, motivate, and persuade its target audience. Influencer marketing is an indispensable aspect of contemporary life, often held as a creative and glamorous area, to create an impact on Generation Z and society in general. Social media is in-vogue media, which enables real-time interaction and has considerably impacted the lives of people worldwide. Every day, social media users are confronted with multiple products and services through unsolicited pop-ups, telemarketing, and streaming ads, which lead to impulsive purchases.

With its ubiquitous and networkable features, social media is popular among youth for the purpose of sharing and interacting in the virtual environment. In fact, today's market is affected by fostered social media influencer's advocacy, personalization, and localization. For better connectivity, brands are flocking to social media platforms for user generated reviews, brand awareness and multimedia content. Participants follow influencers, celebrity, or other popular accounts regularly to seek out reviews before making purchase decisions and company's trustworthiness increases if it gets promoted by influencer. Furthermore, the results reveal that online recommendations help in brand recall. Brand awareness reach by influencer appeal is positive and growing faster than digital advertising but insignificant influence on purchasing decision among college students of Kolkata. In the given connection, two social media platforms are being analyzed: You Tube and Instagram for the purpose of the study.

**Keywords:** *Social Network, Social Media Influencer, Marketing, Brand Awareness*

## **INTRODUCTION**

With social media, it was possible to transmit messages that integrated text, voice, still and moving images, music, and video as distinct components of a single good or service. Social media's ability to break down barriers of time and space to influence social and economic life outside of a village or small local community is primarily correlated with the increase in literacy. A new era of change in media and communication has been sparked by the transformation of telecommunications through a mix of technology advancement, governmental regulation, and industrial

arrangement. The expanding reach of Internet and mobile telephone is acting to reconfigure the global experience and use of new media. More recently, the foundation upon which the conventional regulated broadcasting regime is founded is significantly altered by digitalization and convergence. As a result of digitalization and more affordable content production, data has become more widely available, increasing the flow of information and the number of channels available.

Similar findings about the Internet are made by Andrew Shapiro in his book *The Control Revolution* (1999). He makes a compelling case for how the internet allegedly radical expands power over interpersonal relationships. Internet significantly improves each person's ability to make and influence decisions about how we connect with others in social situations, in our educational, professional, and political lives, as well as how we decide whether to explore different points of view. Social media has changed how people interact and communicate, opening up new marketing opportunities and posing challenges. Social media evolved into a hub for business, sales, advertising, and consumer communication. In addition, more Influencers on social media (hence referred to as influencers) have emerged as a result of awareness of the potential and shifting nature of social media. Influencer marketing is a form of word-of-mouth advertising that emphasises social context and fostering relationships (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). There are four main steps in influencer marketing: (i) identifying influential people and rating them according to their importance, (ii) educating followers of influential brands, (iii) increasing target market awareness, and (iv) influencing

consumers' perceptions of a brand through influencers (Ranga and Sharma, 2014). The basic concept behind influencer marketing is the idea of influencer traits including credibility, engagement, and trust (Singh & Banerjee, 2018).

The most powerful brands increasingly consider social media Influencers are used as brand promoters by them. Consumers seek assistance from other consumers while making lifestyle or buying decisions. Businesses employ influencers as a dynamic outside voice in their advertising campaigns. Through social networks, influencers may rapidly, cheaply, and directly communicate with end users. Utilizing the authority, dependability, and receptivity of social media influencers to client attitudes (Buyer, 2016). Influencer marketing is one of the marketing strategies that marketers employ to promote businesses. Customers are significantly influenced by social media influencers, particularly those from the younger age. On a variety of companies and products, they provide suggestions and opinions. In today's integrated communication world, social networking is a crucial tool for both enterprises and media consumers. Members of this market are influenced by social media advertising, and this category's product advertising has fundamentally changed as a result of the social media environment (Sowles et al. 2016).

The choice of an influencer is often crucial, because the personality of the influencer can get transferred to the brand with enough repetition. Anthropologist Grant McCracken has argued convincingly that influencer possesses extremely potent symbolic qualities that are then transmitted to the brand they support. A reference group is defined by V. Parker Lessig and C. Whan Park as a real or hypothetical

institution or organisation that significantly influences the target individual's assessments, goals, or behaviour. Numerous studies have shown that influencers do in fact affect consumers' behaviour. In extended behavioural intention model, total behavioural intentions towards purchasing it as well as an arbitrary standard. Such reference groups may include those that are (a) utilised as benchmarks for evaluating one's own performance, (b) regarded as knowledgeable authorities, or (c) used as sources of norms, standards, and attitudes. Today, a client's judgement of an idea's creativity or effectiveness may no longer be the only factor. Since any user of the internet may now post comments, reviews, and publications, all businesses must quit chatting and begin paying attention to how they are regarded. Social media also makes it easier for user-generated content to form and spread quickly (UGC). The usage of social media seems to be more widespread than previously thought, encouraging users' and consumers' social participation. Consumers are without a doubt more dependent on social media for their regular social interactions and purchases.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Chatterjee (2001) "Online reviews: do consumers use them?", because the consumer has already chosen a product or brand, this study investigates the impact of unfavourable reviews on retailer rating and customer intention. Findings suggest that a consumer's decision to shop online is influenced by the depth of their WOM search. Furthermore, familiarity with the retailer and if it operates exclusively online or offline organisation influence the impact of unfavourable WOM data on consumers' perceived

trustworthiness of the retailer and their propensity to purchase. It has been highlighted how management implications for positioning tactics can reduce the impact of unfavourable word-of-mouth. A delighted consumer could according to study on word of mouth, a satisfied customer would tell some people about his experience with a business, but a disgruntled customer would tell everyone he meets (WOM) impacts. Virtual communities with engaged users who share assessments and opinions about goods and companies now offer a platform to spread awareness of one of the most rapidly expanding phenomena on the Web (Armstrong and Hagel 1996). Therefore, it should come as no surprise that giving customers a platform to express their opinions, suggestions, and complaints as well as tracking this word-of-mouth activity has turned into a business (Tedeschi 1999). Some companies even pay customers for their contributions by giving them money, rewards, or recognition. According to the current research, consumer familiarity with the retailer may be able to reduce the negative effects of bad customer evaluations on the retailer's perceived dependability and buy intention for both conventional retail and only online businesses. Additionally, customers who shop at a well-known retailer are less susceptible to unfavourable WOM information and look for information less frequently. Compared to customers who choose a familiar company, those who choose an unknown merchant that provide a lesser price look for more negative WOM information and are more inclined to believe that the problems might recur.

Bond, Ferraro et al. (2010) "Social Media Advertising: An Investigation of Consumer Perceptions, Attitudes, and



Preferences for Engagement", according to this paper, there is a lot of room for marketers to embrace the idea by creating strategies that might potentially have a big influence in the quickly shifting customer environment. The results of this study show that companies may engage with customers on social media platforms successfully, with the potential to develop a sizeable, devoted fan base that will eventually serve as brand ambassadors. The adoption of permission-based communications or subscription-only material could significantly increase acceptance and opinions of customers toward social media messages from businesses. To facilitate a more focused conversation about the advantages and disadvantages of advertisement on social media and respondents' views toward engaging with companies in this way, two social media marketing campaigns were shown to respondents during the focus groups.

Ohajionu and Mathews (2015) "Advertising on social media and benefits to brands", This conceptual paper's goal is to look at the numerous advertising techniques that businesses can utilise to better serve their clients, provide higher-quality service, and generate more revenue. This study also aims to shed light on Malaysia's Generation Y consumers' use of social media. Companies have been able to establish relationships with both current and potential customers via social media, and to create communities that actively work together to identify problems and provide solutions. Social media unquestionably enables businesses to engage with clients utilising richer material with a wider audience (Thackeray et al., 2008). Social media's interactive features enabling customers to communicate and share information in addition to allowing advertisers to do so with

their target audiences. This study provided a conceptual framework for the various advertising tactics that companies may employ to improve customer satisfaction and service quality. This evaluation also identifies benefits and drawbacks for each social media platform. This study's findings suggest that businesses can use certain methods to spread their advertising messages and educate their target audiences.

Jokinen (2016) "Branding in Social Media and the Impact of Social Media on Brand Image", The thesis examines how social media may be used for branding and investigates how brand perception is impacted by social media. In addition to examining how social media usage relates to traditional media consumption and how significant social media is as a brand image influencer in comparison to traditional media, the thesis also examines the considerations that must be made while using social media for branding. This investigation was conducted using quantitative research. Comparable information on the use of social media and traditional media, as well as consumer opinions of branding in these channels, was gathered using a quantitative technique. According to the findings, social media brand presence is often seen as being slightly more significant to consumer perception of brand trust. Additionally, it was believed that brand social media communication had a somewhat greater impact on the overall favourable brand image.

Hoffman, Khanfar et al. (2016) "The Lasting Effects of Social Media Trends on Advertising" This study examines social media developments, including mobile marketing and social media opportunities, as well as any potential long-term impacts on advertising. For marketers, the rise of social

networking sites like Facebook and Twitter has created a plethora of opportunities. One of the reasons these social media are so successful is their inherent capacity to automatically segment the market. Customers can alter their social networking and Facebook sites in order for the information they get to be relevant to them. Additionally, social media platforms make it easier for marketers to communicate with influencers and industry experts. The expansion of social media marketing reflects marketers' desire to forge tighter ties with their customers.

Lee and Lau (2018) "A new triadic creative role for advertising industry: a study of creatives' role identity in the rise of social media advertising", analysed the work of advertising has changed since the era of social media advertising creatives expanded to include strategy and technological production in addition to the development of creative ideas. To put it another way, it appeared that there had been a shift toward a triadic creative function that required them to work with more stakeholders and complete more duties. The significance of integration and collaboration in this specific creative industry was underscored by this enlarged creative function. The study aimed to support their claims by demonstrating how advertising creatives looked to be taking responsibility for defining their job identities, acquiring new skills, and changing the way they approached their work in the social media era of advertising. This study advances our understanding of the ways in which social media are impacting marketing and advertising strategies.

Kolo and Haumer (2018) "Social media celebrities as influencers in brand communication: An empirical

study on influencer content, its advertising relevance and audience expectations", studied in the social sciences, the fundamental idea of influencers and WOM is well-known and highly regarded as a success element for successful communication. The popularity of social media has increased brands' opportunities to interact with their target markets. In this study, examination of YouTube video from influencers uploads, a representative audience survey, and observational data from followers of influencers are combined. The findings demonstrate that influencers no longer communicate with each other limited to specific demographics and that their fans consume social media content in a manner that is remarkably similar to how they consume content from conventional media. The study also demonstrates that, under specific circumstances, followers can cognitively anticipate and accept advertising despite its ubiquitous presence. The study's data also hints that audience preferences in terms of themes are fluid and that influencers must modify their material to reflect new trends (such as food or interior design) in order to succeed. The study's findings lend additional credence to the presumptions about influencers' monetization strategies.

Thomas, Wirtz et. al (2019) "Determinants of online review credibility and its impact on consumers' purchase intention" In light of consumers' growing scepticism toward the veracity of online reviews and the dearth of research on what factors affect consumers' corresponding perception, the purpose of this study was to discover and investigate factors that affect the authenticity of online

reviews and how they affect consumers' purchasing intentions. The study provides numerous contributions to social media and e-commerce research and practise. Most intriguingly, contrary to the first expected direction of effect and previous research findings, review number exhibits a considerable negative impact on review credibility (Fan et al., 2013). This suggests that consumers consider more online reviews of a particular good or service to be less reliable. One explanation for this contradictory finding may be found in the growing consumer interest in online reviews as such and, in particular, the increased consumer awareness of fake reviews and businesses' deceptive practises, which are the results of the recent public debate about fake online reviews and the corresponding increased media coverage. Customers may be wary of a large number of online reviews if they are aware that businesses want as many favourable ratings as possible because they believe these businesses may have contributed falsely to the multiplicity. They could consider more reviews to be unreliable as a result. Finally, the findings show that review credibility and its determinants are significant precursors to customers' buy intentions, showing that consumers' purchase decisions are influenced by more than just the typical aspects of online shopping and consumer attributes (Cha, 2011).

This result generally agrees with other research findings that highlight the critical impact of review trustworthiness in determining consumers' purchasing intentions (Chih et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2011). The current study, however, goes beyond these strategies by

illuminating the underlying causal chain in greater depth and highlighting the key levers for boosting customers' purchase intentions in this situation.

Jin and Muqaddam (2019) "Instafamous and social media influencer marketing", analyse because they are perceived as being more like average audiences, Instagram influencers can engage with audiences more effectively, are more likely to interact with followers, and are simpler to relate with or identify with than other types of content creators. Customers react more favourably to other Facebook influencers than to conventional celebrities, especially when the peers have similar demographic and psychological characteristics. This study extends the concept of celebrity credibility to encompass new types of celebrities and to pinpoint the key psychological factors that increase their consumer attraction. Micro-celebrities distinguish apart from individuals who take part in TV shows or blockbuster movies due to the greater level of interpersonal closeness they have with fans. Luxury branding was the only topic covered in this paper because it is becoming common particularly on visual sites like Instagram or Pinterest, in social media marketing. Second, information on the participants' nationalities and cultural backgrounds is missing from the existing data collection. Third, it's crucial to remember that different social networking apps have features and philosophies that are distinct from what Instagram offers.

Nuseir (2020) "Is advertising on social media effective? An empirical study on the growth of advertisements on the Big Four (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp)", Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and

WhatsApp have grown in popularity, changing how people communicate. exchange data on a personal and professional level. Small and large businesses may communicate with their clients frequently thanks to social media. It often takes very little time for an advertisement to reach its target audience. The use of social media is gradually replacing traditional advertising methods. The "Big Four," or the top four, social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram) were the subject of this study. Businesses that use these social media platforms may be able to draw in more clients and boost sales because they have large user bases. This study makes the case for the significance of creating advertisements that not only take into account the preferences both the demands of individual users as well as those of social media users as a collective. Businesses must be prepared to understand how to use social media effectively and which platforms to use to reach their target audiences doing this involves an internal examination of marketing procedures.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

- ◆ To find whether participants actively seek out online reviews before making purchase decision.
- ◆ To study the brand awareness reach by media influencers on college students
- ◆ To find out whether influencer marketing is growing than digital advertising.
- ◆ To examine whether social media influencers are a reliable source of information.

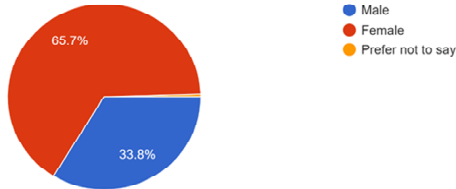
### **METHODOLOGY**

Simple random sampling of probability sampling was selected with structure questionnaires distributed among 216

respondents. Data was collected through survey from large percentage as possible of this random subset.

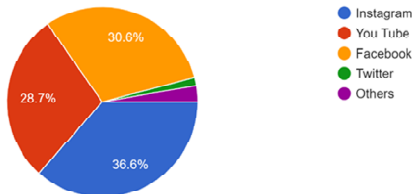
### DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Gender  
216 responses



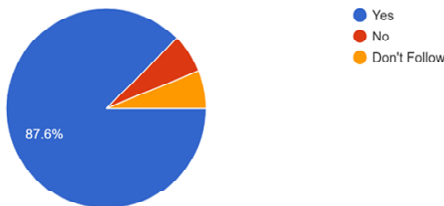
The finding survey suggest that out of 216 respondents (College Students) 65% is Female and 33.8% is Male. It is found out that females are more likely than males to participate in online surveys.

1. Which of the following Social Media platform do you prefer use?  
216 responses



Most of the youth preferred YouTube and Facebook as there social networking sites.

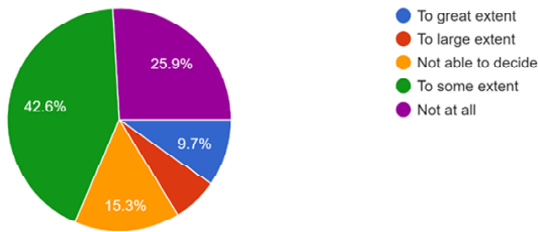
5. Participants who followed any influencers, celebrity or other popular accounts on social media ?  
209 responses





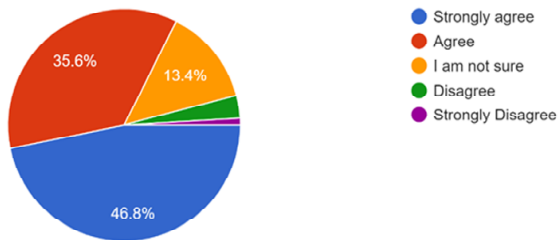
Youth with 87.6% preferred to follow influencers because they feel more connected to their followers when they interact with them frequently, especially young individuals. The survey's results confirmed the idea that six primary motivations-information seeking, information sharing, cool and new trends, leisure activities, friendship, boredom/habitual pleasures, and leisure activities-drive young people to follow their favoured social influencers.

8. Do you subscribe to the products or concepts which are promoted by the influencer?  
216 responses



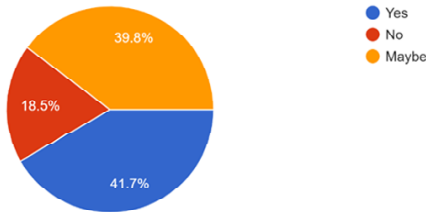
The above pie represents 42.6% products and concepts promoted by influencers are considered thoughts are valued and noteworthy and who inspire others to action. Marketers like to target these people because by doing so, they can influence or persuade numerous people to make purchases from them.

9. Do you actively seek out online reviews before making purchase decisions?  
216 responses



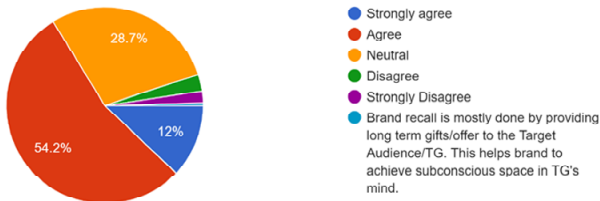
The above pie represents online reviews are actively seek out with 46.8% electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is regarded as a trustworthy information source. Reviews from customers and influencers both qualify as eWOM. They signify consumers' sharing of feedback and assessments of a good or service with other potential customers. The impact of eWOM on purchasing intention is strongly supported by studies.

13. Do you think the company's trustworthiness increase if it gets promoted by the influencer of your choice?  
216 responses



The above pie chart shows trustworthiness increase with 41.7% and 39.8% may be as Influencers interact with their followers and share personal information. They stand apart from their well-known rivals by returning messages, providing feedback on goods, and being friendly. These actions establish a bond and increase trust between the influencer and the customer.

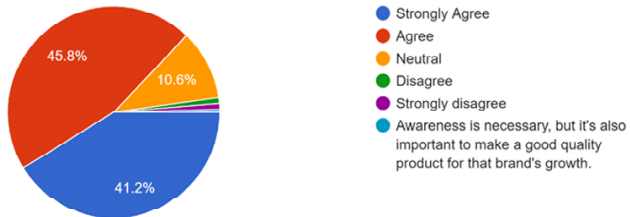
15. Does online recommendations helps in brand recall?  
216 responses



The above pie chart shows 54.2% that online recommendation does consumers are more likely to remember a well-known brand name, which increases market share. Significant brand equity can result from high brand recall.

19. Awareness of a brand is necessary for the its growth

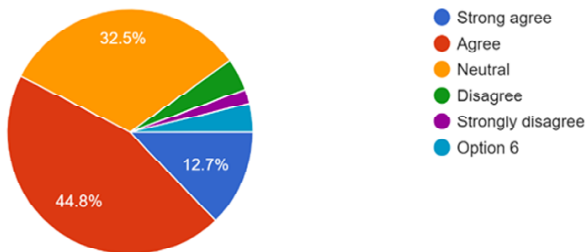
216 responses



The above pie chart shows 41,2% strongly agree and 45.8% agree that brand first stage in establishing trust is raising awareness, therefore the more people who are aware of your brand or business, the more successful it will be. It is essential for luring customers, helping them understand and feel comfortable with your products and services, and increasing sales your brand equity.

21. Is influencer Marketing the future of Social Selling?

212 responses



The pie chart above shows 44.8% of youth agrees that social media has evolved into a useful tool for marketing. Your potential audience expands as social media users continue to increase.

25. Is social media influencers are a reliable source of information about products I desire?

212 responses



The above pie chart shows 37.7% are neutral about social media influencer when it comes to considering celebrity, famous personality, or influencer as reliable source. Also, 34.4% are positive about influencer as a genuine source of information when it comes to purchasing a product. So, yes followers can be influenced by influencers. However, not every influencer can.

## FINDINGS

Online recommendations by media influencers in social media helps in brand recall. Also, Influencer marketing is the future of social selling. Even it was found out that company's trustworthiness increases if it gets promoted by influencers. Majority of the participants of the respondents follow influencers, celebrity, or other popular accounts on social media. Study also revealed Instagram and You tube is the most preferred social media platforms among youth. Also, influencers emerge as reliable source of information.

## **IMPLEMENTING A STRATEGY FOR INFORMATIONAL INFLUENCE**

Advertising frequently appeals to a consumer's desires for group identity, belongingness, and conformity to social and community norms. Advertising heavily relies on group influence. Regarding how susceptible they are to peer pressure and group influence, consumers vary. Younger consumers have been discovered by C. Wahan Park and Parker Lessig to be more receptive to persuasion. This can be due to their lack of product category expertise, increased social contacts and visibility, or more intense continuing identity-seeking and socialisation processes. Many other purchasing decisions are influenced implicitly by personal factors. Many purchases that seem to be made for oneself are made with the consideration of another person or group in mind. The extent to which these characteristics enhance the function of social and group influences in each situation must therefore be considered by an advertiser who is thinking about using advertising to promote social or group influence.

Regardless of the product kind, using celebrities has the advantage of their exposure and attention-grabbing abilities. The celebrity can be instantly recognisable and relatable to large sectors of the public, and the allure and goodwill attached to the person can be transferred to the product. It is frequently effective to use local celebrities or lesser-known actors and actresses in local or regional market situations. The most important factor in choosing an influencer must be the "fit" or "match" between the influencer's qualities and the needs of the brand. Utilizing consistency theories of attitudes, it is possible to

comprehend how an influencer affects consumer attitudes regarding the marketed product. When consumers aspire to the lifestyle or reference group represented by the celebrity endorser, or when the cultural implications desired for the brand's imagination are tied to the celebrity endorsement, a celebrity endorser may also be highly helpful.

The choice of an influencer to be included in an advertisement must therefore be done carefully. If the strategy is to try to increase positive attitudes, high-credibility influencer should be used. However, if the strategy is to induce behavior such as trial directly, it is possible that using a highly credible influencer can undermine the formation of "real" positive and thus reduce the incidence of future repeat purchase and brand loyalty. That why so-called "hidden camera" ads that shows ordinary "people on the street" are not being paid to say what they are saying, they must believe it. When it is anticipated that the audience would identify strongly with the role being played, the individual is "like" many audience members, and honesty and dependability are likely to come across, a generally delighted consumer is frequently the ideal option. The market, the advertising ecology, and consumer culture have all been affected by the quick uptake of social media advertising methods. The introduction of social media advertising methods has had a huge impact on the global advertising sector.

### **CONCLUSION**

Due to the rapid growth of social media, understanding consumer behavior and consumption trends in the new millennium presents marketers with new challenges. and the attention it has attracted from consumers and marketers on

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a worldwide scale. Interactive influencer marketing is one of the many ways that brands can interact with customers on social media. Research indicates that social media advertising via influencer/ celebrity and famous personality has a major impact on customer engagement and brand loyalty when incorporated into a multichannel marketing plan. Micro-celebrities distinguish apart from individuals who take part in TV shows or blockbuster movies due to the greater level of interpersonal closeness they have with fans. Permission-based communications or subscription-only material could significantly increase Generation Z attitudes and acceptance regarding receiving messages from businesses on social media. Influencers on Instagram are skilled at introducing and popularizing trends, pushing new products, and boosting sales. Influencers, who are seen as more similar to typical audiences, are more likely to communicate with followers, and are simpler to relate to or identify with than traditional therefore, celebrities have a higher chance of connecting with audiences. Youth will be more accepting of influencers' fashion advice and the brands/ products they support since they view them as more trustworthy.

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# **Digital Culture and News Media: Exploring Content Diversity, Community Representation & Cultural Pluralism in the Indian Mediascape**

*-Mitinam Siram*

## **ABSTRACT**

**D**igital revolution has brought in a tremendous shift in the ways and means of media production and consumption. The same phenomenon is also observable in the field of news content production and consumption. Nowadays, we not only find news and information from professional and organized sources, but a lot of news and information is disseminated and accessed through alternative media platforms such as social media and vlogs. Even though it creates an ethical dilemma in terms of the core principles of news such as truth and objectivity, such a change in the process of news gathering and dissemination has brought in diversity in terms of narratives, perspectives and representations of people, places, and events. While, ideally media, particularly news media,

should be striving for truth and accuracy, what is visible currently is the fact that there are often imbalances in news coverage with false narratives and misinformation overshadowing the very idea of truth and facts in news reporting. Moreover, media pluralism is valued in most dominions because it keeps the citizen well informed. The percept of pluralism in the Indian digital culture serves as the base for freedom of speech and expression enshrined in the constitution of India under Article 19 (1) (a). In some countries media freedom is restricted therefore, curtailing complete ban on pluralism and genuine competition on media coverage. Apart from that, news items on issues relating to communal representation and cultural diversity is one of the most important components to measure the implication of freedom of speech and expression.

In this context, this paper intends to discuss the unique nature of the growing concept of pluralism in Indian News Media fostered by the growth of digital culture and the inclusion of contents on communal representation and cultural diversity. In particular, the paper explores the increasing importance of digital media in challenging the traditional notion of media power and media hegemony. With the emergence of new media sneakily taking over traditional forms of media it is evident that the consumers have shifted their taste from dominant form of media to plurality in news coverage and consumption. The aim of the paper is to analyze if media pluralism nurtured by digital revolution in any way is affecting the quality of news and if media pluralism facilitated by digital culture is changing the role of the audience.

**Keywords:** *Digital Culture, Content Diversity, Cultural Pluralism, Freedom of Expression, Media Pluralism*

## **INTRODUCTION**

There has been a tremendous shift in communication ever since the information superhighway took its form, and completely took hold of the human society. Communication patterns have evolved in the present day modern human societies. When mediums were limited, information were also restricted only to the rich and privileged. However, the scenario has changed. Up until now people were only dependent on mainstream media for news dissemination. Many a times the journalists from the mainstream media does not always broadcast the issues of certain communities because of less freedom in their profession. Nevertheless, the recent surge of independent vloggers and bloggers have offered consumers, representation of various communities and their issues, extending pluralism in media consumerism. Pluralism in media is an important aspect especially in a democratic country as it indicates the extent to which freedom of speech and expression is applied.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

When James Augustus Hicky published the first newspaper of India, The Bengal Gazette, on January 29, 1780, it was a single sheet of paper with the size of 12" x 8" having three columns on each side. But presently, several print media organizations like, The Hindu, Times of India and India Today and many other organizations are developing comprehensive websites of their own, which covers interviews, chat shows, business, and economy news and lifestyle and entertainment. The recent development and

trend the Indian Press show they are bound to gather strength while some others are bound to emerge in the wake of rapid technological innovations and developments (Aggarwal & Gupta, 2001).

Print media has always been a one-way mass communication which gave way for the digital media to develop rapidly allowing common people to act both as consumers as well as producers. The digital media seem to be giving solutions to every single problem. The digital media has been a vast preference for the flexible feature it provides (Karambelkar, 2019).

(Metykova, 2017) wrote, diversity in media contents is usually used in a more factual or concrete meaning, whereas the term pluralism is referred to a more diffused societal value or an orientation of an underlying issue. In broader sense, the concept of media diversity refers to the heterogeneity on the level of contents, outlets, ownership, or any other aspect of the media deemed relevant. Similarly, (Roessler, 2007) noted that the concept of diversity is pivotal for viewing mass media as a part of pluralistic society, where on one hand mass media unifies individual as "providing a common set of values, idea and information" (McQuail, 2000) as media focusses on issues that are relevant for public discussion.

(Kowalski, 2017) "These concepts of pluralism assume an active role of authorities, which, through legal, organisational or political actions, are trying to achieve organised diversity resulting from disbelief in automatic operation of the market, unit's freedom of choice or self-organisation ability (including self-regulation) of market players (media). Generally, different point of view is

represented by the libertarian, free-market concepts, among which we can indicate on the ideas of spontaneous, reactive, reflective, external, and moderate pluralism."

### **AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the study is to explore the idea of digital culture and its impact on news media in the areas of content diversity, community representation & cultural pluralism.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- ◆ Analyze the evolution of digital media vis-à-vis content diversity and community representation.

- ◆ To explore cultural pluralism in the Indian mediascape because of digital revolution.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research is an Exploratory Study combined with researcher's personal observation in connection to the changes that are occurring in the field of digital revolution with changes in the news content in terms of its diversity, representation of issues and cultural pluralism.

"Exploratory research is characterized by its flexibility. When a problem is broad and not specifically defined, the researchers use exploratory research as a preliminary step. By exploratory research we mean a study of a new phenomenon. Exploratory studies are a valuable means of finding what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomenon in a new light" (Yin, 1994).

Exploratory research, as the name suggests is to investigate the research questions and does not give any concluding result of the problem. Though the research does not give proper conclusion, it gives a good understanding to the problem. When conducting exploratory research, the

researcher can willingly change his or her direction because of adding new data and new insights. According to (Babbie, 2007), Exploratory research takes place when problems are in a preliminary stage. Exploratory research is used when the topic or issue is new and when data is difficult to collect.

(Leicht et al., 2010) mentioned (Wax 1971; Bauer et al. 2000) It is difficult to determine precisely when observational research methods were first used. These techniques are, in many ways, natural steps in the research process. Simply stated, if we are curious about why something occurs, we are likely to seek observations of that phenomenon to understand it more fully. Thus, it would appear more fruitful to consider when the observational method gained formal recognition as a research tool rather than when it was initially employed.

(Research Methodology C R Kothari (Eng) 1.81 MB. Pdf, n.d.) observation method is most the most commonly used method particularly in the branch of behavioural sciences. We all observe things around us on a regular basis, but this sort of observation is not scientific observation. It becomes a scientific tool and a method of data collection for a researcher when it serves a planned research purpose which is systematically planned and when the observation is recorded. Under this method of data collection, data is collected by investigator's own direct observation with questioning the respondents. The major advantage in observation method is it eliminates subjective bias if conducted accurately and the information found under this method is related to current happenings and is not involved with the past and future attitudes. Also, observation method is solely independent to the willingness of the respondents

to cooperate during the study and as such is relatively less demanding as it is in the case of interview or questionnaire method. This method is particularly suitable in studies which deal with subjects (i.e., respondents) who are not capable of giving verbal reports of their feelings for one reason or the other.

Based on the above descriptions on exploratory & observational research, the researcher has attempted to look at digital media revolution and its connection with news content, community representation and cultural diversity in Indian media.

## **DEFINING DIGITAL MEDIA: HISTORY AND EVOLUTION**

According to (What Is Digital Media? | Digital Media Marketing | Digital Logic, n.d.), digital media is any form of media that uses electronic devices for distribution. The form of media that can be distributed, modified, or viewed via electronic devices.

Any media that can be read, seen, or heard in the digital platform such as television, radio or any other device is called media. News or medias that can be circulated, edited, or distributed through electronic digital devices is what strikes a difference between digital and traditional form of media. To put forward information gathered into some news, in traditional form of media required manual efforts. "the impact of digital media brought about a technological revolution. The Internet, personal computing, and digital media gave us a chance to handle information on a level which we could only dream about with traditional information storage devices like books. Digital media created a whole new world in the fields of journalism, entertainment,



education, publishing, commerce, and politics. It brought about new challenges concerning copyrights and intellectual property (Scott, 2017).

(Aggarwal & Gupta, 2001) "Just as the twentieth century dawned, radio was invented by which electromagnetic impulses could be sent through the air without wires, carrying voice transmission over long distances. For the first time in civilization, people had a medium of mass communication. In the same century the ability to capture moving visual images with the camera was perfected." People also discovered ways of capturing movement as well as sound on film to produce the motion picture and the electronic system called videotape. Scientists and technologists, in deciding how these motion pictures could be transmitted over wires, and subsequently without wires, created a new medium called Television in India in 1959 as an experimental telecast.

### **DIGITAL REVOLUTION IN INDIA: CONTENT DIVERSITY, COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION & CULTURAL PLURALISM**

(Miller - Carpenter, 2010) explained (Blanchard, n.d.) that, diversity is also a matter of accuracy. More than 60 years ago, the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press stressed the need for the news media to paint a more representative picture of society through diversity.

(Metykova, 2017) wrote, diversity in media contents is usually used in a more factual or concrete meaning, whereas the term pluralism is referred to a more diffused societal value or an orientation of an underlying issue. In broader sense, the concept of media diversity refers to the heterogeneity on the level of contents, outlets,

ownership or any other aspect of the media deemed relevant.

(Fürsich, 2010) explained community representation as something which is within this cultural-critical paradigm of media studies that scholars developed and studied the notion of representation. This concept helped scholars to move beyond understanding media messages as simply a portrayal or reflection of reality. Instead, representations are embedded in the 24-hour saturated media stream and establish norms and common sense about people, groups and institutions in contemporary society.

(Georgiou, 2013), when looking into communication and minorities in everyday factors of life, we are persistently reminded that we need to address both the longstanding and new challenges in terms of minorities' media representation - not only in the media but also behind the media at times of media convergence. (Larson, 2006) "No cultural representation can offer access to the 'truth' about what is being represented, but what such representations do provide is an indication about how power relations are organized in a society, at certain historical moments". (Saeed, 2007) explained (Miller 2002, 246) what the media performs with their due power is to represent the world in certain ways and since there are numerous ways (some conflicting) to decode the meaning it matters who and what issues are represented and who are left out; and how things, people, events, relationships are represented. What we know of society depends on how things are represented to us and that knowledge in turn informs what we do and what policies we are prepared to accept.

## **CULTURAL PLURALISM**

(Valcke et al., 2015) Concerns over pluralism in the media began to arise in the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries as press barons such as William Randolph Hearst, Joseph Pulitzer, and E.W. Scripps began creating newspaper groups that gained significant political impact, which led to condemnation that owners of large press enterprises had undue influence over public discourse and could limit the range of ideas and opinions expressed by other citizens. In the words of (Brooks, 2002) cultural coexistence under the roof of a single state does not necessarily mean that communities are at peace with one another. (Craft, 2017) adds that cultural pluralism in Britain has existed for centuries, but it has gained more popularity because of its unbiased and democratic nature and with greater acceptance of individual autonomy in all aspects of behaviour and belief.

Media pluralism and diversity are values and principle that few would oppose as the ability to access a wide variety of different political views and cultural expressions comprise a fundamental value in media policy as well as in theories of the relationship between media and democracy. (Karppinen, 2013)

(Raeijmaekers & Maesele, 2015) noted that the buzzword media pluralism serves as a taken-for-granted up to a remarkable extent. It is still unclear what is meant by media pluralism content or how it should operate within western democratic societies. Although media metaphors such as 'marketplaces of ideas' or 'public forums' are adopted regularly as democratic benchmarks, the discourse of

pluralism underpinning these popular conceptions generally remains unspecified.

### **DIGITAL CULTURE AND NEWS MEDIA**

Before human society advanced itself to the phase of possessing large governmental organizations and less commercial activities, news had very limited value, primarily available and were of interest to only those who were in authority.

It is believed that printed reports of weather conditions and the arrival and departures of ships and cargo, useful to the mercantile community, were first introduced in China around 1000 B.C. As government began to exercise its power beyond the city limits, and as commerce expanded in volume and completely, printed communication became indispensable for the wider dissemination of essential information." (THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF NEWSPAPER JOURNALISM IN INDIA. - ProQuest, n.d.)

(Administrator, n.d.) The Internet as popular mass medium coincided with its commercialization, the privatization of its backbone (early 1990s) and the development of the world wide web (WWW) by Tim Berners-Lee in 1990. The WWW enabled the mass sharing of linked files and provided an easy to use, readily accessible way to post personal and commercial content. Ever since its inception the internet as popular mass medium have come a long way (Kumar, 2020) "The fourth 'industrial revolution' is already upon us. It is marked by rapid developments in robotics, augmented reality, 3-D printing of human organs, big data analytics, artificial intelligence (AI) and the internet of Things (IoT). The first industrial revolution (1760-1850)

was set in motion by steam and the factory system; the second (1850-1980) by the internal combustion engine and electricity, the third (1990s to 2007) by computers, digitization, the internet, and the mobile phone. This is not to suggest that the earlier three 'revolutions' have been overawed or eclipsed in any way. The reality is that even as innovations in science and technology change and perhaps disrupt the way people live, love, work and do business in the more affluent parts of the world, the transformations are less dramatic in other parts; in the developing world, for instance, all four 'revolutions' continue to exist side by side."

(Peakson, n.d.) Ever since the first digital computers were invented, we have witnessed an exponential increase in computing power and storage capacity. The ability to access, modify, store, and share digital media has been made easy and handy to billions of people with the help of smart phones and computers. Electronic devices such as digital cameras to drones could create, transmit and view digital media. Digital media has transformed 21st century society completely in a way that is frequently compared to the cultural, economic, and social impact of the printing press through mediums such as World Wide Web and the Internet. The change has been rapid and extensive that it has set an economic transition from an industrial economy to an information-based economy, creating a new period in human history known as the Information age or the digital revolution. The mixing of digital media with rest of the mediums and is known as new media. Digital media has a significant, wide-ranging, and complex impact on society and culture.

## CONCLUSION

In simple terms, to bring diversity in news contents, representing communities of all walks of life and providing pluralism in media relates to media freedom. Moreover, the ownership pattern of media houses, be it conventional or unconventional, affect the nature and types of news. The availability of contents in the age of conventional media such as newspaper, television and radio were mostly limited to major events and occurrences. However, with the advent of the internet and use of digital platforms have brought in a lot of diversity in terms of content which are seen to be more personalised and niche. Many individual vloggers and bloggers are seen to be actively engaged in content creation and dissemination adding to the element of diversity of media fostering community representation and representation of cultures from the margin. These independent content creators own and command the way news are supposed to reach the wider audience unlike in traditional form of media bringing plurality in media consumption. Relying on a single news outlet, thus does not give the probability that all walks of communities and news items around the world will be covered as it was purely based on whatever serves the interest of the editor or the owner which is completely different in the age of digital media and culture.

Inclusion of events and news available for the public in the news realm is supposed to be unbiased. As (Karppinen, 2013) in the book "Rethinking Media Pluralism" suggests that to ascertain a wide variety of political views and cultural expressions pluralism constitute a fundamental value of the relationship between media and democracy. In a democratic

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country like India, every community should have the privilege of putting forward their issues concerning their well-being, taking full privilege of the internet. This has become a reality with the coming of digital media and explosion of digital culture.

The observation in the study leads to a conclusion that it is necessary for the media houses to represent diverse groups from the society more particularly from the marginalized section which would make the news more inclusive. Whereas it is evident that the mainstream media is struggling with representation of diverse and marginalized group, digital media more particularly news media has become more open and diverse as result of digital revolution. It is also observed that individual bloggers and vloggers are independently turning up their voices against issues which are sometimes not addressed in the mainstream media.

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## **Product Placement in Hindi Films: How Good is it for the Brand Image?**

*-Navsangeet Saini*

### **INTRODUCTION**

**A**ccording to Merriam-Webster dictionary, consumerism is defined as the preoccupation with and inclination towards the buying of consumer goods. It is also an economic theory that states that an increasing consumption of goods is economically desirable. In a world driven by consumerist attitudes and motivations in the majority, it becomes imperative for the marketers to constantly engage their audiences and reinforce their brands in their memories. The dissemination of information about a product, service or idea is as important as its manufacturing or invention. Without marketing a business is like an anthology of poems tucked away in the cupboard of a potential poet with negligible chances of being published and made public. For things to have an intended impact socially and economically, they have to be made known. Marketing does precisely that.

According to American Marketing Association, Marketing is the activity, a set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large. While the general belief is that marketing benefits the business it markets, it also serves many socio-economic purposes. By providing information about a product, service or idea to the public, marketing widens the knowledge base of the audience. This knowledge is instrumental in their purchasing decisions, builds brand recognition, creates customer loyalty via consistency in services, a carefully researched, constantly evolving marketing strategy and repetitive reinforcement. These are some of the ingredients of a strong buyer- seller relationship and form an integral part of the civilization.

It also Influences the consumer behaviour and ensures the Freedom of Press. It also reduces the cost of production per unit as an increased demand means an optimal use of the resources available to a business. Marketing creates that demand and maintains it thereby reducing the cost of production per unit of product. The increasing competition keeps businesses on their toes and ensures that they deliver the best quality to the consumer. Marketing builds brands, increases the demand therefore it leads to creation of more job and employment opportunities in the market. Besides this marketing in itself is a multifaceted arena and is full of opportunities for employment and productive work. In these ways and so many more, marketing ensures the smooth running of economy worldwide.

A carefully chalked out marketing mix is therefore imperative to economic growth and stability of businesses.

An increasing access to mass media, availability of more choices and variety in products and services have changed the gamut of marketing practices worldwide. There is a growing resilience within the audiences to the traditional marketing practices. To overcome that resilience and reach out to the customers, it is necessary for the marketers to innovate and employ new and interesting techniques of marketing. The newer methods of marketing such as Product Placements make it easier for the marketer and audience to exchange the information without being too obtrusive.

Product placement is the art of placing your product in movies, games, songs etc. in a subtle manner so as to reinforce the brand image in the mind of the audience without hampering the flow of the information that they seek. This enhances brand visibility without compromising the flow of information to the audience. In this manner, it is perceived as a better method than the traditional advertisements. Product placement is the purposeful incorporation of commercial content into non- commercial settings, that is, a product plug generated via the fusion of advertising and entertainment (Ginosar and LeviFaur, 2010).

Films are a popular media for brand placement as they are a popular media of entertainment, have a longer shelf life and enjoy a global audience, especially, in times like these when OTT platforms are fast becoming popular with the masses and content from all across the world, from myriad of cultures is available on your screens. Films are a popular mass medium in India. The Hindi Film Industry exerts a great mass influence. Films, therefore, especially in India, become a common choice for product placement.

Bollywood or the Hindi Film Industry offers an enormous production output (approximately 1000 films/year), compared with Hollywood (473 in 2003, Motion Picture Association of America, Inc.; <http://www.mpa.org>), and Bollywood is fueled by a large audience eager for consumption (Britt, 2002). Reach is estimated at 65 per cent of India's rural and urban population, including a relatively affluent middle class of approximately 150- 250 million (Bhatia, 2000). Indian consumers are considered to be sophisticated and savvy, even transcending language or class boundaries (Venkatesh and Swamy, 1994). The products chosen for advertising through the medium of films have varied from automobiles to soft drinks, garments, gift items, services, pharmaceuticals to name a few. This industry was an unorganized sector, it was granted "industry status" only in the year 2000 by the Government of India. Thereafter began the journey towards its formation as an organized sector. (Rajadhyaksha, 2003).

It is undeniable that Product Placement is a favourite marketing tool for companies across the globe. Films assure a longer shelf life and an audience across borders. For filmmakers, the trend seems favourable as it grants them financial assistance in return. The mutually beneficial methodology is also light on the audience which takes in the marketing message without much resilience and in a more natural fashion.

Product Placement is gaining widespread importance as a marketing methodology. The greatest advantage of Product Placement as a marketing tool is that it registers a brand in the mind of the audience in the most natural way. Besides this, it creates opportunities for recognition of the product

when used right. Audiences are exposed to brands embedded in the movies or television programmes and they register them without much resilience. It is comparatively less costly than some of the other above-the-line methods of advertising e.g., celebrity endorsements and doesn't interrupt the flow of a programme to introduce a brand/ product. It is less obtrusive than traditional commercial breaks. There is always the added advantage of a known face or a relatable character or an iconic film star introducing or using the product. This adds to the credibility of the product. The product gets exposed to the mass market at a national level. It adds to the image of the corporate when associated with a positive storyline/ situation in a film or TV content. The success and popularity of a film or TV show can be utilized to garner attention for a brand or product. The brands prefer to have a well-known star, or a positive character implicitly endorse their product in the program or film. This builds a favourable brand image. Indian Films, additionally, are breaking geographical barriers and cultivating audiences across borders. The brands thus get international recognition via product placements.

In this study, the researcher attempts to gauge the effectiveness of product placement and the response of the audience to such practice.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To study the effectiveness of product placement as a marketing methodology.
2. To study the audience response to the practice of product placement in films
3. To study the effect of subliminal messages in the form of product placement on the cognitive ability of the audience.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature for the topic 'Effectiveness of product placements in Hindi Films' is as follows. The review has been beneficial in helping the researcher define the topic, understand the context, identify the research gaps, and effectively contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the topic under consideration.

In a study titled 'The influence of Product Placement Type and Exposure Time On Product Placement Recognition', the authors studied the extent to which the placement type and the exposure time are instrumental in brand recognition of product placements in films. The researchers consider a different classification of product placement. The product placement is classified as on- set or creative. Creative placements are those in which brands appear in the background (implicit) while the on- set placements feature the product in a more prominent manner (explicit). The researchers found that the placement type had a great impact on brand recognition. In fact, the impact of placement type is more predominant as compared to exposure time. For creative placements, the marketers are less likely to be able to generate better recognition in the audience while for on- set placements, the recall and recognition is more with an increase in time of exposure. But this changes if time of exposure exceeds 10 seconds (Brennan, Dubas and Babin, 1999).

A study titled 'A comparison of Product Placement in Television and Movies' by Beng Soo Ong attempts to understand the attitudinal difference among audiences between television placements and movie placements. The study found that although three-fourths of the sample were

aware of product placements in both media, respondents appeared to have less exposure to brand placements in television shows than in movies. The attitude of respondents however did not differ with the medium of product placement. This could signal that audiences perhaps do not filter promotional content based on the media of placement. The research also concludes that product placement is a unique and novel way of promoting brands and therefore it is likely to continue its proliferation into films and other media. So long as marketers can benefit from this promotional strategy, it will continue to rise in demand (Beng Soo Ong, 2004).

A study titled 'Brand Placements Bollywood Style' by Nelson and Devanathan points to the fact that Indian film industry has an advantage for product placements owing to the sheer volume of films it produces as compared to Hollywood and on top of it the audience is eager for consumption. Cultural values and beliefs also tend to have an impact on the purchasing patterns and decisions of an individual and also on how they perceive advertising messages including product placement. However, India is a vertical collectivist society which means that it tends to look up to those higher up in the hierarchy. Celebrities, film stars, cricketers etc. are considered as the icons that people follow. In the product placement context, therefore, from a cultural point of view, in a society such as India where film celebrities have a huge social status and are widely popular figures, reaching out to audiences via films is even more effective as it comes with an added advantage of subtle celebrity endorsement of some sort thereby increasing its overall effectiveness. (Nelson and Devanathan, 2006).



In a study that measures the effectiveness of product placement in comparison to 30 second commercials, the researcher uses experimental design to compare the brand recall and brand recognition for subtle product placement of brands to their 30 second commercials. The study found that prominent product placements were more effective in comparison to product placements that were subtle in nature. The products in prominence garnered better attention from the audiences. Also, product placements in comparison to 30- second television commercials were less effective for the same reason but in the long run it was observed that product placements can generate more positive attitudes in comparison to commercial breaks. If we take in account the zapping behaviour of audience, it was found that placements tend to yield better results (Blonde & Roozen, 2006).

Another study 'Recall of Products Placed as Prizes versus Commercials in Game Shows' by Pola. B. Gupta and Stephen. J. Mould studied the relative recall of products placed in game shows. Product placement was found to have favourable impact on the audiences (Gupta & Gould, 2007).

The authors Galician and Bourdeau in their research titled 'The Evolution of Product Placements in Hollywood Cinema: Embedding High-Involvement "Heroic" Brand Images' studied high grossing films to understand the various factors that are of critical importance in gauging the effectiveness of product placement in films. They also carried out a longitudinal study of 15 films to assess the change in the practice of product placement over a time period of two decades i.e., 1977-1997. They noted that the number of appearances of products in films remained fairly

constant from 1977-97 but the length of placement diminished slightly over the time period. Although the number of appearances in general diminished, the key placements (refers to products placed prominently, referred to in the scene and longer in duration) have increased significantly over the two decades. Secondly, during each year studied, the type of product that is most commonly placed is automobile followed by soda and beer. The number of brands embedded in films over the year significantly increased signaling the growing popularity of product placement as a marketing methodology (Galician & Bourdeau, 2008).

A study titled 'Effectiveness of Product Placement in Hindi Movies' by Neville Harwani states that films are found to be of higher involvement as compared to television. High level of clutter of advertising messages on all sorts of mass media and channel switching can be some of the reasons for the rise of phenomenon like product placement in films. The audience can multitask while watching TV at home thereby reducing the attention span of the viewer in case of Television. This reduced attention span will lead to less retention and recall of Brands shown in TV programs. In contrast to this a movie goer makes an informed investment in terms of money, time, and attention and hence he is more attentive and receptive to all sort of information provided in a movie hall which also includes product information or brand messages (Harwani, 2011)

Nuno Barroso noted in his research titled 'The effects of Product Placement, in Films, on Consumer Purchase Intentions' that the traditional forms of advertising and marketing such as television have been losing their effectiveness. The main conclusion that the study reached

is that the product placements have positive limited effect on shaping brand attitudes (Barroso, 2011)

After the literature review it can be concluded that the practice of Product Placement is a popular choice for marketers who are looking to break through the clutter. Films are an iconic medium of communication as they tend to influence the perception and attitudes of the audience while very efficiently mirroring the issues of a society. The films also provide the marketers with the opportunity to build an impactful association of their product with a likeable sequence in the film or an appealing character or a famous actor. This adds to the brand value and builds good association with the audience. Product Placements can hugely impact the brand recall and recognition and it has a great impact on the brand image too.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study uses experimental design. In the study in the subjects were administered a questionnaire containing questions regarding their knowledge and perception of product placement in Hindi Films. Thereafter, they were shown a showreel of snippets from Hindi films that contained product placement instances. The second part of the questionnaire was administered after the showreel, and audience response and perception were studied.

### **DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

The respondents' ages varied from the age group of 8 to 35 years with a mean age of 17. 51.3 per cent were females while the rest were males. Majority of them were pursuing their studies at various levels of education ranging from matriculation or less to postgraduate and above. The frequency of the respondents' watching Hindi films was

studied and it was found that the majority of the respondents (41.3 per cent) watched Hindi films few times in a week while 32.7 per cent of them watched rarely, 17.3 per cent watched once a week and the remainder 8.7 per cent watched Hindi films every day.

When the respondents were asked to recall any brand or product, they may have seen in a movie they have watched recently, the respondents recalled numerous brands from various Hindi films. The majority of them were able to recall Bournvita from the movie Krrish (2006). They constituted 32 per cent of the total respondents. Other brands such as Coca Cola, Pepsi, various automobile brands such as BMW, Ferrari, Royal Enfield were also recalled by the respondents. It is, however, noticeable in the data that a large number of respondents were also unable to recall any of the brands. As pointed out in a previous research, acceptance, attention, and emotions can be attributed to the difference in recall observed among the audience. (Sharma & Nayak, 2015)

The researcher attempted to study the usefulness of product placement in films on recall of a brand or product. 60 per cent of the respondents found it to be slightly useful in boosting the recall, 19.3 per cent felt it had no impact on the recall of a brand while 16.7 per cent found it to be highly useful in ensuring the recall of the brand or product. A meagre percentage of the respondents felt that the practice of product placement was almost useless (2.7 per cent) or completely useless (1.3 per cent).

While comparing the usefulness of product placement with regard to boosting the recall of a brand, the relationship

between gender of the individual and his/ her opinion was studied. Upon applying Pearson's Chi-square Test, a significant p value of .020 was found. A similar trend is also observed when Monte Carlo Simulation is applied to the data. With significance value at .011, a variation ranging from .008 to .014 in lower and upper range is seen. We also find a standardized residual bordering on significant value (1.7) that signals an underlying relationship between male gender and perception on higher usefulness of product placement for boosting recall. While males perceive product placement to be significant in boosting recall, females tend to show no such trend in perception.

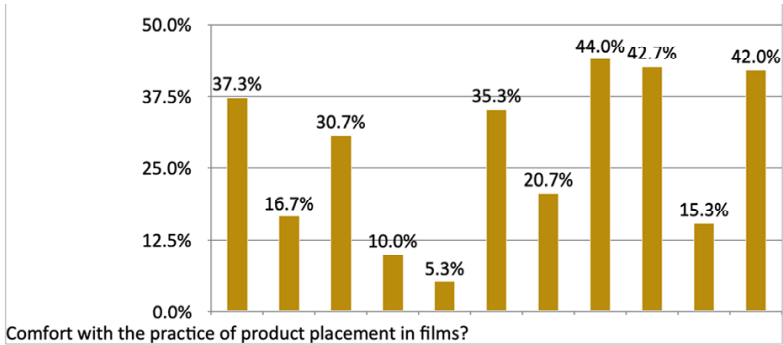
As an attempt to understand the audience response to how effective product placement in films is as a marketing methodology, the respondents were asked to rate the overall effectiveness on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being very effective and natural in disposition to 5 being not effective at all and obtrusive in nature.

Majority of respondents fall within the boundary of very effective and natural to a neutral stance on the issue. 34.7 per cent ticked 3 on the scale demonstrating a neutral disposition while 24 per cent find it effective and 17.3 per cent admitting that it is highly effective as a methodology. A cumulative 24 per cent find it ineffective or obtrusive in nature. Hence it can be deduced that a sizeable number (17.3 per cent + 24 per cent + 34.7 per cent = 76 per cent) of respondents have a positive outlook with regard to the effectiveness of product placement in films as a marketing technique while the remainder less than a fourth of the respondents find it ineffective and unnatural or hampering to the flow of the content.

For any product placement to be effective, it is imperative that the audience feels comfortable in receiving the promotional message embedded in the film. In the study conducted it was observed that 37.3 per cent respondents feel perfectly comfortable with product placement in Hindi films while 30.7 per cent are neutral with the practice. While 16.7 per cent say that it is slightly hampering the flow of the film, 10 per cent find it irritating but ignore it to continue with the film. 5.3 per cent however find product placement extremely uncomfortable and the presence of it in a film makes them want to skip the film altogether.

The study also attempted to understand whether product placement is obtrusive to the film viewing experience and hampers the natural flow of the film. 44 per cent think it may be true while 35.3 per cent were sure it is obtrusive in nature to the flow of content. 20.7 per cent respondents find the opposite to be true and stated that product placement doesn't hamper the natural flow of the content.

In another query that attempted to understand the degree of interruption created in films by product/ brand placement, 42.7 per cent find it not interrupting but welcome, 42 per cent agree that it does interrupt but also state that it can be ignored while the remainder 15.3 per cent feel it surely gets in the way of a pleasant film viewing experience. Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of the audience is okay with product placement either completely or they show acceptance to a reasonable degree. It's only a minority of respondents that find it unwelcome and obstructive in a film. The following chart provides a graphical insight into these data points.



### Comfort Hampering the flow Degree of Interruption

Figure 1: Respondents Perception of Product Placement in Films

Upon doing cross tabulation of gender of respondents to the level of comfort registered by the respondents with regard to instances of product placement in films, a significant p value of .023 was found. This proposes a strong link between the gender of respondents and the degree of their comfort with product placement. Similar trend is repeated upon applying Monte Carlo Simulation. Standardized residual of 1.7 (closer to significant value of 2 or more) is noted with males expressing explicit comfort with product placement. Female data shows no such trend. It can be pointed out that males feel more comfortable with product placement in films.

A strong association between frequency of viewing films and comfort level with product placement is indicated as a significant p value of .025 is observed. It is suggested that the more the frequency of viewing films, the better the level of comfort with product placement in films. The respondents who view films everyday register a standardized residual higher than others.

Besides this, the respondents were asked to rate the experience of watching scenes from the showreel that had product placement in them. 64 per cent participants found the scenes viewing experience to be okay with 20.7 per cent saying it was a great experience. 13.3 per cent found it to be somewhat interrupting while a negligible 2 per cent claimed the product placement embedded within those scenes made them want to discontinue watching. It can therefore be safely deduced that the majority of the participants were positive towards viewing product placement in film scenes. The graphical representation of this is as follows:

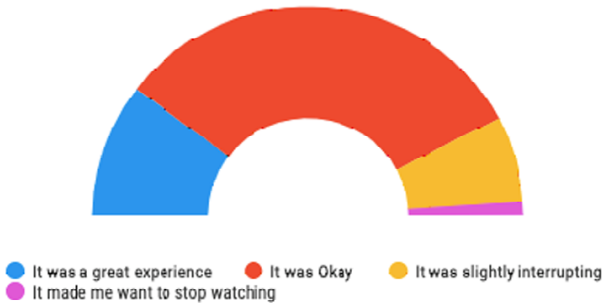


Figure 2: Rating of Viewing Scenes with Product Placement by Respondents

The respondents were asked how easily they were able to spot the brands in the showreel. While 2.7 per cent respondents claimed to have spotted the brands very easily, 97.3 per cent said that it was tough, but they recalled one or two brands they saw in the showreel. No respondents spotted a few or none of the brands present in the showreel. A strong association between educational qualification and ease of spotting brands in showreel is noticed. The standardized residual for graduates easily spotting the brands in showreel



is as high as 4.3 indicating a strong association between the two variables.

The respondents were asked how natural the product placement looked in film clips shown. 50.7 per cent found it to be quite natural in disposition, 42.7 per cent said it depended upon the type of product placement while a minor 6.7 per cent felt product placement appeared completely unnatural. Also, a high standardized residual of 2.4 is seen between matriculation and less level of education and a more natural perception of product placement scenes. This tends to signify that lower educational status can lead to a more acceptable perception of naturality of a deliberate marketing exercise such as product placement. With increased educational status, this perception tends to be of the practice being less natural.

The respondents shared their reasons for liking product placement as a marketing methodology. Majority (27.4 per cent) found it to be a creative way of showcasing the products, 14.8 per cent said it was natural as compared to other marketing techniques used widely, 12.3 per cent liked it as it added something to the plot or scene and a same percentage of people expressed a liking for product placement as the product was presented very beautifully in the scene. 11.7 per cent felt it went with the flow of the content, 11.5 per cent found it to be easy on eyes and ears while 10.1% said it was very unobtrusive.

When listing down their reasons for not liking product placement, 24.2 per cent felt it was too obvious, 17.3 per cent felt it was an intrusion and a same percentage of respondents disliked product placement as they felt they did not sign up for this when they decided to watch a film. 12.6

per cent opined that it added nothing to the plot of the film while 10.8 per cent thought the product was not appropriately presented. 9 per cent disliked it due to lack of creativity making the product appear nothing more than a prop while 8.7 per cent felt it was unnatural in disposition.

The respondents were asked to share their recall of the brands depicted in the showreel. 86.7 per cent said they could recall some of the products shown, 12 per cent couldn't recall any brand they saw while 1.3 per cent claimed to recall all the products/ brands shown to them.

Out of the total brands in the showreel, the respondents were asked to recall and write as many as they could easily remember. The average number of products the respondents recalled was 3.2 with its median being 3.0 and a standard deviation of 2.8. Some of the most easily and commonly recognized brands from the showreel included Apple iPhone, Haldiram, Range Rover, Adidas, Pepsi, Coca Cola, Amul and Justdial among some others. There were over 38 products in the showreel while the maximum any respondents recalled was 15 making it less than half of the total.

### **CONCLUSION**

From the findings it can be observed that respondents tend to have a largely positive outlook about product placement in films. While some do consider the practice hampering and obtrusive, they still maintain a neutral stance about product placement being used as a marketing methodology. It is also observed that the frequency of film viewing, educational qualification and employment status tend to exercise a varied degree of influence on the perception of product placement amongst the audience. Majority of audience however takes the insertion of products

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into films in their stride and consider it to be an acceptable experience. Product placement is liked by the audience as it's a creative manner of showcasing the products, its comparatively more natural than other marketing techniques and at times the product may even be very beautifully integrated into the scene and add something to the plot. While the main reasons for unliking the practice were that product placement was too obvious and obtrusive. However, in a nutshell, The key findings of the study included that majority of the respondents had a positive attitude, albeit of varying degree, towards product placement in Hindi films. The audience recall of products in the films was however flimsy. Their attitude towards the inadvertent celebrity endorsement of products placed within films was fairly positive and the association of a product with negative character or situation did not significantly affect their perception of the brand.

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## **Media, Culture and Contemporary Social Issues**

*-Nimisha Suryanshi*

### **INTRODUCTION**

**N**ot more than a decade ago people cherished moments of solace in talking and sharing with those nearest to them. This was a time of good close connections with those around. But this was also the time when family and friends who were further away could seldom be contacted. When people had less technology at hand, when distance was most dreaded, for there was no way around it. Those were testing times. But the democratization of technology that came with the introduction of social media built a platform that bridged that gap, ending the silence between friends living at opposite ends of the world. Within just half a decade this trend picked up at monumental speed. And the last couple of years since the pandemic have been the golden years of the social media.

While the new media in the early 2000's ushered us in the world of internet, the social media has caught us awestruck in the glory of the internet. Perhaps it is more

than just a tool to connect with people we couldn't keep in touch with before. It has morphed into a flashy toy for young adults that keep them busy all day. But for the social media one of the biggest USP has been as a 'Platform that gives voice to the voiceless', a community space that musters help for the helpless. But the social media has given voice also to the people who have nothing to say. It has granted access to everyone to say anything targeted at anyone. Social issues that sprout from the social media hence make an endless list.

From intimidating tribulations that birth from inept cyber security and cyber bullying, to problems that go unnoticed like peer pressure, fear of negative and positive evaluation, exposure to inappropriate content, fear of missing out, constant need for validation from another, self-doubt, vested interest in another's life story, dejection on the display of another's fortune, and the ultimate path being led to seeking momentary gratification from futile online trends; all of these issues are intricately woven together. They all lay hidden under the colorful interface of the social media apps. And these are unquestionably responsible for the systematic disruption of the mental, physical, and social wellbeing of our youth.

This paper hence tries to understand the different aspects of social media in the context of the social issues that it inevitably poses for our youth today. It attempts to find if social anxiety is birthed out of a dip in social skills due to engrossed engagement with the new media. In a different approach it seeks to find if the media meddles with the cognitive skills of the users altering their social standpoint and potentially debilitating them from engaging in healthy social relationships.

This is a conceptual paper that largely focuses on the recent trends of the new media and its relations with the rising social anxiety among the youth, based on archival-study and meta-research.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE EMERGING CULTURE OF SOCIAL ISSUES**

While the social media was born about two decades ago, (with Facebook being launched in 2004, YouTube in 2005, Twitter in 2006, Instagram in 2010, Snapchat in 2011,) the media only spread to a larger audience in the last half decade. This expansion has been so tremendous that according to a recent pew report there are currently 4.59 billion active social media users. This makes up for about 60% of world population who are linked to one or more social media platforms. It also states that 75% of those eligible for media usage are actively present online. But it isn't the quantitative spread of the media pacing at lightning bolt speed, it is rather the qualitative aspect of its expanse that has become a greater cause of concern. Not only more people are engaged in social media, but now more and more people are helplessly engrossed in the media's allure. This plants the problem of social anxiety.

Several studies have attributed this high attachment to the social media usage for being one, a consequence of social media induced issues and two as also a cause of their subsequent continuation. This inevitably forms a vicious cycle aggravating the problems at both the ends. Reports suggest that on an average, there is an addition of 6 new social media users every passing second. Now the society is faced with this upward spiral of ramified problems. And researchers claim that these problems are the root cause of

the emerging imbalance in people's physical, mental, and social well-being. These issues from cyber security and bullying to peer pressure, self-doubt, dejection and screen addiction and others are discussed in veritable detail in the following sections.

### **CYBER SECURITY**

Security on the social media app must account for the topmost priority of the media app developers. A recent Forbes article suggests that there is a cyber-attack every 39 seconds. As social media has emerged as a free of cost, simple to use, multipurpose communication tool that also provides unlimited entertainment, young adults and even kids are in a frenzy to join the platform. Hence the media is primarily responsible to assure that security of the personal identity of its user remains intact. With more and more kids flooding the platform this responsibility holds even greater significance.

### **CYBER BULLYING**

While technical loopholes pose a threat to the security of the online users, at the other end of the interface some users stand to pose a threat just as alarming. The media grants one with a platform to speak and be heard on. It allows us to publish information for a select group or communicate privately with anyone. It also gives one access to any information that has been made public. And finally, the media allows us to choose what part of our identity we prefer to make public. Hence allowing many to hide behind the screen and wrongly make use of the facilities provided by the social media. This is Cyber Bullying. Cyber Bullying may take many forms. It ranges from defaming someone by spreading false information about them online, about constantly threatening



someone through direct messages, callously insulting someone, tricking someone and later teasing them, blackmailing them to sending death threats. This has been one of the earliest issues to have a direct connection to media induced social anxiety. And it arguably remains to be relevant even today.

### **PEER PRESSURE**

Man is a social animal. We have an innate tendency to seek acceptance from our immediate relationships. We wish to fit in and become a part of a group. Our actions hence become somewhat imitative of people we strive the company of. It is only natural then for people to not accept those whose actions differ from their own. Hence this fear of unacceptance and unlikability from our peers makes their company as much persuasive. This way our friends, contemporaries, partners, associates may become overpowering sometimes. Any refusal to follow the group's actions or decisions puts individuals on the spot, pressuring them to contemplate their decisions in sync with the group. And as most individuals feel the need for validation from the group, any course the group takes, individuals get hassled into obligating the same.

In context of social media, peer pressure plays the most pivotal role in directing the actions of individuals. It begins right from the decision of joining the platform, to creating avatars and mirroring every step of their peers online. Slowly in the race of becoming like another one runs the risk of losing their very essence, their very identity. Eventually this causes one's plummet into a pool of dejection and self-pity for the inability to hold their own against others.

In a different approach to the problem of peer pressure, recent trends suggest it may also be significantly contributing to the perpetuation of existing social media induced anxiety. Such anxiety may bring with it a decline in self-esteem, a tendency to doubt one's capabilities, development of inferiority complex, pessimism, hopelessness, and a sense of incompetence. But there remains a lack of societal awareness about the alarming consequences of peer pressure as well as open discussions about ways to tackle and reduce the ill effects of peer pressure. Burdened under implicit pressures of the peer groups and society at large, individuals make desperate attempts for the slightest escape. Hence, they often resort to extreme measures which primarily takes two major forms. One, the individuals might get provoked to become the source of such pressure in order to escape its burden and begin instilling such pressures in others. Thus, participating in one or more activities of cyber bullying. On the other hand, an individual in a rather helpless situation might dwell on suicidal ideation. Hence the problems of social anxiety that the media poses by encouraging peer pressure are manifold.

### **FEAR OF NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE EVALUATION**

In the times of print media and electronic media where only a certain handful could use the media as a tool to communicate, the media seldom had active facilities to allow feedback. The procedure of feedback was technical and hence much controlled. Only those acquainted as well as invested in the subject made the effort to give feedbacks. But with the development in technology and emergence of new media and especially social media there has been an unprecedented rise in active involvement of the audience. The social media

facilitates a platform for people to communicate effortlessly. It allows indefinite number of people to convey their message with utmost convenience.

This has resulted in an incredible surge in people's interest in sharing their life story. This has also encouraged greater sources, greater channels, more messages and most importantly a greater inflow of feedback. Now people from all across the world are baring themselves naked to the world, spelling out sensitive information about themselves, sharing intimate moments of private life with complete strangers. Hence making themselves vulnerable to people's interpretations, opinions and evaluation of their personal lives. But this issue has another angle to it. As social animals, we all crave company. But when on social media, this tendency multiplies and there's a sense of accomplishment on gaining followers, subscribers or more friends or connections online. But to maintain this level of connection or preferably to broaden the spectrum of one's connections online one might feel the desperate need to overcompensate through more information, greater involvement in social media trends, all while putting themselves in a position to get speculated and evaluated on innumerable standards as set by their growing list of nameless faceless followers.

As the media grants everyone complete access to make direct contact with another, media users may choose to comment on the work and even the personal matters of anyone present online in a positive or negative fashion. Hence in a race to become most liked and adored online, people have been mindlessly investing their times in giving away information about their personal lives for speculation and more importantly validation from others. And because

of this veritable investment in order to be appreciated by people online, even futile things like a like or a positive comment may skyrocket one's self esteem. This builds unrealistic levels of self-worth in people. And with such euphoric experiences from anything positive, the slightest bit of negative assessment gains the power of having the opposite of euphoria in a greater intensity. Hence the more importance one assigns to a positive evaluation, the worse is the impact of a negative evaluation. Reports suggest people experience symptoms similar to those of depression on encountering a negative evaluation online.

What's ironic about the media is that it is usually marketed as a safe place, a community place for everyone to love one another and grow together. But the perks of the social media get far outweighed by the spiraling issues sprouting right from the media's community space. The more invested people are in the media, the more sensitive and vulnerable they tend to get with regard to the general opinion of the masses. Hence this increasing trend of snide evaluation by those hiding behind the screen can be attributed as one of the factors responsible for the uncontrolled spread of social anxiety amongst active media users.

### **EXPOSURE TO INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT**

Social Media allows one to join the platform at any age. It allows for anyone to publish any information, any video, any content online for anyone and everyone to consume. This data need not be censored before publishing. Hence the media is flooded with content in all sorts of contexts. As a mature and responsible adult, one might report content they find inappropriate or offensive or manipulating. But the social media has no age bar. And most children or

immature young adults with access to any social media platforms either through their parents' devices or otherwise get exposed to much of this inappropriate content. Content that may be unfitting for their innocent minds, harmful to their mental stability, and may cause a hindrance in the formative years of their cognitive development. Violent, unsettling, pornographic, provoking, manipulative, and abusive content inundates the media today. A recent pew report suggests that untimely exposure to such content and in the wrong context is contributing to a string of anxiety issues in young children. It states that this affiliation to social media platforms is potentially debilitating children from engaging in interactive study sessions in classroom, as well as to participate in group sporting activities. This untimely conception of social anxiety in children as well as most young adults has become an issue of growing concern in society today.

### **FOMO - FEAR OF MISSING OUT**

Recent research on the use of social media suggests that about 70 percent of millennials experience what is referred to as a Fear of Missing Out. This largely refers to the idea of how social media users have now developed a vested interest in the lives of others, and how missing out on any minute detail posted online is unaffordable to the frantic media users. More than half the population of media users are grossly invested in keeping tracks of what their peers, their contemporaries might be up to. And alike all the other issues FoMO too is not a mere consequence of unchecked social media usage. It equally contributes in encouraging further involvement with the media, hence entrapping media users in an endless loop.

For social media has become a platform for people to display their social standing, the media has eventually assumed the form of a veritable marathon to prove one's social worth. With every update post from one's personal life, people tend to experience a sense of accomplishment for being ahead of others. But now everyone is competing in a baseless competition that essentially leads to nowhere. Hence after a momentary sense of satisfaction, anxiety starts to creep up. Several previous surveys conducted on young adults reveal that they experience a sense of helplessness, moments after posting something online if the number of likes does not measure up to what they expected. This disappointment from trivial matters may leave an impression of being obsolete in one's ways, that one is unable to live up to the standards set by the society and is falling behind in a never-ending struggle to stay on the top. This perceived notion of being less than and unworthy is what further feeds to the 'Fear of Missing Out'. In a frenzy to keep up with the trends online an average social media user dedicates at least 3 hours of screen time on a multitude of social media platforms. The most preferred media apps being Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and the ever-present WhatsApp.

Social anxiety births from the Fear of Missing Out as people have fallen into a routine of constantly checking their phones. This is because social media facilitates an effortless medium to get updates about anything from anywhere and most importantly in real time. With media apps I our pockets, getting access to people's minute to minute activities is now just a tap away. Also, these media apps come dressed in shapes and colors which has an appeal to every age group.

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Colorful and flashy shades of neon pink, purple and blue for the young, to a more sophisticated version with colors such as dull blue or dull emerald with off-grayish white for the adults. Along with the color game, the developers constantly keep updating the user interface with better, faster and more flashy features. With this the social media has acquired its position not just as a convenient tool for communication, but more interestingly as a tool for entertainment with addictive features. The media apps have become so dangerously addictive that users across the globe spend a total of 10 billion hours online each day, as suggested by a recent pew report. Hence in this fever to stay updated, people are now more distracted than ever. People are now more scared than ever.

### **SELF-DOUBT**

Man defines everything in relation to others. From simple objects of daily life to our relationships, our experiences, and even our own identities. And as we are social beings, it is only natural to engage in social relationships and get acquainted with others. The more we see and experience from such relations and acquaintances, the more we desire. But as we all lead different lives, we live in different environments, and we have different experiences. Hence there are boundless things that we may not experience but others might. In today's socially proactive society, most of us have closely knit connections with countless people. These connections are extremely superficial for there is no emotional connect or any signs of real friendship but rather a passing familiarity with faces. And yet, we are strangely extremely aware of their smallest of activities. Hence with such baseless friendship everything

that is presented from their side is seen as perfect by the people on the other side of the interface. As we do not know of their actual lives, we have started idealizing their posts of 'intimate glimpses of their perfect lives. But we fail to see that these staged moments of people's lives were intentionally recorded on camera, and then were refined through numerous filters before being posted online. Consequently, every aspect of our own life starts to pale in contrast to the flashy, beautiful, and flawless lives of people online.

Our self-worth then plummets to a negative. We define our worth to a made-up life scenario that was marketed to us in a very subtle manner. We try to decide the worth of our identity in contract to carefully curated images of others. What may seem to be 'normal and an every-day thing' in a video or a picture or even messages are 99% of the times staged. As a result, people are anxious not just from the perfection reflected in others' posts. But also, because they unknowingly slip into the business of painting themselves as perfect. In such confusing times, many media users have no idea how to draw a line between healthy communication and corrupt marketing strategies. We need to draw a line between healthy entertainment and unchecked addiction to the media.

### **SOCIAL ANXIETY DRIVES THE MEDIA MARKET TODAY**

Social Media made its debut as an easy to use, extensive tool for communication. But just like print media and electronic media or even new media, social media too gets fueled by advertisements. It's much more of a busy messy marketplace than any other media. But because more people



are now responsive to open discussions and as this form of media allows everyone to speak their mind, the social media has largely painted a picture in our minds as being a safe space for us to share our story. But behind most stories online there is a commercial motive to sell that story as well as a string of other products through that story. The main marketing strategy here, is one, the emotional connect established through sharing of staged intimate moments, and two the fascinating allure of the social media platforms, with the brightest and the most pleasing of colors, and the best of designs.

When we watch these sponsored real-life stories, we are convinced that the products they name in their posts are credible and truly life altering as promised in the post. What we fail to recognize is that most social media apps are completely free of cost. And that ads would pop up at every corner, even if they come disguised as an information or an entertainment post. The products are marketed by implicitly hinting at how miserable and sad our lives are. And then every product is introduced as a magical key to change our lives. But with increased access to the media, there are endless sellers. With them come endless magical products. These increased online activities keep us busy and keep us hooked to the media. And as a result, it stimulates a fear of missing out. People wish to become the best and these online products are viewed as the key to that goal.

On the other hand of the social media business is how most media users get entrapped by the media's glory at a very tender age. At an age when they are still undecided of their life paths. Hence, it is much easier for them to get deflected. So naturally the social media developers have been

certain to make the youth their target audience for its further commercial spread. Fascination for the media's attractive interface has paved the way to hours of consistent surfing on the internet. And with a plethora of content posted by millions of people, any user would perceive others being the best in their fields. This not only gives birth to a fear of missing out on people's life updates but also develops an inferiority complex in the media users.

Today we all have lowered our self-worth after viewing such fancy and flawless people online. The achievements of others on the media doesn't instill in us a desire to hone our skills and develop new skill sets. But rather we fall for the media trap and work towards creating and posting perfect moments of our lives to prove our worth over others. Hence this cycle of social anxiety continues indefinitely. Today the people who post the most perfect pictures of their lives are the most unhappy. And these unhappy people are on their quest to make others unhappy in order to pacify their own unhappiness.

### **CONCLUSION**

The social media weaves a web of connect for us enabling easy engagement with our social environment. A mass appeal for such convenience and a user-friendly interface has earned the media an unquestioning acceptance by the masses. But in the past decade the youth has begun worshipping the new media for its speed and colourful allure. In all its glory the media has become the ideal choice for personal and public communication universally.

The media has now become a platform for sharing carefully curated content under the alias of "insights of a normal-life". The glory of the "normal-yet-perfect-life" posts

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are fascinating, but this trend is inevitably pushing people to measure their lifestyle with the unachievable standards set by the ever-increasing opinion-leaders. And this unfathomable closeness with strangers, sharing of staged intimate moments of life, and essentially everyone hollering of their perfect lives has disturbingly become the fast-followed trend.

This study concludes that the youth is grossly invested in the social media game to the extent that any separation from it gives them a sense of deprivation. It is observed the media has exhausted the will to learn of the spirited youth. The new media has fixated the youth in futile engagements impeding their productivity. People are now caught in a frenzy of posting curated pictures for a momentary satisfaction that comes with a sense of a well accomplished life to utter dejection over display of another's good fortune. In its flashy features the people are choosing to overlook the cycle of social anxiety that the new media has entrapped them in.

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**Exploring Food Culture in India:  
Negotiating Access, Uses and Experiences  
among Migrant Students Using Social Media**

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**ABSTRACT**

**F**ood is an integral part of culture and therefore cultural studies. Each cuisine practices borrow and contain cultural flavours. It can be geographical, social, or religious culture. Migration, short term, or long term is a shift from a certain set of norms and practices to another one. This is a change which happens gradually. Among migrants, food culture can stay intact, or there can be a mixture of home and host food culture, or they can completely change to the culture of the host place.

Though, not apt in all cases, migration for education is generally characterized (and differentiated from other type of migration practices) by the non-economic intention and the short nature of the migratory period.

Social media's role in cultural communication and food communication has been investigated largely by

academicians. It has grown to being a new field of study called Intercultural New Media Studies (INMS). The current study investigates the role of social media in the food habits and the shift in culinary culture among interstate migrant students. One part of the study deals with how students cope with the new culinary environment which is different from their original one with the help of social media. The second part deals with the hands of social media in the exploration of the new food culture.

The study occupies a questionnaire survey among interstate migrant students from Kerala who are studying across India to understand about the said question. The survey data is statistically analysed to draw conclusions about how interstate migrant students use social media in their culinary practices and cultural exploration.

***Keywords:*** *Interstate, Migrant Students, Social Media, Food Culture, Culinary*

## INTRODUCTION

Food is an integral part in day-to-day life. For the same reason, it is also a cultural artefact. Each culture has its own specific food culture and tastes. These cultural flavours can be of geographical, social, religious or any other nature. Food is influenced by geography in terms of availability of certain raw materials and crops. Climate is also an important factor in this regard. Cooler areas can consume more spicy food where warmer areas prefer less. Rural-urban-semi urban differences can also be the reasons of differences in food habits. Social factors comprise of religion, beliefs, and other socio-cultural aspects. Certain religious beliefs restrict community members from consuming certain food items. This can influence their food culture.

As a federal republic, India is a federation of several states and union territories. This division is not only based on administrative ease, but at the same time, there are many cultural differences between each state, even within the states. This is very visible in the food culture. In some places, the main dish is rice while some others eat roti as their regular food. People of some geographical areas consume more spicy food while people of some other areas consume less spicy food and so on.

Cultural studies in relation with migration and diaspora is subject to relevant academic investigations. Migrants include forced migrants, labour migrants, student migrants, etc. Though students are well addressed in international migration research, their relevant population is often under addressed in internal migration research. This is visible especially in Indian context where state borders are relevant indicators of cultural varieties and also cultural gaps.

As we already stated, food is an integral part of every culture. Thus, it varies from culture to culture. The differences can be major or minor. When a person migrates to another state, he or she needs to cope with the new food culture for survival. Though many cities offer various cuisines, it cannot be always complete.

A student migrant is different from other migrants in terms of his purpose and duration of migration. The aim of a student migrant is primarily not economical. Here, knowledge is the motivational factor (Raghuram, 2013). The general short-term nature is another important aspect. The experiences of migrant students in terms of their food habits and consumption and its relation to the cultural coping has

to be investigated. In the current study, the researchers analyze the food habits and food culture exploration among interstate migrant students from Kerala who are studying across various states across India. The study also investigates the effective ways for communicating food.

Research indicated that 33.1 per cent of total internal migration from Kerala is for the purpose of education (Rajan & M., 2020). A proportionate number goes for interstate migration accordingly. It is high time to study the socio-cultural situations of the said group.

International migration research describes social media as a cushion in process of migration and settling in the new place (Ihejirika & Krtalic, 2020). Current study puts social media in the middle for the investigation for finding how social media helps the study population in coping and exploring to a new food culture.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The literature lies around cultural position of food, migrants' food habits and dietary wellness, social media and food and social media and migration.

One of the earliest scholars who studied about the sociological aspects of taste was Pierre Bourdieu. He, in his book 'Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, proposes the agency of people with higher social capital in deciding what is good taste and others (people with less social capital) accepts it and thus forms a disparity between high culture and low culture. Food is also a part of this distinction. Bourdieu's theory is important as the early effort to connect food with social distinctions along with other artefacts. Food has been addressed as a cultural artefact by many scholars (Counihan & Van Esterik, 1997; Kittler et

al., 2016; Montanari, 2006). Stajcic (2013) theorized food as a means of communication.

Parasecoli (2014) analyses how cultural reproduction happening through food in immigrant communities. Mishra and Anand (2020) investigated the dietary diversity changes among internal migrant students. The evolving of food practices among migrants over the time has also been investigated (Greco Morasso & Zittoun, 2014).

Evidence for the dietary wellness of adolescents can be found in the presentation of food on social media by them (Holmberg et al., 2016). The language of food in social media is explored through a corpus analysis (Fried et al., 2014). Rousseau's (2012) work comprehends the food related discourses in social media. The phenomena of food vlogs and cooking videos are subjected to various questions of investigation (Abd Razak & Zulkifly, 2020; Benkhelifa & Laallam, 2018; Briliana et al., 2020; Lewis & Phillipov, 2018; Oh & Oh, 2017).

Social media, among migration scholars, is perceived as a helping hand for migrants in coping with the new socio-cultural environment while keeping rooted to their original place and culture (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Groenewold, 2018; Komito, 2011).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study occupied questionnaire survey as the method. Responses were collected from 77 interstate migrant students from Kerala who are studying in different states across India. Responses were collected using purposive and snowball sampling methods. The collected data has been analysed with the help of SPSS software.



## **FINDINGS**

The results of the study are divided to three parts. The first one is the demographic profile of the respondents. The second part deals with the culinary habits of interstate migrant students from Kerala. The third part deals with the role of social media in the culinary habits and food explorations.

### **DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

A total of 77 responses were collected from interstate migrant students from Kerala who are studying in various other states of India through an online survey using purposive sampling. Among the respondents 44 (57.1 per cent) are male and 33 (42.9 per cent) are female students. The demography spread across 8 states namely Karnataka (63 per cent), New Delhi (9.1 per cent), Punjab (9.1 per cent), Rajasthan (6.5 per cent), Haryana (3.9 per cent), Telangana (3.9 per cent), Tamil Nadu (2.6 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh (1.3 per cent). Most of the students are in the age group of 21-24 (66.2 per cent) followed by 17-20 (19.5 per cent). 14.3 per cent of the respondents are above 24-year-old.

When it comes to the migratory period, 31.2 per cent of the respondents are studying outside for 1-2 years. 24.7 per cent of the respondents are outside for 3-5 years while 22.1 per cent are studying for above 5 years and 22.1 per cent are only below one year since they moved for education. While 46.8 per cent of the respondents are studying in the bachelor's level, 42.9 per cent are from masters' courses. 10.4 per cent of the respondents are research students. Respondents are from humanities and social sciences (41.6 per cent), Science (22.1 per cent), Law (16.9 per cent),

Medicine (16.9 per cent), Commerce (1.3 per cent) and Technical Education (1.3 per cent) streams.

Coming to the social media usage statistics, every one of the respondents are using social media, one or the other. WhatsApp is seen to be the most used social media platform. 96.1 per cent of the respondents are using WhatsApp followed by YouTube which is used by 92.2 per cent respondents. Instagram is used by 89.6 per cent of the respondents whereas Facebook and Snapchat used by 51.9 per cent each. Twitter (41.6 per cent), Pinterest (35.1 per cent), Reddit (9.1 per cent), Telegram (3.9 per cent) and LinkedIn (2.6 per cent) has also been used by students.

Usage time is also an important element in social media research. 39 per cent of the respondents use social media 3-4 hour everyday while 37.7 per cent use 1-2 hours. It is important to note that 18.2 per cent of the respondents use social media above 4 hours per day. Those who use social media below one hour are only 5.2 per cent.

#### CULINARY HABITS OF INTERSTATE MIGRANT STUDENTS

An important part of the research deals with the food habits of interstate migrant students after their moving. The difficulty level faced by students is evaluated in the survey. 33.8 per cent of the respondents found it difficult cope with the new food culture. The same number of students hasn't found it easy of difficult. 22.1 per cent find it easy to cope with the new food culture. Table 1 gives a comprehensive idea about the difficulty level. The mean of difficulty level is 3.22 which mean that most of the respondents are neutral towards coping to a new food culture.

Table 1 (Difficulty level)

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Difficult	26	33.8	33.8
Easy	17	22.1	55.8
Neutral	26	33.8	89.6
Very difficult	6	7.8	97.4
Very easy	2	2.6	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

58.4 per cent of the respondents like to go to both Kerala style restaurants and local food places. 24.7 per cent like to go to Kerala restaurants only while 13 per cent prefer local food places.

Responding to the question about exploring local food in the current place of residence, the mean is 3.88 which indicated to students' tendency of exploring local culinary culture often.

Response for the question of cooking habit came to a mean of 3.16. That means the group likes to cook often. Question about watching cooking video provides a mean of 3.27 which is close to the previous one. Respondents like watch cooking videos sometimes as they like to cook (Table 2).

Table 2: Cooking and Watching Cooking Videos

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Cooking	77	1	5	3.16	.988
Watching					
Cooking videos	77	1	5	3.27	1.021
Valid N (listwise)	77				

In cooking, 86.7 per cent of the respondents prefer Kerala dishes only whereas 33.3 per cent of the students likes cook dishes of the current place of residence.

Interestingly 40 per cent of the respondents like to cook the dishes from cultures other than the abovementioned. Further explanation can be seen in the question about what videos they like to watch. 74.3 per cent of the respondents likes to watch cooking videos from Kerala whereas 40.5 per cent like to watch cooking videos on dishes in the current place of residence. 58.1 per cent of the respondents like to watch cooking videos of dishes from other places.

### **PROBLEMS FACED BY INTERSTATE MIGRANT STUDENTS**

- ◆ Health issues occurred by unfamiliar and/or lack of quality of food
- ◆ Difference in way of preparing food, texture, and flavour (usage of spices, oils, etc.)
- ◆ Lack of availability of native food
- ◆ Price range of food
- ◆ Initial difficulty
- ◆ Lack of availability of preferred food items (veg and non-veg, etc)
- ◆ Cleanliness

### **ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CULINARY HABITS AND EXPLORATION OF INTERSTATE MIGRANT STUDENTS**

This part deals with the role and help of social media in the food habits and culinary explorations of interstate migrant students from Kerala. Among the respondents, 55.8 per cent are following food vlogs while 26 per cent are following food vlogs. Photos of food (7.8 per cent) and Recipe note (2.6 per cent) has also been followed. Most of the participants rate food vlogs, cooking videos, photos of food and recipe notes as good in a rating question. A mean of 3.58 has been

derived from responses to the question about watching level of food vlogs which indicates that respondents watch food vlogs often (Table 3). It is identified that most of the respondents go to food places introduced by food vloggers sometimes (m. 2.95). The motivations behind going to such places are cleanliness (56.8 per cent), ambience of the place (39 per cent), favourite food (51.4 per cent), presentation of the food (43.2 per cent) and presentation of the vlog (39.2 per cent). Convenience, ratings, and prices are also marked as motivation factors.

While most of the respondents like watch food vloggers from Kerala (74.7 per cent), 54.7 per cent like vloggers from the current place of residence. Most favoured handles include Village Food Channel, Mysuru foodie, Basim's Plate, Sujith Bhaktan, etc.

Only 2.7 per cent voted for both. Some students also expressed their dislike towards vloggers.

Table 3

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Watching food vlogs	77	1	5	3.58	.978
Visit to places introduced by vloggers	77	1	5	2.95	1.062
Valid N (listwise)	77				

As stated earlier, respondents watch cooking videos often (m. 3.27). Most of the respondents likes to watch Kerala cooking videos (86.7 per cent) whereas 40.5 per cent of the respondents likes to watch cooking videos on dishes from the current place of residence. Interestingly, many of the respondents (58.1 per cent) like to watch cooking videos on dishes from other places also. It is understood that

respondents depend on cooking videos sometimes (m. 3.00). Most of the participants (76.5 per cent) depend on cooking videos for Kerala dishes while many of them (38.2 per cent) depend on videos for cooking dishes of the current place of residence. 51.5 per cent of the respondents depend on cooking videos for cooking dishes of other places also.

Another part of survey indented to check the likeliness of seeing and posting food related contents. 55.8 per cent of respondents somewhat like to see the photos of dishes in social media platforms. 57.1 per cent of the respondents somewhat like to watch videos related to food. But those who like to post photos or videos of the food items are significantly lesser than this.

Table 4

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Whether the respondents like to see food photos	77	1	4	2.97	.778
Whether the respondents like to watch food videos	77	1	4	3.22	.681
Whether the respondents like to post food photos	77	1	4	2.10	.926
Whether the respondents like to post food videos	77	1	4	1.91	.920
ValidN (listwise)	77				

The analysis shows that most of the participants like to post their photos and videos related food on Instagram (55 per cent and 52.5 per cent respectively) followed by

WhatsApp (45 per cent 44.1 per cent respectively). Snapchat is also an important platform where students like to post their captures.

Through asking about their awareness about famous Indian food content creators and Kerala specific food content creators, the study has also tested which area they are more familiar with. It is found that they are far more aware about Kerala food content creators than the former one.

In response to the question asking their favourite food vloggers and cooking video producers, most of the respondents wrote food vloggers from Kerala. Some of them have written vloggers from the current place of residence. Some responses mentioned national and international vloggers too.

Respondents have given their culinary hardships and experiences and the help of social media in the survey. This is majorly about the troubles they are facing as an interstate migrant student, exploration of local culinary culture, role of social media in overcoming the culinary gap after their moving.

### **SUGGESTIONS TO SOCIAL MEDIA BY RESPONDENTS**

- ◆ Globalize cuisines irrespective of cultural and geographical boundaries
- ◆ Knowledge about good local food places should be disseminated
- ◆ Spread awareness in the food-related issues among interstate migrant students
- ◆ Promote healthy food culture
- ◆ Providing easily preparable, homely and proper recipes

- ◆ Provide information about flavour and texture of food items while vlogging

- ◆ Avoid unethical paid promotions

## **DISCUSSION**

The current study investigated the food habits and food cultural exploration of interstate migrant students with reference to the help of social media in it. The study indicates that many of the interstate migrant students face difficulty in coping with a new food culture. Most of them also tend to explore local food. The assistance of social media in both is very visible.

The major thing to understand here is, there is a fluidity of food culture occurring in the students' migratory period. In food consumption and preparation, we can see that the students try new things which are close to the new food culture, while not leaving the old culture completely. Social media helps the interstate migrant students in maintaining this balance. This insight follows the conclusions from international migration that social media works as a cushion in two aspects, 1) Coping with the new social and cultural environment, 2) keeping rooted with the old culture (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Groenewold, 2018; Komito, 2011). We can see that the same phenomenon is visible among interstate migrant students as well.

The fact that, a significant majority of the respondents are aware about and follow food related contents such as food vlogs and cooking videos is important to know that how much role it plays on the lives of the group. Their tech-savvy nature is also an important element in this. Food vlogs gained huge popularity among interstate migrant students as well as other social groups. The responses also show that



they can make a change in the culinary habits as most of them tend to go always, often, or at least sometimes to the food places introduced by vloggers. This popularity is suggestive to the possibility of using vlogging as a medium to communicate dietary safety and wellness. An endorsing proof is that students see cleanliness and ambience of the food place as the supreme motivation for them to be attracted to there. Presentation of the food and vlog also play significant role. Students are far more towards vlog handles in their own language which is Malayalam than other language vlogs and other contents. Communication in the native language is always preferable.

It is discovered that the respondents don't confine themselves to the cuisine of homeplace and host place, but also go for the dishes of other areas and even other countries. Students follow national and international food content creators and even try the recipes at home. This directs to the high tendency for cultural exploration among the group in terms of culinary culture. For this, digital contents help them.

While too many respondents like to see and watch photos and videos of the dishes on social media only some of them prefer to post photos and videos of their foods on social media platform. They like to post it mostly on Instagram, WhatsApp and snapchat. These platforms can be seen as powerful platforms for these kinds of awareness communication. Though, WhatsApp and snapchat can be described as closed platforms to some extent. Still, effective communication on an interpersonal level is highly probable.

Respondents have noted the challenges they are facing, their ways of food explorations and the help of and suggestions

to social media. We can understand that most of these issues such as lack of native food can be tackled using media to some extent. However, some issues would be unable to have rubbed by social media. Health issues by consuming unfamiliar food and lack of availability of preferred food items are examples. There are geographical areas where vegetarian or non-vegetarian food has prominence and some of the items banned. In such areas, it is difficult get the food items seek is difficult even with the help of social media.

### **CONCLUSION**

The current study has found that social media is playing a significant role in the culinary life of interstate migrant students. Migrant students are more less finding hardships in food consumption. Social media and its handles can help the group in this regard to some extent. The study has identified various problems related to food habits of interstate migrant students and how can social media be used for improving these situations. Social media also helps students in cultural exploration in their current place of living and even cultures of other geographical areas. It is hereby suggested that various social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat for the cultural education and dietary wellness awareness communication.

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## **A Study on the Rise in Demand for Regional Language OTT Platforms**

*-Prof. Vidya Deshpande*

### **ABSTRACT**

**D**uring the pandemic in 2020 and in 2021, Over-the-Top (OTT) players performed well, especially because of regional and local content. Both Netflix and Amazon Prime were quick to get their old content dubbed in Hindi and regional languages like Tamil, Telegu, Kannada, Bengali, Marathi, and Malayalam. With data connections getting cheaper, the reach of OTT platforms has moved beyond metros and there is a rising demand for content in regional languages. There are several platforms that stream exclusively in regional languages like Hoi Choi in Bengali, Sun NXT in Tamil. Recently a few movies were also launched in four languages simultaneously. Already, Netflix has slipped to number 5 with Disney Hotstar Plus and Zee 5+ being the number one and two platforms. According to EY\_FICCI report on entertainment, regional content share on OTTs will increase to 60 per cent by 2025. Regional content is already accounts for 50 per cent of the content

on OTTs platforms. Making content in regional languages especially Hindi is helping OTT platforms gain viewership in two and three tier cities. Localisation of content has gained momentum and for OTT platforms this is becoming the revenue earning mechanism. Movies, TV serials dubbed in local languages are getting far wider audiences. Audiences can watch a much larger and wider variety of shows in their own regional language. This paper, through analytical research, explores the growth of regional content, its future in the OTT market, and content development in regional languages. It will also present the future of regional language OTTs and content and its growing importance.

***Keywords:** OTT, Regional Languages, India, Content, Audiences, Growth Pattern*

## **BACKGROUND: LAUNCH OF OTT PLATFORMS AND BINGE WATCHING**

In 2013, Netflix launched all 13 episodes of House of Cards and Orange Is The New Black, and subscribers binge watched the episodes over a few days (Matrix, 2016). It became headline news as 'binge watching' was a new concept. In fact, media critics raved about this new style of watching TV serials. The Toronto Star called it the "Netflix-ication of media", like an all-you-can-eat buffet. The formula became an instant success. Others, like Prime and Hulu, followed the pattern. In fact, what Netflix successfully did was to change the way we watch TV serials, shows and movies. By putting it on a platform where you can access it at any time for a small monthly fee, Marc Randolph and Reed Hastings, owners of Netflix, disrupted the traditional broadcaster-owner network market and put videos on demand or Over The Top (OTT) platforms into the limelight.

The Netflix behemoth started as a small video rental company, taking on DVD rental company Blockbuster backed by Walmart. The Netflix goliath soon sank Blockbuster's business by streaming videos online that you could binge watch. "In popular press, binge viewing and Netflix are becoming synonymous" (Matrix, 2016).

As more people opt for binge watching, it is the cable and satellite (C&S) market that is now under threat from streaming platforms. "Netflix is now employing the same tactics to undermine cable and satellite providers, but in an outwardly nonthreatening way, the better to sneak into these new markets and disrupt the competition," says Gina Keating in *Netflixed: The epic battle for America's eyeballs*.

In 2016, Hasting and Randolph, announced their move to launch their services worldwide, including in India. "Given the potentials of its large and growing user-base, India has emerged as the latest territory ripe for the global expansion of US OTT video platforms." (Fitzgerald, 2019). It was predicted by Hollywood Reporter that India would be a key battle ground for Netflix and Amazon.

### **REASONS FOR RISE OF STREAMING PLATFORMS**

The growth has been much more than what was predicted in 2018. Other than Netflix and Amazon Prime, India has close to 60 streaming platforms in both the SVOD (Subscription Video on Demand) and AVOD (Advertising Video on Demand) formats. At the end of 2020, FICCI-EY report, *Playing By New Rules*, says 28 million Indians had paid for 53 million OTT subscriptions, leading to a 49% growth in digital subscription revenues.(FICCI-EY, 2021). "Growth was led largely by Disney+ Hotstar which put the IPL behind a paywall, increased content investments by

Netflix and Amazon Prime Video and launch of several regional language products. In addition, 284 million Indians consumed content which came bundled with their data plans."(FICCI-EY, 2021). Although the IPL season was disrupted in 2020 due to the pandemic, Disney+Hotstar managed to be ahead of the pack. Business newspaper, The Mint, links the success to the platform making its content accessible through bundled deals with telecom players like Vi (Vodafone Idea), Reliance Jio, Airtel with pre-paid offers. "2020 saw demand patterns shift as consumers actively sought alternatives and had the time to try new things," says Ashish Puri, M&E Team Leader, E&Y.

The pandemic year (2020) had a huge effect on the way we consume video content. Being locked indoors, whetted the appetite of consumers to view more and more video content. Business Magazine, Forbes (USA) says: "The average U.S. consumer now pays for four different streaming video subscriptions. Nearly one-quarter of U.S. consumers (23%) have added at least one new paid streaming video service since the pandemic began." In India, pre-pandemic Disney+Hotstar had a subscription base of 8 million, which more than tripled to 25 million by the end of 2020, according to London-based consumer research company Omdia's 'India: Online Video Trends and Omdia Consumer Research Highlights'. While Disney+Hotstar has 41% market share, the number 1 platform is Eros with 24% of the market. It is important to note here that the number 2 platform has only Hindi content with serials and movies. This has pushed Netflix to number 4 slot with just 7% of the market, while it is the number 1 platform worldwide. Amazon Prime is at number 3 with 9% of the market. And here is the catch for



Netflix. While it has 45% of the total subscription fees paid, Disney+Hotstar has 26 million subscribers while Prime has 17 million. The difference here is in the cost of subscriptions. A Netflix monthly subscription in HD costs Rs 649 p.m. (Rs 199 p.m. for SD) while Prime charges Rs 129 p.m. Disney+Hotstar on the other hand charges Rs 299 p.m. for a premium subscription, while YouTube charges Rs 129 p.m. for premium services. So, while Netflix is losing out on number of subscribers, it has higher revenues generated. How much pricing plays a role in Indian mindset needs to be studied more, with proper comparisons of the difference.

Zee5 shook up the market by offering one year's subscription for Rs 499 bundled with free views of Salman Khan starrer Radhey and for the Friends Reunion to woo young viewers. It also offers the best of serials from AltBalaji via content sharing. Manish Kalra, Chief Business Officer, Zee5 India told Forbes India this allows them to get a wider subscription base, reporting 4.2 million views for Radhey. Reed Hastings, CEO of Netflix, admitted in a share holders' call, "The thing that frustrates us is why we haven't been as successful in India, but we're definitely leaning in there."

Major regional language streaming platforms in India: Increasingly, Indians are showing a preference to watch content in local/ regional languages, a trend that OTT platform owners have taken note of. SonyLiv, which has the rights to stream Euro 2020 football championships live in India, has come up with football commentary in Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Telegu and Malayalam other than English. Disney+Hotstar adopted the same strategy for the IPL

matches to increase its audience base. FICCI-EY has projected the growth of regional language streaming to 50% of all content along with the need for dubbing, titling and formatting content for consumption on mobiles. (FICCI-EY, 2021).

Other than the popular Hindi platforms like Zee5, SonyLiv, AltBalaji, Voot and Eros Now which stream largely in Hindi, language-based platforms are increasingly becoming popular.

Hoi Choi: This is a Bengali platform launched in 2017 and has 1.3 crore subscribers, as of September 2020. It offers movies, web series, shows, with English subtitles. It streams popular Satyajit Ray movies, Bengali serials by Byomkesh, etc. It also has a library of audio songs in Bengali.

Aha Is a Telegu OTT launched in early 2020 and within a year has more than 10 lakh subscribers. The platform is owned by popular Telegu actor Allu Arjun's father Allu Aravind, who is also a film producer. It streams movies and well as exclusive web series.

SunNxt: The streaming platform of the Maran-backed Sun group streams in four south Indian languages (Tamil, Telegu, Malayalam and Kannada) and Bengali. Sun TV has a huge subscriber base for its Tamil satellite channel and has beat Star Plus as being number 1 GEC channel in BARC's TRP rankings. Subscribers to the streaming platform can also watch TV shows live. It also has audio, song videos and comedy videos in addition to movies and serials.

Koode: This Malayalam streaming platform launch by Studio Mojo in December 2020 is the new to the OTT world. The streaming platform has curated content from its popular YouTube. It's a pay-per-video platform.

**Oho:** This Gujarati channel was launched in May 2021 but already has 1.5 lakh downloads. It is the brainchild of Gujarati filmmakers Abhishek Jain and Parimal Modi. The platform is targeting diaspora Gujaratis as well as domestic Gujaratis, who are about 7 crores in numbers.

**Planet Marathi:** This streaming pay-per-view platform was launched by the production house Planet Marathi in 2020. It offers web series, food shows, talk shows and provides space to new filmmakers to showcase their talent. They are also planning to tie up with producers for 'first-day-first-show' concept of viewers paying for a one time watch of a movie on the same day as its theatrical launch.

**Olly Plus:** This is an Odia platform with movies, serials and songs launched last year.

**Reel Drama (Assamese):** This platform was launch in early 2021 by a Hyderabad production house to stream specialised content in Assamese along with movies and songs.

**Regional content consumption:** International players are facing stiff competition from regional OTT players like HoiChoi, SunNxt etc. Content localisation has been the big focus of these platforms with the demand for dubbing, subtitling, translating, and audio descriptions growing. "The global localisation industry has grown up to 40% in the last 3 years and is expected to surpass \$2.5 billion by 2021 and OTT content localisation will be the defining factor for such growth." According to a survey report by YouGov, South India has the greatest preference for subtitled content among all regions with 82%, while the Northern and the Eastern states were twice more likely than the South to prefer dubbed versions.

Netflix held a launch party for the media on March 2, 2021, in Mumbai, title, "See What's Next India 2021". It announced that it would be investing heavily in Hindi and regional language productions to bring in 40 new films and series from different corners of the country. It has a huge line up of films, serials, documentaries, comedy series and reality shows. It announced the second season of popular reality shows like Fabulous Lives of Bollywood Wives, The Big Day Collection, popular series like Delhi Crime, Jamtara. Masaba Masala, Mismatched etc. Amazon Prime has announced the coming of Family Man 3 after the stupendous success of Family Man Part 2, and next parts of Mirzapur and Made In Heaven.

There has been a virtual explosion of number of hours of original content on these platforms. Boston Consulting Group puts the number of hours at 1400-1800. (Samtani, Kanchan; Kohli, 2020). Sony Liv had 15-20 originals in Tamil and Telugu along with dubbing of Hindi shows, while Zee 5 has at least 2 originals a month in Tami. Telugu, Marathi, Bengali, Kannada for premium customers. Prime has a collection of serials in 10 languages while MX Player (an AVOD platforms) has tied up with SunNxt and HoiChoi for content in different languages. Both SunNxt and HoiChoi have several hours of exclusive programming. SunNxt has 50,000+ hours of original content including live TV, movies, originals, kinds of content and music in all southern languages. HoiChoi has about 300+ original shows and 500+ movies and it has roped in prominent Bengali actors like Raima Sen and Anirban Bhattacharya for some of its serials.

## CONTENT CREATION

Netflix has invested over Rs 3,000 crores in getting original Indian content. Owner Hastings said at the Hindustan Times Leadership Summit that shows like Sacred Games, Little Things & Delhi Crime, have proved to be popular and the company would focus on these kinds of offerings. It has tied up with Dharmatic Entertainment (Karan Johar) for a long-term exclusive partnership for fiction and non-fiction serials and new movies. It also has a tie up with Viacom 18 for new serials.(Samtani, Kanchan; Kohli, 2020) Co-content creation has become another important aspects of acquiring fresh content. Zee5 has a tie up with Alt Balaji to co-share several serials which are available exclusively only on their SVOD platforms. Disney+Hotstar, HBO and SonyLiv have a contract for embedded content across platforms. This will substantially decrease the costs of production and increase content diversity.

Future of regional OTT services: The future of OTT platforms will depend a lot on continued investments in original content. They will have to increase the diversity of content across all languages and find new ways to drive content curation and discovery. While on the on hand, OTT platforms must look at localization of content and hyper segmentation of the audience, they also need to produce content for global audiences. Increasingly, many serials, movies and shows are following a multi-language format. The producers of Soorarai Pottru, a Tamil movie based on the life of Air Deccan founder GR Gopinath, was not launched in theatres due to the pandemic but on OTT. Also, the makers dubbed the movies in south Indian languages and in Hindi. The strategy proved an instant success. It is now

the third highest rated movie of all time after *The Shawshank Redemption* (9.3) and *The Godfather* (9.2) at 9.1 on IMDb, the largest data base on films, serials, shows etc.

In a bid to cater to multi-language audiences, Prime launched *Family Man 2* with large parts in Tamil, English, and Hindi. The mix of languages worked well for the serial along with the cast who were from different regions. This formula will be used by other production houses too as it went down well with different audiences.

Conclusion: Regional languages have emerged as the main stays of OTT platforms. Companies like Netflix and Prime have begun to increase content in Indian languages to increase the subscriber base. They are offering not only dubbed Hollywood content, but also original content made in different languages as well as exclusive content in regional languages. A good move by streaming platforms has been to give commentary options in local languages. Hotstar started the trend for IPL with commentary in 6 languages including English, which has been replicated by SonyLiv for the coverage of Euro 2020 football matches. And this is just the tip of the iceberg. The potential of regional content is yet to be realised to its full and in the coming years, it's this market that will help OTT platforms expand their market.

The use of globally appealing stories, real life crime stories, actors across regions are all strategies that have worked and will be increasingly used by OTT platforms. Further segmenting the payment packs by offering pay-per-view and even non premium access for as low as Rs 50 per month are some of the strategies being devised by companies.

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### **FURTHER RESEARCH**

1) Study the costing patterns of streaming platforms and the options that consumers prefer and look at cost sharing of content creation to reduce production costs and retain subscriber base.

2) Study on how content creation can be made more internationally appealing as well across regions by using actors from different states.

3) Study the content offered and analyse the types of content that are popular among views to increase subscriber base.

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# **Inclusivity in Media: Experiences of Tribal Journalists in Ranchi in the Context of Cultural Diversity Debate**

*-Puja Kumari*

## **ABSTRACT**

**T**he media is not just a "channel of dissemination of information" but holds a much more significant space and role in shaping any society. The interdependency of the media and society creates knowledge and information based on the people involved as a work force and is also affected by the structure of society as a contextual framework. The media is intimately linked to the concept of diversity with reference to its content, function, structure, ownership, audience, and accessibility. And the expectations that media will 'reflect society' can be supported on the grounds either that it is what their audiences want or that those who work in the media are a cross-section, at least in their values and beliefs (McQuail D., 2000). Diversity of culture among media professionals also implies inclusion of marginalized groups. So, to what extent has the Indian media been able to establish the representation of the

different sections of society? Kenneth J Cooper, an African-American and the former Delhi bureau chief of the Washington Post noted in 1990's that "India's majority lower castes are minor voices in newspaper".

Anil Chamaria in his paper on the Representation on Tribal and Dalit quotes that "On a survey on employee in the Bihar media after 2006 it was mapped that there were none from the Tribal community". Also, the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in New Delhi reported in 2006 that of 315 key decision makers in the mainstream new media, none was from the tribal community. The current newsroom debate about representation in India lacks tribal's, which prompts concern about the diversity of journalists and an urgent need to ascertain the reality of this debate and the causes of this workplace culture. The study aims to collect the experiences and opinion of media person belonging to tribal communities in Ranchi city in context of cultural diversity debate. The study's approach is qualitative and includes in-depth interviews as its methodology. The thorough interview of tribal journalists in Ranchi sheds light on the current state of the field of journalism and further the discussion of "inclusivity of media with reference to tribal representation". The study concludes by the perspectives of tribal journalists and the suggested solution through their experiences as journalists.

**Keywords:** *Inclusivity in Media, Tribal Journalists, Cultural diversity.*

## INTRODUCTION

The term 'mass communication' was coined, along with that of 'mass media', early in twentieth century to describe what was then a new social phenomena and a key feature of

emerging modern world that was being build on the foundations of industrialization and popular democracy (McQuail D. , McQuail's Mass Communication Theory, 2010). The interdependency of the media and society creates knowledge and information based on the people involved as a work force and is also affected by the structure of society as a contextual framework. Journalism holds a significant role in India's freedom struggle to voice suppressed and unheard opinions. With the publication of the first newspaper, "Bengal Gazette", in the year 1780, James Augustus Hicky pioneered the journey of Indian media. The Indian language journalism was pioneered by the newspaper Samachar Darpan and other Bengali periodicals along with Persian newspaper Miratool Akbar (Kumar K. J., 2018). The media has a long history of contributing to the nation's development. The emergence and development of Indian media put forward the significant role in framing and evolving India in political, social and cultural context.

Normative theories state certain norms and standards and apply these to the actions of the media, and especially to defining various expectations concerning the structure, conduct and performance of the media (McQuail D. , Mass Communication Theory, 2010). The role of the media in a democratic structure is as a catalyst for the development and representation of people. Here, "people" stand for the individual from all the diversified communities existing in the democratic state, thus promoting inclusivity. The notion of inclusion usually refers to heterogeneous groups' participation in society on an equal footing, e.g., their equitable sharing of social goods. Frequently, inclusion also denotes the targeted efforts to culturally, socially,

economically, civically, or politically incorporate underprivileged, disadvantaged, marginalized, or subaltern social groups (Zilla, 2022). As one dimension of the duality inclusion/exclusion, the concept serves for discussing a variety of problems such as the lack of social justice, equal opportunity, and social recognition as well as the existence of marginalization, discrimination, and oppression from different theoretical angles (Zilla, 2022). So, to what extent is the Indian media inclusive with reference to cultural diversity?

### **SCHEDULED TRIBES AND INDIAN MEDIA**

The Indian society and the concept of caste run parallel to each other, and the media couldn't stay unaffected from this. Caste is a form of social stratification characterization of by endogamy hereditary of a lifestyle, which often includes an occupation, status in a hierarchy, customary social interaction, and exclusion (Scott & Marshall, 2009). The independence of the country in 1947 established a democratic state in India with a Constitution. The Constitution of Indian eliminates all kind of injustice and practice of inequality based of caste, creed and religion. However, the conflicts regarding the caste-based issues had been in existence since long especially on the matter of right of suppressed class that is Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe. The tribal people of India are called 'Scheduled Tribes' in the Indian constitution. Often the debate of representation is put forth to underline the slow growth and the ignored portrayal of suppressed classes. So, to what extent the Indian media had been able to establish the representation of the different section of the society! India has the second largest tribal population in the world, the first being Africa. The

Anthropological Survey of India under the 'People of India Project' identified 4,635 communities in India, of which 461 communities were of the scheduled tribes (Tribes in India, 2020).

Kenneth J Cooper, an African- American and the former Delhi bureau chief of the Washington Post noted in 1990's that "India's majority lower castes are minor voices in newspaper". The Centre for the study of Developing societies in the New Delhi reported in 2006 that not even one person who belonged to the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribe were part of the 315 key decision makers in the mainstream New Media (Delhi based 37 publication and channel). Anil Chamaria in his paper on the Representation on Tribal and Dalit quotes that "On a survey on employee in the Bihar media after 2006 it was mapped that 73% were from higher class, 10% of them were from backward class, 1% from Dalit and none from the Tribal community. Adding to the fact the paper notes that each mainstream newspaper of Jharkhand includes tribal however one tribal in each except one organization where two tribal are the part of workforce". He also quotes that until 70's no debates emerged as matter of concern about the no Tribal and Dalit in India media; the debate created pressure and emphasis on the debate however it resulted in very little changes. As per the Census by Government of India in year 2011 it is to note that 26.3 per cent of total population state of Jharkhand includes Schedule Tribe and 11.8 per cent but the status in media representation is near about similar. The data portrays the clear image about the status of the Tribal communities. However, there are more layers underneath the fact of representation.

The Journalism entered India in 1780's that is at the pre-independence era and the independence changed the India in context of more freedom to press, technological advancement, emergence of different media and the ownership. However, the major change comes up with the inclusion of Journalism as course in India. The initiation of media education remains with P.P. Singh who introduced it in Punjab University in 1941; however, hammer to hot iron was struck with recommendation of Journalism by the University Grant Commission in 1977. Inclusion of Journalism created a professional space with the expectation of the betterment of journalism field and creating opportunity for all to be part of media as well. However, it doesn't seem achieving expected goal.

The Report of National development Corporation for the media and entertainment industry estimated that there would be increase of employment in the media and entertainment sector from 1.1 million persons in 2008 to 4 to 4.1 million persons in 2022. If this is the expectation, then where is there room for the tribal in this given population? Where and what is the hurdle that striking out or keeping this section away from being part of media. The process of requirement is to be questioned or the expectation or parameter of the media market. Lack of involvement and representation of oppressed class need a check point to understand the decline of participation.

Until 2000 the state of Jharkhand was part of Bihar and therefore if we attempt to dig out the history of journalism in Jharkhand, we need to explore the media of Bihar. The tribal communities' identity was among one of the major

issues in the movement for the demand for Jharkhand as a separate state. Early news paper in Bihar were Bengal Magazine, Bihar Bandhu, Samachar Chandrika, Qasid, Behar Times, Behar Herald, Bengalee, Al Punch, Indian Mirror, The Behar News, The Beharee, Daily Hitavadi etc. (Singh, 2012). The Doordarshan Kendra, Ranchi was commissioned on 25th September'1984 to accelerate the socio-economic and cultural development of the people including tribal of this area (<https://www.ddjharkhand.com/about-us/>, 2019). The media in Ranchi has been expanding its reach to the people of the state and the most recently the trend of web portal and a converging media setup had entered here. Therefore, it is relevant to explore the experiences of the journalists of the tribal communities in Ranchi city to dig out their views and opinions on this debate.

### **OBJECTIVE**

i. To collect the experiences and opinion of media person belonging to tribal communities in Ranchi city.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

i. What are the major problems and solution associated with inclusivity in the media?

ii. What are journalists' perspectives on the media's inclusivity debate?

iii. What are experiences of the journalists belonging to the tribal communities?

### **STUDY AREA**

The study was conducted in Ranchi city, capital of Jharkhand state, India. Ranchi being the capital city of Jharkhand tends to have industrial zone for the active media house of the state. Also, most of the bureau office of media houses is in the city of Ranchi.



## **METHOD**

To collect experiences and opinions of tribal journalists in Ranchi in the context of the cultural diversity debate, this study adopts a qualitative research method combining in-depth interviews of the journalists of tribal communities in Ranchi city. The questions of the in-depth interview were semi-structured. For this study, 13 tribal journalists were identified in Ranchi city, out of which 8 respondents were interviewed. The study includes journalists who are currently associated with media organizations and those who have spent remarkable times as journalists in new oriented print, electronic, and digital media organizations. The list of the sample was prepared by using the accredited lists of journalists by the Information and Public Relations Department, the Government of Jharkhand and the Ranchi press club member list. Furthermore, the tribal journalists were identified by interacting directly with editors and journalists of different media organizations in Ranchi. The interviewees were contacted by the researcher and, after seeking permission, the researcher conducted the interview in-person. The modes of the interview were face-to-face interaction and telephonic. All interviews were recorded through an audio recorder with prior permission obtained from the respondent, and notes were taken by the researcher. The interview was conducted in both English and Hindi, based on the preference of the interviewee. The recorded interviews were transcribed manually by the researcher. These datasets were then categorized and thematically examined.

## LIST OF SAMPLE JOURNALISTS WITH THEIR ORGANIZATION

Sl. No.	Name	Media Organization
1.	Surender Lal Soren	Tribe TV
2.	Poonam Kerketta	All India radio
3.	Jyotshna Sheela Dang	All India Radio
4.	Sunita Munda	The Loktantra
5.	Vijay Oraon	Web Portal
6.	Ashish Tigga	Hindustan
7.	Vasawi Kido (Worked as journalist for about 20 years)	Social Activist
8.	Santosh Kido (Amongst first tribal journalist in English newspapers)	St. Xavier's
9.	Manoj Praveen Lakra	Prabhat Khabar
10.	Oli	All India Radio
11.	Chunda Soren	Retired
12.	Karan Minj	-
13.	Cornelius Minj	-

### FINDINGS

In-depth interviews were conducted, and major themes identified from the data are described below in detail with illustrative quotes from the data.

#### a) Educational background of tribal journalist

Not all tribal journalists have a journalism degree, but they have all graduated. The journalist who didn't have a journalism degree told during 1980's - 1990's time, people with knowledge of writing and reading used to be appointed as journalists. Journalists who were well-learned considered

it a benefit to their career as they performed well, and challenges were canceled out because of their skills. One of respondent said:

"जितने लोग भी लिखते पढ़ते थे सीधे सीधे पत्रकारिता में आ जाते थे."

"Whoever people used to read and write; they went straight to journalism".

The respondents also expressed that the relevance of reading and writing is of utmost priority when it comes to good journalism.

#### b) Choosing media as career

The participant's major reason for choosing media as a career was self-motivation and included an interest in writing and reading. The power of the media attracted all of them, hence leading them to get into journalism. BBC radio also acted as a source of curiosity for the tribal journalist whose career began in the 1980's and 1990's. Appreciation and support from the senior journalists motivated most of the respondents to choose journalism as a career.

One of participant quoted words from a senior journalist:

"सोरेन साहेब कहाँ फिल्म-सिनेमा में जायेंगे। आप जैसे लोगो की जरूरत यहाँ है। यह आइये और अपने समाज को कुछ वापस दीजिये "

"Soren Saheb, Why do you want to go into the film and cinema? People like you are needed here. Come and give something back to your society."

Apart from these, one of the senior journalists' major motivations was the domicile movement during the formation of Jharkhand state.

One of the respondents said:

"जब झारखण्ड में डोमिकिले आंदोलन चल रहा था तब हम पढाई करते थे, उस दौरान हम अक्सर लेटर तो एडिटर लिखते थे इसी से रिलेटेड। वैसे करते मन में एक इंटरैस्ट पैदा हुआ"

When the Domicile movement was going on in Jharkhand, I used to study. I used to frequently send letters to editors about this during that time. By the way, I developed an interest...

One of the female senior journalists said that she carved her path to the media house in order to take the rural issue to the government through her writing and also to fill the communication gap. Two individuals were encouraged to work in this field by the dissatisfaction with the news coverage of tribal-related concerns.

c) Level of satisfaction from journalism as career

Except for one tribal female journalist, no one was completely satisfied with their career. She considered being on All India Radio to be her reason for satisfaction in her career.

She said:

"Perhaps because I work in a government-owned media where the work, promotion, and salary systems are all standardized." Therefore, I have no dissatisfaction. "

Almost all of the journalists called journalism a journey, and therefore, it is a never-ending process of progress and downfall.

One of the participants quoted:

"मैं अपने काम से पूरी तरह संतुष्ट नहीं हूँ क्योंकि यह एक यात्रा है। हालांकि यह मेरे लिए उपलब्धि है कि खूंटी के नक्सल प्रभावित इलाके में जहाँ रिपोर्टिंग करना बहुत मुश्किल है, खासकर एक महिला पत्रकार के लिए मैंने वहाँ इतने सलून से काम कर रही हूँ। मेरी रिपोर्टिंग ने वहाँ के आदिवासी लोगों को आवाज दी और लोग मुखर होने लगे वे अपने मुद्दों के लिए मीडिया तक पहुंचने लगे और आत्मविश्वास हासिल कर रहे थे।"

"I am not completely satisfied with my work as it is a journey. Although it is an achievement for me that in the Naxal-affected area of Khunti, where reporting is very difficult, especially for a female journalist, I am working so well there. My reporting gave voice to the tribal people, and people started becoming vocal. They started reaching out to the media about their issues and were gaining confidence."

One of the prominent reasons for dissatisfaction, as per the participant, is the decline in ethics in the media and the downfall of real journalism. Some of the respondents also expressed their dissatisfaction by quoting that "Everything has changed now; nobody reads now. So, to whom shall I write? "

d) India media is run by Upper caste Hindus!

All of the journalists agreed that the media is run by the upper caste Hindus as they hold the top positions in almost all of the media houses. However, journalists also expressed that they are running the media as they are more skilled and capable. The respondent said that "we cannot question them about why they are sitting at that post. Instead, it must be why we are not reaching there."

According to the respondents, they had mixed experiences. Some found this as a major factor that led to the media's biased approach in dealing with issues associated with tribal and deprived areas. However, some had good experiences too, where they were motivated by their seniors. Also, there were people who didn't talk in detail about it.

One of the respondents just quoted this as a response to this question:

"अगर तालाब में बड़ी मछली है तो छोटी मछली को खा जयेगी।"

"If there is a big fish in the pond, it will eat the small fish."

e) Level of inclusivity in media for tribal communities

All the journalists expressed concern about the lack of tribal journalists in the media even after 22 years of the formation of Jharkhand and more than 75 years of the Independence of India. On average, all of them have known a maximum of 10 tribal journalists throughout their journey as media person. It was also found during interviews with the participants that challenges are more in media for tribal people in their initial times in media. The participants expressed that the caste system often comes into the workspace as well. However, the participants also stated that this cannot be generalized because we met motivating and supportive people in that crowd as well. Also, almost all of the participants said that they took the suppression as a challenge and a problem that shall not be affecting their work.

The respondent also stated that tribal journalists are entering the media. However, due to the majority of upper-caste Hindus in the Indian media, experiences of exclusivity are often encountered prominently at the beginning of a career.

Quote from one of the participants:

"आदिवासी पत्रकार आ रहे हैं। हालाँकि यह सच है की उच्च हिन्दू जाति हाबी रहती है, तो हमें भुगतना होता है। हमें जगह बनानी होती है और आप फिर संघर्ष करना सिख जाते हैं।"

"Tribal journalists are coming. Although it is true that the upper Hindu caste prevails, we have to suffer. We have to make room and you learn to fight again."

Quote by participant -

"If media claims to be unbiased then they have to be unbiased, but the reality is that they are not."

f) Impact on Professional experience

The participants shared the impact of the lack of tribal journalists in the media. The work distribution is highly effected and almost all of them were restricted to specific beats, including tribal-related beats. It was an opportunity as well for them since no one could do it better. However, the restriction to just tribal beat slowed their growth as well. Three of the participants shared that they were offered with beats no one was offered, like crime and religion. However, one of the participants said that he took it as a challenge, and therefore made his remarkable space in this beat.

One of the participants shared:

"मुझे क्राइम बीट दी गयी थी। मेरे साथी कैबिनेट और दूसरी जगह रिपोर्टिंग करने जाते थे और मैं क्राइम सीन पर। मुझे बुरा लगता था। हालांकि बाद में मैंने ऐसी बीट में अपन नाम बनाया जो शायद दूसरी बीट में नहीं बन पाती।"

"I was given a crime beat. My colleagues used to go to the cabinet and elsewhere to report crimes, and I was at the crime scene. I felt bad. However, later, I made a name for myself here that might not have been possible with other beats."

The participants said that their promotions were delayed and people junior to them got promoted earlier. The journalists in public broadcasting didn't have any issues associated with the matter of promotion, and one of the journalists denied any level of partiality for promotion and quoted that "if you are skilled enough, no one can stop you". Participants also expressed their experience regarding being bullied by their fellow journalists by using casteist jokes. She said: "I gave that well-known newspaper my 13 years,

but it was not confirmed. I came to know that they would not confirm me because I do not belong to the upper caste."

Due to mental breakdown and financial instability in journalism, most journalists have at least once thought about changing their profession. Two of them switched from mainstream media due to some experience of caste-based exclusion at work.

g) Problems in the achieving inclusivity

The major problems with reference to inclusivity in the media, according to the participants, are mentioned below.

i. Almost in all private-owned media houses, there is a lack of a structured recruitment process. The selection process is based on recommendations, and therefore, favoritism and partiality take over the fare appointment process.

ii. Another major issue is regarding the sustainability of tribal journalism. After interacting with tribal journalists, they expressed a concern that many of the journalists came into the field but changed or left the profession.

iii. A systematic salary system and equal grade pay are required as, according to the participants, this leads to putting many journalists in a dilemma to choose between survival and their profession. And often results in leaving the field of journalism. One of the senior journalists quoted that "It is not always the media house atmosphere but sometimes it is the issue of survival, especially today when media had decreased its salary by around 40%".

iv. One of common opinion from the participant was that tribal people don't want to come into journalism. They quoted that - "पत्रकारिता आदिवासियों के मिजाज का नहीं है" (Journalism is not in the mood of tribals). Because there is no job security or systematic salary system and for tribal people its way to



demanding to be creative every day. And you need special kind of madness for journalism that cannot be taught in books". The ones who are studying journalism have a greater attraction towards government-based media organizations or positions like public relations officers.

v. According to the participants, there is little or no self-realization among tribal communities to contribute to their society.

vi. Cultural shock is quite common among tribal people, and it frequently causes difficulties in adjusting to mainstream Indian society. Furthermore, the unwelcome nature of trolling and bullying diverts their attention away from this field.

#### h) Suggested solutions for enhancing inclusivity

Based on the experiences and opinions of the participants, these are the suggested solutions to enhance inclusivity in the media with reference to tribal communities.

1. The most important aspect of increasing inclusivity is that mainstream media must create space for tribal journalists to actually fulfill their accountability to the people. Also, tribal people must come into the field of journalism and create space for themselves through their skills and capabilities. Participants also suggested that the tribal journalists should update and upgrade themselves according to the market.

2. Participants expressed concern over the urgent need for a structured recruitment process, not just for tribal inclusivity but also for the betterment of declining media.

3. One of the participants quoted that "The tribal people need to realize that they have to come into this field to join the mainstream. Then only their issue will be solved, and they can develop".

4.They also mentioned that "Their attitude needs to be questioned, not that the upper caste Hindus are more in the media. Because attitude is the real issue".

5.At the level of universities and colleges, good lecturers are needed in order to train the fresher journalists well.

6.One of the journalists put forth the need to include a separate section for tribal issues so that, based on that, they could be included, in an actual sense, in the mainstream.

7.Apart from all these solutions, most of them said that journalists coming from tribal communities must take it as a challenge and work on it more effectively.

8.As for the solution that has already come up, all of them said to switch to alternate media and run their own platform like many are doing. Also, almost all raised their hopes by mentioning the social media that has decentralized and democratized media, thus leading to natural inclusion.

### CONCLUSION

It was found that the mainstream media in Ranchi city, including public broadcasting services, lack tribal journalists. The reason, as per the respondent, lays both ways; that is at the level of tribal joining media and also space created by mainstream media for tribal communities. Although not all tribal journalists have a degree in mass communication, they are all graduated in some subject. Self-motivation is a major factor in choosing the media as a career for tribal journalists. However, recognition from senior journalists and social movements were also factors in deciding to join the media. The level of satisfaction regarding the career is partial as "most of them considered it as a journey," but the dissatisfaction level is high based on the decline of ethics

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in the media and facing disrespect. It was also found that the media is run by upper-caste Hindus. However, journalists also expressed that they are running the media as they are in top positions and are more skilled. "We cannot question them about why they are sitting at that post. Instead, it must be why we are not reaching there".

Also, the attitude of treatment tribal journalists as inferior should be stopped in order to promote inclusivity in a real sense. The lack of a structured recruitment process seems to be a major problem. Also, the media field seems unappealing to tribal communities due to its payment system and lack of job security. Cultural shock and lack of realization about the importance of contributing to their society among tribal communities are the hurdles too. Casteist jokes seem to contribute to creating a negative image of the media. However, it was found that willpower and converting negative energies to develop tribal journalists is a formula for surviving in the media for a long time. Education for skill development and improvement is required. As a solution, respondent stressed on alternative media and social media. The tribal communities have already started creating their own media as a way to voice their opinions. To summarize, tribal journalists appear to have more hope from social media than mainstream Indian media.

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**Social Media and Youth Engagement for  
Creating Environmental Awareness:  
A Study in Twin Capital City of  
Arunachal Pradesh**

*-Punyo Oka*

**ABSTRACT**

**S**ocial media is a tool that allows people to create and share different ideas, information, and picture/ videos. Presently, social media has become an immensely powerful tool of communication, interaction and participation in activities related to social or political issues. Environmental degradation is one of the most crucial problems the world is facing now. In connection to environmental concerns, social media is playing a significant role in keeping the ongoing problems and undesirable conditions of environment in front of us within no time. Moreover, the explosion of social media usage, such as, Facebook and Twitter particularly among the youths deemed to have enormous potential in widely disseminating environmental related issues. In this context, this study

explores youth engagement for creating environmental awareness in Twin capital city (i.e., Itanagar and Naharlagun) of Arunachal Pradesh using Facebook and Twitter as platforms of social engagement. The study is executed by employing mixed method approach. To fulfill the objectives of the study a survey has been conducted through a structured questionnaire among the youths of twin capital city of Arunachal Pradesh and for social media analysis, researcher has selected the contents of social networking sites such as Facebook, and Twitter. Accordingly, the study attempts to understand the impact and effectiveness of social media as a tool for creating environmental awareness and environmental activism.

**Keywords:** *Environmental Awareness, Social Media, Social Media Activism, Youth Engagement*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Social media has become an important part of our society and our world particularly for younger generation, as young people are less into reading and watching news. Today's youth mostly rely on social media to acquire information and notify people about the current events happening around the world. As social media opens up the possibilities of discovering and exploring new information, sharing ideas, and interacting with others, no other media has become so popular in such a short period of time like social media.

As per data, the number of people actively using social network in India is about 518 million (cycles & Text, n.d.), and it is growing faster with the availability of cheaper broadband connection. It is estimated that, by 2040, there would be 1.5 billion social network users. Social media is

transforming the pattern of social interaction and used as a means of entertainment, social awareness, surveillance, change agent and reaching out to people.

In late 2019, over the controversy of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) people of India took streets protest, where protestors relied on social media to raise their voices and gather support. But at the same time there were many who could not attend the protest in person. So, with the help of social media platforms like WhatsApp and Twitter they were constantly following what was happening on the ground. Social media was used by both sides of the CAA/NRC to show support and push their own narrative through platforms such as WhatsApp and Twitter (Zamre, n.d.). In context of Arunachal Pradesh, when it comes to the usage of internet and social media, the most popular social networks are YouTube and Facebook (Stephen & Pramanathan, 2015). However, the use of social media in creating environmental awareness and environmental activism is relatively an unexplored area of study which needs some attention of the research community.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDELINES**

Government has introduced some Acts and Rules in order to protect environment through different departments like The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972; The Biological Diversity Act, 2002; The Environment (Protection) Act and Rules, 1986, The Environment (Protection) Second Amendment Rules, 2004; Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, amended 1988; Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2003 etc. Thus, NGOs also help government to obtain relevant information for promoting and facilitate the implementation

of major environmental programmes (Role of NGOs to Protect Environment, n.d.). The necessity of environmental awareness and enforcement is more demanding and urgent today, therefore, all these government and NGOs have combined together to act for the cause of conservation and protection of environment. Also, it is individuals' duty to protect our environment at the same time. Hence, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), established in 1972, addresses environmental issues at the global and regional level for the United Nations. UNEP's mission is "to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations."

So, the purpose of this study is to explore the Youth Engagement through social media for Creating Environmental Awareness in Twin capital city of Arunachal Pradesh. The study has been executed by conducting mixed method. To fulfill the objectives of the study, the researcher employed survey method by constructing a structured questionnaire. Study is executed by content analysis of the page/group related to environment in social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The Youth has been selected specifically for the study because, according to a survey conducted, 54 percent of the Indian internet user base is between 20-39 years which indicates that youth are more active in social media than other age group. Similarly, Social media has managed to give youth the power to speak their mind, as youth help in building nation. They have the power to help a country develop and move towards progress.



## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The general objective of the study is to explore Youth Engagement through social media for Creating Environmental Awareness in Twin capital city of Arunachal Pradesh

Specific objectives are:

i) To study the impact of social media as a tool for creating Environmental Awareness among the youths of Twin capital of Arunachal Pradesh

ii) To study youth participation in Environmental Activism with the help of Social Media in Arunachal Pradesh.

iii) To find out collective actions taken by the youths for protection of environment prompted by Social Media Activism.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Literature review is a critical component of any research process where one is required to acknowledge and appreciate the research work carried out in the concerned area of the study. Reviewing the research work invokes critical thinking, adds to one's knowledge of the subject being researched upon and also identifying the limitations in the earlier studies. In order to develop a sound conceptual framework to carry out the study, a review of the relevant research articles, journal, and books has been attempted. Works done on the issue in India and Arunachal Pradesh have been consulted as far as possible. For the purpose of this study, the researcher has reviewed literature relating to, Social Media, Social Media and Environment.

### **Social Media**

(Shabir et al., 2014) in their study on "An Impact of social media on youth" figured out the majority of the

respondents agreed with the influences of social media. Moreover, In (Boulianne, 2015) study, the metadata demonstrated a positive relationship between social media use and participation. And more than 80% of coefficients were positive. Which shows that social media is one of the prominent social networking sites that helps people especially youth to engage and participate in any social, political or environment related issues.

Social media has been serving the people all across the world by different means. It also plays an important role for interaction and entertainment. With passing of time, new technologies take its place in more convenient way through which people can get immediate comments and feedback. Therefore, Facebook is considered a wider network, reference for the place to connect with people you actually know and a powerful appropriation storytelling tool (Suh et al., 2017).

With over 560 million internet users, India is the second largest online market in the world, ranked only behind China. It was estimated that by 2023, there would be over 650 million internet users the country. Despite the large base of internet users, the internet penetration rate in the country stood at around 50 percent in 2020. This meant that around half of the 1.37 billion Indians had access to internet that year. There has been a consistent increase in internet accessibility compared to just five years ago, when the internet penetration rate was around 27 percent.

(Mehta et al., 2014) Advanced Wireless technologies have proved to be of great boon to the telecommunication sector in developing it. The purpose of the user has been served more rather than the operator making it more reliable

for the user. By the addition of different technologies, and adding 5G into it, mobile technology can be more powerful and more in demand. And also it will serve society in more efficient and helpful way (Patel et al., n.d.)

### **SOCIAL MEDIA AND ENVIRONMENT**

(Scherman et al., 2015) in their study on "Youth environmental activism in the age of social media: the case of Chile (2009-2019)" shows that social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, are positively associated with participation in environmental protests. Individuals who spend more time on social media platforms are more likely to participate in such protests. Therefore, this social media can be utilized as a tool to promote awareness regarding various current environmental issues in a much faster way and to a large mass within a very short span of time (Mallick & Bajpai, 2019).

(Han & Xu, 2020) "A Comparative Study of the Role of Interpersonal Communication, Traditional Media and Social Media in Pro-Environmental Behavior: A China-Based Study" discovered that social media affects pro-environmental behavior mainly by strengthening the effects of interpersonal communication. The research reveals that while different types of information exposure affect pro-environmental behavior differently, interpersonal communication plays a central role. (Ghermandi & Sinclair, 2019) The analysis of the rapidly growing body of studies using social media data in various environmental disciplines supports the notion that this new data source offers unprecedented opportunities to extend the scope, scale and depth of research, especially insofar as the interactions between humans and the environment are concerned, but, at the same time, present

environmental researchers with a range of issues involving potential biases, big data management and rapidly evolving frameworks with which they are generally not familiar. Thus, the social media can be a channel for connecting to opinion leaders, and issues can be disseminated much faster through a few powerful connections (Jung et al., 2020).

(Vu et al., 2021) The study suggests that discussing on climate change impacts, global climate NGOs focus more on what is happening rather than what has already happened in the past or will happen in the future. (Bodin & Crona, 2009) The study has identified the existence of social networks as a common and important denominator in cases where different stakeholders come together to effectively deal with natural resource problems and dilemma.

From the few studies that have been reviewed it is clear that, as the time passed by the evolution and changes has been taking place, be it growth in population, changes in different sectors of society, changes in environment, and revolutionary changes in technology. With the advent of technologies, social media plays a vital role in shaping the world in a better place. Social media platform gives new spaces to connect, interact, communicate and engage on different issues especially among the youth. Social media has managed to give youth the power to speak their mind, as youth help in building nation. As, they have the power to help a country develop and move towards progress.

The present chapter has discussed and analyzed an understanding of the social media and its effective role among the users. It also dealt with social media activism and how it is playing a role among the users and how an activist distributes movements' goals. It also highlights on

not only giving an opportunity to activists to voice out their demands on an issue, but it also gives an opportunity to every individual participant which denotes minorities empowerments such as, women or youth, by giving them a platform to be heard, and by including them in the discussion in various environmental issues in social media.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study has adopted mixed method approach. A survey has been conducted through a structured questionnaire for the youth between the age group of 20 - 35 years of Arunachal Pradesh, using Snowball sampling.

For Content analysis, researcher selected the social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter as they are the most popular sites among the Youth of Twin capital City of Arunachal Pradesh and analyzed the contents from October 2019 to November 2020 related to environmental activities. In order to make the data adequate, the researcher observed and analyzed the selected pages such as Youth Mission for Clean River and Fridays for Future India: Arunachal Pradesh in Facebook and Twitter respectively. Accordingly, the Communication pattern, community building and interaction posts through Facebook and Twitter has been analyzed.

### **DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

Table 1. Medium through which Youth of Twin capital city mostly receive information related to Environmental issue

Social Media	Percentage
Facebook	72.3%
Twitter	11.7%
WhatsApp	8.5%
Instagram	7.5%

Through the collected primary data, it has been found that 72.3% of the Youth in Twin capital city of Arunachal Pradesh receives information related to environmental issues through Facebook, followed by Twitter and other social media platforms.

Similarly, it has also been found that the youth does pay attention to the issues posted in social media related to environmental awareness, which indicates that social media such as Facebook plays some role the process of dissemination of information related to environment among the youth of Twin capital of Arunachal Pradesh.

The study also indicates that Facebook helps Youth to actively participate in the environmental awareness by sharing and reposting the contents or posts in social media so that it reaches to the people of the state as many as possible.

Table 2. Participation of youth in the movement related to Environmental issues mobilized through Social Media

Movement based on the mobilization through social media	Percentage
Yes	36.2%
No	63.8%

Table 3. Youth response on Social Media playing an important role in creating Environmental Awareness

Social Media plays an important role in creating environmental awareness	Percentage
Yes	95.7%
No	4.3%

According to the table no.2, the study found that the only 36.2% of the Youth in Twin capital of City did

participate in the environmental related movement, mobilized through social media. However, at the same time 95.7% of the Youth agree that Social Media plays an important role in creating environmental awareness, which shows that the spreading and sharing of information enhanced the people, especially the Youth and helped them in engagement with the protest and also engaging new participant and leading to the coordination of offline action in the movement at the same time.

### CONTENT ANALYSIS

For content analysis, selected Facebook and Twitter pages were observed and analyzed such as Youth Mission for clean River (YMCR) and Fridays for Future India: Arunachal Pradesh (FFFI) to access the communication pattern, Interaction with post and community building among the Youth of Twin Capital city of Arunachal Pradesh and accordingly analysis, interpretations and discussion were elicited.

Table 4. Number of posts shared in Youth mission for Clean River (YMCR) page.

Issues	No. of posts
Clean River	60
Waste management	25
Global Climate Strike	18
Plantation drive	42
Cleanliness drive	40
Pakke Tiger Reserve	15
Total	200

Table 5. Number of posts shared on Fridays for Future India: Arunachal Pradesh (FFF) page.

Issues	No. of posts
Clean River	12
Waste Management	6
Global climate strike	8
Plantation drive	10
Cleanliness drive	9
Pakke Tiger Reserve	5
Total	50

## **COMMUNICATION PATTERN**

### **Number of Posts**

The total posts in the Facebook and Twitter page 'Youth Mission of Clean river page' and 'Fridays for Future India: Arunachal Pradesh' is 250. The analysis revealed that members of page group published various posts on local environmental issues not only under the Twin capital city of Arunachal Pradesh but also other parts of Arunachal Pradesh.

### **Frequency**

According to the observation made on the frequency of the posts, the posts on both Facebook and Twitter pages such as Youth Mission for Clean River and Fridays for Future India: Arunachal Pradesh on waste management have been shared 31 times in the month of October 2019- March 2020. Also posts on clean river have been shared 72 times from the month of October 2019 to November 2020. Similarly, posts on global climate strike have been shared 26 times, plantation drive 52 times, cleanliness drive 49 times from the month of December 2019 to August 2020, and strike over salary delay of the staffs of Pakke Tiger Reserve together shared over 20 times in the same time period.



### **Tone of Language**

The study revealed that there were no provocative and misleading comments or replies are observed. All the posts were appropriate which indicates that the Youth of Arunachal Pradesh taking the environmental issues very seriously and trying their best to bring the positive outcome by creating awareness regarding the environmental issues among the people of the state.

### **Mode of Communication**

Mode of communication was classified based on three types, words, images, and videos. According to the study the most frequent media type was images (45 per cent), followed by videos (30 per cent) and text with 25 per cent less spotted. The study also found that sharing contents helps to maintain high posting frequency while saving time.

### **Interaction with Posts**

Facebook offers the options for interactivity between its users, so people can make reactions on posts such as, like, love, laughing, wow, sad, and angry emojis, through which they can express their thoughts and feelings about that particular post.

From the 250 posts coded in the study, most of the posts reacted with a like and love reaction. Only few of them actually commented on a post. This was because a click on reaction button and share button is more comfortable than writing a comment.

### **Community Building**

Another category is how the members of the Facebook and Twitter pages find ways to build strong relationship between the Youths of Twin capital city. The study has analyzed through pages that they interact with each other by

inviting for the movement, through supportive comments, good wishes and by encouraging each other for taking up such good initiatives.

Posts were not just about organizing and inviting. There were posts on the achievements and successfully conducting the campaign. Furthermore, the members conduct many other programs like debate and poetry competition, which talks on local environment issues, where students from different colleges and universities participated, observing Global Climate Strike. The main motive of this event was to connect Youth to stay connected, join hands together and to pledge to save and preserve our ecosystem and together follow the path of sustainability.

### **CONCLUSION**

The rapid growth of Facebook and Twitter, the most debated and discussed social media platforms, is the example of the rising people power, where people communicate and disseminate information by creating or posting content in page or group. This signifies that the social media plays an important role in giving opportunity to the users specially the younger generation to create awareness or campaign on genuine cause.

Through this study, it can be noticed that the role of social media in the creation of shared awareness is immense. In context of the present study, Facebook has been found to be really playing a very important role in mediating between the activists and the public, especially among the Youth of Twin capital city of Arunachal Pradesh followed by Twitter which is considered to be used less by the Youth of Twin capital city of Arunachal Pradesh. Social media like Facebook has ensured that information was accessible and transmitted among the users.

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Therefore, the present study will contribute towards social media and environmental activism in Arunachal Pradesh by serving as a source of reference for researchers, students, environmental activists, etc. The study will also help government policies and programmes for an efficient action plan. Moreover, it will help to explore relationship between social media and environmental activism among the youth of Arunachal Pradesh.

Apart from this, the current study is limited to the Twin capital city of Arunachal Pradesh analyzing only Facebook and Twitter posts in connection to environmental issues. Therefore, an in-depth qualitative study in the near future is needed.

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## **Constructive Journalism and Its Effects on Environmental Discourses**

*-S. Lekshmi Priya &  
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### **ABSTRACT**

**T**o counter the negative bias and polarising views in mainstream media in the recent years, constructive journalism is being projected by alternative media platforms to move forward. With its positive psychology and solutions-based approaches as the foundation, this genre moves from the traditional code of journalistic ethics of objectivity and impartiality, and employs journalistic practices based on reflexivity and advocacy for social concerns with the goal of ushering in real-time changes in society.

Constructive journalism challenges the role of the media as a mute spectator that observes and only informs. It relies on the delivery of news in a way that is reflexive on the part of the journalist, and socially useful for its audience. Can such a change of journalistic narrative be considered significant in the way media functions? If so, does this imply

any shift in the existing media culture that embodies a new set of ethics?

The environment accommodates us all, lack of its upkeep being the most pressing social concern of all. Yet, environment communication in mainstream media fails to address the environmental issues with the attention it needs, nor does it elicit enough impact to call people for action. Since environmental issues are a matter concerning the existence of all living beings, it forms a crucial aspect in the area of constructive journalism.

This paper intends to study the ethics emerging out of constructive journalism based on environmental discourses. The study also intends to review examples of constructive journalism, particularly focusing on various environment issues from around the world.

**Keywords:** *Constructive Journalism, Environmental Journalism, Ethics, Media, Solutions*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Originating from the Greek word *ethos* (character) and the Latin word *mores* (custom), ethics fundamentally outlines a code of moral conduct that is beneficial on an individual as well as social basis and "establishes the nature of duties that people owe themselves and one another" (LII, 2022). In the present-day literature, ethics is defined as "Non-mandatory principles and guidelines that a person or group may decide to follow as engines that direct decisions; generally related to behaviour affecting other persons or groups" (Barney, 2003). Like most professions, the field of journalism has also evolved over an edifice of professional ethics since its commencement.

The first set of ethical principles titled Canons of Journalism was adopted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) in 1923, that included nine areas of professional and ethical considerations namely, Responsibility, Freedom of the Press, Independence, Sincerity, Truthfulness and Accuracy, Impartiality, Fair Play and Decency (1923). These principles were put together "by responsible journalists in revulsion against the sensational journalism in the 1920s" (Saalberg, 1973). These ethical codes have been since universally adopted and adapted by practitioners and professionals of journalism around the world.

Nearly a century later, the Code of Ethics laid down by the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) does not stray too far from these and includes four principles: Seek truth and report it. Minimize harm; Act independently; and Be accountable and transparent (2011).

In India, journalistic code of ethics is underlined in the Press Council of India-issued Norms of Journalistic Conduct, which identifies 45 areas of interest of national significance vis-à-vis media functioning.

"The fundamental objective of journalism is to serve the people with news, views, comments, and information on matters of public interest in a fair, accurate, unbiased, sober and decent manner. To this end, the Press is expected to conduct itself in keeping with certain norms of professionalism, universally recognised. The norms, when applied with due discernment and adaptation to the varying circumstance of each case, will help the journalist to self-regulate his or her conduct" (Press Council of India, 2020).



So, what does it mean to be ethical as a journalist or a media organisation in the present mediascape that is heavily interspersed with sensationalism, polarisation, jingoism, negativity bias, and paparazzi culture; not forgoing the fact of life-threatening risks often imbued with the journalism profession?

It is without doubt that journalism is a service to the society. "The principles and purpose of journalism are defined by something more basic: the function news plays in the lives of people" (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2021). However, the once objectivity, responsibility and fairness tenets of journalism seem to have made way to excessive sensationalism laced with seemingly negative and polarising narratives in the newsrooms worldwide. Furthermore, the corporate takeovers of media houses have led to the propagation of 'breaking-news' and 'exclusives' culture in order to generate revenue and increase viewership; often at the cost of blurring the journalistic code of ethics for greater TRPs.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

To counter the exponential growth of yellow journalism, and negative and polarising views being thrown out as objective truth in mainstream media over the last few decades, various movements such as action journalism peace journalism, service journalism, civic journalism, citizen journalism, etc., have made rounds (Bro, 2018). Building on these precedents, a constructive approach is being embraced by alternative news platforms and some mainstream organisations around the world that transcend beyond the peripheries of traditional and limiting structures of journalism to one that aims to be constructive to the

society while offering solutions to real-time social issues plaguing it.

The term constructive was first associated with journalism by Walter Williams (1914), the founder of the Missouri School of Journalism, over 100 years ago and today, the field is slowly cementing its foundation with various journalists and organisations employing constructive approaches in their news narratives. Defined as "an emerging form of journalism that involves applying positive psychology techniques to news processes and production in an effort to create productive and engaging coverage, while holding true to journalism's core functions" (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2018), constructive journalism has been referred to as the next megatrend in the field of journalism by Haagerup (2017).

The Netherlands-based Constructive Institute calls the movement "a response to increasing tabloidization, sensationalism, and negativity bias of the news media today. It is an approach that aims to provide audiences with a fair, accurate and contextualised picture of the world, without overemphasizing the negative and what is going wrong" (2021).

The field may not be confused with positive journalism, which only focuses on happy stories while completely overlooking the wrongdoings or problems in the society. The goal of constructive journalism is to move beyond highlighting just the positive aspects of a society but to research and seek solutions to its persistent issues and present it in a comprehensive way to the people. One cannot stop negative incidents from happening, as most often these portray the reality of the world, we all live in. However, how

these are presented can most certainly can be reconsidered and redefined. McIntyre & Gibson (2016) state that news need not just capture positive events, but also focus on a "silver-lining story - one that highlights a positive outcome of a negative event. These may present a practical way for media outlets to maintain the time-honored surveillance function of negative news yet also reap the affective benefits of positive news."

With its positive psychology, restorative narrative, and solutions-based approaches as the foundation, this genre moves from the traditional code of journalistic ethics of objectivity and impartiality, and employs journalistic practices based on reflexivity and advocacy for social concerns with the ultimate goal of ushering in real-time changes in society.

Constructive journalism challenges the role of the mainstream media as a mute spectator that observes and only informs. It relies on the delivery of news in a way that is reflexive on the part of the journalist, and socially useful for its audience. Can such a change of journalistic narrative be considered significant in the way media functions? If so, does this imply any shift in the existing media culture that embodies a new set of ethics?

### **ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE**

Environment continues to remain an area that is rather flagrantly overlooked by mainstream media, despite being established as a beat since the late 1960s (Sachsman, 2002). This is particularly concerning, given that we live in an age that has been increasingly witnessing the repercussions of climate change and global warming. Unless and until something terribly catastrophic or in the media parlance, a

'breaking' newsworthy incident occurs, environmental stories mostly always take a backseat, with many major mainstream media organisations not even having a dedicated environmental section (Friedman, 2015). Mishra (2020) also points to the development versus environmental conservation stance that the mainstream media more frequently projects, as and when clashes occur with the administration and activists; the former almost always takes precedence and is a matter of concern observed globally.

On the other hand, it is the alternative and independent media platforms along with non-profit organisations that have risen to the occasion to fearlessly report on various environmental issues including that on climate change, thanks to the internet and social media.

But with great responsibility, also comes great threats to life and often, environmental journalists have been bearing the brunt for raising grave environmental issues, often at the fatal cost. Roughly about 30 environmental journalists have been murdered since 2009, according to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), which claims the number doesn't include activists that may be close to a thousand (Char, 2021).

Ginsberg (2022) draws attention to the rapidly growing prominence of solutions journalism (an ancillary of constructive journalism), "especially in those communities experiencing the most severe impacts of climate change. It's also a method of reporting that could prove more successful than the more alarmist stories readers traditionally associate with climate reporting".

In India, alternative media platforms like The Better India and Mongabay India have been at the forefront of

covering environmental issues deploying constructive narratives in recent times. Other environmental news platforms and blogs are also attempting discursive and restorative narratives alongside solutions-based manner of news presenting, instead of the usual alarmist narrative often synonymous with environmental journalism, with the aim of drawing more attention to environmental concerns amidst the common people as well as invite civic participation.

As Ginsberg mentioned, a cultural shift is indeed being observed in the way environmental news is dealt with. Various factors including concern for the environment and future, inequitable distribution of resources and its remorseless overexploitation, as well as better awareness could be attributed to this shift.

One could argue that constructive journalism, with its reflexive and transformative paradigms, stands exactly against the objective and impartial principles of normative journalistic ethics. However, "The highest and primary obligation of ethical journalism is to serve the public" (SPJ, 2011) which also happens to be the primary goal of constructive journalism. It is still an organic domain that requires research, revision, maturation as well as progress (Bro, 2018).

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study includes content analysis of 25 recent environmental news stories from around the world that have deployed constructive attributes in their narratives. These platforms were chosen based on a list by the Solutions Journalism Network (2019) and further verified by their own claim of practising constructive journalism. One randomly chosen recent environmental story from each of these platforms was considered.

## DISCUSSIONS

Around the world, very few publications have employed a constructive approach in news stories, even more so when it comes to environmental coverage. Although, this number has been now slowly increasing with mainstream media organisations like BBC, The Washington Post, The Guardian, etc., foraying into this genre. It was observed in the study that more alternative news platforms were quicker to adapt to this emerging approach to news sharing. While almost all platforms had dedicated environment sections, some were exclusively dedicated to covering environmental stories in general (Ensia, Mongabay, etc.), and there were others that focused exclusively on climate change stories (Grist) or had climate change or solutions as its subthemes.

Each of the 25 articles was observed to have narratives that ranged from explainers, solutions-based, restorative to discursive. As each of these concerned environmental issues, complicated scientific terms were comprehensively expressed and well explained. Themes such as exemplary practices, personal responsibility, community empowerment, lifestyle changes, activism, civic engagement as well as opinion pieces emerged from these stories.

Articles covering exemplary practices either showcased environmental heroes and celebrated their crusades or shared eco-friendly practices adopted by different urban as well as rural communities across the world. Stories that had the personal responsibility theme focused on individuals who decided to take up various environmental issues as their own responsibility to the environment and shared stories of

success as well as hardships. Lifestyle change stories highlighted stories of ordinary urban people whose lifestyle changes were pro-environment and reported in a manner appealing to the audience and inspire them to adopt these practices themselves. Expert opinion articles focused on a particular issue and had many experts in the field sharing their anecdotes as well as explanations on the same. Community-based stories shared empowerment stories of rural and marginalised communities ranging on topics from livelihood to capacity building. A majority of these stories focused on success stories of women and self-help groups. Civic engagement stories most often overlapped with the exemplary practice theme.

The most striking observation made in all the 25 stories under the constructive journalism framework is that these had a conversational tone and were comprehensive in nature, despite addressing serious environmental concerns in the backdrop.

Table 1: Constructive Environmental Stories and Their Media Organisations

Sl No.	Title of the Article	News Platform
1.	Language barriers in conservation research could be hurting biodiversity efforts. What can be done about it?	Ensia (ENvironmental Solutions In Action)
2.	Explainer: Two people hunted an olive ridley turtle in Ostional, a community dedicated to sea turtle conservation	The Voice of Guanacaste
3.	In Vietnam, farmers show a willingness to work with the elephant in the room	Mongabay (Solutions)

4. The country trailblazing the fight against disasters      BBC (Future Planet)
5. How Behavioral Science Solved Chicago's Plastic Bag Problem      Politico Magazine (What Works)
6. The perilous 1,000-mile journey to save Africa's endangered black rhinos      The Washington Post (Climate Solutions)
7. Black Soldier Fly As Solution Organic Waste Management In Gulu      Things that work in Uganda
8. Cities Are Planting Trees. Why Not Make Them Fruit Trees?      Next City
9. Solar power's continued success rests on diversifying its workforce      Grist (Fix Solutions Lab)
10. Spain's draft legislation fights food wastage      Incline (Good News)
11. To protect eagles, hunters and conservationists rebuild old alliances      High Country News
12. The Saguaro Solution: Can a massive effort to replant cacti in the Sonoran Desert restore an ecosystem ravaged by fire?      bioGraphic (Solutions)
13. Solutions blueprint: How to talk to your kids about climate      Hothouse
14. No Thanksgiving crab: California officials delay start of 2022 Dungeness season      The Mercury News
15. How Three Friends Prevented 7.5 Lakh Plastic Milk Packets From Entering Landfills      The Better India



16. 'It's radical!': the Ugandan city built on solar, shea butter and people power The Guardian
17. How to free the soil by depaving Shareable
18. The shrinking ozone hole shows that the world can actually solve an environmental crisis Vox (Future Perfect)
19. Six lifestyle changes that could help avert the climate crisis Positive.News
20. How Indigenous Knowledge Reconnects Us All to Fire YES! Magazine
21. A street lit by rotten onions? An Indian market embraces biogas. Monitor (Monitor Solutions)
22. How to accelerate the socially just energy transition Apolitical
23. Green burial becoming more popular in NH New Hampshire Union Leader
24. Butterfly gardening could help protect endangered monarchs Richland Source (Solutions)
25. These apartments will soon get their heat from wastewater Fast Company (Impact)

Far from the alarmist tone taken by mainstream media while covering environmental crises, almost all the reviewed articles had a restorative narrative and were reflexive in nature. Compared to the usual mainstream articles, these articles didn't flout any ethical principles besides advocating for the environmental cause that may appear in conflict with the objectivity and impartiality principles.

### **CONCLUSION**

A constructive approach is surely welcome in the field

of journalism as an evolutionary change. One could argue advocacy for the environment may not be objective or even fair to a certain extent, but the evolution of environmental journalism requires reflexivity as well as subjectivity that need not compromise accuracy or forge facts - a trend increasingly being observed in mainstream journalism. As more and more news platforms are embracing constructive journalism and are gaining public attention as well as engagement because of their positive psychology and solutions-centred way of approaching serious environmental concerns, a shift in the ethical code is recommended to accommodate reflexive as well as transformative narratives in the field of journalism.

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## **How Modernity Change Investigative Journalism in the Digital Era**

*-Sachin Yadav &  
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### **ABSTRACT**

**A**s a result of the proliferation of information, every industry now faces a new set of difficulties. For the journalism industry, the advent of IT has brought about profound changes to many parts of the job. The high-tech revolution has broken the conventional monopoly of the mainstream media and drastically changed how the public gets its news and information. The survival of the news media depends on how well they adapt to the changing requirements of their audience. Despite the rise of other types of journalism, investigative reporting still has a prominent place in the field. One of the cornerstones of democracy is free speech to hold those in authority responsible, a means through which corruption may be exposed and the people can be educated. Before the Internet, journalists would spend months gathering information before publishing a major investigation like Watergate. The basic tenets of investigative

journalism remain the same, but the methods used to expose stories have evolved. The digital realm has provided not only new mediums for storytelling but also altered traditional methods of tale distribution. You cannot expect people will set aside time to read the paper or watch TV at certain times of the day. The trend of growing syndication poses a threat to investigative journalism since it may lead to a simplification of viewpoints and an emphasis on stories having national rather than regional appeal. While this is a drawback, it must be balanced against syndication's usefulness in saving money for high-priced forms of journalism like investigative reporting that help mastheads fulfil their watchdog role in a democratic society.

**Keywords:** *Investigative Journalism, Digital Age, News, Information Technology, Traditional Monopoly, Media, Production of News, Computer and Internet Access*

## INTRODUCTION

Until a few years ago, India appeared like the image of a healthy democracy, with a strong free media and a rising growth rate. Many hallmarks of contemporary democracies have been waning in India because of the ascendance of violent Hindu nationalism and its torchbearer, Prime Minister and Bhartiya Janata Party leader Narendra Modi. Journalists have been arrested and labelled "anti-nationals" on spurious sedition allegations. The use of both online and legal harassment against journalists working for free and independent media outlets by both state and non-state actors is becoming prevalent. In the meanwhile, most news outlets have become the government's propaganda machine.

New digital media platforms have emerged as leaders in "independent and free journalism," while established news

sources discreetly toe the official line. These journalists battle judicial harassment and uncover the secret networks of troll armies, commanded by operatives backing the governing elites.

A journalist's holy grail, the one concept without which the field would collapse, spans all of human history and knowledge. From the time of pigeons until the present day of the Wi-Fi internet, newspapers have been the primary medium for journalistic content. However, the recent telecommunications revolution represents a radical departure from previous modes of technological advancement. We have the chance and the obligation to approach this situation quite differently. "Since new technologies are reshaping the most fundamental parts of our communications system, we must reevaluate our most fundamental assumptions about the future of newsgathering and dissemination."

NDTV 24x7, India's Leading Television Network Our study participants, who mostly use English while using the internet, rank national publications like the Times of India, Hindustan Times, and The Hindu behind only Today TV and BBC News in terms of their offline popularity. India's print and broadcast media are self-regulated, and certain stations have gained notoriety for sensationalizing the news and hosting contentious discussions. After a financial dip caused by the epidemic, print media rebounded in 2021, with an estimated 20% increase in income - most of which came from an increase in advertising.

Online, however, established media outlets are up against a lot of nimble, digitally born firms that are dedicated to editorial autonomy. To augment their ad income, many

non-profits depend on grants and reader contributions. Similar to Newslaundry, several digital native companies depend only on memberships and contributions to stay afloat. While The Wire's editorial stances tend to be anti-establishment and investigative in character, those of Newslaundry's are more neutral, with the former preferring to provide a range of perspectives as they see them. While The News Minute focuses only on South Indian news, The Quint uses its news coverage, as well as its citizen journalism projects and fact-checking services, to create connections within the local community. Advertising and subscription income both increased by 29% in 2021, contributing to the total 29% growth of the digital market. The majority of Indians (72%) get their news through their mobile devices, while just 35% do so via personal computers. Google News (used by 53% of Americans), Daily Hunt (25%), InShorts (19%), and NewsPoint (17%) are just a few examples of news aggregator systems and applications that have grown popular and widely used.

The majority of the people we studied (53% and 51%) in India get their news via social media platforms like YouTube and WhatsApp, respectively. After TikTok and other Chinese applications were prohibited in 2020 for security reasons, local alternatives such as Moj, Roposo, and Josh emerged, along with platform-level additions like Instagram Reels. Despite their widespread usage, social media platforms are also home to a great deal of false information, not to mention persistent trolling and harassment, which has policymakers worried about the impact of this phenomenon. According to third-party sources, major political parties' allies have been known to coordinate such actions on



occasion. Several YouTube news stations were blocked by the government in April of this year for endangering "national security" and "international relations." The restriction was implemented in accordance with new information technology laws drafted in February 2021, which have been contested by both social media and traditional media outlets. Furthermore, Facebook has been under scrutiny as media investigations showed the site had promoted divisive material and disinformation in the form of adverts, favoring the governing party BJP, throughout the 2019 and 2020 election seasons. Meanwhile, concerns that Google has misused its dominating position in the online news business have prompted an inquiry by India's Competition Commission of India (CCI). Publishers in the US, as in other countries, complain that they do not get enough payment for the material made available by third-party digital platforms.

The World Press Freedom Index 2022 placed India at #150, eight places lower than in the previous year, suggesting deteriorating conditions for press freedom there. In January, members apparently loyal to the local government took over the independent Kashmir Journalistic Club (KJC) in the presence of armed police, a move the Editors Guild of India condemned as part of a "continued tendency to crush press freedom". Meanwhile, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has issued new accreditation guidelines for journalists, which indicate, among other things, that accreditation might be cancelled if employment is judged to undermine the wider interests and sovereignty of the country. The Supreme Court of India established a commission to investigate claims that Pegasus spyware was

used against journalists, activists, students, and members of civil society in India. This was done to allay public worries about their right to privacy and freedom of speech.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Field Theory and Its Application in Journalism Studies**

In the mid-1960s, when Bourdieu first introduced the phrase field theory, it was mostly used in the study of literature and the arts. In the words of Wacquant, "the various spheres of life, art, science, religion, the economy, the law, politics, and so on, tend to form distinct microcosms endowed with their own rules regularity and forms of authority-what Bourdieu calls fields." Field theory is not a simple theory but rather incorporates many concepts such as capital, Doxa, and habitus. "Bourdieu employs these ideas to depict the field not merely as a physical location where power dynamics may be seen, but also as a setting in which these dynamics are structurally ordered according to their logic." According to Bourdieu, entering a field calls for understanding the field's justifications and accepting the norms integral to the field's functioning and structure. His first take on this logic labels it as Doxa, which he defines as "the implicit presuppositions that participants in this area know well". According to Bourdieu, Doxa emerges through the interactions between players in a field and is dependent on the prior beliefs and experiences of those actors. Bourdieu calls this dynamic and its structural outcome habitus, which describes how forces (such as cultural, social, symbolic, and economic capital) compete to preserve or disrupt the status quo of this field's established order. Internal conflicts and tensions among the field's many forces are also shown by field theory. Bourdieu contends that actors

may alter their standing in the field by accumulating and investing capital and that this is essential for understanding the field's power structure and linkages. In contrast to economic capital, which refers to tangible resources like land or buildings, cultural capital includes intangible assets like expertise, connections, and reputation.

Scholarly investigations center on the fight for power within the journalistic field, and there is no long history of applying field theory to journalism studies. To paraphrase Benson, "the journalistic field is understood as part of the field of power; that is, it tends to deal with first and foremost those actors who hold huge quantities of capital." Journalism is an area where diverse forces dwell and may influence journalistic works. However, this quote emphasizes that it is located inside the 'dominated' field of cultural production, a field within this wider field. The struggles between various types of capital are studied in depth. "while forms of capital are useful to map variation in journalism both along broader traditions and genres, as well as between organizations and agents," Maares and Hanusch write, "the concept and its analytical power to research journalism has not yet been streamlined in journalism scholarship." For instance, Zeveleva notes that the country's political elites are undermining Russia's journalistic sector and that this is reflected in the country's extremely concentrated media ownership. "Specifically, Li examines the advertising operations of US news organizations and concludes that the pursuit of commercial objectives undermines the professionalism of legacy media by eroding the wall of separation between editorial standards and business activities." Scholars that study digital journalism have

discovered that nontraditional news outlets (such as citizen journalism and aggregators) have joined the industry and are threatening traditional journalism's dominance in content production by drawing on traditional journalism's cultural capital. These outlets develop their credibility by adopting a similar approach to traditional media while maintaining a distinct voice and aesthetic.

### **The Mutual Transition Among Capitals in The Digital Age**

Though economic capital is more influential than cultural capital, it is usual to witness a shift between the two in the digital era. When two capitals switch places, there is a marked shift in the orthodoxy of the media. Today's news outlets care more about their readers than their proprietors. Advertisers place a premium on audience behavior, so news outlets must include this in their decision-making when selecting, producing, and publishing stories. Using news metrics and web analytics, media outlets may better understand their viewers' interests and discover story ideas from the wide range of subjects currently trending online. "The proprietors of media platforms may offer recommendations and suggestions to their audience about what to consume in the future by capturing and analyzing the digital trail that the audience leaves online while consuming or accessing material on a digital platform that is known to them, it has been argued by academics like Ignatow and Robinson that digital media functions as a type of information capital in the information creation process, including the generation of news."

In order to stay competitive with other media channels, legacy media is also creating online outlets in response to

the digital trend. Most times, the news information shared on social media platforms deviates from the printed edition. "Soft content and a strong political slant define the newspapers' use of social media to convey news in South Korea, according to recent research." Newspapers may improve their viewership by evaluating the comments they get on social media and making regular updates to keep the information fresh. The news media now rely heavily on digital platforms to not only "stay in contact" with their readers, but also to establish their credibility and the credibility of the content they produce. BuzzFeed research suggests that economic wealth in journalism may be better-distributed thanks to the rise of digital communication. BuzzFeed's online popularity has grown over time because of the site's mixture of humorous and serious media content. For news outlets and reporters alike, digital platforms have become a valuable resource for gathering sources and audience input that contribute to economic and cultural capital growth. To paraphrase what Perreault and Stanfield call "personal, environmental, and audience aspects," digital technology is a hub where these three elements meet.

While digital media has helped strengthen the link between cultural and economic capital, viewers' engagement on two levels has altered the doxa of this branch of journalism.

First, journalists' subjective judgments of what constitutes newsworthy events must consider readers' concerns. Journalists cannot depend only on their understanding of newsworthiness from a professional standpoint. This does not always imply that the audience controls how the story is told. The journalist's sense of what

constitutes "breaking news" must be balanced with the interests of the reading public.

Moreover, second, there is the potential for strife between reporters and editors from an organizational standpoint. Editors play a crucial role in ensuring readers and advertisers are satisfied with the information journalists to produce since each news outlet caters to a certain demographic. The rise of digital communication has put the audience squarely at the heart of this journalistic arena, where it no longer functions as a separate but equal force.

This summary provides evidence of the use of field theory in the study of journalism. Journalists Maares and Hanusch point out that Bourdieu's ideas were not thoroughly investigated and that he did not provide any clarification on how to apply the above notions to the study of journalism. Most research on these ideas is grounded in the customs of the West. The following part will present the notion of plot twist news and the landscape of digital media in China in order to analyze the role of the digitally empowered audience in the Chinese context of journalism.

### **TECHNOLOGY AND JOURNALISM PRACTICES**

Huge technological advances in the production, alteration, and dissemination of images during the last quarter century have significantly influenced journalism, entertainment, advertising, and the visual world at large. One of the most pressing challenges we have in defining the public interest today is to question the nature of news journalism in light of the dramatic changes in the media environment and associated technology. The "Times of India" and "The Hindustan Times" have daily online editions.

Reporting methods, story structure, and even the fundamental definition of what constitutes "media" have all been altered by the proliferation of digital technology.

Since the advent of the information age and electronic journalism, the journalist's role has shifted from information transmission to information processing. According to the writings of Marshall McLuhan, each new medium offers a different sensory experience that allows the user to project their identity out into the world.

#### ◆ Investigating the Delhi Riots by Scanning Social Media

The Wire, a non-profit digital media platform that publishes in four Indian languages, has set the standard for independent and objective reporting in the country. Its reporters, notably the paper's founding editor Siddharth Varadarajan, have been subjected to repeated defamation and sedition prosecutions by the government. Pegasus Project monitoring targeted several journalists with ties to the media organization.

The Delhi riots, which killed 53 people and damaged hundreds of houses and stores, were investigated by Wire reporters Alishan Jafri, Shehlat Maknoon Wani, and Varadarajan himself for months using material gleaned from social media accounts. Reporters were able to determine that members of the minority Muslim community were disproportionately affected by the riots because the Delhi police did not undertake a thorough investigation. The guys who were instrumental in spreading hatred, organizing crowds, and inciting violence were also identified as a result of the investigations.

◆ Using Satellite Imagery, NDTV Verifies China's Incursion into Indian Territory

It has been a source of tension between India and China for many years since the two nations share a border that stretches for more than 3,000 kilometres (2,000 miles). Many troops from both countries were killed in border fighting last year, and a full-scale war broke out between them in 1962 over the same region.

The ultranationalist administration led by Modi has always rejected any Chinese invasion. However, this assertion was debunked by the top Indian news station using satellite imagery. The news organization aired a series of reports detailing Chinese-built settlements in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. A report from the United States Department of Defense subsequently corroborated the claims made by the Indian news outlet.

◆ Pegasus Project's Impact in India

After the Modi government refused to admit it was spying on opposition leaders and others under the guise of national security, the Pegasus Project investigation, in which The Wire played a significant role, shook the foundations of India's democratic system and prompted the Supreme Court of India to form a high-level committee.

The Wire reports that the Israeli IT firm NSO Group was given a list of 300 verified Indian mobile phone numbers belonging to ministers, opposition leaders, journalists, the legal community, businesses, government officials, scientists, and rights campaigners. A forensic examination of a subset of the phones "found unambiguous indicators of targeting by Pegasus spyware in 37 phones, of which 10 are Indian," the study said.



## **THEMES REFLECTING THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

The media's position in the information era is met with fear, perplexity, and jubilation. The concern stems from a natural aversion to novelty and difficulty adapting to rapid change, particularly regarding digital technology. Following the feedback loop between YouTube and traditional media, we can see that these concerns are not entirely unfounded. The speed with which the narrative spread, was interpreted, and was reshaped presented a significant challenge to the established methods of obtaining news.

The fetishization of devices and the widening gulf between those who have grown up in the digital world and those who have had to adapt to it are two more sources of perplexity brought on by the advent of new digital technology. The iPod was seen as the "harbinger of this transition," and the concept of a "golden era of gadgets" and "third age of gadgets" was proposed to describe the emerging industry centered on consumer electronics. The fierce rivalry between major tech firms drove this. The widespread availability of sophisticated mobile phones and the cult following enjoyed by products like the iPod may lead to misunderstandings regarding their practicality. These devices' storage capacity, multimedia capabilities, and communication skills are outstanding, yet the devices themselves are agnostic technology. People and materials are essential for their functioning.

In addition, there is muddled thinking regarding how persons born before and after 1980 interact with the digital age. Different generations are sometimes characterized as being on different sides of a digital divide regarding their knowledge and comfort levels. Differences in early exposure

to various forms of media and methods of communication likely contribute to a generational divide in digital literacy. Changes in the conventional distribution of power between the young and the elderly, as well as in business, education, and entertainment, have resulted from the introduction and growth of the microchip, the Internet, and the digital economy.

Our third idea is one of reserved joy. Creating, transmitting, and receiving information digitally has opened communication and the media in previously inconceivable ways. "People's desire to engage in and share their media and information experiences is reflected in the creator/consumer audiences seen in the new public arenas of YouTube, Blogspot, and MySpace."

Anticipated reciprocity (the sharing of material), improved recognition (peer respect), and a feeling of effectiveness (the accomplishment felt while generating complicated digital content) are the three key motives that are driving these "virtual communities". As a result of these incentives, media companies are beginning to develop more media-rich content tailored to certain demographics and user-friendly in that it encourages sharing and user-generated contributions.

## **THREATS TO PRINT INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM**

There is no one agreed-upon definition of investigative journalism. Based on the research conducted for this article, I have created a ten-point definition (see method section). The time, effort, and verification required to uncover facts that are in the public interest and would otherwise stay secret set investigative journalism apart from regular news reporting.

Given the in-depth nature of an investigation, investigative journalism often results in fewer articles than other forms of journalism. Due to its focus on individuals in positions of authority who may attempt to stifle inquiries, investigative journalism has a greater risk of inviting lawsuits, which drives up costs. Since Australia's print media are under financial duress, it stands to reason that they could be reluctant to devote resources to in-depth reporting. Historically, newspapers, especially broadsheets and non-commercial television media in Australia, have been responsible for investigative reporting. These outlets tend to focus more on political and investigative reporting and draw a sophisticated, well-informed audience known as the affluent AB demographic in the advertising industry. Many people in this group care deeply about open government. Traditionally, broadsheets have been able to devote the necessary resources to conduct in-depth, time-consuming investigations because they have access to more time.

### **THE TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY ELECTRONIC JOURNALIST**

Because of the availability of data transfer rates, online databases, not daily newspapers or television newscasts, will serve as the standard for electronic journalism in the digital realm. Instead of point-to-multipoint transmission or print, a self-defining, open network will be the principal medium for news delivery. "The news machine of the twenty-first century will be an interactive multimedia system that combines the strengths of television, newspapers, and the telephone network, it will make the most of an open network, which more effectively utilizes available bandwidth than a one-way, closed system like broadcasting or cable television."

Readers will have a voice in shaping the news they consume. Journalism will shift from being a monologue to a dialogue. Instead of trying to second-guess their readers' interests, journalists will be free to focus on turning a seemingly unlimited stream of raw material into usable information packages.

There will be a proliferation of new media outlets, each much smaller and more niche-focused than the current crop. Compared to traditional news organizations, these newer, more streamlined news outlets will provide more news of a higher volume and diversity for niche demographics. The mere term "mass" media will become archaic. As the cost of producing news decreases and the accessibility of editing software increases, "information on demand" will soon be the most popular news format. Instead of a big team of technological professionals, reporters will often be able to do their jobs with only a few affordable tools like camcorders, laptops, and mobile phones. These journalists' work will be produced and disseminated across many platforms at once. In order to thrive in this more cutthroat market, news organizations will need to develop innovative strategies for maximizing revenue from ever smaller audiences.

### **CONCLUSION**

If you think that monopolistic corporations installing toll booths along the information superhighway or hackers stealing intellectual property are a major risk, think again. It is the work of well-meaning government officials protecting aging infrastructure and attempting to stifle free speech. Eventually, we will have the technological means to convert innumerable digital bits into unfathomable amounts of useful information that can be shared between all people. This

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expanded power, however, comes with the enormous responsibility of ensuring that all citizens retain their right to freely access such information and participate in the ongoing digital dialogue. The established norms of journalism emerged in a period of few materials. Standards in the media, however, are not dependent on financial hardship and may continue to thrive during prosperous periods. The usefulness of a story does not diminish just because more individuals have access to the raw facts. It would be foolish, however, to ignore that if new technology encourages everyone to speak at once, no one will be heard or understood.

The news machine of the twenty-first century is rapidly becoming a reality, and although it has many positive effects, it also forces people to make difficult choices. There is little question that this cutting-edge equipment will change the face of journalism forever. "It is up to society to ensure this change is for the better." Answering the challenging questions that new technology will raise about the role of journalism in a free society is crucial to the survival of a free press and journalistic ethics as we navigate the perilous waters of Cyberspace. "No matter how potent, technology is only as useful and worthwhile as humans decide to make it. Technology without intentional human contact is "lights and wires in a box," as Edward R. Murrow warned many years ago."

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## **The Cynical Side of Social Media that Clouds Its Positive Aspects**

*-Saikat Majumdar*

### **INTRODUCTION**

**I**ndia is now the land with second highest population in the world and according to experts; it is one of the fastest growing economies on earth. The population of this diverse country is now almost 1.40 billion people and still counting. Quite naturally it is one of the most fertile places on earth for social media marketers, who are always looking for newer ways to reach out this huge number of consumers. It is quite evident from the available statistics that; their efforts are not in vain. Research shows that almost half of India's huge population gets online as a regular habit. The number of Internet users is also on the rise. Social media has become an integral part of our regular life. It is now the most popular way to connect not only with friends or family but also with business contacts and potential clients or customers. In fact, WhatsApp has been recognized in most of the organizations as the official mode of communication. At the same time, for Indians, social media has given a voice

to the general people & also a platform for creativity. Since the Constitution of India provides freedom of speech and expression to citizens, social media also acts as a platform to gather information and express opinion. If these are the positive aspects of social media, there is the flip side too. Hate speeches, cyber bullying, FOMO (fear of missing out) & of course fake news is some of them, not to talk about social media addictions and irregular lifestyles.

This thesis has tried to focus on both sides of the coin. The target is also to focus on the fact that the digital media is like many other branches of culture, is a great world of communication, information & entertainment if used with proper care.

### **DIGITAL IS THE PRESENT, AND OF COURSE THE FUTURE**

Social media has become the part & parcel of Indian culture now. Indians, on average, spend more than two & half hours on social media daily. More the use of internet is increasing; the numbers of social media users are also increasing with the same pace or may be more. The following table gives an approximate account of the fact:

Population of India	1.40 billion (approx.)
Number of Internet users	658 million (approx.)
Number of Mobile Internet users	601 million (approx.)
Active social media users	467 million (approx.)

The falling price of smartphones & the offers given by different service providers of superfast internet at low prices is another factor for a large-scale rise in the adoption of social media. The rise in number of Mobile Internet users proves the fact. In fact, the above table clearly shows that.

According to studies, the annual growth in active social media users is 4.2% with more than 19 million new users added last year. The annual growth of Internet users is 5.4% with another 34 million new users. The average daily time spent using the Internet is more than 7 hours of which well over 2 hours of the daily time is spent using social media.

Study also shows that in India, Instagram is the most popular social media platform in 2022 with more than 75% of the internet users. The number of active Instagram users in India is more than 500 million. The major percentage of Instagram's users is young people, especially teenagers. Now it is not only a mere social media platform for casual communication but also a great channel for businesses.

The close second position goes to Facebook. Almost 75% of the internet users in India have profiles on Facebook. They also have a little less than 500 million users. Among masses in India, Facebook may remain popular for many years to come.

If we talk about social media, messenger apps can't go unnoticed. They are the dominant force in today's culture. WhatsApp is the most popular messenger app in India with around 535 million active users. That is almost 82% of the country's total internet users. The second most popular on the list is Telegram which has almost 375 million users with 57% penetration. The close third position goes to Facebook Messenger with almost 330 million users which come to almost 50% users. Fourth in the list of 2022 social media chat apps is Snapchat with 43% users.

Till now the discussion was about the platforms. Now we move on to the devices used.

Few other messenger apps that are favored in India are Sharechat (20.90% penetration) and Discord (18.20% penetration).

In 2022, the most dominant device in India is the Mobile Phone, with a share of more than 75%. Availability of cheaper smartphones & also the trend of buying secondhand phones are the reasons for this boom. The next device on the list is Laptop & Desktop with near about 24% followed by tablet which is way behind. Less than 1% users opt for that.

### **THE INFLUENCES OF THE DIGITAL CULTURE**

With these statistical discussions it may not exceedingly difficult to realize that Social media & the prevailing digital culture is having a deeper impact on the society day by day. Nowadays social media is playing a more significant & more impactful role of teaching individuals what is socially acceptable. Social media itself is providing people with instances about how to behave and present oneself as well as how not to.

According to social scientists, social media has the greatest impact on those who are in their secondary phase of socialization. This occurs most commonly in late childhood and adolescence. For every individual, this stage is very important as they grow up & passes through different stages of maturity during this period. So quite predictably they become susceptible to outside ideas, perceptions, and concepts. Interestingly, this secondary phase of socialization also can happen when most people get into the world of social media. Therefore, whenever they interact with their peer groups on social media, the social contagion effect takes place-an effect which can lead to adopting certain

behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs which are direct influences of the social media.

It can be easily said that communication and socialization are necessary components of social media while behavioral change is a by-product. These changes can be from different walks of life which can involve many different facets of life. With communication and socialization on social media, people now can challenge their own biases and force others to do the same. Often it leads to powerful changes or at least catches the eye of the world. # Fridays for future, #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, #OccupyWallStreet are some recent examples which made huge impact in some way or other.

### **WHY THE WORLD HAS BECOME A PART OF THE DIGITAL CULTURE**

People have become a part of the social media for various reasons. Among those the major reason is the urge for communication and interaction with other people. In fact, this issue is directly related to human psyche. It's the human desire to fulfill a sense of belonging through support from relationship; even it is virtual, with others. Social media provides the much-desired platform where people can communicate with others and belong to different networks via virtual communities on the Internet. At the same time, it is a wonderful platform to acquire information and know about different opinions and perspectives of various recent issues, burning topics, and events. But above all, social media is the perfect tool for social communication. It provides the hitherto unknown platform that allows people to participate in conversations and online dialogue without being face-to-face with others. Social media has really turned

the world into a global village. In a country like India, every year thousands of students venture to different corners of the world to build up their future career leaving behind their families. A sizable number settle in different foreign countries for either for good or at least for a few years. Earlier, one-long-distance call a week might be the only mode of communication between them & their families. Now social media & messenger apps have come as a boon to this sizable number of populations. From sports stars who spend almost two third of the year playing in foreign lands to the boy or girl next door, everybody feels blessed to virtually meet their near & dear ones sitting thousands of kilometers away. One can pretty well remember an emotional Lionel Messi communicating with his family on field after he led Argentina to win Copa America last year.

Actually, social media culture has three almost equally significant components - communication, socialization, and change. These components can cause both hazard and benefit to the world. Like every major phenomenon it has both advantages & disadvantages.

First, let us focus on the benefits & positive aspects of social media -

- 1.It's a great medium of communication. Social media has definitely increased connectivity among people.
- 2.It can reach large audiences.
- 3.It's a useful medium for dissemination of information.
- 4.It can be used as a tool for spreading education & awareness.
- 5.It can assist information of people's community.
- 6.It's a great platform to voice your opinion & protest.
- 7.No doubt that it is an ideal source of entertainment & stress relief.

8.It can be used as a tool of advertising, promotion or marketing.

9.It can be used for noble causes. Crowd funding is one simple example.

10. It can be a cost effective medium.

But it has a lot of negative effects as well -

1.Cyber bullying

2.Hacking & other cyber-crimes through social media.

3.Reduction of face to face & written communication skills.

4.Spread of fake news.

5.Addiction to social media. It is becoming almost as harmful as drug addiction.

6.It causes distraction & reduces concentration.

7.It has a serious adverse effect on mental health like depression & anxiety.

8.Social media is making people unsocial & causing loneliness.

9.It causes physical health issues as well like sleep disorder & stress on eyes.

10.It wastes valuable time & energy, specially of the youth community, who are the largest community of social media users.

Now, if we go through all these 20 points, it may seem that the negative aspects are heavier on scale. In fact, many parents and educators are apprehensive of the effects of use of social media in the classroom. There are growing concerns & quite logically that social media tools can be misused for different crimes & sharing sub-standard content. Not only are the younger kids, even the adults falling victims to the booby traps of social media. Actually, social media is

one valuable tool which is to be managed very carefully. It depends on the user whether he wants to use or misuse it. The digital media is like many other branches of culture, is a great world of communication, information & entertainment if used with proper care. It is society's responsibility to limit social media's possibility of causing harm and utilize the benefits.

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**Tracing the Presence of Transgenders within  
India's Cultural Milieu and Studying  
Their Marginalisation Through  
Misrepresentation in Media**

*-Saswati Panda &  
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**ABSTRACT**

**T**he resurgence in counter discourse such as feminist and subaltern studies and a liberal ideological shift in geopolitics of the world have helped to bring the voices of marginalised groups to the academic platforms for debate and discussions. But, despite this resurgence, there is a conspicuous presence of hegemonic dominance of the elite in the media spaces. Though the LGBTQ movement started in the West in 1960s, in India, it gathered momentum only in late 1980s. Keeping the movement and the NALSA judgement by the Supreme Court of India in 2014 and 2018 in the background, the researchers have tried to study the Transgenders and their marginalisation. The main objectives of the study are to historically trace the presence

of transgenders in the cultural scape of India and the process of their marginalisation. Marginalisation is a systematic process of subjugation of the minority and vulnerable groups. Media often plays a role to construct, produce and maintain the marginalisation by non-representation, wrong representation or insensitive portrayal of the marginalised groups. Hence, media representation needs to be studied by researchers. The history of feminist movement is a proof of the fact that even in a world of heteronormative hegemony, patriarchy ran deep to systematically subjugate women and still there are a large section of women facing marginalisation in different platforms. It is often seen that Films which is the most influential form of mass media, women are predominantly portrayed and projected as per male values and as vehicles of male fantasies. Tracing the journey of transgenders therefore is an exercise that needs systematic investigation and a nuanced approach to understand the process of alienation, stigmatisation, and subjugation of the transgenders while studying their representation in media which includes their absence, stereotypical representation, wrong and poor representation etc. This study is qualitative in nature and the methodologies used by the researchers are systematic investigation of secondary sources and content analysis of films.

The study is divided into five sections. The first section is an Introduction that traces the presence of transgenders within the cultural milieu of Indian subcontinent. The second section is reviewing of literature and exploring the position of transgenders in Indian Society. The third section analyses representation of Transgenders in the media (Cinema) and tries to find out some Stereotypes and Prejudices. The fourth

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section deals with some new trends of transgender representation in media. The concluding section includes the research findings and discusses future scope of further research.

**Keywords:** *Transgenders, Marginalisation, Minority Groups, Media Representation, Heteronormative Hegemony, Stereotypes*

## **INTRODUCTION- PRESENCE OF TRANSGENDERS WITHIN THE CULTURAL MILIEU OF INDIAN SUBCONTINENT**

In Sanskrit language, gender exists grammatically. The terms Pu linga, Stri linga, and Kliba/ Napumsaka linga refers to the division of nouns into masculine, feminine, and neuter gender. Before Panini standardised grammar of Vedic Sanskrit around 500 BCE, Sanskrit as a language and literary form had already existed for many years and had been continuing as an oral tradition. Panini's grammar book "Ashtadyayi" is the most important surviving text of Vyakarana or grammar. He studied these sources systematically and came up with 3959 rules of syntax, semantics and morphology. Poetry is regarded as the most ancient forms of literature. Vedas and Puranas are the most ancient treatises in Classical Sanskrit literature. (Remya LM-2017)

Literary Historians have maintained that anthropomorphising of words and abstract ideas are done by poets and philosophers. These words not only signify the enriched creativity but, they also reflect the social reality of the gendered past of inequality and marginalisation. Purusa and Prakrti often are used representing an oppositional relationship and a relationship of dominance

of Purusha over Prkriti. In India, almost every state has their version of Mahabharata, an epic that talks about the great Indian Tradition. The depiction of male and female characters in a number of stories in epic Mahabharata throws light on many aspects of genders.

Zwilling and Sweet (2000:99) noted that 'a three-sex model was an important feature of the ancient Indian worldview with ambiguous categories of Napumsaka and Kliba appeared several times in Vedic texts. 'They were of the view that in vedic period though they had been regarded as suffering from a condition of defective masculinity, in the post vedic period they were looked at as 'innate or congenital.' They conclude that 'in general the third sex is a residual category, comprising a wide variety of non-normative biological, gender role and socio-behavioural traits.' However, they do make a very important observation which indicates towards gender based social discrimination. According to them, 'despite the recognition of a third biological category, the gender bending does take place in the Mahabharata where the third gender does not necessarily constitute a third sex, nor does it necessarily challenge the binary framework.'

The most well-known cases in Mahabharata where Arjuna's character as Brihannala as an effeminate dance instructor to the daughter of king of Virat and the depiction of Amba turning into Shikhandi. There are some other subplots in Mahabharata which form the background of some transgender communities of India. They are Aravanis and Jogappas.

As the story goes, Pandavas were told that they can win the war, only if one valiant warrior is sacrificed. Hence,

Arjuna's son Aravan came forward to make that supreme sacrifice. He just had one request. The request was to experience the ultimate sexual union of a husband with his wife for at least one night before he died. No woman would agree to accept such a proposal. So, Lord Krishna took the form of a woman and married Aravan. There is a tradition in Tamil Nadu of celebrating the supreme sacrifice of a valiant hero and the transition of God into a woman to fulfil the pure sexual desire of a hero. Keeping this story in the background, the Male to female transgenders of Tamil Nadu are called Aravanis.

The transgender community that is found in north Karnataka, parts of Andhra and Maharashtra are called Jogappas. They are lesser known but form a distinctive community culture where their spiritual songs and faith on Yellamma creates for them a separate identity as gender fluids. Yellamma is goddess Renuka who faced the fury of her husband and got killed by her son Parshuram. Her four sons were cursed because they refused to kill their mother. The curse of their father made them stones taking away their masculinity. Jogappas sing bhajans for Goddess Yellamma. They are usually feminine in their appearance.

In Hindu mythologies there are a number of instances of gender and sexual transformation among Gods. The prime concept of shiva-sakthi tradition underlies the androgyny of human nature. Shiva is represented as Ardhanariswara, lays down transgender form of divine energy. No wonder, Ardhanariswara is regarded a patron saint of the transgenders. The story of Vishnu transforming as Mohini to take out Amrita from the demons is a popular speaks about transformation of male God into female form. There are

lores about how Shiva was captivated by the beauty of Mohini and the union of two lords led to the birth of Ayyappa, popularly known as Hariharaputra. In Krishna bakthi cult, male devotees identify themselves as women or gopis who love the male god. Bhakthi tradition holds that the soul or atman is genderless. In Ramayana, when Rama embarked for his fourteen - year old exile, a group of his devotees followed him. On the river bank, Rama asked his followers, men and women to go back to their homes. When he arrived fourteen years later, he discovered that a band of transgender devotees had not moved from their place because they were neither men nor women. Overwhelmed by their devotion, Rama conferred them power to give blessings on auspicious occasions like childbirth and marriages.

It is quite a paradox that when gods who have transgender forms are worshipped and transgenders are deemed auspicious, they are still condemned by the mainstream society.

Kama Sutra is considered a scientific discourse in sexual arts. The work deals with the fulfillment of kama or desire, which is one of the four normative spiritual goals of life. The eighth and ninth chapters of second part of Kamasutra extensively refers to Tiritiya Prakriti. Vatsayana, the author describes techniques by which male and female as well as third sex can perform acts of sexual pleasure that are non-penetrative. The very fact that such a treatise on sexuality, eroticism, and emotional fulfilment existed during 2nd or 3rd Century CE speaks volumes about the dynamic and liberal side of Indian culture.

Devdutt Pattanaik in his article 'Did Homosexuality exist in ancient India?' writes: "Hijras are organized

communities comprising of males who express themselves socially as women. They are a mix of transsexuals (men who believe themselves to be women), transvestites (men who dress in women's clothes), homosexual (men who are sexually and romantically attracted to men), hermaphrodites (men whose genitals are poorly defined due to genetic defect or hormonal imbalance) and eunuchs (castrated men)."

Transgenders in India now a days are often termed as Hijras. Hijr is an Arabic word, and it means 'leaving one's own tribe'. The etymology itself indicates that it is an Umbrella term like the English equivalent Transgender. It refers mainly to those people who leave their birth sex to adopt the opposite sex. Hijras form a sizeable portion of Indian population. According to recent census there are about 5 lakh hijras in India today. In India they are called by different names in different parts. In Odisha, they are called Hinjida; in Andhra, Napunsakudu; in Tamilnadu, Aravani or Thirunangai; in Punjab, they are called Khusra; Kotis in Maharashtra; in Gujrat, they are known as pavaiyaa; in West Bengal, Up, Bihar, and even Kerala, they are known as Hijras or Hijdas. There are certain names used for third genders such as Kothis, Kinnars etc. Some of these names such as Kothis are based on the sexual roles they play in the same sex relationship. These terms which are used to refer to the transgenders are often used as a derogatory term of insult. From the tone, context and manner these terms are used in the local language across the country can be cited as the most conspicuous form of their discrimination in society. They live on the fringes of society and are often mocked at and ridiculed. The prejudice against them needs to be studied and their marginalisation need to be analysed, understood and discussed.

The word "Eunuch" in English is of Greek origin and refers to homosexuals and castrated men. During the colonial period when India was under the yoke of British rule, homosexuals and transgenders were degraded to the level of criminal/ perverse other as per Victorian prudish standards. Hence vague and inappropriate terms like eunuch, neuter and impotent were used to refer to transgenders.

When all the above categories are studied and a comparative analysis is done, it can well be concluded that the comprehensive document of American psychological Association on different categories of Transgenders is not exhaustive enough. Some collaborative approach with Indologists and literary historians working on literature on Indian transgenders can bring out many more categories of non-binary sexual categories and their orientations.

The main categories that APA has come up with explanation are- Transsexual men or Transmen known as FTM (Female to Male), Transsexual women or transwomen known as MTF (Male to Female), Those who call themselves as Men or Women after transition, Cross Dressers who may not be disclose their sexual orientation, Drag Queens/ Drag Kings, Genderqueer who fall outside the binary constructs of "male" and "female" and do not define themselves as Transgender either. They use different pronouns such as zie instead of he or she and hir instead of his or her. There are some other categories as third gender, gender non-conforming, multigendered, Androgynous etc. it is difficult to provide exact definitions of these terms because they may vary from person to person and may change over time. However, they all indicate a sense of blending of genders. Whatever these categories are, but, one common factor that



is common amongst all these categories are that they find binary concepts of gender as restrictive.

### **REVIEWING LITERATURE AND EXPLORING THE POSITION OF TRANSGENDERS IN INDIAN SOCIETY**

The sordid saga of marginalisation of transgender people in India from equal participants in cultural milieu to that of struggling outsiders in the fringe is multifaceted and complex. There have been attempts to study the issues of transgender people by interdisciplinary researchers in social science and legal studies in past decades. Most of these research studies available in the free internet sources like google scholar or INFLIBNET (Information and Library Network) though have successfully brought out several important aspects of transgender life in India, there is a dearth of holistic analytical studies on Indian Transgenders using multicultural approach. This study is an attempt to bring together cultural history and present socio-cultural presence of transgender people in Indian society.

In a book titled, 'The Third Gender: Stain and Pain', (Gupta and Khobargade ed.), Dipti Majumdar makes an in-depth analysis about the socio-cultural backdrop of the story of Mahabharata. In most of the narratives that we find in India based on the epic Mahabharat, the transgender characters emerged and disappeared looking insignificant in the larger fabric. When Dhrishtadyumna asked Krishna, "My elder brother who was born with a female body, is raised as a son by my father. He now has Yaksha's body who had given his body for one day, but the Yaksha is cursed by Kubera that he can never get his body back, till Shikhandi is alive. What is he Krishna, Man or woman?" This question

reflects the question of common people who are always confused about transgenders and want to fit them into the binary that they know and are comfortable with. There are many grey areas Mahabharata touches, and this episode is one of them.

However, Vyasa symbolically keeps the episode of Shikhandi right in the middle of the 18-day war period between 9th and 10th day. This signifies one important aspect that their presence can never be ignored. Even when there are attempts to marginalise them, they will not go away. They will come with a vengeance. Shikhandi symbolizes all queer people from gays, lesbians, transgenders, bisexuals, to hermaphrodites. Bhishma refuses to fight with Shikhandi may also be a symbolic gesture of the dominant community not giving the due respect and dignity even if they possess potential and trainings of a great warrior.

Was it then a reflection of hegemonic dominance that has systematically continued in every age and stage of human civilisation?

K. Delliswararao and C. Hangsing (2018), brought an important point into the discussion and that is "The social exclusion framework as multidimensional. Hijras make an attempt to prove the existence of gender variant in ancient times and within sacred text and claim their authentic identity that has existed throughout the history. In Mahabharata, not only Arjuna's character as Brihannala proves the importance of Transgenders mingling with mainstream society, but the depiction of Amba's birth as Shikhandi reinforces their role in socio political milieu as participants who nowhere can be called marginalised. In the entire epic no where they have been treated as social out casts or there is a trace of any

ridicule or marginalisation found. Hence, the social exclusion theory has to be understood in perspective.

There are many stories behind the various rituals followed by the transgender communities in India. The 18-day Thiruvija festival is to celebrate the supreme sacrifice of a valiant hero Aravan and the transition of God into a woman for the cause of a pure sexual desire of a man. Keeping this story in the background, the Male to female transgenders of Tamilnadu are called Aravanis. Many transgenders and believers of nonheteronormative sexuality visit Kuvagram to become a part of this festival. On day one they tie Thalī on their neck and wear bangles as a mark of a married woman and the festivities begin. The end of the festival is sombre when they accept widowhood. The glass bangles are broken, and their Thali is ritualistically cut. As the legend goes, people of Tamilnadu believe that Aravanis become very powerful during those 18 days. Farmers take those shreds of glass bangles and throw on their field because they feel that their lands will become fertile with the divine blessings of the Aravanis (Desai, 2013).

Some of the cultural similarities found between Northern state of Punjab where the Mela Chiragan or festival of light is celebrated on the Death anniversary of Sufi saint Shah Hussain and Thiruvija festival of Tamilnadu is astounding. Around the same time of the year, in the month of March/April when mela Chiragan is celebrated in Punjab, around 7,500 kilometres away in village Koovagram of Tamilnadu where Thiruvija festival is celebrated. Both festivals are seemingly disparate, one Sufi and one Hindu but the astounding commonality is both are celebrated to mark deviance and non-conformism. Mela Chiragan is

comparatively recent and started in the northern part of pre independent India. Hussain was born in 1538 during Akber's reign. He was the son of a poor weaver an Islamic convert. His poetry and his religious philosophy were unconventional. He lived like a Fakir, a wonderer. At the age of 53, he met Madho lal a Brahmin boy and fell in love with him. Such was his love that he changed his name to Madholal Hussain and declared him to be his successor. This unconventional union is revered by the transgenders who believe and practice Guru - Chela custom. Hussain had thousands of followers and 20 devoted successors. As per his wish and prediction, Madho lal succeeded his position and continued for next 48 years after his death. The Guru Chela system of transgenders that we see in India today is steeped in this tradition established by Hussain. The guru and chelas amongst the transgenders may or may not have sexual relationship, but they form a family or a small group. The most striking part is the transgenders are not bound by any religious boundaries. Like this Sufi saint, the transgenders accept guru and chela from any religion. The culture of Sufism where Ghazal as a poetic form emerged as a popular musical genre often had homoerotic desire as a subtle emotion expressed in sombre tone taking the relationship into a spiritual realm where gender of lover and beloved becomes obscure.

Both these festivals represent the presence of a culture that had space for non-heteronormative sexuality in two different eras wide apart but within the strict boundaries of a heteronormative society.

Another transgender community that is found in north Karnataka, parts of Andhra and Maharashtra are called Jogappas. They are lesser known but form a distinctive

community culture where their spiritual songs and faith on Yellamma creates for them a separate identity as gender fluids. Yellamma is goddess Renuka. As the folklore goes, Renuka was so pure and chaste that she could bring water in an unbaked clay pot from river Narmada. Once while filling the pot, she saw Gandharvas (celestial musicians) playing with their partners erotically and she got attracted to one. This distracted her mind and the clay pot broke. Furious with this transgression, Jamadagni ordered his son to behead his wife. Four of them refused. He cursed them and they lost their masculinity and became stones. Parshuram was intelligent enough and agreed to behead his mother. While trying to escape, Renuka took shelter in the house of a poor woman. Parshuram killed the other woman by mistake thinking her to be his mother and later kills his mother. Pleased with him, Jamadagni asked for a boon, and he asked for the life of his mother and brothers back. Jamadagni gave water with power to bring the dead to life. Parshuram put the poor woman's face on the body of his mother and sprinkles water. As a result, Yellamma was born. She is regarded as the goddess of the poor, down trodden, and fallen. Jogappas are as per the folklores are the cursed sons of Yellamma who lost their masculinity. But the vibrant culture of Jogappas that is seen during November and December the Indian month of Margashira is a reflection of a faith and spiritual practice of a marginalised community. The yellamma Jatre or festival is an annual event that happens in Soundatti temple of Karnataka. It is a gender fluid world. The Jogappas are possessed by the goddess and become powerful.

The colonial rulers came in close contacts with the oriental way of life, and they analysed the sociocultural

mores in many different ways. Orientalist like Richard Burton attributed the homoeroticism as an outcome of climatic condition. The orthodox British colonial masters looked at the open culture of homoeroticism as an Oriental Vice. The Maculay plan of 1860 came with draconian Indian Penal Code. English Education System systematically wiped out the traditional system of knowledge creation and dissemination. In the name of Rule of law, unjust legislations were passed. One of such law was section 377 of IPC which declared same sex relationship as unnatural and a criminal act. In 1871, Transgender communities were declared as criminal tribes. (Gupta, 2008)

Mittal and Sharma (2022), in their research makes the point that representation in the media has, to a great degree, shaped people's views of communities they have not had personal interaction with. With growing awareness about the lives and rights of transgender individuals, a concern is raised about how they are showcased in media. The research finds in the participants signs of transphobia which is internalised not by their personal interactions with transgenders but through what is fed to them by different forms of media content. Therefore, media seeking to represent the transgender, or any minority, community need to consider the impacts of their representation.

### **MARGINALISATION THROUGH MISREPRESENTATION OF TRANSGENDERS IN MEDIA(CINEMA)-STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICES**

Lajja Shankar Pandey, a character played by Ashutosh Rana in film Sangharsh is arguably one of the best portrayals of a negative character and he won awards and accolades for this role. This can be considered a great feat of an actor who

is considered as an iconic villain. The character was created upon the philosophy of pure evil, as someone who is beyond any reason. He is engaged in ostensibly senseless acts of violence. He is crazy, deranged, evil, and scary. This character is out and out ugly and abominable. The conventional morality and ethics are dead when we examine this character. But the catch here is, what we often didn't bother but it had a certain role to play in the social ostracization of an entire community is the influence this character had in the psyche of the audience.

The prejudice that sets in against the transgenders become even more deep rooted with one such negative representation. Transgenders are as such a marginal group fighting for their own space and demanding acceptance from society and government in myriad special ways. The methods they have adopted come under continuous scrutiny. What mass media like a popular film does to influence a large number of people can never be negated by some analytical articles of academicians or research finding of an individual researcher where the results cannot even be generalised as the sample size is too small.

Can few journal articles have based on random psycho social research undo what a film like this has done over the years?

The causes and the consequences of marginalisation and exclusion is layered and have to be studied through a multidimensional and dynamic framework. Indian society in general is multicultural and diverse and there is a fair amount of tolerance and acceptance of different languages, cultures, religions, languages, and customs. Despite the general climate of acceptance and tolerance, there appears to be limited public knowledge and understanding of same

sex sexual orientation and people whose gender identity and expression are incongruent with their biological sex.

Marginalisation is a systematic process of subjugation of the minority and vulnerable groups. Media often plays a role to construct, produce and maintain the marginalisation by non-representation, wrong representation or insensitive portrayal of the marginalised groups. Hence, media representation needs to be studied by researchers. The history of feminist movement is a proof of the fact that even in a world of heteronormative hegemony, patriarchy ran deep to systematically subjugate women and still there are a large section of women facing marginalisation in different platforms. It is often seen that Films which is the most influential form of mass media, women are predominantly portrayed and projected as per male values and as vehicles of male fantasies.

Tracing the journey of transgenders therefore is an exercise that needs systematic investigation and a nuanced approach to understand the process of alienation, stigmatisation, and subjugation of the transgenders while studying their representation in media which includes their absence, stereotypical representation, wrong and poor representation etc.

### **NEW TREND OF TRANSGENDER REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA**

Liz Mount in longitudinal research on transgender women studied media representation and made a nuanced argument about educated transgender women identifying more with the middle-class cisgender women while simultaneously dissociating their life and struggle from Hijras. It is important to note that the small group of transgenders who are visible in a conspicuous way though are recognised form a marginal group. This observation



points out the fissures within the transgender group and establishes clearly that Transgender may be an umbrella term used by policy makers, academicians and scholars to club all those who reject the gender binary, but it also establishes the fact that transgender is not a homogeneous category that stands against the gender based social hierarchy. Even the group of educated and employed trans women who were studied considered hijras as the most disreputable and looked at the middle-class respectable womanhood as their desired social status. Hence, they in a way promote gender conformity and the very obvious characteristic of hijras is gender nonconformity which leads to their marginalisation.

A well-researched Bengali language film 'Nagar Kirtan' by Kaushik Ganguly can be an important example of true representation of transgenders. The simple love story of a male to female transgender with a heterosexual man touches upon many subtle aspects of trans life. The realistic portrayal and bringing actual trans characters to play the supporting casts makes it even more authentic and truly representational. Such films can sensitise the audience.

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS AND FUTURE SCOPE**

One important point made by Ruth and Kidwai can be taken up by researchers studying human behaviour that same sex partners can easily stay together without getting married in India without raising an eyebrow because of a strange psyche deeply rooted in acceptance of gender binary. It is only when they come out in the open about their sexual orientation and preference, want to marry or adopt a child that they face difficulty at multiple levels.

Transgenders are actually the ones who challenge social norms are considered as a threat. Because Transgenders adopt

the opposite sexual identity while rejecting the sex they are born with, makes their case a more complex one. If we look around, there will be many streets and public places, buses and trains where one would come across Hijras. They often carry themselves as women. They clap in a certain way demanding acknowledgment and attention despite all the discrimination and mockery they face in their day-to-day life.

If not anything else, Transgenders have been a part of complex web in the social spectrum of India because of India's diversity. There is a sudden spurt in transgender leaders like Laxminarayan Tripathy emerging to paint a glorious picture of past history of Indian transgenders in an egalitarian and inclusive Hindu society. Coming from transgender themselves, this may create a myth of healthy heterogeneous culture of the past. Ironically, these arguments are not substantiated by the complex Varna and caste structure and deep-rooted patriarchy. The clear political leanings towards the right-wing narratives of these leaders makes it even more complex. During the study, the researchers found a strange tendency in some researchers to push the entire transgender movement to a problematic discourse of marginalisation of transgenders to be a result of Islamic invasion and colonial administration. Such arguments have to be understood in perspective and checked with cross verification from other interdisciplinary research.

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# **Education Taking the Digital Route via YouTube**

*-Satyajit Samanta*

## **ABSTRACT**

The entire educational system starting from elementary to tertiary level has tumbled during the lockdown span of the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) not only in India but across the world. This analysis is a description of online teaching-learning methods embraced by educators for the teaching-learning process. It peeks forward to an intellectually enriched option for additional future educational decision-making during any adversity. The aspired to objective of this paper pursues to deal with the required essentialities of online teaching-learning in education amid the COVID-19 pandemic and how existing resources of academic organizations transform traditional education into online education with the assistance of virtual classes and other pivotal online implements in this continually veering educational landscape.

The paper utilizes both quantitative and qualitative approaches to survey the perceptions of educators and

learners on online teaching-learning modes and also highlights the execution procedure of online teaching-learning methods. The importance of this paper is to attract a holistic portrait of ongoing online teaching-learning training during the lockdown period comprising specifying the connection between the shift administration process and online teaching-learning method in the education system amidst the COVID-19 outbreak to overwhelm the persisting educational disruption and consequently assure the resumption of academic activities and discourses as an ordinary course of method in the education system. The attraction of the researcher towards the usage of technology in understanding surged during the Covid-19 pandemic as more users were anticipated to use online aids due to the fixed face-to-face activities and the contemporary norm that motivated social distancing.

This analysis strived to examine the characteristics that influenced a students' approval of YouTube as an educational resource. Established on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), this analysis explored the function of subscription rate as a moderator variable. The conclusions of this analysis supported TAM, in which the student's acceptance of YouTube as a learning resource was associated with the perceived relief of use, perceived efficacy, and social impact. This analysis also documented that the subscription rate did not intermediate the connection between the characteristics and the students' acceptance. Accordingly, this analysis indicates that students accept YouTube as a learning resource either as a subscriber of the YouTube channel or otherwise. This study mightily contributes to the literature by examining the acceptance of YouTube as a learning resource during

Covid-19. And this, education after the Covid-19 pandemic is taking the digital route via Youtube.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Electronic learning or e-learning is a broad term that is utilized to ascertain the learning process by utilizing electronic technology comprising information and communication technology. E-learning scope can be text, image, video, and audio. Nichols illustrated that 'E-learning is learning that is enabled or supported by the use of digital tools and content. It typically involves some type of interactivity, which may include online interaction between the students and their teachers.

The Covid-19 pandemic has slammed virtually all parts of the world in 2020. This global health emergency has influenced varied sectors, enclosing education in which the attraction to utilizing online platforms for teaching and learning among educators and students has boosted tremendously. Although many organizations and educators around the globe have acquainted some conditions of online aspects into the teaching and learning procedure.

Although the benefit of online materials in teaching and learning (T&L) training is not completely a recent criterion because it has existed for years in distinct phases, for some people the method is still evaluated as a new norm of education training because the usage of online learning materials is the only choice instead of an option. While the appeals in utilizing online platforms such as YouTube for T&L objectives have evolved more predominant, the problem of the convincingness and importance of the functional scope of online outlets for education training is still skeptical. Therefore, this paper reacted to the upwards

attractions in the use of YouTube as a learning platform while the proficiency on the cogency of this platform was still undefined. YouTube is the vastly used social media for educational objectives compared to other social media as disclosed in an analysis among students across various places. Nonetheless, the literature on characteristics of social media usage for educational objectives is still advancing, implying more practical analyses before conclusive results can be made.

The usage of online materials for T&L actions is compatible with the technique of battling the Covid-19 pandemic as suggested by the World Health Organization (WHO) which is, among others, limiting people's activities and avoiding enormous conferences. Accordingly, the traditional face-to-face classroom is not feasible or is completed at a minimal speed because student meetings may direct to new clumps of Covid-19 patients. For some, this impulsive difference may result in some level of alarm. Yet, our awareness of how people react and respond to the new standard of life comprising T&L activities is still insufficient. As such, the manner students reacted to the online learning materials during MCO stayed largely unfamiliar and underexplored by experimenters.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the enactment of MCO have furnished new chances for experimenters to reconsider the existing hypotheses. Thus, this analysis was accomplished by reconsidering the applicability of the Theory of Acceptance Model (TAM) on the characteristics that might impact users' acceptance of technology. In the foremost version of TAM, two forecasters of discretion to use technology are sensed efficacy and sensed relief of use.

However, the TAM's body of proficiency has developed to contain other characteristics, such as colonial impact. Social impact refers to the sociable agency that contributes to a person's perception of technology. In this study, the actual TAM prototype was integrated with social impact, a characteristic that has been examined in the literature for the ample TAM.

This analysis has a substantial subsidy to the literature threefold. Foremost, it experimented with the existing hypothesis and model under new occurrences; therefore, greatly enhancing the literature. Secondly, comprehending the topics corresponding to how the populace has reacted to the fresh criterion during Covid-19 is crucial to improve proficiency so that people are better ready for similar conditions in the future. Thirdly, although YouTube has different willingly functional videos that may be utilized for learning, the usage of the self-created teacher's YouTube channel, as investigated in this analysis, is still fairly unknown in the literature. The literature has briefed that the usage of technologies in education was impacted by three characteristics: sensed ease of use, perceived efficacy, and social effect. The writers selected these three characteristics based on the TAM. Among the technologies that have attained popularity among researchers is social media technology.

Although there are different social media, such as YouTube and Facebook, each outlet has an extraordinary aspect; therefore, an experimenter should contemplate researching each platform independently. The same method was applied in this present analysis by using YouTube as the education platform of curiosities. The accuracy of this study was to examine the moderating impacts of subscription rate



on the connection between the three characteristics of user endorsement and the user's approval of YouTube as an educational resource. The three characteristics were ease of use, perceived efficacy, and social impact. Although these three characteristics have been widely analyzed in the literature in indicating the user's approval of the technology, the way the subscription moderates this connection is fairly unfamiliar. While not all technology acceptances affect 'subscription', likes and comments have become the indicators of users' acceptance of internet 2.0 applications, such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. Nonetheless, this new splendor has not been completely explored in the literature, quitting the question of ways the subscription rate has influenced the user's acceptance of internet 2.0. The next area highlights the characteristics of users' acceptance of YouTube as a learning resource. Then, it is pursued by dialogues on the functional processes for YouTube users, such as subscriptions, to enhance the user's knowledge when using YouTube. Thus, this analysis examined the moderating consequences of subscription on the user's acceptance of YouTube.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Factors of User's Acceptance:** The internet has been utilized by an elevated ratio of students for educational objectives. The Covid-19 pandemic has fetched differences in different sectors, including education. While conventional face-to-face class is despondent to minimize human contact, moving T&L training o online platforms has seen enormous interest. In response to the pandemic problem that needs T&L activities to be online, online platforms also have different benefits, thus enticing more T&L actions to

be functional online. The adoption of technology into T&L training has been established to enhance T&L training in different elements, making learning more adaptable because the material accessibility is not limited by time, place, and channel. From a user perspective, efficacy and social influence are among the major characteristics that direct the usage of YouTube for learning. The user will use YouTube if they sense that the scope of YouTube is helpful for their education, and they obtain positive feedback from their social spiral, or their social circle has shared identical interests towards YouTube as a learning platform. These two characteristics are indicated in TAM; nonetheless, the characteristic of sensed ease of usage was not found in their exploratory qualitative analysis. The characteristic of perceived comfort of use in examining the use of YouTube may be unrelated for adult students as YouTube is commonly well-known for its ease of use even for children. According to, YouTube has low barriers to children due to the simple and instinctive interface. Nonetheless, this current analysis investigated YouTube users from the age span of 20 years old to more than 50 years old. Due to the enormous period range of respondents in this present study, the perceived comfort of use concerning YouTube was pertinent to be examined.

Benefits of YouTube Videos as a Learning Material: Utilizing YouTube as an education platform has the prospect to assist users to attain multifaceted learning consequences, comprising cognitive, social, emotional, and psychomotor outcomes. The content of the videos on YouTube may enable users to enhance their mental ability by earning knowledge like learning new terminology or

mastering recent skills to find answers to mathematical difficulties. In addition to that, the usage of YouTube involves users' social skills, such as responding to remarks given by other users and equipping feedback to the content innovator in the right way. The use of YouTube also acquaints users with the psychomotor facet by utilizing different processes that require to be organized by the users, such as downloading the video, sharing the video, or skipping the promotion. In an investigation among students of an English class, education on YouTube was found to be more adaptable, fascinating, and interactive; therefore, incorporating YouTube videos from language-teaching Youtubers into T&L training would be helpful to the students. Educators are also encouraged to develop videos and upload them on YouTube to enhance the learning knowledge of their learners.

In overview, the usage of YouTube as a learning platform can endorse lifelong learning knowledge for users; it was favorably pertinent to the respondents of this examination who were students of distance education. Nonetheless, the knowledge of the ways the subscription rate of users affects their attraction towards YouTube as an education platform is greatly unfamiliar. The next compartment pertains to the disparity between subscribers and non-subscribers in their user knowledge of YouTube. Earlier authors have documented the favorable consequences of using YouTube in different educational domains, such as science, language, marketing, and medicine. However, little is understood about the use of YouTube as a learning resource for reckoning. This gap is planned to be fulfilled by this present analysis.

## **SUBSCRIPTION AND YOUTUBE USER EXPERIENCE**

Studying how the characteristics of YouTube channels add importance to T&L activities may enhance the knowledge of how YouTube channels can be utilized as a T&L platform. One of the characteristics of a YouTube video is the statements are nourished below each video, enabling spectators to provide comments on the content of the video. These comments may be in the form of recommendations, objections, and commentaries. The statements are available to the public; other users may respond to the statements, and therefore, the communication and proficiency traded through the statements area have entirely influenced the procedure of coordinated and lifelong learning. The previous study has divulged that the benefit of the internet has entirely influenced the educational execution of learners. One of the major challenges for learners to use the internet is knowledge overload which may cause learners to distribute time to discern the valuable and relevant knowledge for them. This activity is hard for fresh or uneducated users when they want to validate and evaluate the dependability of aids. This crisis of knowledge plethora may be less stringent by subscribing to a reliable YouTube channel. Another challenge confronted by YouTube users when utilizing the videos on YouTube for education is the inconsistent rate of the functional videos, directing to low-quality learning knowledge. This challenge has been based on an analysis of medical trainees who utilized YouTube videos as their learning resources. Thus, this challenge may be overcome by restricting the disclosure to different videos through subscriptions to counted channels with a high-quality scope

rather than viewing all the functional videos. Although the examination of the consequences of subscription status on YouTube user knowledge may be lacking in the literature, conclusions from previous analyses that examined the effects of the buy switch on social media users may feed useful knowledge. The buy button in social media is a link or visual on a social media page, authorizing users to connect and transfer users to another page, such as an expenditure page that authorizes users to make payments for their investments. The authors found that the purchase button contributed to a better shopping experience and higher readiness to buy the derivatives.

In addition, developing and adding an extra procedure on a webpage or social media page may have favorable consequences for the user. For YouTube, there are several justifications for users to subscribe to an inlet. Among others, the users are curious about the scope of the subscribed channel, or the users would like to get information about the new video uploaded to the channel. Although the subscription quality of YouTube may convey a promising experience of using YouTube, the subscription is not mandatory. In other words, an individual can still watch a video on YouTube without subscribing to the channel. Although subscription is a crucial part of YouTube, very little is understood about how this procedure influences users when using YouTube as a learning resource. At this juncture, this paper may hypothesize that YouTube subscribers' experience may vary from those who do not subscribe. Subsequently the discussion on how the perceived comfort of use, perceived usefulness, and social influence are associated with the user's acceptance of YouTube scope; and

how subscription status may affect the relationships; this study developed six assumptions as follows:

H1: Perceived ease of use impacts the user's acceptance of YouTube.

H2: Perceived efficacy influences the user's acceptance of YouTube.

H3: Social Influence affects the user's approval of YouTube.

H4: Perceived ease of usage leverages the user's acceptance of YouTube, mediated by subscription status.

H5: Perceived efficacy impacts the user's approval of YouTube, mediated by subscription status.

H6: Social Influence influences the user's approval of YouTube, mediated by subscription status.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This analysis would embrace a mixed procedure of both qualitative and quantitative methods.

? Primary data:

Primary data collection would comprise surveys amongst students, teachers, and educational institutes about their look at the educational system and its shift to the digital or social medium.

Considering primary data is the method of bringing an understanding of the collected data to respond to research questions or assist or deny research hypotheses that an analysis is originally formulated to evaluate. The tendency of data analysis techniques relies on the type of data acquired, quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative data are received when researchers rely on the amount, or selection of numerical values to units, to ascertain the relative levels or degrees of the variables under analysis, whereas qualitative

data are textual data that is evolved in the shape of participants' transcribed or researchers' descriptive statements. This access provides an overview of fundamental quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. This method will comprise interviews, surveys, questionnaires, statements, over-abstraction of the outcomes, and triangulation of data acquired.

Priority would be provided to group discussions and case analyses. This survey will concentrate on the understanding, impressions, and overall utterances of the students regarding digital education and modern changes through social media. Also, the survey will contain queries about technological preparation and infrastructure. The feedback will be purified by well-known statistical data examination devices. Based on the conclusions, we will be able to find out whether they will choose to move with digital education in the future or not. In acquisition, we will also concentrate on the situations that the students face in digital education and how we can trade with it.

This survey will moreover concentrate on the studies of educators and educational academies. It will also include questions based on which we will be able to know how to improve creative endeavors that encourage them to overcome the constraints of virtual teaching and how subscriptions can be increased on YouTube for better understanding and facilities. Based on these findings we can find extraordinary chances for improvement, creative solutions, and willingness to comprehend from others and try unique tools as instructors, parents, and students to stake similar knowledge. Online learning has sustained the alternative to teaching and learning in creative ways unlike

the teaching and learning experiences in the normal classroom setting.

**? Secondary data:**

Secondary data would be vastly utilized to comprehend the existing technologies and to learn about the easy adaptability of the implemented technologies through YouTube study journals, articles, videos, etc.

Secondary analysis pertains to the use of existing analysis data to find explanations for a question that was extraordinary from the original work. Secondary data can be enormous scale estimations or data collected as part of the private examination. Although there is extensive agreement about sorting the outcomes of large-scale surveys, a limited agreement exists about the second. While the fundamental ethical problems associated with the secondary use of study data persist to be exact, they have become more mashing with the advent of new technologies. Data sharing, compiling, and storage have evolved much faster and easier. At the same time, there are new problems with data confidentiality and safety.

The secondary methodology includes two methods namely, quantitative data analysis and qualitative data analysis.

**QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

As for quantitative data analysis, we are not compiling the data that we will be working with, we need to become familiar with the data set. This familiarization process entails:

- ◆ Awareness about how the data was acquired.
- ◆ Understanding who the population of the research was.
- ◆ Conceding what the ambition of the original analysis was.

was.



◆ Speculating what the comeback sections were for each question exemplified to survey respondents.

◆ Specifying whether or not clusters or stratification need to be achieved during the analysis of the data.

### **QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

Qualitative data analysis is a technique where we do not use any digits or numerical data. Somewhat, the results of qualitative data analysis give an in-depth awareness of how we can enhance digital education. It is much more generalized data and comprises consultations of students, teachers, and educational institutes, group studies, group discussions, and case histories respectively.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings, this investigation finalized that the user's acceptance of YouTube videos as learning resources was associated with three characteristics: perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and social influence. Individual and environmental characteristics were both important in the user's acceptance of YouTube for learning. Perceived usefulness was an important characteristic for the anatomy students, affecting their decisions to use YouTube as their learning resource. The key conclusion from this result was that although the critical duration of the Covid-19 pandemic forced more teachers and students to shift their T&L activities either in full or part, they could not forget these three characteristics to ensure the students' acceptance of online resources. In other terms, the perceived comfort of use, perceived usefulness, and social influence still played a significant role in specifying the success of e-learning actions, even in situations where using online

platforms was not an option due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Although the hypothesis and the characteristics examined in this study were well-reported in the literature, this study received its substantial consequences by examining how the connections between these characteristics and user acceptance were mediated by subscription status, which was one of the processes on YouTube that had the potential to improve the user experience of YouTube. By subscribing to a YouTube channel, a user can attain the advantage of receiving data on the latest uploaded video by the YouTube channel owner. This study indicated that the subscription level did not moderate the relationship between sensed relief of use, perceived efficacy, and social influence on the user's acceptance of YouTube, demonstrating that the approval of YouTube scopes between subscribers and non-subscribers did not vary. This outcome supplies a significant statement to the content developers when equipping their content. Both subscribers and non-subscribers will receive the uploaded content if they acknowledge the contents are useful. Meanwhile, non-subscribers and subscribers may be impacted by their social circle when viewing YouTube content. In other terms, there is no assurance that subscribers may automatically view the content from the YouTube channel they have subscribed to. To the instructors, this result indicates crucial importance. A teacher may ask learners to subscribe to a YouTube channel but to ensure the students proceed with the content, active efforts by the teacher and fellow students may result in various results on the enthusiastic usage of YouTube.

The conclusions indicated in this study provided beneficial insights for educators in using YouTube as a T&L platform, either for full-online learning or mixed learning. The proficiency that may impact user acceptance would help educators to be more student concentrated during the procedure of formulating scopes for self-YouTube channels or suggesting scopes of YouTube to the students for their learning objectives. The use of YouTube as an educational resource should be encouraged with proper advice from educators as students who use YouTube in their academic activities have been found to attain better educational execution as well as improve their widespread knowledge. As an alternative, teachers may create videos on their own and upload the videos on their YouTube channels to undervalue the risks of students viewing irrelevant or low-quality materials. Although this study has attained its purpose and has laid a substantial contribution to the literature, it has constraints that have to be conceded to provide inputs for future research. While this analysis has successfully examined the user's acceptance of YouTube videos as learning material, this study concentrated on the lecturer's self-created videos posted on a dedicated YouTube channel. Thus, the transferability of the conclusions to other situations may require further analysis, such as the usage of YouTube videos created by YouTubers.

The investigation was completed to comprehend the consequences of subscription status on the characteristics influencing the users' acceptance of YouTube as an educational resource. Although the measurement prototype and the structural model of this analysis were vital, this study had its constraints. The study was for a single topic, which

was accounting, and the specimens were restricted to the distance education students who were knowledgeable about the online learning platform. Thus, developing samples of other topics and learner backgrounds may bolster the literature on this subject. One strong finding from this study is that a content developer needs to constantly reimburse sufficient awareness to the target audience, either subscribers or non-subscribers during the procedure of formulating their scopes. The acceptance of YouTube content for both parties was impacted by the same aspects: perceived comfort of use, perceived usefulness, and social impact.

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## **Social Media, Clickbait Journalism and Its Impact on Netizens**

***-Dr. Reshmi Naskar &  
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### **ABSTRACT**

**A**s the technological - driven media environment proliferates, it has revamped the pattern in which people interact, communicate and engage. This has facilitated in rapid development of the social media platforms and increased the demand for user generated content. Thus, bringing about a major reconstruction in the field of journalism which now requires new strategies to survive in the digital era. This virtual reality has transformed consumers into active participants and users, from being just passive readers and viewers. Subsequently, revolutionized the way in which media is created and distributed. This change in media production and information dissemination pattern has forced legacy media platforms to make their presence felt in the digital space. This convergence of newsrooms seems to be the most viable option to exist, but the fact that the old and new are placed along one another,

rather than at opposite ends has ushered a new field of tension.

As the Reuters Digital News Report 2022 contends that 63% of the youth in India are accessing news through social media especially on their mobile phones, journalists many a times today try to attract the audience's attention and keep them hooked to the screen by resorting to sensitized headlines, in order to get the clicks and following numbers right. As this decides the advertising revenue and a monetary model to survive the stiff digital competition - clickbait journalism poses a major impact among the netizens. While many contend that such strategies do not have any effect on the credibility of the news stories, this paper tries to explore the impact of clickbait and factors that trigger netizens to click and read the news. Previous studies contended, have been mostly done concerning the journalists' point of view but, there exists a gap when one tries to understand how clickbait journalism impacts the netizens. As news thrives on trustworthiness and authenticity, it is important to understand how audiences perceive clickbait journalism from the prism of credibility.

This paper thus aims to analyze whether netizens feel clickbait style headlines have an effect on the credibility of news stories. It further tries to investigate the user-engagement pattern and quality of the news stories. To achieve these objectives, a survey was conducted where the respondents from Kolkata were exposed to a set of clickbait style headline news stories and actual news stories in order to understand clickbait journalism and its impact. The findings clearly suggest strong statistical evidence that the clickbait has negatively impacted the credibility of the news

stories. It also highlights that these factors even affect the quality of the news stories as well as the user-engagement pattern and present a homogeneous curation of news stories.

**Keywords:** *Social Media, Clickbait Journalism, Credibility, User-Engagement Pattern, Netizens*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Over the last few decades as the technological - driven media environment continues to transform rapidly, it has changed the manner in which people interact, communicate, and engage. This has facilitated the rapid development of the social media platforms and increased the demand for user generated content. It is important to note that the speed in which technology is changing, human consumer behavior is also changing, and even human expectations are evolving. With a fragmented audience at hand, the digital media has altered the way in which we produce and receive news. Across the globe around 3.6 billion users (i.e., 49% of the total population) actively use social media platforms to engage, gain knowledge and search for information best suited to their needs. (Kempers, 2020) Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Google, Pinterest, Reddit are some social media platforms popularly used by them. These social media platforms thus, enjoy a huge user-audience base and are increasing every day. However as these continue to happen the contemporary newsroom ethnographies seem to be tense about the ever increasing multi-media demands (Brannon, 2008; Cawley, 2008; Usher, 2012) and its need to adapt with it as well as leading to convergent newsroom environment to survive in the digital era (Bock, 2012; Klinenberg, 2005; Robinson, 2011; Silcock and Keith, 2006; Singer, 2003). Virtual reality has thus transformed



consumers into active participants and users, from being just passive readers and viewers. Subsequently, revolutionized the way in which news is created and distributed.

Now, this new change in the journalistic environment requires new economic strategies to exist. On top of that the netizens owing to the digital boom are being placed with a plethora of choices to choose which news organization they want to select for accessing news. Hence, one cannot only depend on the subscription revenue, also the advertising revenue will only be received by the concerned media outlet when the users have clicked on the particular news article and while scrolling being exposed to it. So, the online news media is dependent on the number of clicks a particular news article can bring and the likes and shares of that particular news. So, in this age where news outlets are mushrooming every day, being able to bring the correct amount of footfall to an article is very important. The journalists are thus under acute pressure to grab the reader's attention, for this they resort to using catchy headlines to lure the readers to read the particular story. This usage of sensationalized headlines is understood as Clickbait. So, clickbaits are defined as usage of sensationalized headlines to attract the attention of the reader and then lure them to click on the link which redirects them to an article. (Chen, Conroy, and Rubin. 2015, pp. 15 - 19) Examples of clickbaits are: Ayan Mukerjee was not included during an interview of Brahmastra. What Ranbir Kapoor did next will blow your mind; Anushka Sharma's statement on Kangana Ranaut's Nepotism comment will leave you shocked; 20 Facts You Probably Didn't Know About Brahmastra Part One: Shiva.

These articles redirect users to the news website portal and after reading the content of the news article, it is clear that the information in the article does not match with the headline. Facebook thus defines clickbait as a link published in a manner that the headline stimulates an interest or an urge among the netizens to click, without making them aware of what content the news article actually contains. (O'Donovan et al., 2014) This technique of using headlines in a manner that they grab the attention of the reader is called forward-reference. As rightly contended by Bloom and Hansen (2015) in their study, 'Click bait: Forward-reference as lure in online news headlines' clickbaits thrives on forward-reference technique where they create an information gap by concealing important information from the headline that creates a curiosity and interest in the minds of the reader to click and read the article. In short, clickbaits thrives on this cognitive phenomenon of Curiosity Gap. (Loewenstein, 1994) Now in spite of having a strong suit of curiosity to grab the reader's attention these news articles often leave the readers disappointed as their heightened interest starts to wane out slowly by the end of it. This ultimately leads to a disruption in the attention span of the readers and this continuous scrolling and switching from one article to the next leaves them mentally exhausted. Thus, creating a tendency to skip textual articles and in-depth critical news stories.

The conventional belief goes as clickbait being used by news sources who are fictitious and their whole news website thrives on half-truth and misleading content. But this was only true till the initial phases of online journalism, post which due to extreme competition and requirement of

a steady flow of economy many legacy news sources have started to use clickbait. A study by Rony, Hasan and Yusuf in 2017 contend that at least 33.54% of the legacy media today, in their social media posts make use of clickbait rather than digital news sources who stand at 39.26%. The difference isn't much and one can say it is diminishing slowly with passing years. Even the Columbia Journalism Review recently published that there is an almost equal amount of factual news stories along with clickbait stories by legacy media organizations doing rounds. (Nolan & Ball, 2020) This evidence paves way for an even darker shadow lurking in the background, that is, credibility and trust in the news articles published. Initiatives of removing clickbait news stories have been taken by Facebook in 2014 based on the click-to-share ratio and also the amount of time the user spends on certain news stories. Following this, even Potthast et al. (2016) devised a method to detect the clickbait tweet posts on Twitter, but nothing worked in the long run as the clickbait stories were no longer restricted to only fictitious news portals, but also legacy media organizations started using them. Posing a greater risk in the credibility and trust attached to a news story.

All these have together contributed to a cultural shift among the social media users. In this web of inter-connected users, the interactions, opinions and discussions on social media ushers a new culture for both its producers and consumers. (Burger, Thornborrow, & Fitzgerald, 2017, p. 25) This has allowed people to participate in interactions and communal encounters transcending geographical boundaries and creating new forms of cultural communication. Like any cultural change happening in the

community, the online environment also leads to the formation of patterns, creation of symbols, their preferences and language in which they interact. This emergence of clickbait journalism in the media industry has also created a negative cultural impact on its users. It's no news that such articles gain a lot of clicks which in turn provides a good source of income for the journalists. At first even though it was spread at times, the tendency of media organizations publishing clickbait stories have also increased. This is because people on social media are very active, they instantly share the news they view/read. The fact that the number of clicks increases drastically has created a cultural shift towards news subterfuge. The objectivity with which journalists earlier used to report have now taken a back seat, with time journalists have learnt to package even misleading information well in a manner that users would almost fall prey to such stories and virtually travel from one baited story to the next. (Mirpuri, 2017)

#### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Most of the scholarly articles have stressed on the journalist's perspective of using clickbait. This paper thus tries to understand the impact of clickbait news articles on netizens and how this has brought about a cultural change in the minds and behavior of the people. Hence, the objectives that will help in investigating the research problem are:

? To assess whether users are able to identify a misleading news story with clickbait headline.

? To analyze whether the clickbait headlines affect the believability of the news story

? To understand whether this trend of clickbait has brought about a cultural shift where users are prone to clicking such news stories.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### ◆ Clickbait and Headline

Sensationalized headlines and presenting half-truth in headlines are essentially termed 'clickbait' and these characteristics can be specially seen in news stories in the online mode where clarity and unambiguity has now taken a back seat. The journalist who uses a baited headline, frames it in a manner that they make the reader curious enough and present them with necessary cues, so they are lured to click and read the story which does not match the same interest intensity as built in the headline nor the quality of the news story reported. While presenting a clickbait headline news story the journalist is faced with a conflicting set of principles as one is to impart the information about the article wrapped up in the form of a headline that convey all the information necessary and two, to attract the reader's attention (Andrew, 2007; Dor, 2003). Dor (2003) contends that journalists identify headlines as those that talk about the entire news articles in a short crisp manner within a few words and are not based on assumptions. Thus, these clickbait headlines negatively impact the cognitive power bringing about an attention distraction among the users (Dvorkin, 2016)

As this misleading content has increased, it affects the attention span of the users. Since, the sole focus of this content in the digital newsroom environment is on the clickbait-headline, a subsequent decrease in the quality of news articles can be noticed. The depth of the article is no longer stressed on, as the news article has lost its importance, especially with a fragmented audience at hand the trend to avoid textual content has increased. Dor (2003)

believes that since these clickbait news stories help to bring about an increased traffic/clicks to a particular news website/article economic benefits can also be achieved and slowly most of the articles have started to adopt the click bait style. Silverman (2015) in a recent study on online news 13% of the articles have misleading headlines and in the following year an increase in the use of this trend among the mainstream media organizations.

#### ◆ Journalistic Quality

As the cultural shift towards clickbait journalism increases, one cannot overlook the degrading factual objective style of news reporting. A study conducted by Sundar (1999) contends that when one tries to understand the credibility of the media: especially from the perspective of message credibility journalistic quality of writing happens to be an important part. It is true that researchers while conducting their study have found that quality of news has a direct proportional effect on credibility. As one must understand that to measure the believability of a news article, journalistic quality is also a branch of it, and one cannot ignore it. Other researchers also who contend their studies on the same line - towards understanding message credibility deals with both credibility measures and quality of news articles. (Clerwall, 2014; Graefe, Haim, Haarmann, & Brosius, 2018)

Now, journalistic quality itself is a very subjective term as there is no definition prescribed to it. It depends on an individual's perception and analysis mostly. However, to ease this ambiguity Urban and Schweiger (2014) has devised a six criteria normative mechanism for researchers to help them check the news quality like, accuracy,

comprehensibility, impartiality, diversity, relevance and ethics. Neuberger (2014) in his study applies the framework and concludes that the reader's expectation largely confirms the categories devised.

Understanding journalistic quality can thus be a herculean task as individual preference of news quality might vary. Yet there can be a broader set of heuristic cues developed, such as, media brands, uncivil comments beneath an article, or whether the article was written by a human, inclusive of varying netizen characteristics. (Graefe et al., 2018; Prochazka, Weber, & Schweiger, 2018; Urban & Schweiger, 2014) Vultee (2016) contends that depending on whether the article is edited, or it being shared by the editors, or readers (Sundar & Nass, 2001) forms parameters of assessing the quality of the news story. Clerwall (2014) and Graefe et al. (2016) contend that audiences believe that there exists a slight difference between automated news articles and human-produced news articles, in which they consider the former as more credible but lack emotions. The latter however has emotive content, but the neutrality out here is a perceived reality whose quality and credibility still needs to be tested.

#### ◆ Journalistic Credibility

Metzger et al. (2003) in their research work, 'Credibility for the 21st century: Integrating perspectives on source, message, and media credibility in the contemporary media environment' deal with the perceptions of the students' towards the credibility of the information available on the web. The study shows that the students of the 21st century tend to depend more on online sources of information as opposed to reading newspapers. They rely more on the

information available in the World Wide Web; its popularity among students is also because the accessibility to the information is free and easy as compared to the traditional formats of information seeking. Research even highlights that message credibility online, depends primarily on the structure of the message, its content, and delivery. Now understanding media credibility among students, the author points is tedious as it originates from source credibility and keeps changing with time. They access that media which gratifies their needs, and this credibility index helps them to access accurate news online.

When we talk about accessing information that is already available on the Internet, studies point out that age and education of the user, form important credibility assessment factors. Mulder (1981) assessed that critical media users are those who are older and more educated as opposed to the younger generation, who are less educated and believe in all media coverage and think them to be credible. Young adults of age group 18 - 24, believe news media as highly credible (Robinson & Kohut, 1988) These demographic patterns of response are collected from the network news. Thus, a new type of media literacy is developed which includes sophistication, life experience, and knowledge of the press.

Consciously or unconsciously, readers/the consumers of media may not be aware about the working mechanisms of how a news story is created but, when packaged as a story to be consumed they have their own opinions and perspectives about it. These opinions/perspectives the scholars analyze as measurements of message credibility (Thorson, Vraga, & Ekdale, 2010) which in turn contribute to the credibility of the journalist (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) or, the news



organization on which it is published. (Bucy, 2003; Johnson & Kaye, 2000) The readers/viewers of the media are presented with cues about how to attach their trust in a news source which might be external or embedded in the media message itself. Reasons why scholars contend that credibility is understood as measurements of believability, as it resonates itself closely with the journalistic value of objectivity. 'Credibility' itself is a multidimensional concept and hence it is often used as an objective definition to measure trust, believability or accuracy. Credibility itself is a very broad topic to assess it from the perspective of source, message and medium is a herculean task hence it is substituted as measures of believability as audience over a period of time have developed a certain trust towards certain media organizations, formulated his/her own opinions and belief and accordingly attach their believability. Since everything is dependent on credibility and believability even journalists are advised to craft their messages in a manner that the readers/audience can attach their credibility to. (Willis, 2019)

### **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Since this paper primarily focuses on understanding the impact of the clickbait news story from the prism of believability, the Messenger Credibility Theory has a natural starting point to it. The impact of message believability is actually connected to the source and the cues provided by channel publication (Norris, 2017). As soon as the reader is directed to a news article, it starts looking for cues in order to understand whether the news story can be trusted or not. Depending upon these cues identified, the reader may possibly trust that source of the news. If the reader is in conflict with the cues identified, then the news story reported

will be questioned and might be disregarded entirely (Xu, 2013). The reader today can no longer be engaged by just a misleading headline. The fact that even legacy media organizations are now adhering to this trend of clickbait have increased the risk of trust in news. It is actually curiosity together with the believability of the news source that prompts the netizens to actually click and read the entire story.

Now, for understanding the behavioral change in the users Media Priming Theory happens to be the center point of discussion. This theory tries to understand how the user behaves when they are presented with a stimulus while reading or viewing a news story. In other words, it tries to delve into the effects of clickbait headlines/sensationalized headlines on the user's cognitive capacity (attention and retention) and behavior. (Roskos-Ewoldsen et. al, 2002) Priming is a process that happens continuously when the netizens are exposed to the media content. Since it is a cognitive process, as rightfully contended priming changes the manner in which people process information. (Severin & Tankard, 2001) A study by Bargh and Pietromonaco (1982) holds evidence to the fact that many times the individuals are not aware that their behavior is actually being studied. Thus, this can be deduced that before the credibility of the content is understood, the headline information has a priming effect on the users. Evidence can be seen in the likability of the users to click on these baited headline news stories more than factual news stories.

Thus, the Research Questions that will help to constitute the basis for analysis are:

RQ1: Are the users able to identify a misleading news story with clickbait headline?

RQ2: Does clickbait headlines affect the believability of the news story?

RQ3: Has this trend of clickbait journalism brought about a cultural shift?

### **METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

This study is being done with the objective of understanding the impact of clickbait news stories among the netizens of Kolkata. Thus, to fulfill the objectives of the study, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. Prior to formulating the questionnaire, categories for choosing the news stories to be shown to the participants were identified, which were used for the survey. The themes thus identified were news articles revolving around political personalities and personalities from the entertainment business.

The main reason for choosing them is that they are well-known people so one, the users will be able to connect better, and they enjoy a great prominence hence using clickbaits in their cases is maximum as well. Prominence of the personality automatically attracts a higher readership and is directly related to the importance of them as an important news source and news value as well. As the saying goes - 'Names make the news'. Hence, this was chosen as an underlying theme. Since, the themes identified for selecting the videos were done through a more abstract approach, several incidents were identified keeping in mind the criteria, to qualify a particular theme.

For conducting the survey, a structured questionnaire which consisted of a total of 20 questions were prepared. The survey mainly targeted netizens ranging between (15 - 45 years old) the Millennials and the Generation Z living in

Kolkata, West Bengal, as they are constantly exposed to the technology evolving environments. They are the catalysts in spreading internet usage to every household and bringing about a rapid development in social media communications. The sampling technique used for this particular study is non-probability sampling. The non-probability sampling method used here, is voluntary sampling, where people voluntarily determine by themselves whether they want to participate or not. The main focus is to understand the impact of clickbait news stories on the users.

Participants for the survey were asked to complete the questionnaire, distributed online and was constructed with controlled parameters. The survey was developed using Google Forms and the responses recorded in the form of Google Sheets. The questionnaire was designed in such a manner that only those respondents using social media platforms to access news, specifically through platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and Telegram (as they are credible and mostly used social media platforms by the Millennials and Gen Z consolidates as per the Statista report 2021) were recorded so as to avoid sampling error. The central focus of conducting the survey was to understand the impact of these clickbait news stories specifically distributed especially by the legacy media organizations India Today, Zee News, News 18, Times of India. The participants were exposed to three clickbait news stories and three non-clickbait news stories as per the chosen theme. The stories were linked exactly in the manner that is done on any digital platform to garner the unvarnished response of the user. A series of questions were asked to test their believability,

motivation to click, and impact. Questions regarding the awareness of participants, so that they don't fall prey to misinformation were also asked among others. Every question had a forced response, so the participants were unable to skip questions.

Of the 21 questions asked the first few were regarding the demographic attributes like age, gender, occupation, and educational qualification. The data reflects that out of the 173 respondents about of the population 92.4% use social media platforms to access news. Only those participants who fell into the correct age bracket (i.e., between 15 - 45 years of age) were allowed to go forward with the survey; the rest were asked to submit the form.

Considering the research objectives, it is necessary to first, understand that among the many available, which social media platforms are popularly used by the Netizens. Figure 1 clearly holds testimony that around 52% of the netizens use Facebook, followed by 49.3% of the users preferring Twitter, Instagram and then, Telegram.

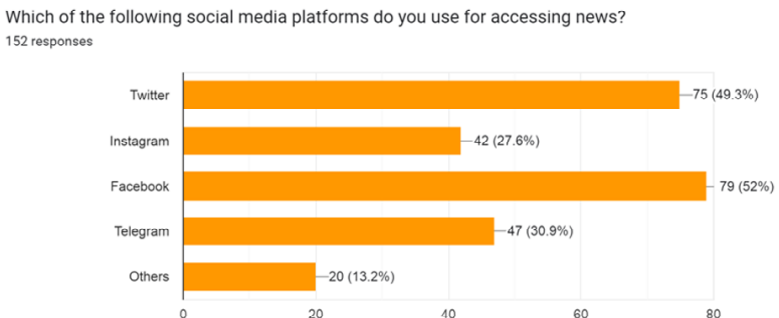


Figure 1

Participants were then asked about the frequency of their news access through social media platforms: "How often do you generally access news from social media platforms?" A five-point scale was used: Daily, 5-6 days a week, 3-4 days a week, 1-2 days a week, Seldom. As Figure 2 clearly indicates 70.4% of the respondent's access news from social media Daily. 11.2% of them around 3-4 days a week, 9.2% of them around 5-6 days a week while only 6.8% access news 1-2 days a week and 2.6% of them Seldom.

How often do you generally access news from social media platforms?  
152 responses

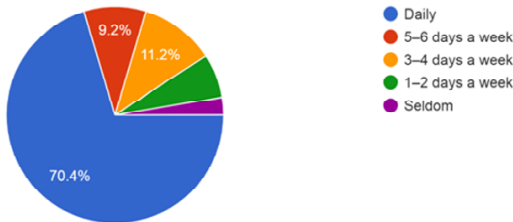


Figure 2

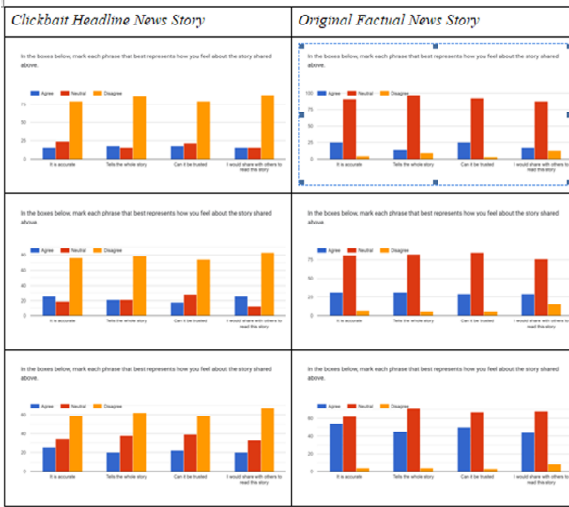


Table 1: A cumulative representation of the credibility assessment divided as per the source of the video

The respondents were then exposed to a series of four news stories and asked a series of questions. For every story read the viewers were presented with several cues so that they could attach their believability and assess the statements accordingly. The source of the video published was mentioned and the news story itself formed part of the message credibility which were the necessary points of analysis.

Analyzed carefully, the believability factor was assessed through statements like - 'It is accurate', 'Tells the whole story', 'Can it be trusted' (Meyer, 1988). This credibility scale was developed by Meyer (1988) to measure the perceived credibility of the media. It clearly indicates that among the news stories selected, the non-clickbait stories were considered as most believable by the respondents. Another statement was even asked, 'I would share with others to read this story' in order to understand the likelihood of the user to share the story with others. This clearly implies that the believability factor has a direct impact on the user-engagement pattern.

To check whether the respondents has actively participated in the analysis few cross-questions were asked like: Did the headline of the news story prompt you to click on the link and check the news story? to which 94.3% of the users were lured to read the news story depending upon the headline; What are the factors that helped you form your analysis? To this 77.5% answered that it was the headline of the news story while only 34.2% of the respondents have actually read the entire news story; Do you think that among

the news stories analyzed above, the quality of the news decreases when sensationalized headlines were used? to this 113 respondents among the 120 identified as the correct sample believe that the quality of the article decreases with usage of baited headlines. (see Figure 3, 4 and 5 respectively)

Did the headline of the news story prompt you to click on the link and check the news story?  
120 responses

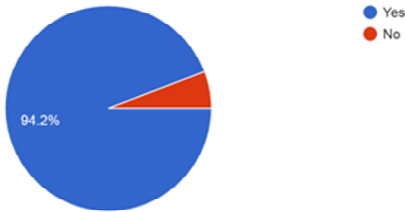


Figure 3

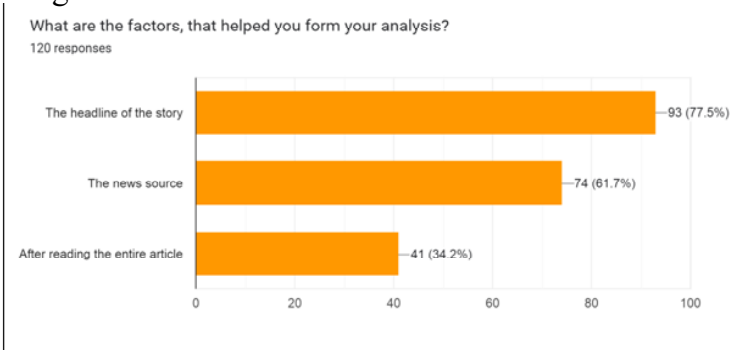


Figure 4

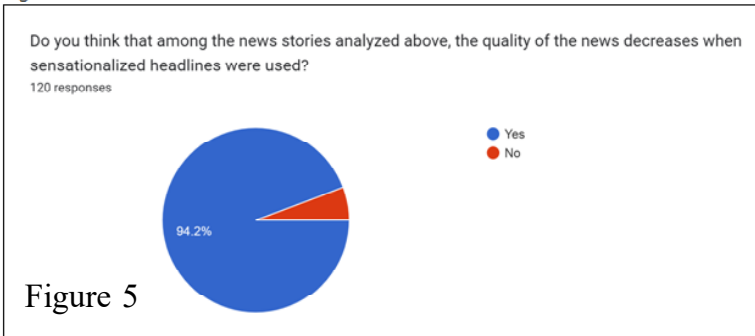


Figure 5



Furthermore, the respondents were asked an important question of whether they indulge in fact-checking the information they access to. To this, 30.8% of the respondents replied as Very Frequently, 34.2% as Frequently, 25% as Occasionally, 4% as Rarely and none as Very Rarely. (see Figure 6)

How often do you refer to the news sources for confirmation of the news story you have read? For example, if you see a news story on your social med...ebsite sharing it or, other news agencies as well.  
120 responses

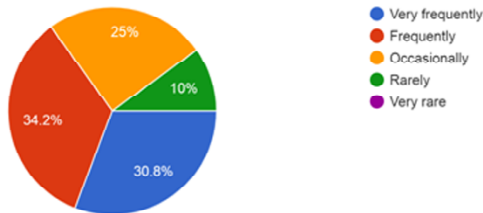


Figure 6

Lastly, catering to the objective of understanding whether this trend of clickbait has brought about a cultural shift where users are prone to clicking such news stories and journalists in order to get the traffic to the website correct have become prone to publishing such stories. As Figure 7 rightfully states, 55.8% of the users believe that, Yes, the numbers are increasing daily and shift can be noticed, 30% of the users believe that No, the gatekeeping methods have increased and users have become more active, 2.5% of the users contend that Misleading articles have always existed; They have neither decreased nor increased rather the identification of such articles have become prominent while, 11.7% Do not resonate with the statements. (see Figure 7)

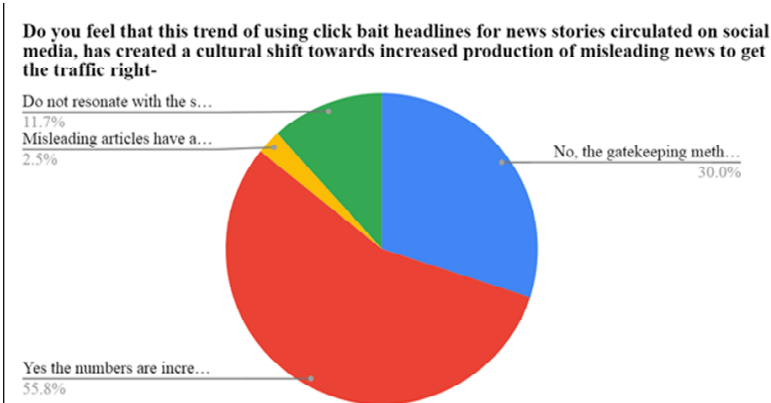


Figure 7

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The survey was conducted to understand the impact of clickbait news on the netizens and was controlled through certain clauses. The results reflect that while Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram still remain the popular medium chosen by netizens for accessing news stories - they in fact are quite active and watch news regularly. Most importantly, the survey holds testimony that netizens are lured by the clickbait headlines and have an intent to click and read the story. Subsequently, they also agree that due to this the quality of news articles has been negatively impacted as the headlines claim something and the news articles are something different. It has been also contended that the respondents very frequently cross-verify the information they read about in news stories of the news events shared on the social media platform.

Based on the survey analysis, it is clear that RQ1 - 'Are the users able to identify a misleading news story with clickbait headline?' has been answered. When the respondents are presented with an array of clickbait and non-

clickbait news stories, they have been able to differentiate between the two and attach their trust to the news article accordingly. They even contended that the headline of the article, the source publishing the news and after reading the entire article they were able to form the analysis. The respondents in this study were purposefully exposed to a mixed set of clickbait and non-clickbait headlines, which acted as "cues," and thereby helped them form their analysis better (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009).

As far as RQ2 is concerned, 'Does clickbait headlines affect the believability of the news story?' - the survey clearly answers that as well. The credibility scale developed by Meyer (1988) helped in assessing this. The theoretical framework of Messenger Credibility theory clearly has helped to draw the conclusion here, that headlines and news sources acted as cues as well as the content of the message. The interest might have been aroused by the cues presented but the message content helped to assess it better. Adding on, the clickbait headlines have a negative impact on the believability of the news article. And, believability, might have an inversely proportional relationship with clickbait articles but has a direct and positive impact on the user-engagement pattern. The higher the credibility of the message the more likely are the users to share the same article. Lai & Lui (2020) claims that the content credibility is an active precursor of social media engagement and the engagement stems from the readiness of the user to accept the message that is disseminated. So, in spite of getting the clicks these misleading headlines fail to garner the same amount of user-engagement pattern that a factual object news article might enjoy.

Lastly, RQ3 - 'Has this trend of clickbait journalism brought about a cultural shift?' has been answered very clearly as well. The survey indicates that there is a close force of people who believe that there is a cultural shift of clicking on these misleading news articles and because of this, the numbers are increasing daily - so much so that traditional media organizations have now retorted to using clickbaits. But a close section of the respondents believe that the gatekeeping methods have increased, and users have become more active. It is true that subterfuge has increased activism about making people aware of misleading news articles has also increased but maybe not the same magnitude of user-interaction that a factual objective news story might enjoy. The gatekeeping process especially for the online media needs to be revamped, as the survey suggests many journalist and scholars are of the same opinion that even though the business and the economic side of the media needs to rely on click, so much so that every journalist has a click target to reach they do have a larger responsibility towards the society. Undoubtedly, journalists have succeeded in their part of attracting the audience attention, as can be clearly understood through the Media Priming theory that they are presented with a set of cues which help the readers' form their trust in news but also due to continued exposure direct the manner in which they process so much so that they are prone to clicking more on these click bait news stories.

### **CONCLUSION**

To conclude, it is necessary that social media platforms devise mechanisms like blocking clickbait articles by scanning the headlines. Like, before uploading a video on

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YouTube there is a thorough check of copyright issues. Similarly, a mechanism can be developed to put a check to these clickbait news stories. With its growing number every day, not all users can be made aware about it every minute. Hence uprooting the vice from the starting point is important. Media, the fourth pillar of democracy, is supposed to play an important role in informing the citizens, hence publishing such misleading stories only creates a negative impact among the users. The mechanisms in which news stories are written and the values it upholds should be kept aside from economic means of surviving in the digital world. Lastly, there was a time when credibility was synonymous with the media and there was little or no scope of doubt. Today however with the digital advent accuracy and objectivity is questioned almost every other day. These trends of clickbait journalism have affected the journalistic environment in a manner that many times even most aware citizens fall prey to such vicious cycles and are ill-informed. The sole purpose for writing this paper was with the intent that both readers and writers alike, through discussion work towards building a satisfactory journalistic environment of news dissemination where for clicks, likes and share none have to retort to sensationalized, baited and misleading news reporting mechanisms.

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# **The Metamorphosis of Public Sphere and Political Communication in a Digital Era**

*-Sethulakshmi E S &  
Dr. S. Arulselvan*

## **ABSTRACT**

**N**ew media is changing the conventional patterns of political communication, a field that had its heydays set forth by print, radio and television. The unprecedented growth of the internet and the resultant emergence of new media is establishing new realms of public sphere. The traditional meaning and structure of public sphere is undergoing relevant changes with the rise in new media. Habermas' seminal work 'The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere' discusses why public spheres are important for the healthy working of democracy. The fundamental aspect of a public sphere is the possibility for discussion about various problems in the society and coming to a consensus that are amicable for all parties.

But according to scholars like Jodi Dean and Peter Dahlgren, public spheres in digital media works in a totally different fashion than the traditional public sphere.

According to Dean, the public sphere postulated by Habermas was not an equitable space.

Analysing the landscape of new media, the algorithms of most social networking sites are designed in a way that numerous 'echo chambers' or 'filter bubbles' are created, and the users won't be able to get exposure to viewpoints or ideologies other than what they believe. Also, according to Sarah Myers West, the business model of networked technologies and the commodification of users' data resulted in 'data capitalism' that in turn led to asymmetrical distribution of power. This paper seeks to analyse the ways in which the attribute of public sphere is transforming with the advent of digital media especially social networking sites. It also analyses whether the new media technologies are contributing to strengthening of democracy or is it undermining the democracy.

**Keywords:** *Data Capitalism, Digital Media, Misinformation, Political Communication, Public Sphere, Social Media*

## INTRODUCTION

The structure of public sphere is in a flux with the rise in new media infrastructure. A healthy democracy is characterised by the presence of a public sphere that is accessible by everyone regardless of their social and political capital. According to Habermas, public sphere is a space where exchange of ideas and opinions takes place and through rational debate and discussion people should be able to come to a consensus.

Later various scholars analysed this idea of public sphere and came up with various critiques. Fraser (2005) discussed the exclusionary character of Habermasian public

sphere. The public sphere of enlightenment period only included men with proper education and property. People who lived on the fringes of society, the marginalised people, women, people of colour and minorities were not included in such discussions. The term public means a space that is attainable by everyone. The concept was in contradiction with the pragmatic functioning of public sphere.

During and after the world war, the act of public sphere was taken up by mass media like television and radio. Television was a major tool used by various countries for spreading their propaganda. Habermas (1989) is of the view that television and radio failed to act as public sphere due to commercialization and privatisation.

Mouffe (1999) says that the worldwide rise of extreme right-wing governments can be due to the weakening of democratic institutions as a whole. She points to the political theory that is being followed which is individualistic, universalistic and rationalistic framework adding to it is a neoliberal model of globalisation (Mouffe, 2008). According to Mouffe, such a system can undermine a pluralistic democratic public sphere. Also, in contemporary politics the dimension of morality is giving much importance that a space for antagonism has been replaced.

The Habermasian discourse model need public deliberation to come to a consensus. Rational consensus is different from mere agreement. This needs equality, transparency, there should not be use of force and there should be agreement from all people. Even though these conditions will bring about better democratic practices, the actualization of such a process is highly unlikely.

With the coming of new media, the functioning of public sphere had undergone major transformations. Research is going on to find whether this phenomenon of online public sphere is strengthening of democratic institutions or is it undermining the ideal of democracy.

During the enlightenment period, the French salons or coffee houses or townhalls served as spaces where people could come together for public deliberation. As mentioned earlier this was an exclusive space. During the 1960s, television became the 'constructor of political reality' (Gurevitch et al, 2009). Studies have shown that after the popularisation of television, people became more politically educated. In this context, Bourdieu's (1998) account of television journalism provides a detailed analysis of how journalism performed on television can contribute to depoliticisation of the political process. In television, political issues began to be associated with leaders rather than their political ideologies. Pierre Bourdieu (1998) argued that television tries to impose a particular vision of politics in the minds of its audience. Journalists are keen on discussing the tactics of politics and not the substance of politics. There is a paranoia associated with accessing the newest and hardest news to get. All these tendencies work towards producing an effect of depoliticization among the audience.

Also, the one - way relationship between the broadcaster and audience can be considered as a problem that can arise when television takes up the role of public sphere (Cook, 2011). Citizens rely on debates and talk shows that takes place during news to be informed about the opinions of political parties or leaders. Dahlgren (1994) addresses this

issue by marking a clear demarcation between a common domain of public sphere and advocacy domain of public sphere. The common domain includes the arena where major media provide information, opinion and debate for every member of society. In the advocacy domain can be referred to as the space and time made by the dominant media for civic participation from political parties, interest groups and so on (Downey & Fenton, 2003)

The commercial agenda of the news channel can influence such debates in order to socially engineer various narratives that circulate regarding particular issues. The ownership of media is an important factor that can play key roles in the way television acts as public sphere. Fraser (2014) argues that conventional or normative narratives can be publicised through television much more easily as it is an influential medium.

Livingston & Lunt (1994) are of the view that only the elite representatives were able to participate in a television debate and the instances where actual citizens were included in a debate was very low. Habermas (1984; 1989) argues that the television and mass media in general are creating a pseudo public sphere. According to Habermas, in order to oppose the power establishment, there is a need to create a public sphere where people could come together for discussion and deliberations through rational debates. In a façade of creating a public sphere, mass media is actually creating fragments of private individuals. This also distracts public from engaging in political actions. For example, in television debates, a high event turnover and limited public attention has made journalists to take either extreme positions on issues or reporting on extreme events in order

to satisfy public interest. He said that the public should be aware of the mechanisms at work and remove the journalistic race for the scoop.

With the introduction of new media, the number of people who relied on the internet and social media sites to acquire news is increasing exponentially. The shift from traditional media towards new media is an 'ecological configuration' (Gurevitch et al, 2009). New media is more inclusive where audience became a part of the political process in an unprecedented manner. Digital media has contributed to the undermining of traditional media. Along with it, digital media and technologies have improved the communicative balance of power by reconfiguring "access to people, services, information and technology in ways that substantially alter social, organizational and economic relationships across geographical and time boundaries" (Dutton et al. 2004, p. 32).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Social Media as Public Sphere**

The alternative media that is growing through the framework of digital media is creating repercussions in the way political communication happens in contemporary time. Habermas himself was skeptical about the internet's ability to create inclusive public spheres. According to him the various public spheres created by internet are closed off like global villages (Habermas, 1998). They act as networks and these networks in turn connects to other networks that have similar standpoints.

Sunstein (2001) views internet as a space that can spawn spaces that allow radical viewpoints to spread without moderate and balanced deliberation of opinions. This can

lead to polarisation or formation of enclaves. According to Sunstein, people should have exposure to alternative viewpoints in order to have a comprehensive understanding about various issues. On one hand such formation of enclaves can lead to polarisation while on the other hand it can be used for the political mobilization purposes. It can only be successful as they become significantly influential in the context of mass media public sphere. For this, the autonomous and public spheres should be able to form alliances and come together as large groups for political movements. The overlapping of different public spheres will strengthen the democracy as well as leads to fragmentation too.

Iyengar et al., (2019) defines affective polarisation as a negative feeling towards political parties other than that works inimical to people's beliefs. In a study conducted to analyse the affective polarisation happened in twelve OECD countries in the past 40 years, it was found that the United States experienced largest growth in affective polarisation (Boxell et al., 2020). It was also found that in six countries the rate fell in terms of affective polarisation. The researchers had incorporated data on economic, media, demographic, and political factors that may have some relation to the concept of affective polarization.

Also, patterns of affective polarisation are positively correlated with trends in the number of private 24-hour news channels, the non-white proportion, party sorting, and elite polarisation. It was found that the relationship between elite polarisation and the non-white proportion is greatest.

The potential of the internet to revitalize political communication has been debated by many placing the central



argument that digital media facilitates public deliberation (Coleman & Blumler, 2009; Dahlberg, 2001; Dahlgren, 2005; Papacharissi, 2002). While a certain degree of cynicism persists about new media and its role in political communication thus causing disillusionment among the public, opportunities to enhance political processes cannot be neglected. For instance, studying political talks (Graham, 2015) of and by the public in social media, messenger apps and other digital spaces reveals the fecundity of digital media and its potential for public sphere. Active citizens need to talk about societal and political issues, which can increase the political knowledge of citizens (Bennett, Flickinger, & Rhine, 2000; Coleman & Blumler, 2009; Conover, Searing, & Crewe, 2001; Eveland, 2004).

### **Data Capitalism and the Flux of Political Communication**

Even though, as of now, it is easier for the public to engage in political communication, this privilege is not equally distributed. Digital divide acts as a hindrance that weakens the discourse of participation by all. We cannot reject the potential of new media and social networking sites in creating a democratic space for civic interaction on politics. Policy reforms are needed in order to make the online realm a more inclusive and equal space. The hegemonic structure of society is reflected in the online space too. Technological innovations are creating new waves of social interactions that directly influence development discourses in the global south.

Social media, much like print and television, have enabled the production of discourses that helps in the development of a society and individuals. Social media have

become "digitally enhanced public sphere" (Dutton et al., 2004, p. 32). The way politicians use such a space is also undergoing drastic changes. They have acknowledged the huge potential of such a public sphere that can be used to directly influence people.

Dean (2005) argued that deliberation is relegated to the secondary level and what matters is not the message but its circulation that eventually contributes to capitalism. This is in contrast to communicative action proposed by Habermas (1991), which refers to the collective and collaborative action taken after deliberative exchanges among participants in the public sphere. The likes, shares, postings etc. are useful to generate data in droves. While Habermas (1991) said that communicative deliberations are fundamental to democratic processes, Dean stated that they strengthen capitalistic citadels. Similarly, Beller (2020) said that social media are economic media as messages and their meanings have been financialised and therefore are media of value abstraction and creation.

Much of political communication in digital media is driven by users. Internet has enabled users to participate actively in social media (McAllister, 2015) and in politics (Nam, 2012). Stieglitz, Brockmann, and Xuan (2012) found a robust relationship between politicians and social media users after studying the functioning of social media for political communication. This, in corollary, has improved communication between politicians and voters. Biswas, Ingle, and Roy (2014), after analysing the influence of social media in India, especially on voting behavior, show that social media unites people within political parties. The meanings of mediated messages find their resonance in the sharing,

spreadability (Jenkins, 2013) of content and the ways in which users reinscribe content through their participatory actions. Some of the political opinions are expressed through creative or participatory forms of artefacts such as memes (Wiggins & Bowers, 2015).

However, the infrastructure of the digital media is designed and conditioned by the corporate and leveraged by the State to achieve authoritarianism to a disconcerting degree. In Beller's (2020) terms, technologies, are reduced to entities of governance and manipulation or what is called command-control apparatus that also inhere in computational capital.

Zuboff (2018) characterised the business model of social networking sites as 'surveillance capitalism' and describes it as 'a new economic order that claims human experience as free raw material for hidden commercial practices of extraction, prediction, and sales. Basically, OSNs were not created for political discourse production. The ultimate aim is profit generation accomplished mainly through advertisement revenue.

In other words, when politicians engage in propaganda or campaigns, messages are delivered to audiences. At the same time, their attention is garnered to convert their engagement in social media as well as their expressive and affective actions to values. That would essentially mean that exchanges are stripped of content at all levels, and it is only signals that continue to flow accumulating value across the distributed architecture of the networked ecosystem. Thus, social and communicative practices such as political campaigns and political advertisements integrate with economic and capitalistic ideals of social media. This

combined with political economy of media in political communication has become fertile site of study with growing technologies, monopolization by platforms etc.

### **Use of Bots in Political Communication**

The employment of bots in political communication has changed propaganda and campaign tactics. Bots are employed to automate the sending of spam messages and are said to as "the web's first indigenous species" (Leonard, 1998). (Zhuang et al. 2008). Social bots resemble genuine users by having characteristics that are comparable to those of an account that belongs to a real person. On the other hand, bots are intelligent agents that have the ability to observe, navigate, and influence in order to accomplish certain specified aims, such as giving the impression that a politician is popular by inflating the number of followers. They can also be used to solicit donations from the public. Political bots can sway public opinion and get beyond established legal norms (Howard et al, 2018).

Political bots are used to create fictitious accounts and sway public opinion (Ratkiewicz et al. 2011; Woolley and Howard 2016). They are employed to polarise the population and instill prejudiced viewpoints in them by disseminating misleading information that is opposed to either right- or left-wing ideals. Political bots are also used to create counter narratives that challenge science, such as when it comes to vaccinations and propagate incorrect health information (Marwick and Lewis 2017; Broniatowski et al. 2018). During the campaigns of Donald Trump and Rodrigo Duterte, political bots were used massively to amplify the popularity in terms of metrics (Zhang et al. 2018; Uyheng and Carley 2019). Now, the use of bots raises suspicion when

50 percent of the accounts on Twitter or Facebook happen to spearhead political campaigns.

Online environments foster relationships that aren't physical, which makes it simpler for bots to work. By forming views and sustaining social engagement, they might evoke perceptions of a person. Bots have merely vitiated the political communication scene and created irreparable disruptions. They essentially started an information war (Woolley & Howard, 2016). On Twitter, malicious bot accounts proliferated, spreading false information and fake news. According to Bessi and Ferrara (2016), bots are employed to sway public opinion:

The presence [of] social bots in online political discussion can create three tangible issues: first, influence can be redistributed across suspicious accounts that may be operated with malicious purposes; second, the political conversation can become further polarized; third, the spreading of misinformation and unverified information can be enhanced. (para. 33)

The potential manipulation by political bots can be curbed by appropriate policy and laws. In depth research should be carried out in the areas of campaign finance, election law, voting rights, privacy and so on to come up with an inclusive solution. Better software and tracking of information flow can also contribute to the maintenance of social media and its intervention in politics.

### **Misinformation and Disinformation**

Many institutions have been disrupted as a result of the technical sector's unprecedentedly rapid expansion, and democracy is not exempt. Moore (2020) demonstrates how false information spreads hate and polarizing politics. The

dirty side of social media was evident in the election strategies utilised by American and Russian politicians. They disseminated deep fake images and videos of their rivals in an effort to defame them. They launched mimetic war, which demonstrated just how amateurish internet advertising can become. Attacks on the mainstream media and torture of sincere critics occurred. As a result, truth started to lose its legitimacy.

While visuals offer fascinating and potentially fruitful ways to analyse political communication and messaging, the advent of fake news, fake pictures, and AI-driven deep fakes has raised new questions about political communication. Political parties' institutionalisation of the creation of false information and the hiring of individuals to participate in dishonest propaganda must be examined from a variety of angles, including false information and propaganda, misinformation, mediated political communication in digital media contexts, affective labour and political communication, etc. In this context, Richard Rogers and Sabine Niederer's 'The politics of social media manipulation' (2020) explores definitional concerns, consumption, including the issue of persuasion, and the criticism of the notion that automation efficiently tackles the issues.

"Political communication today is built on a visual foundation" (Schill, 2012, p. 119), political communication research has for long given primacy to texts and text-based methods. The text-based analysis has continued despite increased use of visuals in political communication research (e.g., Veneti et al. 2019). The role of visuals in political communication needs to be examined (Veneti, Jackson, Lilleker (2019). The use of visuals has greater impact on

the personalization of political communication in terms of politicians' work and their personality (Farkas & Bene, 2020) and this is more pronounced in social media (Enli and Skogerbø 2013).

### **Algorithmic Bias**

According to a study (2020) on German users, it was proved that hyperactive users or people who are more active on social media than the average users, can influence political discourses and shape the public opinion. It shows that these users act as opinion leaders and can produce an agenda- setting effect (Papakyriakopoulos et al., 2020). However, the bias of data, arising from the ideological intentions associated with data collection practices, training datasets, the role of algorithms in contextualizing the data based on multiple connections, produce discourses that are 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, year).

Moore (2018) emphasises that as a result of increased monitoring, there is now a bias in the data and algorithms that might be used to target a certain group of individuals. Recommender systems are a subclass of machine learning methods. They provide consumers with "relevant suggestions." These recommender systems may be influenced by the actions of hyperactive users. With the rise in popularity of social networking sites, there has been a significant change in the dynamics of political contact between politicians and voters. OSNs have the capacity to accommodate a variety of viewpoints, however not all users are equally engaged online. There may be an overrepresentation of issues affecting users who are hyperactive. Such tendencies might lead to erroneous political communication. The users play the parts of citizens

and customers. OSN platforms adjust their recommendation algorithms according to popularity of the content. This practice can induce an asymmetry in contents that gets circulated.

Medrado, Vale, and Cabral (2019) argued that algorithms of YouTube can impact political communication significantly. OSNs' algorithm can create bias among its contents, likewise, YouTube algorithm can influence the recommendation of its videos to users. The authors selected two social movements in Brazil - the Homeless Workers' and the Indigenous Peoples' Movements, and one political party, PSOL. Then, a YouTube video from each of them were selected and using the YouTube's data-mining application Data Tools, they traced the recommended videos that were generated from each of the YouTube videos. The data were analysed for power relations involved in political communication using visual content drawing on theoretical perspectives related to platform studies (Veneti et al., 2019).

#### Political Communication and Digital Media in India

The last decade saw the volatile functioning of political parties, the burgeoning of democracy and populism, and 'cyberization' of participation across the world. While social media acts as an alternative media, it defers to media that assist the interests of state or corporate enterprises (Servaes, 1999). Further, political parties use social media to directly engage with voters. Social media allows for both mass messaging and micro-targeting. It is also bolstered by grass-roots campaigning and is immensely powerful in shaping public opinion. While working towards the making of a participatory democracy, social media can also be misused for propaganda, hate speech, and disinformation campaigns,



which can undermine the pluralistic foundations of democracy (Mahapatra and Plagemann, 2019).

The interaction between traditional media and new media gave way to phenomenon like popularisation, personalization and populism. (Bracciale R & Martella A, 2017). This situation has hugely helped politicians, journalists and of course, citizens to propagate their agendas and ideologies. For example, several movements like Anna Hazare's fight against corruption or the rise of Aam Aadmi Party have effectively used social media to their benefits (Darshan & Suresh, 2019).

In India during the 2014 election campaign the Bharatiya Janata Party had effectively used technology to their benefits. The availability of cheap smartphones and the rapid decline in cost of data and internet services have allowed hundreds of millions of Indians to access social media and engage in political discourse (Panda et al, 2020). In the following years, India saw a major increase in fake news being propagated against Muslims and other underprivileged people, that, at times, led to lynching and death of several people.

In the Indian scenario, two of the most prominent examples where social media acted as a platform for crowd mobilization for a social cause was witnessed in two instants: the anticorruption movement of 2013 and the movement against Delhi gang-rape. The Delhi assembly election results were also influenced by social media discourses (Pande, 2015).

Hyper - local messaging technologies like WhatsApp have been used by most of the parties to propagate their ideas. Udupa (2019) shows that the ideology of social media backed politics is to use extreme speech and abuse through

memes, troll videos and so on. Chopra (2019) throws light on the trend of using WhatsApp and Facebook to spread disinformation, fake news and for fearmongering which often leads to communal violence. In the new age of digital media, contrary to what was expected, women politicians find it extremely difficult to be on social media because of cyberbullying. Sometimes the gender bias that already exists in the society is reflected in digital realm too (Patterson 2016). Indian Women journalists and women activists too are not spared. They are threatened with violence, gang rape and stripping on Twitter (Arya, 2013)

Contrary to mainstream media practices, social media can be used to propagate messages that reaches the audience who choose to see it, along with a larger audience. For example, Indian prime minister Modi has not addressed the press, but his social media activities always get the attention of mainstream media, and these reportages will reach people who do not even follow him on social media. In this way he could design what should be communicated with people, which could not be done in a live television interview or media briefing.

Social media usage has helped in the normative positioning of India's politicians. Studies, however, show that such technology driven campaigning could not produce any massive change in the voting behaviour of the Indian public. But these tendencies can become problematic in the sense that they are being used to propagate hate speech and fake news that are divisive.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Cambridge Analytica controversy and the growing meddling in political campaigns by corporate moguls and

internet moguls like Robert Mercer and Andrew Breitbart in the US, for example, indicate to the evolving patterns in political communication that require attention and investigation. The underpinnings of democracy have been shaken by these interferences. According to Moore (2018), in a number of nations, an unholy truce was made between big data, advertising, and politics in order to rig elections. Some of the powerful men in politics, whether in Brazil, the US, or India, employed similar strategies to win the election.

With social media being critiqued over ethical decadence and fake news, its potential as a space for alternative politics has begun to wane. Like everything digital space also began to get institutionalized. Currently almost all politicians use social media to put forward their ideologies. More than seeking to garner support from the voting population, politicians use social media to draw support and attention from the diaspora and to create an amicable image of themselves to show to the outside world.

On the plus side, social networking sites and the internet are designed to provide every community, including those who were excluded from conventional media, an equal platform. Social media platforms have served as hubs for the political mobilization necessary to combat systematic injustice. Ironically, the same social media platforms have recently acted as catalysts for polarisation and division throughout society. Political communication may be algorithmically manipulated as a result of OSNs supporting biased political material. In order to address potential algorithmic interferences in the political discourse, there is a need for increased openness on the actual data-intensive

recommendation algorithms employed by the platforms (Papakyriakopoulos et al, 2020).

Political communication should be carefully crafted as it can strongly influence public opinion and in turn the democratic processes. The digital platforms and social networking sites should try to come up with an appropriate framework that would not breach privacy of users and refrain itself from creating manipulative algorithmic design. Without a framework to decide boundaries of data mining to minimize privacy intrusion of individuals, the phenomenon of 'data mining' can blow out of proportions. In all, the imbrication of new practices and possibilities afforded by digital media has offered new structures of thoughts and discourses around how political communication inquiry materializes.

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# **This Girl Can Meme: Analysing Participatory Activist Discourse of Women Members from India**

*-Shamika Dixit*

## **ABSTRACT**

**T**he present study analyses internet memes created by women as a tool of creative participatory activism in internet spaces. Studies have shown the growing popularity of memes, their influence on the consumer, and more importantly the shift and growth in using internet memes as a tool of political action. However, it has also been observed that there is a limited level of women's participation in the general discourse of meme content creation on the internet.

Therefore, in order to analyse and understand how women use their creative and participatory ability through internet memes, in this paper, 149 internet memes have been analysed which are created by women memers using feminist critical discourse analysis as a representation of memetic discourse created by women through a dedicated Facebook group called 'Marathi Meme Monks' - A closed group for

Marathi meme creation joined by 48.2K members (The latest number as we write this paper). Based on the internet ethnographic experience with the group, two major meme events are selected to choose sample pool for this paper. Those events are i) #मीमरपोरी (translated as Memer Girls) and ii) #ब्लडस्टोरीज (translated as Blood Stories) as major participation of women memers in these two meme events was observed.

Findings of the paper is divided in three major themes which show how memetic discourse of women majorly revolves around 1. Sexual freedom of women 2. Being 'second gendered' in a patriarchal society 3. Feminist advocacy through memetic expressions. Paper shows how memes created by women use many contexts specific popular references of Marathi as well as Indian culture to convert them into meme templates and use the universal virality of popular meme templates to create quirky and humorous memes which serve the resistance function of participatory popular culture on the internet. I discuss how agentic participation of women memers gives rise to alternative feminist media discourse serving as a strong alternative current to the internet memes in general.

**Keywords:** *Internet Memes, Women Memers, Participatory Action, Feminist*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Internet Memes as a Distinct Artefact of Digital Culture

As I write this paper, I am very sure almost everyone who has accessed the Internet has got exposed to the phenomenon called internet memes in some or another form. Internet memes are getting used across the sector today sprawling from marketeers, Social activists

volunteers, politicians, civil society groups etc. Many reports show that the popularity of internet memes has been growing day by day and it intersects global - local - hyperlocal to vernacular sensibilities (Literat & van den Berg, 2019; Miltner, 2017). People, especially youngsters using the internet and Social media sites such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook get exposed to memes almost a daily basis and enthusiastically Share those with their peers.

From being a specialized geek subculture memes are becoming so important that the mainstream has started taking them seriously over a period. The above statement also applies to academic scholarship based on internet memes Studying various aspects of the phenomenon. Internet meme has been considered one of the important artefacts of popular culture today (Cannizzaro, 2016; Denisova, 2019; Milner, 2016; Shifman, 2014; Wiggins, 2019). Starting from the famous work *Selfish Gene* by Richard Dawkins in 1976, who gave a word 'meme' as he discussed it to be a 'cultural replicator'; many internet scholars such as Miltner, 2013; Miltner, 2016; Shiftman, 2013 have contributed as the strong foundation of the academic study of memes as an important artefact of internet culture.

Shiftman (2013) in her book '*Memes in the Digital World*' has tried to define internet memes as a distinct entity from that of internet viral. He has also given recognizable meme genres based on which we can differentiate between artistic styles and structures. I have used these proposed genre differences s and three main dimensions in memes for meaning making proposed by Shiftmah 2013 for our analysis purposes which are content, form, and stance. I will be

emphasizing it in my analysis section in terms of designing the theoretical analytical framework

Many studies after these foundational studies have focused on internet memes to understand the logic of its spreadability (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013); popularity & relatability (Milner, 2011); vernacular and hyperlocality (Burgess; 2006) etc. Scholars also have studied how specific social groups use social media for different purposes. See for ex (Aguilar et al., 2017; Ali, 2020; Bellar et al., 2013; Boling, 2020; Bowen, n.d.; Mada et al., 2020; Hunting, 2020; Massanari & Chess, 2018; Pearce & Hajizada, n.d.; Rentschler & Thrift, 2015; Ross & Rivers, 2017; Thrift, 2014; Williams, 2020)

Most of these studies show that Internet meme is a significant artefact which represents the spirit of participatory media (Jenkins et al., 2004) where people can give their own meanings and can have multiple interpretations of the same text manipulated in various ways to suit their context and sensibilities. From protest sites to branding efforts, memes are omnipresent across the internet and real-life references today. However, studies have also found that some dominant the oppressive traits prevalent in society repeating itself in memetic culture on Internet (Drakett et al., 2018; Gasparini et al., 2022; Kendall, 2011; Maulana, 2021; Miltner, 2014; Nee & De Maio, 2019; Pearce & Hajizada, n.d.; Phillips, 2015; Prentice & Carranza, 2002).

Especially when it came to the representation of women in memes many scholars found problematic or stereotypical expressions of women's representations in memes. This brought me to the important question of the 'agentic behaviour' of women as 'meme creators'. Through this paper

I study how women creators exercise their agency by creating memes, and what kind of 'discourse' is produced by them through memetic expression from their position as a particular gendered orientation. By exclusively selecting memes created by women memers I analysed their memetic expressions using feminist Critical discourse analysis.

### **Women, Memes, and the Question of Agency**

Some studies in past have particularly focused on the usage of memes by women as a discursive practice. See for example (Ali, 2020; Boling, 2020; Bowen, n.d.; Gadjah et al., 2020; Miltner, 2014; Thrift, 2014). These studies suggest how memes can be used as an artefact for the purpose of political action and online activism. Meme as a text which gets its meaning as per the context and sensibilities of its creators, they have been used to put forward some of the political and feminist agenda by women over a period owning to a participatory agentic culture of the internet. However, these are very few examples of participatory activist actions. Memetic landscape yet, remains a gendered battleground where very few women actually make (create) memes rather than being a subject/object of the meme. Most of the studies done on women's memers are focused on the political struggles of women. This paper tries to shift focus from one reason for agentic activism using memes to understanding the general discourse women memers can create using their creative capabilities and agency. We study how women express their lived experiences through memes using humour and relatability as coherent factors of meme creations and what topics they chose to discuss when it comes to memes specifically created by women. I took a sample of 149 memes from a closed Facebook group called

Marathi Meme Monks' which is famous for making memes which serve as a counter-narrative to the status quo. I have discussed the significance and rationale behind choosing memes from this group in the next section.

## **INTRODUCTION TO INVESTIGATION SITE MARATHI MEME MONKS - AS A WOKE FACEBOOK GROUP**

It is important for the readers to understand the context of a Facebook group from which memes have been selected for the study as it exerts a structural influence on the agency of meme creators of the group. Memes from the Facebook group called 'Marathi Meme Monks' has been taken into consideration for this study. This group is a closed group where people enjoying memes and discussions based on current socio-cultural politics join (mostly in the Indian context and Marathi culture in particular) this group. The group cannot be considered as any other Facebook group but can be considered as a 'Woke group' where most of the group members are young and create memes as an expression of a counter-viewpoint to the status quo in socio-political scenarios of India and Maharashtra, in particular.

Most of the memes uploaded on this group are made in Marathi (the official language for the state of Maharashtra). It also uses many references from Maharashtrian Popular Culture as well as cult media production as meme templates, along with other viral meme templates such as - Fire girl, Black Panther, Batman, Joker etc. I argue that this Facebook group needs to be considered as a distinct case of online culture or as a sub-group which provides and create space for memers to make woke memes and needs to be taken into consideration to the extent to which we can generalize its findings.

It is also important to mention that, to analyse memes created on this group one needs to understand the nitty-gritty of classical and popular culture of Maharashtra and should be aware of a general public discourse which can make meaning of the memes accessible to the researchers. The same thing applies to the group members as well. Till the time members are not acquainted with the narrow public discourse this group members share and if they are not acquainted with Marathi pop-culture references it will be very difficult for them to make or derive meaning from the memes or even to enjoy the humour of the meme. Hence, it will be safe to argue that the memes created in this group are context-specific and meanings are accessible to a sub-group of the audience which becomes a qualification criterion for the group members to enjoy the memetic landscape of Marathi Meme Monks.

However, the significance of this group cannot be undermined. At the time of writing this paper, the group has 48.2K members and 100+ memes get updated on the group every day. It shows how active and thriving this group is. Along with high activity index, this group has also been founding mentions as mainstream Marathi media has started featuring some of the radical memes created and shared on the group. There have been press articles written on the activities of the group. Group admins have been called for press interviews and are invited for public discussion on the meme revolutions they have brought to the Marathi meme landscape. They have also been partnered with some of the cultural events as meme partners which have given them mainstream visibility as a legitimate part of Marathi Popular Culture at large. Hence, it invites academic interest to dwell

in the ecosystem of this meme group and bring out the discussion based on the structure-agency dualism of media platforms and the agentic behaviour of memers.

### **SELECTION OF MEMES AND ANALYSIS OF THE SAMPLE**

Data collected and analysed for this paper is collected through two significant meme events that were held as competitions on the same Facebook Group. As we were focused on analysing women's expression through memes these two events were thought to be most suitable for the paper.

Events Selected are two competitions held one being #मीमरपोरी translated as 'Merer girls' which had specifically asked only women to make and post memes on whichever subject they would wish to make memes on. This event showed a significant turnout from women members, and they posted many memes on different topics of their relevant interests. All these memes created by women are considered for further analysis. These memes were collected by running a hashtag search for #मीमरपोरी. This event gave significant data on memes made by women to analyse which topics they felt or decide to be meme-worthy and how they have expressed it through memes. This meme has also significantly reflected in mainstream media as it became a newsworthy event for feature articles<sup>1</sup>. The second meme event considered for this paper is another competition which witnessed major participation from women memers titled as 'ब्लडस्टोरीज' (Translated - Blood stories). This competition

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<sup>1</sup>The event was covered by mainstream Marathi newspaper, Loksatta- <https://www.loksatta.com/lokprabha/vishesha/girls-play-with-interesting-memes-at-social-media-during-corona-virus-lockdown-its-appreciable-aau-85-2159155/>



had encouraged group members to make memes/ express through the memes on the topic of menstruation. As I witnessed most of the women participating in this women-centred meme event, all the memes created by women during this competition were selected for further analysis. Memes were collected using same technique of hashtag search.

The search was done using both hashtags and a total of 149 memes were available for analysis. To understand how women express themselves using memes and how they put forward their expression I decided to take an iterative qualitative approach which allows researchers to understand the deeper meaning of the media text created by women rather than just giving superficial information in terms of what subject they chose, on which tonality they used etc.

Hence feminist critical discourse analysis has been chosen as the method and analytical framework for this paper.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Analytical Framework - Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

I decided to perform feminist critical discourse analysis (referred to as F-CDA here onwards) on the data as it suits the analytical purpose of this paper. The aim of this paper is to analyse how complex, subtle, and sometimes- not-so-subtle ways in which gender power relations are discursively challenged through the memes created by women (Lazar, 2007). As F-CDA is supposed to be at the nexus of critical discourse analysis and feminist scholarship/women studies, this analytical framework provides focus and at the same time helps researchers to bring out nuances specifically related to gender and aligned power structures (Boling, 2020; Lazar, 2007; Thrift, 2014). It also offers multimodality

(Moussa, 2020) which brings in a holistic understanding of the political feminist point of view expressed through media texts such as images.

Five inter-related Principles of F- CDA given by Lazar, 2007; are therefore considered for the analysis of memes in this study.

These five principles are namely -

i) Feminist analytical activism - which tries to analyse discourses which maintain or critique patriarchal social order in conversation with the status quo

ii) Gender as an ideological structure - Here, how the hegemonic structure is constructed and negotiated with related ideologies has been analysed. The dialectical relationship between structure and agency was a major focus.

iii) Complexity of gender and power relations: the struggle over interests which are maintained, exercised, and resisted through the memes created has been analysed.

iv) Discourse in the (de) construction of Gender: how gender ideology is (re) produced, negotiated, and contested in the texts (memes) is analysed here. Ways of doing/being women and dynamics between the forms of masculinity which result in the oppression has been a focus of this theme.

v) Critical reflexivity as a practice focused on how reflexivity is used by women to analyse the institutional practices they inhabit into with the possibility of change, critique, or transformation

These five principles have been considered as a feminist discourse practice based on which data has been analysed to understand how women use their agency to create a discourse through internet memes. Along with these principles of F-CDA we also focus on three dimensions of

memes discussed by Shiftman, 2013; to analyse the sample. These three dimensions are - content, form, and stance. Merging these three dimensions with the promise of multimodality of feminist critical discourse analysis also gives justice to the classical critical discourse analysis framework given by (Fairclough, 2013). His framework also works on three levels: i) text which can be equated with the content ii) process of production and interpretation which is equivalent to form and finally iii) Socio-cultural practice which resonates with the stance dimension of meme given by Shiftman, 2013.

Considering the above Framework our text (mems) was analysed on all three levels of description, interpretation, and explanation. To demonstrate the discourse established through agentic activist meme creators.

After the data analysis the findings are arranged in four predominant themes that emerged out of the data which are discussed in the following section.

The paper is aimed at discussing the following research question regarding the agentic behaviour of women memers

1)What kind of discourse is produced by women memers?

2)How Ideological construction of gender is re-constructed, of negotiated or contested by women memers?

3)How women memers have discursively engaged in memetic expressions in order to represent their lived experience in a patriarchal society through memes?

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Sexual Freedom of Women**

While analysing the discourse created by women memers, the sexual freedom of women came out as a strong

theme in response to patriarchal conditioning. These women memers brought out nuanced lived experiences of women, their upbringing and the ideas related to their sexual freedom while living in a patriarchal society.

The memes categorized under these themes talk about women's' right to enjoy sexual freedom, normalizing women talking about it and criticizing the mainstream discourse which has created always portrayed them as an object of sexual desire, which has created a discourse of women being passive agents of sexual desire and expression.

Starting the conversation from How women can & should talk about sexual freedom I saw these memetic conversations sprawling on while it touched upon, and critiqued other important facets such as the behaviour of other gender, norms and expectation set by the society, taboos created around the sexual pleasure of women etc.

Using humour as a central trait for memetic expression in this theme women used sharp satire (Moussa, 2020) to show the contrast between the patriarchal surroundings and their aspiration towards sexual freedom. Using their agentic voice women actively break down the dominant culture they live which has never acknowledged their freedom or expression of sexuality. They show through their memes how patriarchal Forces construct an 'ideal image' of a woman where her space is defined in terms of accepted or unaccepted behaviour from women. Women memers try to break down this notion and show how women also can talk about and express their sexual freedom while underlining how it is a surprise for a larger society which still assumes that sexual expressions by women are unusual to the ideal type where she is supposed to be passive

Women memers use many hyperlocal examples to bring out culture-specific humour and sharp

Satire to criticize the established status quo about women, their sexual freedom, expression, and needs. They refer to many customs and traditions very specific to Maharashtrian popular culture which brings out culture-specific humour and critique. Many references to Marathi films, and Bollywood films are used as meme templates to showcase the contrast in ideal vs actual behaviour of women when it comes to their sexual freedom and its expressions.

Consider the following example -



Figure 1

The following meme contains a reference to the two artefacts of popular culture. The first image consists of populist Marathi Public speaker Aparna Ramtirthakar who has always criticised women for being modern and not following the 'Indian tradition'. She has always criticized young women for the depletion of the traditional Indian (Hindu - Brahmanical) value system and of family structure.

In this meme, memmer has referred to a very famous quote which is supposed to be an epitome of her trying to

reinforce the patriarchal value system where she says (claimed to have said) that a woman /wife's hands should shake even while offering a cup of tea to a husband. She is referring to the structural authority between the husband and wife where the wife needs to be fearful as an act of showcasing respect and devotion to her husband. She must accept her subordinate position and should be fearful of her superior male partner. Hands-should shake is used as a metonym for shaking in someone's fear. This artefact of hyper-local Maharashtrian culture is used in contrast with one more artefact from an alternative Hindi film *Lust Stories* based on stories which were known for their bold and alternative content. The film is an anthology of 4 short stories dedicated to the intricacies of sexual Freedom, the choices of women and & their negotiations in relationships. The meme template uses one of the frames from the film directed by Karan Johar where the protagonist is using an adult toy face as a way to exercise sexual freedom towards her sexual desire. The shaking from sexual satisfaction used as a metonym for women owning their own bodies, and desires through their agentic behaviour here are juxtaposed with the shaking in fear of patriarchal thought of a public speaker who is a self-proclaimed keeper, social worker of Indian / Brahmanical patriarchal value system has been used to create humour and also criticized the patriarchal notion towards women's' sexual freedom by women memers. Similar to the above example, most of the memes created categorically tried to destroy the patriarchal notions towards their sexual experiences, and expressions through memes.

### **Memetic Expressions of Being 'Second Gendered'**

The second theme identified collectively represents

women memers lived experience as being a 'second gendered' in society. Through their memetic expressions, women memers have shared the nitty-gritty of their normal daily lives while they chose to criticise the overall patriarchal structure which treats them as subordinates and objectifies them as a secondary part of society and with the assigned stereotypical gendered roles such as cooking, caring for children & husband etc. Women memers have also criticized the social structure which restricts them from their agentic behaviour such as choosing their life partners for themselves. Memed made by women shows how social structures of closely knitted power-based family structures restrict them from making and sometimes exercising their own choices.

The memes under this theme also shared young Indian women's' daily struggles such as eve-teasing to direct message flirting Etc. Memes show how they must be dependent on societal permission to enjoy their lives ranging from deciding to go on vacations with friends to exercising sexual freedom etc.

This theme spectacularly contained memes related to menstrual cycles and societal taboos women face during this phase of their life every month. Using sharp satire and humour women memers Criticized the pseudoscientific claims and how women are victimized because of these claims till today.

Memes Created by women displayed experiences such as how victimization and stigmatization have been actually carried forward by other women in their house belonging to other generations. Women creators have antagonized their mothers, and grandmothers for sustaining the stigma and

carrying it forward from generation to generation as a victim first and then as agents over a period of time.

Consider the following examples for the same



Figure 2 - 'When You Convince Your Family Members Not to Isolate You During Periods

Figure 2 represents a struggle of woman as she convinced her family members not to sit aside (Isolated) inside her own home, using the template from the popular Hindi film Three Idiots where the actor has just overcome his fear by letting go of lucky success stones he had worn all his life on an important day of the job interview and still manages to get the job. This juxtaposition of overcoming pseudo-beliefs has been captured beautifully by a memer where tears in the eyes of the actor signify the happiness of overcoming something important in life. The same happiness has been used as a representational sign as the anchor text suggests woman has been able to convince her family members not to ask her to isolate herself during periods.





Figure 3: 1st Image -Mom, when her daughter sits aside for 4 days and wash her hair after periods are over (adhering to the normative behaviour) vs 2nd image - Mom, when her daughter by mistake touches Pickle jar during her periods

Figure 3 represents how a mother exercises control over the behaviour of her daughter when she is on her period. Using the universal meme template of the mood swings of florals fury from the popular video game 'cuphead' to signify how the mother is happy with her daughter while she adheres to the orthodox tradition when it comes to following things such as untouchability during periods and how she might face wrath from the same mother when she does peculiar things such as touching a pickle jar. These memes portray the everyday struggle of women and the gendered expectations made of them by society. Women memers don't stop here but also comment on issues such as mansplaining, access to public spaces, difficulties during pregnancy, difficulties related to PCOS, PCOD through memes. Memes under this category actually provide a sneak-peak into what it means to be a woman in a traditional patriarchal Society.

## Memes for Feminist Advocacy

The third large theme that emerged in the analysis was memes made for feminist advocacy by women to proclaim feminist voices. These memes also used humour in form of contrast and sharp satire to discuss issues such as mansplaining, problematic positions against feminist movement in general etc. They reflected beliefs held by the society and these women memers negotiate on the topics such as gender stereotypes, patriarchal gaze, objectification of women etc.

Consider the following meme example -

पपा - बेटा काकांसाठी चहा बनव

मी -



Figure 4: Father: "Make a cup of tea for uncle"

Figure 4 is a meme made by using a universal template which emerged from the iconic Marvel film 'Black Panther' called 'we don't do that here!'. This dialogue and template have been used in multifarious ways by memers, many times to show cultural diversity, differences, and acceptance of action across different cultures. The meme template stands for deconstructing the hegemonic worldview of any culture/subculture and aligned practices. Here, the memer has used

the same template to criticize the day-to-day subordination Indian women face with the typification of gendered chores. The anchor text reads as a father asks his daughter to go make a cup of tea for an uncle (supposedly fathers' friend or another elderly man in the family) as it is supposed normal gendered chore done by a woman in the family. By using a meme template from Black Panther memer actually refused these normalized bifurcations of chores which talks about toxic relationship and problematic acceptance by women of the same.

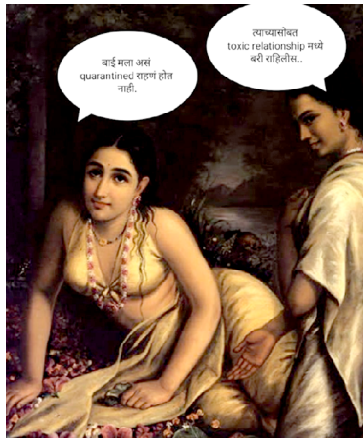


Figure 5: Damayanti - "I don't like to be quarantine like this", Other woman - "Then how did you managed to stay in toxic relationship with him?"

This meme Figure 5 beautifully uses famous painting of Raja Ravi Verma (one of the most celebrated Indian painters known for his iconic painting belonging to the European Academic style of painting and yet portraying Indian mythological figures from its epics such as Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Purana. etc.) This meme uses a painting from his series of paintings called Damayanti who

is waiting for her beloved king Nala who has disappeared without informing her about any of his plans and intentions. This painting is used here as a meme template and anchor text juxtaposes the dialogue from this century where two of the women are still discussing being alone or left alone by unavoidable circumstances such as 'quarantine' during Covid 19 Pandemic. This complaint of 'not liking to be a quarantine like this' is sharply criticised by other woman in the painting. She is supposedly a council or friend of Damayanti and had shown asking her a counter question regarding - 'how did then she managed or chose to sustain and survive the toxic relation she had for such a long time?'

Interdiscursivity of this meme is spectacular where discourse of a queen waiting for her beloved whose reason for disappearance is unknown is used critical-feminist sense to offer a sharp critique about women's' own choices or sometimes helplessness to survive and sustain a toxic relationship while they easily complain about being 'stuck' in terms of quarantine which is a medical precautionary major.

The memes like those discussed above had been categorized under this category of memes on feminist advocacy which showed how women memers chose to make memes about feminist issues and advocacy and used memes and their potential of spreadability to propagate their ideas using humour, contrast, sharp satire etc. Use of universal as well as hyperlocal indigenous templates was again a spectacular trait which was observed throughout this category as well.

### **DISCUSSION**

This paper shows how women meme creators construct their own activist memetic discourse as they create, share and discuss on internet memes. They use the potential of

internet meme as easily sharable, spreadable, relatable, and humorous internet text (artefact) which can be proven as a sharp critique to a status quo. As the analysis shows, women memers whose memes were considered for this paper have used their memetic expressions to challenge the status quo or prominent gendered ideology using the creative agency and expressions. They have used humour, critique, and inherent social conflicts to provide critique of patriarchal structure they live in and face on day-to-day basis.

They bring out their lived experiences to provide a sharp critique of patriarchy and !! dominant discourse of being / doing women in the society. I argue that in their limited capacity of influence they try to create or construct alternative and counter discourse of patriarchal structures. In order to make their memes relatable, spreadable, and humorous which is a soul internet memetic expression (Johann, 2019) they use many hyper- local examples, events, customs and gendered notions.

Not only through the hyperlocal conversation but as the analyse shows, they also use hyperlocal references to use them as a memetic context. Various regional films, public figures, events, jokes are used as meme templates or as a base material which results in to subcultural memes which could be understood by only there who are aware of the base text and its contexts. Access to the meaning of the meme is limited and based on qualification.

Intertextuality and interdiscursivity in this context hence become very crucial while understanding and analysing these memes. I would argue that a one side hyperlocality of these memes maximizes the relatability and humour quotient while it sometimes restricts the spreadability as there can be few

people who will be aware with the multiple contexts included in a single meme.

### **LIMITATIONS & SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

It is important to take into the cons that memes considered for this paper come from a very niche Facebook group which is considered as a woke group. I deduce this characteristic of the group from the type of content which gets uploaded on the group as memes and the disclosure given to a group member while joining the group. Hence this meme space - a closed group does provide some activist potential and little bit safe virtual surroundings to its members. The findings of this study hence cannot be generalized to the vast open genre of the internet meme landscape where objection or problematized representation of women still prevails (Drakett et al., 2018; Gasparini et al., 2022; Kendall, 2011; Maulana, 2021; Miltner, 2014; Nee & De Maio, 2019; Pearce & Hajizada, n.d.; Phillips, 2015; Prentice & Carranza, 2002).

This paper can be considered as one case of a sub-group were given the technological imagined affordances (Nagy & Neff, 2015) women could express themselves through memes.

It will be very fruitful to investigate further how these memetic spaces are co-constructed and the role particular platform plays in arranging the same. There are very few studies which have investigated perspectives of meme creators and their take on why and how they make memes and what are the traits of this mediated behaviour. These questions can be answered through in-depth investigation of memes creators using interviews or other such techniques which can bridge the between content and creator specific studies.

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# **Climate Change Communication in India: A Study on Climate Change Imageries on Instagram**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**G**iven the ever-growing concerns of climate change across the world, it becomes crucial to explore climate change discourses on social networking sites. The rising accessibility of mobile phones and the proliferation of social media have revolutionized the way Climate Change has been communicated. It has challenged the elitist communication attempt based on the deficit model and broadens the scope of climate change communication beyond mere facts and data devoid of socio-cultural contexts. However, the inherent invisibility and temporal complexities of climate change have been a problem when trying to communicate it on image-centric platforms such as Instagram. While there are studies on the visual representations of climate change in news media discourses, there is a lack of clarity regarding the nature of visuals

associated with Climate Change in the Indian context on social media platforms, especially Instagram. Therefore, the current study analyses the Instagram accounts of selected environmental NGOs based in India and examines how the visual limitations of climate change have been negotiated in their posts related to climate change. It also examines how closely the contents align with the seven principles of visual climate change communication proposed in the 2015 climate outreach report.

**Keywords:** *Climate Change Communication, Environmental NGOs, Visual Representations, Social Media, Instagram*

## INTRODUCTION

Climate Change is a burning problem affecting all countries including India. The first-ever climate change assessment report of India that came out in 2020 revealed a rise in the average temperature of the country by 4.4 degree Celsius in 2100. Being one of the most affected countries and also one of the largest Green House Gas emitters, addressing climate change is a complex policy issue in India (Thaker, 2017). Meanwhile, the impacts of climate change are becoming more obvious in recent years in the form of floods, cyclones, droughts, landslides, etc and are expected to be even worse in the coming years. In times of such climate emergency, it becomes crucial to look into how actors -scientists, activists, journalists and environmental NGOs- communicate this issue.

Research over the years has positioned media as the focal point of climate change communication (E.g.: Carvalho, 2007; Moser, 2010; Schafer, 2012; Olausson, 2014; Junsheng et al., 2019, etc.). The transition from

traditional media to social media has opened up new ways of communicating and engaging the general public about a range of topics. Yet making climate change meaningful to the masses has proven challenging (DiFrancesco & Young, 2011). Despite all the communication efforts from various actors over the years, it still remained an abstract issue, far removed from the day-to-day lives of most people (S. J. O'Neill & Hulme, 2009). Researchers attribute this to the lack of visibility of the causes and the stakeholder's indirect experience with the impacts of climate change (Doyle, 2007; O'Neill & Smith, 2014; Wang et al., 2018).

It has been well established that visuals and images strengthen publics' understanding of complex issues. But when it comes to climate change, it is deeply contested. The time lag between cause and effect makes the visual depiction of climate change problematic (Doyle, 2011). According to Leiserowitz (2006), the lack of "vivid, concrete and personally relevant affective images" make people feel it as a disconnected and far away issue. Until recently, the visual language of climate change was mostly dominated by graphs and scientific figures (O'Neill & Smith, 2014). This was mainly due to the influence of the traditional deficit model which assumes increased information with sound environmental action (Suldovsky, 2017). But studies have found that delivering factual data on the possible impacts of climate change does not move people to action (Morris et al., 2019)

Today, the impacts or consequences of climate change are more evident than ever before (Wang et al., 2018). But still polar bears, melting glaciers and smoke stack (O'Neill & Smith, 2014) represent climate change issue and the

humans are mostly presented as separated and disconnected from environment (Doyle, 2011). Such visuals and imageries of climate change often fail people to internalize and associate the facts about climate change and let it affect their behavior as they lack human element in it (Ockwell et al., 2009). When humans are depicted, politicians are the dominant image followed by public figures, protesters and scientists (O'Neill & Smith, 2014). Local and ordinary people tend to feature rarely, sometimes as background or context, or as victims of climate change in distant geographic regions (Herrmann, 2017; O'Neill, 2013). Such images may be helpful in creating awareness and evoking emotions but least effective in motivating action (Doyle, 2011).

While the cumulative trait of climate change poses problems for its visual representation, a considerable array of potential imageries associated with climate change was extensively used across online platforms today (Wang et al., 2018).

Earlier studies on climate change communication (Doyle, 2007) found that popular iconographies of climate change found today were produced through the cumulative impact of campaigning choices of environmental NGOs. They play a critical role in bridging the communication gap between the scientific community, government officials and the local public on issues such as climate change (Jeffrey, 2001). The popularity of digital media has prompted environmental NGOs to employ more visuals to engage the public in social networking sites, as visuals considered central to digital media consumption. There have been many studies on the visual representation of climate change across various media platforms (Culloty

et al., 2018; Lehman et al., 2019; O'Neill & Smith, 2014; Wang et al., 2018), however, there is a lack of clarity regarding the use of climate change imageries by environmental NGOs in the Indian context on social media platforms especially Instagram. Therefore, the present study seeks to answer the following questions: What kinds of imageries related to climate change dominate the Instagram pages of environmental NGOs in India? How the visual limitations of climate change have been negotiated in their Instagram posts?

The theoretical perspectives of climate change communication are limited at present. The most widely used framework for climate change communication is frame theory proposed by Entman (1993), although it is mostly used in analyzing climate change news in print media. Framing assumes that media coverage and representation influence how people perceive an issue (Culloty et al., 2018). Using framing, the researcher tries to understand how NGOs define climate change for social media users. The study also uses the seven principles of visual climate communication proposed by Climate Outreach in their 2015 report, as a framework addressing the research findings. The seven principles are portrayal of 'real' people; new climate narratives; the causes of climate change at scale; emotionally powerful climate impacts; climate impacts at local context; problematic visuals of protests and audience (Corner, Webster, & Teriete, 2015)

### **METHODOLOGY**

Since the current study aims to explore the nature of Instagram imageries used for addressing climate change in India by 4 environmental NGOs, descriptive content analysis

is used (Metag, 2016). Through the analysis, study examines how the visual limitations of climate change have been negotiated in Instagram, an image centric platform.

### **Sample**

To develop the sample frame, the 'Site' search function is used with the key terms "climate change" "NGO" "India" (Site: Instagram.com "climate change" "India" "NGO") across two popular search engines (google and Yahoo). Out of the 23 Instagram accounts that emerged in the initial search results, the researcher purposively selects four NGO Instagram that fulfill the following criteria: popularity (more than 1000 followers); activity level (a minimum of 100 posts) and #climatechange tagged contents. The most recent thirty Instagram posts as of 20 October 2022 which carries any of the following hashtags: #climatechange or #climatecrisis or #globalwarming or #climateaction from each NGO account were selected for the study. The repetitive posts and the posts containing promotions or advertisements related to the organization were excluded from the selection process. Thus, a total of 120 posts were retained for the coding.

### **Coding Procedures**

Coding was mostly done inductively based on existing literatures on climate change imageries (DiFrancesco & Young, 2011; Doyle, 2011; Lehman et al., 2019; León et al., 2022; O'Neill & Smith, 2014) and other Instagram studies (Cohen et al., 2019). Only the first image of the post series was coded. The posts were analysed along with the captions and are grouped in to four categories- type of Imagery used, the subject of the image, its geographic context and its thematic focus (DiFrancesco & Young, 2011). An imagery



type is the type of visual component used for the post and is further categorised in to four main codes- visual image (photographs/ illustrations/ artwork); text only(Quotes/ data driven/ news/ narrative story); text combined with image and video (Cohen et al., 2019). Image Subject is coded in to human subjects (human/illustrated figure) and non-human subjects. The human subjects were further categorised under certain codes -identifiable/unidentifiable, victims/have agency, locals/activists etc (Doyle, 2007; S. O'Neill, 2020; O'Neill & Smith, 2014). If the identity of the portrayed human subject is not well known or mentioned anywhere (in post or captions), it will be coded under 'unidentifiable'. The non-human subjects were coded in to nature (Greenery/ urban or industries/ disaster or pollution); animals (wild / domestic) and others. Coding image subjects are not mutually exclusive. In case the imagery contained more than one visual element, only the most meaningful information will be coded. Image context is the setting shown in the imageries and is coded into local, national and general. The post themes were coded in to Causes, Impacts, Solutions and others (DiFrancesco & Young, 2011).

## **FINDINGS**

### **Type of Imagery**

Of the 120 posts, around 60% of the posts are 'text combined with images', 20% are visuals only, 11% are texts only and 9% are video. The level of prominence of the imageries varies with different NGOs. For example, Green Peace India used more video contents than the rest. However, the 'text combined with image' remained the most used imageries across all the 4 NGO accounts. Of that, photographs accompanying the text is predominant followed

by illustrated texts and posters. 38% of the overlaid contents were rated as educational, 25% were of opinions or quotes, 16% motivational, 13% have warning contents, 3% humorous and 5% others. The images accompanying the texts were mostly comprised of photographs (69%) and illustrations (31%). Similarly, photographs dominate the visual only content posts (84%). Eleven percent of the posts are text only, containing mostly quotes and data driven information. Videos, in general, were rarely used.

### **Image Subject**

Imageries used by NGOs cover both humans and non-human subjects. However, there is a domination of human subjects over non-human elements. Almost half of the visuals contain human subjects. 32% focused on nature, 11% covers animals and remaining 7% focused on other elements (Ex: food). Out of all the human figures (85.1% real people and 14.8% illustrated figures), locals dominated the sample, followed by activists' group. However, this pattern changes upon analyzing individual accounts separately (Ex: In Climate Front India account, activists were more predominant). Most human subjects shown were unidentifiable with no description of them in the posts or captions except few in the Greenpeace India's posts. Presence of celebrities and officials were insignificant in numbers. The presence of males and females were almost same. Whereas representation of other genders was absent. Majority of the posts depicted young and middle-aged humans, followed by children. None of the imagery featured human figures with a visible physical disability. Majority of the posts (70.3%) shown humans as having agency while 22.2% are portrayed as victims and 7.4% as perpetrators.

Of the imagery that contained nature, 50% featured urban environment (industries/polluted), 29.4% greenery and 20.5% disasters (Ex: flood, drought etc.). Out of all the imageries featuring animals, majority came from the Climate Change India account (60%). Wild and aquatic animals (90%) dominated the 'Animal' posts. Food (Ex: indigenous food/ food wastage) was the other major non-human element featured in the Images in relation to climate change.

### **Image Context**

Out of 120 posts, 50 posts (41.6%) carry general contents. 32% features contents related to India and 25% carry localized contents specifying villages, cities and states in India. A large portion of the local based contents (64%) were produced solely by Greenpeace India. Whereas climate change India produced more of general contents (46%).

### **Post Themes**

The number of posts focusing on solutions (47.5%) is higher than the causes (24%) and Impacts (17.5%). Around 11% of the posts dealt with posters and quotes that doesn't fit in any of these frames. The solutions cover diverse topic including sustainable lifestyles, forest and water conservation, wildlife protection, reviving traditional food culture and so on. Around 35% of the solution posts showed climate activism. The cause frame of the climate change mostly covers the visuals concerning pollution, food wastage, deforestation, and coal usage. Impacts are mostly picturized through the visuals of natural disasters (flood/drought), water scarcity, animal sufferings, and heatwave.

### **DISCUSSION**

The present study looks into the Instagram account of four environmental NGOs working on climate change issues

in the Indian context namely, Green Yatra, Greenpeace India, Climate Change India and Climate Front India. The findings are analyzed to understand how the type of imageries used by the four NGOs negotiate climate change limitations. The usage of climate change imageries by these NGOs are discussed against the seven principles proposed by Climate Outreach, in their 2015 report. The seven principles are portrayal of 'real' people; new climate narratives; the causes of climate change at scale; emotionally powerful climate impacts; climate impacts at local context; problematic visuals of protests and audience (Corner, Webster, & Teriete, 2015). These 'climate visuals principles', grounded in a substantial body of work in visual communication and climate change communication disciplines, are a helpful heuristic for analyzing the main findings of the present study (Wang et al., 2018).

The abstract nature of climate change due to the lack of visual evidence create difficulties in communicating climate change through visuals (Doyle, 2011). Environmental NGOs employ wide array of imageries such as visuals only, text combined with visuals, text only and video to represent climate change issues in Instagram. Although the study included only NGOs working in India, there is a considerable difference in how each address climate change. Much of the visuals in their Instagram posts are accompanied with texts, reinforcing the limits of visuals alone in representing climate change. The standard approach for visualizing climate change was to use universally recognizable icons such as polar bears, glaciers and smoke stacks (Schroth et al., 2014). However, the findings showed a limited use of such "cliched" iconographies with only a few NGO posts

having polar bears and smokestacks in it. This may be the result of the decade long arguments in climate communication literature (Doyle, 2011; Manzo, 2010; O'Neill & Smith, 2014) around the problematic use of symbolic and iconic photographs in climate change communication. On the other hand, while such images are criticized for "psychologically distant", publics find it as the most 'easy to understand' image of climate change (Lehman et al., 2019). Images such as flood, cracked ground, forest fires, animal death were the other impact visuals used in the NGO communication in India. Such images capture people's attention and created a sense of importance of climate change (S. J. O'Neill et al., 2013). Flood images were ranked most important in many studies. However, communicators still struggled to understand how such images could empower people to act on climate change. Currently, research has found seven principles upon which evidence-based climate change communication can be done effectively.

The presence of human figure is important in climate change imageries. Showing 'real' humans in climate change visuals can be effective in evoking emotions (Corner, Webster, & Teriete, 2015). Previous literature shows that most climate change visuals portray humans as separated and disconnected from the environment (Doyle, 2011). According to Ockwell (2009), people fail to internalize climate change visuals is because of the lack of human element in it. The findings of the present study revealed that almost half of the climate change imageries of the NGO posts have at least one human figure in it. Although the ratio varies when considering individual accounts separately. It is also noted that considerable illustrations are also used to

portray humans. However, research shows increased public engagement is possible only when real people doing real things are represented (O'Neill & Smith, 2014). Such images are considered 'authentic' and can evoke emotions in the public (León et al., 2022). Most humans portrayed by the NGOs in their Instagram pages are ordinary and non-identifiable people. This is in align with previous studies which argued that identifiable people are less shown on social media platforms compared to traditional media (León et al., 2022). The findings also noted that certain community of people are not given proper coverage, like, humans with visible physical disability in the NGO Instagram posts.

New narratives of climate change are necessary to draw more attention. Although the 'classic' images of smokestacks, polar bears or deforestation are useful in communication, audience found them as cynical most of the time (Corner, Webster, & Teriete, 2015). Images that produce real life stories is an effective attempt to remake visual representations of climate change in public mind (ibid). It has been noted that there were considerable attempts from the NGOs in India to include narratives of people into their climate change posts. This is more evident with Greenpeace India. They used quotations of the affected parties within the post over their visuals, with the full story given in the captions followed. Such communication attempts are proved to be more effective than historical narratives. But then again, such images are criticized for only evoking feelings but not actions (S. O'Neill, 2020). On the other hand, personal stories of successful adaptations or mitigation activities found effective in fostering engagement among 'resistant audience'(León et al., 2022). Humor is another way to give

diverse interpretation to climate change. However, there is only a limited NGO posts under study has humorous contents in it.

For a long time, the visuals of smoking chimneys dominated the cause frame of climate change (Wang et al., 2018). But this has changed with NGO campaigners focus shifted on to changing individual behaviors. Research have shown that general public will not connect their behavior such as driving a car or scooter or eating meat or wasting food with climate change. The causes of climate change therefore need to be shown at large scale (Corner, Webster, & Teriete, 2015). Majority of the posts related to climate change cause used in the study are either of congested traffic or landfills or smoke chimneys.

Research over the years has repeatedly demonstrated the power of climate impacts visuals in making climate change relevant (Lehman et al., 2019). Climate change impacts visuals started becoming more prominent in 1990s with the images of polar bears, melting ice, floods, drought(Wang et al., 2018). Research has shown fear inducing and negative impact photographs, though create sense of urgency of the issue, can be overwhelming (Nicholson-Cole, 2005; Ojala et al., 2021). The impact frames are found less in the NGO posts. Their focus was more on climate solutions such as sustainable lifestyles, clean energy, reviving traditional food culture etc. Research indicates that such solution images are more effective when coupled with emotionally powerful impact visuals (Corner, Webster, & Teriete, 2015). Majority of the impact visuals cover animal sufferings and were not exclusively in the Indian context. People will likely to act when they find the

issue being connected with their local context and immediate surroundings (Hulme, 2015). Emphasizing local contexts-based impacts though effective, may reduce people's concern about wider issues (ibid).

Activists and protesters are key players in climate change communication. This is evident from the posts of Climate Front India. However, research have shown that such images attracted wide spread pessimism and it will not engage public beyond those who are already involved (O'Neill & Smith, 2014).

### **CONCLUSION**

The historical favoring of visuals within environmental discourse pose difficulty for environmental organizations (NGOs) in communicating temporally complex environmental issues such as climate change to skeptical government and disinterested public (Doyle, 2007). But the proliferation of increasingly image centric digital platforms indicates that climate change imageries will be essential for fostering public engagement both in the present and in future (Wang et al., 2018). People understand and perceive issues based on what media represents, now the digital media. The content analysis of climate change related Instagram posts of four NGOs working in India, found a diverse use of imageries on the topic despite its problematic visual shortcomings. The lack of central visual tropes was negotiated with diverse choice of imagery with accompanying texts in the Instagram posts. Around half of the imageries in the sample feature humans, however the majority of them were staged photographs as opposed to suggestions outlined by climate outreach in their report. The classic narratives of climate change such as polar bears and



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melting glaciers were rarely found in the samples. On the other hand, local narratives and stories were more evident especially in Greenpeace India posts. Much of the NGOs' communication efforts was towards changing individual behavior by focusing more on climate change solutions. The Causes and Impacts of climate change were given limited focus by the NGOs. Despite the fact that the NGOs selected for the study are based in India, they showcased great diversity in addressing the issue. Much of the contents carry generalized themes with less reference to Indian and local contexts. Locals and ordinary people are given more emphasis unlike traditional media, which tend to focus on celebrities and politicians. Protesters and activists were seen as key players in some posts, especially in Climate Front India posts, even when such images reinforce the idea that climate change are for 'them' not 'us' (Corner, Webster, & Teriete, 2015).

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# **Deconstructing Indian Queer Identity and Cinematic Representation: A Case Study of 'Nil Nirjane' (2003)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**T**he representation of the LGBTQUIA+ community is a vexed issue in India. While social conservatism has played a key role in marginalizing the community, under-representation and misrepresentation have added to the already existing confusion. Consequently, unhealthy stereotypes have surfaced (Patel, 2016). Unfortunately, the media's role hasn't been too constructive in this regard. Episode after episode, sweeping generalizations and widespread ignorance have punctuated the community's portrayal in popular media (Bose B. , 2008). It is anybody's guess that the stereotypes have only been strengthened in the process. In this regard, cinema has an instrumental role to play. From 'Badnam Basti' (1971) to 'Fire' (1996) and from 'Umbartha' (1982) to 'Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish' (2012); Indian cinema has dabbled with queerness in multiple forms (Gaekwad, 2016). While some of the movies have

rendered pivotal roles in fighting the stereotypes, there have been many others that have come across as homophobic and ignorant. In this regard, mention must be made of the Bengali film 'Nil Nirjane' (2003), which was one of the first of its kind in the concerned language. Made at a time when the queer consciousness in India was probably not as strong as it is today, the movie was also the first full-length digital feature film in India. Directed by the deeply experimental Subrata Sen, the movie courted quite a bit of controversy subject to its 'revealing' nature. 'Nil Nirjane' is also a commentary on relationships and the complicity around relationships.

This research paper would look at how the movie projects queerness amid the larger social superstructure. Using the Auteur Film Theory, the researcher would delve into the narrative and diegetic elements that express the constructs around the LGBTQUIA+ community. The fundamental idea is to comprehend how the usual narratives around the LGBTQUIA+ community go on to define 'Nil Nirjane', a movie that would eventually partly characterize the Bengali cinematic culture around the community.

**Keywords:** *Queer, LGBTQUIA+, Cinema, Representation, Nil Nirjane*

## INTRODUCTION

From the archetypal 'freak' to the effeminate best friend and from the horny fashion designer to the 'hot' lesbian - cinematic representation of the LGBTQUIA+ community in India has always been dangerously clumsy and problematic. The real-life social awkwardness around the community is distinctly visible on reel as well. While the sheer number of films showcasing LGBTQUIA+ characters

has increased over the past couple of decades, there has hardly been any marked improvement in the quality of portrayals. It could be iterated with some confidence that most of the portrayals decidedly strengthen the social stereotypes around the community. Additionally, some films go to the extent of creating stale and mean humour around the characters from the community.

While the deeply conservative Indian society has been one of the reasons behind the community's misrepresentation, ignorance has been the other main reason. It is critically important to identify the larger problem areas vis-à-vis the community's cinematic representation in India. The following list isn't exhaustive by any stretch of imagination. However, it does try to capture the heart of the problem at hand.

1.The Illegality of Homosexuality: Homosexuality was a crime in India until 2018. It was only when the Supreme Court of India repealed the infamous Section 377 that homosexuality was legalized in the country's legal framework. However, the story isn't over yet. Even now, homosexual marital relationships are legally invalid in India.

2.The Shortage of Credible Queer Filmmakers in India: Except a handful of names including the likes of Sridhar Rangayan and Onir, there are very few filmmakers who are from the community themselves.

3.Showcasing of Dangerous Stereotypes: LGBTQUIA+ characters are often shown as caricatures - homosexual men are effeminate, lesbians and bisexuals are crazy and evil, transgenders are dangerously criminal-minded and so on and so forth.

4.The Near Absence of LGBTQUIA+ Protagonists: While characters from the community do feature in some

of the mainstream Indian films, there has hardly been a film that features a LGBTQUIA+ protagonist. Often pushed to the fringe, the roles that characters from the community play are usually incidental.

5. Crude Usage of Humour: If at all anything, the LGBTQUIA+ community has been fighting for its rights in India. Instead of being sensitive to the issue, filmmakers have been guilty of pushing the issue under the carpet through the usage of crude and insensitive humour.

6. The Deliberate and Designed Otherization of the Community: Often, the cinematic character from the LGBTQUIA+ community have been portrayed as the marauding other - someone to be dismissed and tamed, a person whose enterprise is meant to be denied and derogated. Also, characters from the community have been shown as sociopaths and psychopaths, whose sociopathy and psychopathy owe their origin to the characters' gender and sexual identities.

Only in the larger backdrop of all these undeniable constructs, the researcher is penning the current paper. The paper is a genuine attempt to spot the Indian queer narrative in Indian cinema. Although not to the extent which can be considered exhaustive, there have been many Indian films that have hobnobbed with the LGBTQUIA+ identity. The canvas is large and varied.

From 'Badnam Basti' (1971), the first Indian movie to deal with homosexuality, to 'Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan' (2020), the social realities have changed significantly. From a largely homophobic society in the 1970s to a society that is trying to grapple with the LGBTQUIA+ identity despite being homophobic - the cultural constructs around the community stands changed. It is literally impossible to



understand the whole spectrum within the scope of a single research paper. Therefore, the researcher consciously picks up one film that touches on the queer conundrum and analyses the filmmaker's constructs around homosexuality.

'Nil Nirjane' (2003), a Bengali language film, isn't certainly centred around the LGBTQUIA+ community (Dsouza, 2015). No way can it be considered to be a film that is representative of the community. However, it does incorporate homosexuality in its central narrative as one of its fundamental components. Released at a time when the consciousness around the queer community was still very sketchy, the film treats homosexuality very carefully. Clearly with the objective of not antagonizing the traditional Indian audience, the movie focuses more on the heterosexual romance than the homosexual one. This is precisely the primary reason as to why 'Nil Nirjane' has been selected by the researcher for further analysis vis-à-vis the representation of the LGBTQUIA+ community in Indian cinema. Notwithstanding the careful stance of the movie, it became controversial for portraying some intimate scenes. Since the movie was the first full-length digital feature film in India, the importance of the current study increases significantly.

The current study uses 'Nil Nirjane' as a distinct case of Indian cinematic storytelling that uses the queer narrative to further its objective. While not being comprehensive by any stretch of imagination, the study promises to throw some light on how Indian filmmakers approach various issues concerning the LGBTQUIA+ community.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To decipher how the movie projects queerness amid the larger social superstructure in India.

2.To locate the narrative and diegetic elements that express the constructs around the LGBTQUIA+ community in India.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In an article entitled 'Popular Indian Cinema's Complicated Relationship With LGBTQIA+ Representation' published in the global women's lifestyle magazine Elle, Sumona Bose argues that popular Indian cinema has a dearth of vision and perception vis-à-vis the enumeration of stories on the LGBTQUIA+ community (Bose, 2022). She goes on to add that hardly any queer actor feature in mainstream Indian cinema. Most importantly, she asserts that Indian cinema have always had a very complicated relationship with the queer community.

In another rather interesting article entitled 'Queer Representation in Cinema: Differentiating Between Tokenism and Authentic Storytelling' published in the intersectional feminist platform Feminism in India, Manjishtha Pahilajani lashes out at the token representation of the queer community in Indian cinema for profit mongering (Pahilajani, 2022). Along the course of the article, Manjishtha makes a clear distinction between tokenism and authentic representation. In the article, the author says that token representation creates the illusion of diversity. On the other hand, actual representation enhances awareness about the community.

Lachmi Deb Roy in her article 'Pride Month| Queer Representation in Indian Cinema; How Far Have We Gone', published in Firstpost gives a comprehensive overview of how the Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms have played an instrumental role in changing the narrative around the queer

community (Roy, 2022). However, as is apparent, Bollywood remains a place that has rejected the concept of sexual and gender diversity. The article also points out how the regional film industries across India have been far more inclusive in their approach.

In the article entitled 'Pride Month| Bollywood's Queer Eye: How LGBTQ+ Representation Has Evolved in Cinema' by Juhi Chakraborty, published in Hindustan Times, it is argued that while Indian cinema has mostly erred in terms of representation of the queer community, there have been occasional movies that have shown maturity, sensitivity, and sincerity (Chakraborty, 2021). The article also points towards the fact that the OTT platforms have been far more authentic and credible in terms of the representation of the community.

One of the most thoughtful articles that have been penned on the representation of LGBTQUIA+ community is 'Indian Cinema and Its Misguided Portrayal of the LGBT Community' (Sharma & Sundar, 2016). Written by Prateek Sharma and Vaishnavi Sundar, the article was published by The News Minute in 2016, a couple of years shy of the Indian Supreme Court verdict decriminalizing homosexuality. The article argues how the composite Indian film industry miserably failed in depicting a realistic picture of the queer community. While the sheer number of movies featuring the community has increased, the representation continues to be largely partisan and homophobic. It also reaffirms that some of the movies depicting the community vilify them.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The researcher would use the famed Auteur Theory as the theoretical framework to do a thematic and diegetic

analysis of the elements that represent the constructs around the LGBTQUIA+ community in 'Nil Nirjane'. Though a frame-by-frame analysis, the researcher would pinpoint the exact points that portray queer elements in the movie. The basic intent of the analysis would be to understand the LGBTQUIA+ narrative that is propounded by 'Nil Nirjane'. In this context, it is prudent that one understands some technical terminologies associated with the study.

1. Auteur Theory: The Auteur Theory is a widely accepted filmmaking theory which tags the director or the filmmaker as the principal creative force in the making of a movie (Matt, 2022). In this theory, the filmmaker is considered to be a film's 'auteur', which is the French synonym for 'author'. To put it in simple terms, this theory advances the notion that any movie bears the personal stamp of a filmmaker.

2. Frame-by-Frame Analysis: In frame-by-frame analysis, specific frames of a film are analyzed in terms of their visuals and meanings extracted based on the theoretical framework(s) being used.

### **Analyzing 'Nil Nirjane' Using the Auteur Theory**

The movie's title sequence uses multiple frames mostly focusing mostly on the romantic relationships between two couples - one a heterosexual one and the other a homosexual one. While the heterosexual depiction is more explicit, the homosexual portrayal involving two ladies is mellowed down. This is indicative of the same caution that filmmakers had been exercising until that time when it came to homosexual love. Although, there is an attempt to break free, the filmmaker Subrata Sen still doesn't go the distance. The experimental nature of the title sequence is established

beyond doubt as the quirky background music is provided by the popular Bengali musical band Cactus. In fact, Cactus plays a crucial role in furthering the scope of the story.

As the story of the film revolves around holidaying, there is a definite attempt at creating a sync with the natural ambience. Scene after scene, the director emphasizes on integrating the story with the lush green surroundings around. The fact that we see a lesbian romance blossom in the backdrop of nature is a clear statement from the director that homosexuality is as natural as heterosexuality. This contradicts the duplicitous Victorian morality that was clearly the inspiration behind crafting the retrograde Section 377 way back during the colonial era. It is important to remember here that India has not been oblivious of homosexuality. There are multiple cultural instances that showcase India's tryst with queerness including the iconic Kama Sutra by V?tsy?yana.

There is a scene that establishes the connect between Reshmi (played by Raima Sen) and Mou (Mou Sultana), who constitute the lesbian couple in 'Nil Nirjane', in a rather symbolic fashion. The director shows the two 18-year-old girls in two different balconies in the same hotel. While being bound at the same place, they can't be together as the two balconies belong to two different rooms. Also, while being introduced, Reshmi holds on to her portable cassette player thereby cancelling the voice of Mou. It symbolizes the apparent distance between the two characters.

Interestingly, the portrayals of Reshmi and Mou are also contrasting. While Mou is bolder and more sorted, Reshmi clearly needs to get her acts together. Although both the girls are young adults, Mou seems to be a lot more matured than Reshmi.

Both Reshmi and Mou are single-parent children. While Reshmi was born out of wedlock, Mou's mother died long back. In one of the scenes, both the girls talk to each other about the relationships with their respective parents. There is a peculiar dysfunctionality that marks both the relationships. In a way, this similarity brings them together.

In one of the scenes involving the couple, Mou complains of not having a boyfriend subject to her dark skin, which is also a distinct commentary on the dominant race discourse in Indian society. It can also be interpreted as an excuse for Mou not to have a boyfriend to mask her homosexual identity. Reshmi cites her mother's reluctance as a reason for her not having a boyfriend. The reasons seem jittery enough for anyone to understand their sexual inclinations. In a way, the director showcases the social unease with accepting one's own homosexual identity.

Probably the most important moment in the movie comes when Mou draws an analogy between rivers and women. In a starkly revealing assertion, Mou says that just as the two rivers Kumari and Kangsabati meet, two women can also involve in a sexual intercourse. It can be interpreted in two different ways. Mou could have been reassuring herself about her lesbian sexuality. She could also have been expressing her wish to indulge in a relationship with Reshmi. In fact, Mou goes a bit further and equates each of the rivers with Reshmi and her. Kumari means a virgin and hence Mou compares Kumari with Reshmi while comparing her own self with Kangsabati. The director consciously uses this reel analogy to take the story forward.

A critical point in the movie is when Reshmi comes out of a late-night jamming session by the Bengali musical band

Cactus, who makes a rather special appearance in the movie. Mou, who is smitten by jealousy, grabs Reshmi and slaps her for going to the band's room without informing her. Interestingly, Reshmi doesn't put up a fight and seems to be apologetic. This establishes that both the girls have romantic feelings for each other, which they are not shy to admit.

One of the key differentiators in the movie is the usage of silence. There are multiple moments of silence that are pregnant with multiple interpretations. Reshmi and Mou express their love for each other mostly through silences.

In terms of the directorial style, there is one thing that stands out though. The movie primarily showcases two young romantic relationships. The director is non-hesitant in showing the intimate moments between the heterosexual couple. In fact, the complex Indian sensibility might find the repeated display of lovemaking a little vulgar. However, the filmmaker is extremely cautious in portraying the intimate scenes between the lesbian couple. The closest one gets is a passionate kiss between the two after a peck by Mou. What is important to remember here is that the film was released in 2003, when onscreen homosexual lovemaking was not as common as the current era.

While there can be questions about how both the couples were approached in two different ways, there can be no denying that the director shows enough empathy for the homosexual couple. There is an uncanny calmness with which the lesbian relationship is shown. While passion is the driving force for the heterosexual couple, it is compassion and empathy for the homosexual one.

While the heterosexual relationship is readily acknowledged, there is an absence of acknowledgement for

the homosexual relationship. In fact, the respective parents of Reshmi and Mou are comfortably oblivious of the chemistry between their daughters. It is only at the end of the movie that the two girls decide to board the same car on their way back home so that they can steal some more time for each other.

The director leaves the ending open and the eventual fate of Reshmi and Mou and their relationship is left to the imagination of the audience. The director uses only a limited time span in the lives of all the characters to show the development of the relationship between the two girls.

One of the most significant elements of the movie is the usage of popular cultural elements in carrying the story forward. By 2003, Cactus had established itself as one of the most popular Bengali musical bands. Some of their songs had already made a mark for their nostalgic and emotional appeals. Therefore, the director used the band for emphasizing on the contemporary and changing contours of the collective Bengali consciousness. In a way, it represented the changing colours of educated sensibilities. Homosexuality, albeit not being the dominant theme, was one of the changes that were being propounded by the film.

Innovative in terms of the technology that was used, 'Nil Nirjane' made an extensive usage of colours, light and shadows. The director also used multiple jump cuts that point towards the intentional arbitrariness punctuating the movie.

We also see the usage of some of the most iconic Bengali songs being sung by the Cactus members on screen. This evokes nostalgia for the bygone era. While the idea of the movie is contemporary and the philosophy is



distinctively progressive, there is a conscious effort to connect the past and the present in a seamless union.

However, the movie stops short of making a commentary on the social inhibitions concerning homosexuality. While the first scene of the movie points towards the existence of a deep social taboo against heterosexual love outside marriage, there is no such connotation for the showcased homosexual relationship.

Notwithstanding, the movie also displays an absence of commitment. To be more precise, the movie fails to take a stand. At times, the ideas seem half-baked, and the visuals seem incomplete. It is extremely difficult to say if this is exactly what the director seeks.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

'Nil Nirjane' is only one of many films that showcase the queer community. Therefore, this study is unlikely to become a guiding light when it comes to understanding the audio-visual representation undercurrents for the LGBTQUIA+ community. The current study only makes a humble attempt to understand the visual dynamics in one of the earliest Bengali movies dealing with the queer community.

### **CONCLUSION**

In the annals of Indian cinematic history, 'Nil Nirjane' will continue to occupy a special place for many reasons - it showcases teenage homosexual romance in a way that is not denigrating, it equates heterosexual and homosexual love, it harps on the fact that homosexual love is as natural as heterosexual love, and it also portrays the darker side of same-sex love. However, given the limited budget and format constraints and given the fact that it was released nearly a

couple of decades back, the depiction remained incomplete in ways more than one. While it triumphed in terms of normalizing lesbian love, it failed when it came to celebrating that love.

One of the basic flaws that the movie suffers from is a greater emphasis on the visualization of heterosexual love at the expense of the homosexual love. While the man-woman couple is shown to be indulging in unrestrained sex, the women-woman couple only indulge in a small kiss. More than the philosophy, the unequal quantum of visualization hurts the movie.

From the case study, it is amply clear that the Indian society is still weary of visual expressions of homosexual relationships. While the movie does put in an honest effort, it is simply not enough to indicate any changing tides in the conservative nature of dominant Indian gender and sexual psyche. While the OTT platforms have been playing a significant role in reversing the dominant narrative, the larger scene remains as messy as ever. Tokenism and inaccurate representations continue to thrive when the real story gets pushed under the carpet.

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# **Representation of Gender Identities in the Contemporary Bollywood Films: A Content Analysis of the Films *Badhaai Do* (2022) and *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* (2020)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**C**inema is a very important form of entertainment because it is the only kind of creative art form that allows the audience to experience life through another person's eyes. Cinema is a very interactive medium which helps in increasing social awareness about issues that need to be addressed. It helps the audience to change their views on issues like caste discrimination, gender discrimination, and racism. The importance of cinema to society can be recognized from the emergence of cinema itself. In recent times, it can be noted that a lot of films are portraying important sensitive issues such as gender inequalities, sanitation, menstrual hygiene, women empowerment, sexual harassment, and substance abuse. Movies such as *Badhaai Do* and *Shubh Mangal Zyada*

Saavdhan talk about the LGBTQ community and address the gender inequalities that take place in society. Cinema being a visual medium has a great impact on the minds of people and it can shape the opinions of the youth. Society gets very much influenced by the social, cultural, and psychological changes represented through the help of cinema. Through the help of this paper, an attempt has been made in evaluating the social implications of films which are a great source of medium for building opinions. A content analysis on the film *Badhaai Do* and *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* has been conducted. Through the help of this paper, it will be analysed how gender inequalities are portrayed in Bollywood films. It will be analysed how gender role representation is evolving in Bollywood films. The factors that are leading to this paradigm shift from stereotypical portrayal to equal representation will be studied thoroughly.

**Keywords:** *Bollywood, Films, Gender, Inequalities, LGBTQ, Representation*

## INTRODUCTION

Cinema is a very vital art form in today's modern society. Cinema is a kind of art form that acts as a mirror of the society in which it is set in. It reflects the revolutions, diplomatic relations between countries, cultural changes and the changing trends that are surfacing every day in society. Cinema just not only offers entertainment to the audience, but it goes beyond and shapes the opinion of people and helps in rising awareness about social issues. Films behave as a reflector of the social reality it is set in. Gender representation has always been stereotyped. However, there are certain films which are an exception and do not promote stereotypical gender representation.

The study aims to explore how both the Bollywood films Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan released in (2020) and Badhaai Do release in (2022) represent gender and how in contemporary times representation of gender is evolving. A content analysis of the film Badhaai Do and Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan will be conducted. The paper aims to analyse how the lead characters re-enforce and helps in breaking age-old gender stereotype representation. To analyze both films critically certain codes are developed. The findings and results will be analyzed theoretically with the help of Structuralist Film Theory.

### **GENDER AND STEREOTYPES**

Gender is salient to the environment. When someone categorizes someone as male or female. Gender stereotypes at that moment are automatically primed. Social psychologists for several years tried to investigate the activation of stereotypes that affects the perceptions about genders among people (Fine, 2010).

Mass media controls social life by transferring hegemonic ideologies into social life in a very invisible way. Society has created a hegemony of males and has created a dominance of men over women. Representation of gender in media across the world involves the stereotypical portrayals of masculinity and femininity.

### **IMPORTANCE'S OF MEDIA INFLUENCERS**

Media plays a very pivotal role in the dissemination of information and various forms of entertainment. The various kinds of effects of the media platforms can be understood because of the audience's dependence on various kinds of media to acquire information. Canadian Communication Theorist, Marshall McLuhan discussed in his work how mass

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media not only provides us with information and forms of entertainment, but it also impacts people's lives by changing and shaping their opinion, beliefs, and attitudes (MCLUhan, 1964).

In contemporary and modern societies, users typically devote a lot of time to consuming many hours on television, magazines, newspapers, surfing the internet, and watching movies. It seems inevitable from this fact how media influences people. The author discussed in his work how romantic or domestic drama shows a person how a person behaves when they fall in love. Society takes reference points from films and Television. The character in movies is very assertive and single-minded. This is advertised to the viewers and that leaves an impact on the style and preference of the viewers (Gauntlets, 2008).

### **GENDER IDENTITY AND MEDIA**

"Media and communications are a central element of modern life, whilst gender and sexuality remain at the core of how we think about our identities. With the media containing so many images of women and men, and messages about men, women, and sexuality today, it is highly unlikely that these ideas would have no impact on our own sense of identity" (Gauntlett, 2008).

Natacha Henry in the report "Media and the image of women" mentioned that still on the year 2013: Feminists are trying to bring a gender balance and trying to improve the image of women. She mentioned women who do not identify themselves as feminists show disapproval when women are used as an object in advertising (Henry, 2013).

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

Indian media throughout the years represented gender

roles in a very stereotypical manner. This paper aims to unpack and reveal the stereotypical structure that influences the representation of gender identities in contemporary Bollywood films and how the representation of gender identities is evolving in contemporary Bollywood films. The objectives of the paper are mentioned below:

- ◆ To study the portrayal of the LGBTQ+ community in contemporary Bollywood films.

- ◆ To analyse the age-old stereotypical portrayal of gender identities through symbols and images.

- ◆ To analyse the selected films *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* and *Badhaai Do* in three different segments - i) Breaking the gender stereotypes, ii) Love and companionship, iii) Stereotyped gender portrayal

- ◆ "Content analysis of the selected films will be conducted. Findings will be analysed with the help of structuralist film theory.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The available literature on the topic suggests that the representation of woman characters, as well as the impact they create on the viewers has been changing. Wilbur Schramm (1968), in the study titled *Motion pictures and Real-life violence*; states that even though films or television are not the only reasons which leads to aggressive behaviors in the audience, but it also plays a part in shaping the perceptions where people start imitating what they have seen in the films or television. "There is evidence that violence in motion pictures can contribute to violence delinquency, and crime in real life" (Schramm,1968). Thus, it can be analysed how television and motion pictures can create an impact on the minds of viewers.



George Gerbner in Cultivation theory argues that media have a great role in influencing the public in shaping and developing their worldview. Even though Cultivation theory was mainly formulated to address the effects of television on viewers, later it was understood that this theory is applicable in case of all media. According to George Gerbner, continuous exposure to the content of media can lead to the belief that the reality portrayed in the media aligns with the social reality. The films which portray, violence on woman, substance abusing can lead to a belief that it is normal to imitate those in real life settings (Moshrafa, 2015). The importance of any of kind of media thus can be analysed and fair representation of gender is of utmost importance.

A very controversial theory of public opinion and media is the popular theory spiral of silence by Noelle- Neumann (1984). "The spiral of silence talks about people holding views contrary to those dominant in the media are moved to keep those views to themselves for fear of rejection" (Baran, Davis, 2015). The author discussed how fearing isolation and separation from the people around them. It is often noted that people tend to suppress and keep their ideas and opinion to themselves when they feel they are from a minority section. The media, often represent one or two sides excluding others due to various factors, which further leads to discouraging those people to keep their viewpoints suppressed. Spiral of silence is a great example which talks about the effects of media. If different viewpoints are suppressed marginalized sections will be reluctant to view their opinions (Baran & Davis, 2015). A fair representation of all the genders will result in formation of equal views and opinions. Biased and partial representation of gender

will lead to suppressed opinion and will create a spiral of silence.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

To understand any social phenomenon in India it is of utmost importance to delve deeper into the various complexities and its multi-layered structure of society. It demands a need of ethnographical studies which will lead to a panoramic view of the various groups and a navigation of various intersectional and the inter categorical depiction of the phenomena that takes place. This helps in the reception of various intersecting fields. It helps in understanding their interaction with the situation. There are various systems that are articulated in Indian context along with economic, political, and religious systems there are other categories such as class, race, gender and caste which requires intensive in-depth study. It is often found that the views and opinions of the minors are often blocked. Such is the condition of gender minorities in India. It is very vital that if we need to understand their problems it is of utmost importance to understand the various dynamics that exist in the context of gender in India. In the course of history, it can be traced back that the gender minorities in India was acknowledged socially even if not mainstreamed. It is found that in the ancient literature and textual references there was gender inclusive existence and independent sexual preferences was seen as a sin relatively than termed as illegal. Rather in ancient architectural structure and in scriptures it can be found that there was commonness of homosexual behavior. (Pathnaik, 2018)

Social backlash against the gender minorities and ostracizing was common. There was a hierarchy system based

on profession back then. One such category Hizra/ Kinnar (Eunuchs) who were skilled singer and dancers were confined in the parameter of their own community and they were not given the independence to choose their own profession by the heterosexuals. Later under the colonial British Raj system in the year 1861 under the section 377 of Indian Penal Code homosexual community was even more deprived and marginalized which criminalized sexual relations in the homosexual community. They were exploited in the name of administration. (Malik 2017)

After more than a century the rights for LGBTQ+ was initiated by the AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA), an activist movement initiated in the year 1991. It has taken a lot of fights and efforts from Non-governmental organizations like the Naz foundation and Voices against 377 and well-known figures like Navtej Singh Johar, Ritu Dalmia, Keshav Suri, Aman Nath to come out as gay. LGBTQ+ activism has witnessed a long battle and finally won the battle after the Supreme Court passed the judgement which was historical in the popular case of Navtej Singh Jauhar vs. Union of India 2018 which made the section 377 decriminalized under the Indian Penal Code. It declared the various sexual orientations to be natural and it gave legal recognition to the LGBTQ+ community (The Hindu, 2018).

The author mentioned in her work how the LGBTQ and trans communities have been showcased in the popular movies since the nineteenth century. For instance, Charlie Chaplin is dressed as a pretty woman in *The Masquerades* (1914). After a decade, *The Harlem dragball scene in Paris* is burning was documented by Jennifer Livingston, Virginia Woolfs Literary transgender Orlando (1992) was being

adapted by director Sally Porter and Tilda Swinton. These works represent some aspects of transgender. "Interest in trans figure goes beyond the LGBTQ community, as some 159,000 results from a 2018 Google search for "transgender film" would indicate". No matter how much trans perspectives were represented onscreen, there are certain members of society who continue to suppress these movements in a variety of ways. "One way of oppressing people worldwide is to deny them a comfortable and safe way to relieve themselves. During the era of segregation in the United States "Whites only" restrooms were ubiquitous in the south". The author mentioned in many countries it was found that the citizens were not provided with public restrooms leading to health problems, leaving women to many vulnerable situations and attacks. This discouraged woman from leaving the domestic space and voicing their opinions fully in the society. "Gender expression" is any external manifestation of gender, such as names, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, or body characteristics. Most transgender people try to align gender expression with gender identity, rather than with the sex assigned at birth" (Metereau, 2019).

The authors discussed in their work how feminism talks about freeing one from any kind of gender discrimination and any other forms of stereotypes and oppression. Feminism means seeking equal rights within one's marriage, in place of education, politics, sports, law, military, waged works and in various situations. Sociologist Judith Lorber have the view that in a long-term feminism should help in diminishing gender stereotype as a principle in social places. Many feminists' projects and various campaigns have touched

millions of citizens in the United States throughout a long time. Still to this day serious gender inequalities remain but feminism has helped in making significant changes. A lot of change for instance is noticed in the USA where woman and the LGBTQ+ community have become more vocal about public issues.

"In recent years, transgender individuals and activists have challenged, unsettled and transformed understandings of gender together with others who identify as gender variant, nonbinary, or gender nonconforming. They have opened up the possibility of gender fluidity as a site of experimentation as a source of personal authenticity. As a result, increasing number of people are not interested in identifying with what they see as rigid gender categories".

Gender stereotypes are now changing over the course of time. For instance, same sex marriage is now getting legalized. However, gender is sometimes fixed in institutional level (Kirk & Rey, 2020).

The author in his work discussed how masculinity and femininity is associated with both male and female. Certain traits of a male body are characterized as maleness or masculinity. Similarly, femininity is also linked culturally with female based on certain biological traits of female. Many scholars have a viewpoint that this difference between male and female is based on biological differences. On the other hand, there are some scholars who argue that these differences between gender are socially constructed. Throughout the course of history, gender stereotype is changing in relation to the changes throughout the course of history between men and women. Media has played a big role in the notion of gender stereotyping. By showing women

less in the content or by showing certain forms of stereotypes (Dasgupta, 2018). By showing men more on-screen eliminating screen timing of other genders it can be found that gender stereotype automatically takes place in media. Be it television or films.

Patriarchy is a form of male domination in public spheres like- political, economic, legal, religious, educational, military, and domestic. These spheres in a patriarchy are generally reserved for men. Even in the household they are referred to as the 'head of household'. When a woman or someone who belongs to the LGBTQ+ community makes their identity in higher positions there is a constant competition on how they will measure up to a man. In simple terms, dominance of men in public spheres creates more power differences within man and woman. There is a pre-conceived opinion that if men occupy superior positions, then it must be because they are superior. Patriarchy also turns women into sex objects whose life revolves around men's needs. "When we routinely refer to human beings as 'man' or call woman 'guys' we create a symbolic world in which men are in the foreground and women are in the background" (Johnson, 2014).

Patriarchy is a very disturbing kind of life-threatening social disease. Most men in the society do not use the word "Patriarchy" in day-to-day life. "Patriarchy" is not used as a part of everyday thought or speech. Men associate patriarchy with the liberation of women and feminism and therefore dismiss it as something irrelevant. Patriarchal society consists of a social setup in which there is a political-social system that tells the conventional society that males are superior beings. They are endowed with the right to dominate

through various forms of violence. There is a common practice in which males and females are kept away from telling the truth about what happens to them inside the family in that patriarchal culture is maintained. This role of silence has made the word "Patriarchy" inaccessible. Children do not know what to call this system of gender roles. This silence further promotes denial (Hooks, 2004).

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Through the above course of literature, it can be understood that gender representation can be studied well with the help of thematic analysis, discourse analysis and content analysis. For this research paper, content analysis is adopted to study the representation of gender identities in the Bollywood films such as Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan and Badhaai Do. The findings will be analysed with the help of structuralist film theory.

Content analysis in a social science research can be described as the scientific study of the various contents of communications. It helps in the study of the content with a reference to various meanings, intentions and the contexts which are hidden in messages. The term itself is more than 75 years and is listed by the Websters dictionary since the year 1961.

In the year 1952, in the book Communication Research written by Bernard Berelson introduced the term content analysis which gave wide recognition to the technique as a widely used tool for various social science research studies and it became very popular among the media researchers. Even few scholars used content analysis for political and historical research. (Holisti, 1968)

The emergence of content analysis as a scientific method can be traced back to the time when World War II took place.

The U.S government during that time conducted a project under the leadership of Harold Laswell to evaluate the propaganda of enemy. Due to the resources, available for the research as well the advances made in the methodology in the context of the situation led to the emergence of the process of content analysis. The book named Language of Politics (1940) is a result of the outcome of the project (Laswell et.al 1965)

Structuralist film theory is a type of film theory that explains the genre of the film for the audience. Structuralist film theory tells us that film is about reality and reflects the society in which it is set in (Jogezai, 2020). It can be traced back that in the era of 1980s and 1990s brought about a huge revolution in the spheres of digital technology, it improved the sound quality, introduced high-definition pictures, and also introduced use of various special effects to provide a realistic and better experience to the audience. There was a shift of motion pictures to the home of the audiences with the help of video cassette recorders (VCR), it helped in the process of distribution and further it helped in the circulation of movies all over the world. Satellite television, cable and internet further gave audiences direct power and access to watch movies sitting far away at home in comfort (Jogezai, 2020).

"Just like structuralism in dramatic theory, structuralist theory of film is based on the conveyance and translation of meanings through the use of codes and conventions in film production." (Nnamela & Nnalue, 2020)

Research Strategy: The films that are selected for this research paper are Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan released in (2020) and Badhaai Do release in (2022). Content analysis



on both the films with the help of structuralist film theory will be conducted. Both the films have been selected and segmented in three different parts. i) Breaking the stereotypes, ii) Love and companionship, iii) stereotyped gender portrayals. The viewpoints adopted towards the LGBTQ+ community in both the films will be represented in the chart as Positive, Negative and Neutral.

The codes that are adopted for analyzing the gender role representation are as follows:

- ◆ Camera shots & compositions
- ◆ Body language                      ◆ Voice modulation
- ◆ Costume selection      ◆ Casting
- ◆ Profession

### **DATA FINDINGS & ANALYSIS**

i) Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan- is a Bollywood commercial film produced by Aanand L. Rai, Bhushan Kumar and Krishan Kumar under the banners T-series and Colour Yellow Productions. It is a successor to the film Shubh Mangal released in the year 2017. It is a Hindi language rom-com. The film stars popular Bollywood celebrities like Ayushmann Khurrana, and Jitendra Kumar as the lead along with Neena Gupta, Gajraj Rao and Maanvi Gagroo. The cinema revolves around the story of a gay couple who had to face a lot of social stigmas in convincing their parents. Aman Tripathi is an advertiser who hails from a middle-class orthodox family in Allahabad. His middle-class family consists of his mother Sunaina who is a simple housewife, and his father is also conservative in nature and is an agricultural scientist. He resides with his uncle, aunt and cousins. Aman is deeply in love with Kartik Singh who lives in Delhi. Aman's mother asks his son to attend a friend's wedding where Aman's parents

intend to marry him off to their family friend's daughter. Kartik and Aman board the same train named Vivah Express. Aman and Kartik were in an intimate moment where Aman's father caught them kissing on the train. Upon which furious Shankar asks his son to stay away from his boyfriend Kartik. With a lot of reluctance, Aman finally confronted his parents and kissed Kartik publicly. Which left everybody in utter disbelief. Ashok refuses to marry Goggle who is Aman's cousin due to Aman's sexuality. Goggle tries to attempt suicide upon which Aman stops her. But Goggle supported Aman and confessed that she knew about his cousin's sexuality since childhood. Kusum who is to marry Aman also confesses that she loves another man. Kusum fled on the day of their wedding. Kusum tried to flee with her mother in laws jewellery however Aman and Kartik caught her. However, Kusum blackmails Sunaina that she will inform the police about Aman's sexuality. Gogle's parents realise that marriage can't solely bring happiness and gives their approval to their daughter if she wants to stay single. After this incident, Supreme Court makes its landmark judgment and decriminalizes sexuality. Aman and Kartik finally reconcile and lived happily.

Table 1 - indicates codes which represents the stance developed towards the LGBTQ+ community in the film Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan

Camera shots & Compositions	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Body language	✓		
Costume selection		✓	
Casting			✓
Voice modulation	✓		
Profession	✓		

The table here represents the stance adopted towards the LGBTQ+ community in the film *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan*. The film has been selected and segmented into three different parts breaking the stereotypes, love and companionships, and stereotyped gender portrayals. From the above chart, it can be analysed that particular codes are developed to analyse the film critically. The data and findings are analysed with the help of the structuralist film theory. It was diagnosed that the camera shots and composition were positive, and the angle and lighting did not project the characters as submissive or as less important. It was analysed that the body language of the lead characters played by Ayushmann Khurrana, and Jitendra Kumar had a positive stance. In the age-old commercial Bollywood films, it has been noticed that always the characters depicted as LGBTQ+ characters somewhat had a very loud and frivolous kind of body language which is very gender stereotyped. However, in the film *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* depicted a very positive stance. Costume selection is neutral in stance. Most of the time in commercial Bollywood films it is noticed that whenever a character from the LGBTQ+ community has been represented it was always found that they wear colourful and flashy clothes which is a gender stereotype. For example, the character of Suresh Menon in the movie *Partner* was very frivolous, his character was added simply for a laugh which is very gender stereotyped and lacks awareness. It is always seen in the age-old Bollywood commercials that the LGBTQ+ characters are receiving crude and harsh remarks from the heroes or lead characters which are very gender stereotypical. Cross-dressing for comedy is another misrepresentation and gender stereotype.

Also, the LGBTQ+ community is shown as people who are horny and force straight men into courting which is a very gender stereotypical representation and homophobic in nature. Most of the time transgender people are shown in the profession of money laundering and villains who run brothels which is also a stereotype which is shown in the segment of the profession in LGBTQ+ characters. Often it is noticed that gay men are always projected as funny characters who wear flashy clothes and are clingy. The entire point of their existence is questioned and reduced to sexuality as if it is their only identity. Fire directed by Deepa Mehta for instance was way ahead of its time and shocked the audiences to the core with a traditionalist viewpoint in the year 1996.

Boman Irani's character for instance in the film Dostana is another such representation of gender stereotypes. His character was represented as very loud, tacky and frivolous in nature. Even a contemporary film like Laxmi Bomb for instance played by superstar Akshay Kumar represented the transgender community in a very wrong way. It is noticed from the film Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan that the representation of the LGBTQ+ community is becoming more gender inclusive however Bollywood is failing in casting real celebrities from the LGBTQ+ community and always end up casting straight men in the movies. No misrepresentation of voice modulation was found in the movie Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan, and the professional life was also dynamic. Most of the time Bollywood commercials end up forming LGBTQ+ characters as people either hailing from the fashion industry like Samir's character in the movie Fashion or Boman Irani's character in Dostana.

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Movies Like Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan even though not perfect in every aspect tried to show the LGBTQ+ community in a less stereotyped manner.

ii) *Badhaai Do*- is a Hindi rom-com released in the year 2022 starring Rajkumar Rao and Bhumi Pednekar. The film is written by Akshat Ghilidal and Suman Adhikary. The film is directed by Harshavardhan Kulkarni and produced by the banner Junglee Pictures. It is a sequel to the film *Badhaai Ho*. Shardul Thakur played by Rajkumar Rao whose mother keeps on insisting to him to get married. Suman Singh played by Bhumi Pednekar is a physical education teacher who meets a girl on a dating website. On reaching to meet her she realizes that a man had opened the account as a woman and was acting as a lesbian. Sumi upon being disgusted left the place but the man kept on stalking her. He threatened that he will expose that she is lesbian. Sumi after being stalked went to the police station and filed a complaint. Shardul who is a police officer warned the stalker and gave an offer to Sumi that if they married, they would placate their families and confess to Sumi that he is gay. Sumi accepts the offer and gets married to Shardul. They move in together after marriage in police quarters. They go out with separate individuals. Shardul's partner Kabir on the other hand cheated on him. But later Shardul fell in Love with Guru a queer lawyer. Sumi was dating Rimjhim. But Shardul's parents now began to insist on them for kids. They lied to their parents that they are infertile. However, their family tricked them, and their tests came as normal. Sumi backed the story by lying that Shardul is unable to conceive. Both families agreed that they should adopt a child. However, Shardul's mother found out that Sumi is lesbian when she

found them in an intimate moment. Shardul requested Sumi to not disclose his orientation. Shardul later confesses to his family that he is gay. Sumi on the other hand who used to immensely trust her father lost his support in her journey too. Sumi and Shardul planned on filing for a divorce, but they found that the adoption application was finalized and accepted. They decided to adopt the kid and started to co-parent while being in their respective relations with their partners Rimjhim and Guru.

Table 2 - indicates codes which represent the stance developed towards the LGBTQ+ community in the film *Badhaai Do*

Camera shots & compositions	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Body language	✓		
Costume selection	✓		
Casting			✓
Voice modulation	✓		
Profession	✓		

The table here denotes the stance adopted towards the LGBTQ+ community in the film *Badhaai Do*. The camera shots and compositions in the film *Badhaai Do* were positive in their stance and did not represent the LGBTQ+ characters in such angles and lighting where it misrepresented them as submissive or inferior beings. The costume selection is also a positive in stance and did not project the characters as wearing flashy or over colourful clothes. However, it can be analysed that always big celebrities such as Ayushmann Khuranna or Rajkumar Rao are presented in such characters who do not belong to the LGBTQ community in real life. It is always found that the LGBTQ+ community is cast in

stereotyped and negative roles where they are the villains. It highly represents the LGBTQ+ community in a stereotyped way. The voice modulation is also positive in the stance and not over-dramatized unnecessarily. The professional dynamics shown in the film *Badhai Do* are also very dynamic and did not cast the characters as people from the high-class fashion world or glamour industry and represented them as ordinary middle-class beings from various professional fields such as schoolteachers and police officers and lawyers and medical technicians. The difference that is witnessed in contemporary films is not simply changing over time. It is not linear. For instance, Maharani's character in *Sadak* is transgender and runs a brothel and is a pimp. It was very rarely found in Bollywood a police officer is playing the role of an LGBTQ+ character. Films like *Kapoor and sons* are portraying even heroes such as Fawad Khan who is immensely popular among women playing the role of an LGBTQ+ character which would have been impossible in age-old Bollywood commercials. While discussing films representing the LGBTQ+ community it is necessary to mention the film *Aligarh* which represented the homophobic structure of Indian society. As cinema plays a great role in shaping public opinion and building awareness it is necessary that representation of the LGBTQ+ characters are dealt with extreme awareness as films act as a great source of education to the mass. *Margarita with a straw* for example is a film that did justice to the character of Kalki Koechlin who dared to explore her bisexuality. She was already prejudiced for her cerebral palsy condition. Kalki's character represented a very strong and brave person who dared to question the age-old stereotypes.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research study reveals that there has been a significant change in the portrayal of LGBTQ+ characters in the contemporary times. There were several codes that were developed in this research paper. It was found that the codes that helps in Analyzing the content needs to be more accurate and realistic. As cinema is a visual medium people take some messages out of it and get educated by those elements portrayed on the film. The celebrities are worshipped in India, and they enjoy their own fan following. The storyline needs to be depicted in such a way that it would inspire people from the LGBTQ+ community to come forward. Our country already suffers from various discriminations and films being an important mass medium can take the responsibility in making the mass more aware and enlightened. Non-stereotypical, bold, and realistic characters will be more gender inclusive. Hence, this research study is an attempt in showcasing the role of contemporary films like *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* and *Badhai Do* in educating the society.

## **LIMITATIONS**

The aim of this research was to illustrate how fair representation of gender in media particularly Bollywood films can bring gender inclusivity and equality. The biggest limitation of this study is the sample size, which consisted of only two Bollywood films. It can be thus analysed that the sample is not a representative of the whole population. Further, the research was limited to only Bollywood contemporary films. A comparative study would be more insightful. Due to formal restrictions and time constraints the review of literature is limited in size, a thorough review of literature will be of great importance.



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### **SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The films that were selected for this research study are of the romantic-comedy drama genre. Future research on the topic is highly desirable in other genre, also the movies that were selected are from the contemporary times. A comparative study between different time frames will help in analyzing the evolution of gender representation in Bollywood films. Content analysis with the help of structuralist film theory was conducted for this study. Further in-depth focus group interviews between participants will help in analyzing how the viewers feel about the representation of gender in contemporary Bollywood films and if the films are gender inclusive or not.

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# **Storytellers of the Divine: An Analysis of the *Bhagavata Kathavachaka* Tradition**

**-Ujjaini Chakrabarty**

## **ABSTRACT**

**S**torytelling sessions based on sacred narratives has been a characteristic feature of India. Since time immemorial, these storytelling events called Kath? have been instrumental in shaping the landscape of belief that defines the Indian society. However, while the storytelling traditions of different regions of India, folk narratives and their performances have been researched well, the most conspicuous of these storytelling events, i.e., the oral performance of Shrimad Bhagavata Mahapurana, popularly known as the Bh?gavata Kath?, though more widespread in reach and frequency, has not received much scholarly attention. These Kath? events are performed by people variously called kath?k?ras, kath?v?chakas, and Vy?sas, who are especially trained in ritualistic storytelling, often belonging to an ancient tradition of oral scholarship. Since kath?karas were instrumental in the transmission of sacred lore, customs, and cultural values, they have, over the course

of time, gained significance as tradition bearers. The younger generation of kathakras are also bringing in new and socially relevant content to the fore. Kathakras are utilizing the potential of social media to connect with their audience, encouraging discussion among their followers on various topics ranging from religion to science, arts, and culture to politics. New and younger audience, hence, are also attending kathaks, which were earlier deemed the prerogative of the elderly.

The present paper thus aims to explore Bhagavata Katha as a communicative act, rather than just as a religious form of storytelling. The paper also aims to discuss the role of kathakaras as cultural agents who have facilitated the preservation and transmission of cultural knowledge over millennia, continually contextualizing ancient wisdom to retain its relevance for the changing socio-religious milieu of the society. The findings of the study are based on data collected from field observation, which provided an opportunity for a diachronic study of the tradition of kathak and its relevance to India's society and culture- in the past, present, and future.

**Keywords:** *Katha, kathakara, Religion, Cultural Agents, India, Faith, Cultural Knowledge*

## INTRODUCTION

"A culture based on a dynamic and practical philosophy which indicates the goal of life and the many ways to reach it, cannot help but have an enduring quality about it. These fundamental ideas have provided a spiritual base and direction to the Hindu culture throughout the ages". - Dr. Rajendra Prasad.

The belief in the power of the oral sacred word dates to the earliest period of the Vedic civilisation when poet-seers

composed hymns for the divinities pervading the universe. While other ancient traditions were shaped by great philosophers, scholars, and thinkers, since the beginning Indian culture has been shaped by the vision of the sages, who, apart from sharing the above-mentioned features with their counterparts, were also guided by a consciousness borne of spirituality. They recorded their observations, objectives, and aspirations in the form of the oral tradition of the Vedas. According to the rishis, 'word' or 'v?k' which pervaded the entire universe, was the very source of creation. It was a potent vehicle by which all knowledge- whether spiritual or material, is made known, and hence, was held in great reverence as the 'form' of the Supreme Being by the Vedic seers.

Traditionally, the Vedas are believed to be the fountainhead of all knowledge in India but have primarily been used as books on liturgy; the terse language and rigid rules pertaining to their recitation restricted their use to the performance of sacrifices. Since the Vedas are considered *apauru?eya*, they were unalterable, and hence, another class of texts, the *Pur??as*, were composed. The *Pur??as* were ideologically fluid texts which have been continually edited throughout their history to retain relevance for all ages (Hazra, 1940; Raghavan, 1956; V.N. Rao, 2016). As such, the Vedas and the *Pur??as* have a symbiotic relationship. While the Vedas were the sources from which the *Pur??as* derived their content and legitimacy, it is the *Pur??as* that made the essence of Vedic knowledge accessible to all. The *Pur??as* elaborated upon the Vedic stories from a theistic perspective, which 'decoded' their esoterism so that the essence of the stories could be

contextualized and accommodate changes, as and when required. As devotionism centered on the post-Vedic, Puranic divinities gradually became prominent, the prevalent opinion about the accessibility of the sacred word underwent a profound change. The Vedic rituals were also modified to suit the changing religious milieu. Following the injunction of the Puranas, the oral performance of the holy narratives of God, popularly known as kathas, gradually gained prominence alongside Vedic sacrifices, and subsequently became a characteristic feature of devotional Hinduism. Langellier and Peterson (2004) opine that "as audiences gathered around storytellers, the narratives became a significant site of communication and study."

Noting the significance of religious practices, Chambers, et al. (2013) argue that religion's relationship with the public sphere can be better understood performatively and not normatively, that a religion's public power is vested in its performative presence. This implies that apart from looking at religion as a set of theological or philosophical assertions only, it should be viewed as a "dynamic, lived, and fluidly embodied set of actions, practices, gestures and speech acts at specific points in time and space" (ibid). The katha events organized all over the country or for the diaspora communities provides this discursive space where one can witness the interplay of faith and belief that has guided the Hindus for over five millennia. It is the performative tradition that has kept the stories of gods, demons, and exemplary humans alive, who have penetrated and influenced the Indian psyche since time immemorial (Fleukicger et al. 1991). In her study of the performative traditions of the Ramayana and Mahabharata,

Dayal (2009) states that the "Rama and Mahabharata stories have been used very effectively for the transmission of messages for centuries. To come to terms with the ways in which these narratives have functioned, we need to know the tellers, when, where and to whom the tellers told the tales (and), how the listeners responded". It is to be noted here that along with the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, it is the ṛimad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa whose oral performance, called the ṛimad Bhāgavata Kathā is conspicuous by its presence all over India. The popularity of the Bhāgavata Kathā in almost every part of India thus provides an opportunity to examine influence of the text as well as its exponents on people across socio-cultural and spatio-temporal dimensions.

The present paper, therefore, aims to explore the role the kathāvachakas have played in the religious as well as socio-cultural history of India. Belonging to an ancient tradition of bards, these itinerant storytellers have captivated the imaginations and inspired the lives of multitudes for many generations. During their travels across the country, they incorporated local legends in their repertoire and retold them in other places with dramatic effect. In this way, they bound the length and breadth of India into one cultural whole. They wove the performances of the more serious content of the Purāṇas with the newer forms of religious congregation like kīrtanas and bhajanas, which attracted audience and enabled them to participate in the performance. As is characteristic of Indian culture, the kathā events also underwent changes with the changing times. While earlier temples and village squares, and ritual occasions were often the only 'sites' where kathā would be performed, since the



mid-20th century kath? events became bigger and their organisation more lavish. Today, the ratio of exposition to bhajanas is skewed in favour of the latter . The younger generation of kath?vachakas are also bringing in new and socially relevant content to the fore. Like other celebrities, kath?vachakas are utilizing the potential of social media to connect with their audience, encouraging discussion among their followers on various topics ranging from religion to science, arts, and culture to politics. The mass appeal of the katha gives them the chance to promote issues like education, raise funds for disaster management, opening of schools, and so on. Kath? events are now available on television and new media platforms, where people can watch them at their leisure. New and younger audience are also joining the milieu of katha goers, which was long believed to be the prerogative of the older audience.

The time is, hence, ripe to provide new insights into the nature of kath? as a communicative and performative act of the storyteller, rather than just as a religious form of storytelling. In a land of diverse cultures like India, there is much wisdom and truth for us to learn from these oral mediums. The decisive changes that have occurred within the connective structures of Indian society over the centuries can be ascertained by the change in the form, content, and audience of kath?s, as well as the change brought in the performance styles by the exponents. This provides an opportunity for a diachronic study of the tradition of kath? and its relevance to India's society and culture- in the past, present, and future.

### **STORYTELLING AS RITUAL**

The spoken word was the first technology by which man was able to let go of his environment to grasp it in a new

way (McLuhan, 2013). This was done through the medium of myths and legends, tales and proverbs which formed a link between the mundane and the cosmic realms. During their inception, cultures across the world devised various strategies to periodically renew this relationship, which found expression in the various rituals associated with all aspects of the life of man and the environment he lived in. Due to their significance, rituals became the core component of all religions. Rituals allowed the creation of a meaning system which validate and connect both the social and the cosmic world. The performance of rituals is a symbolic act which fosters community participation, provides opportunities for socialization, and generates a deeper bond between the community members. As a culturally patterned behaviour, firmly rooted in tradition, ritual is a subject of heuristic importance (Saraswati, 2017). The rules governing ritual behaviour are transmitted orally or through the liturgical texts of a religion. Ritual action ensures the well-being of not only the performer but also the society for which the ritual is performed. The belief that the social world is protected through the performance of rituals has made them 'obligatory social behavior (which are) prescribed for occasions that have reference to belief systems (ibid).

Ritual performances were supplemented by storytelling sessions related to the ritual- the reasons for the performance of the ritual, the original performer of the ritual, and the merit one gains by performing the rituals. The storytelling events related to the rituals help us better understand not just the ritual act but also the motive of the ancestors behind instituting these occasions. The medium of kath? in India serves the same purpose as storytelling in other parts of the

world. Kath? is a pan-Indian term, which relates to the narratives as well as their oral performances which are performed all over India, albeit in their regional variations. (Lutgendorf, 1991). A special type of kath?, called Pur??a Pravachana, based on the Pur??as refers to religious storytelling which are organized for a period of time, usually for 7 or 9 days. During these occasions, the exponents expound on a Pur??a by interpreting its content according to the traditional knowledge that he/she has been trained in. They enrich their discussions with intertextual references which have always been one of the pleasures of kath? performances. Their skill to connect and provide references and contextualise ancient lore for use in present times is one of the skills that exponents display in the performances, often by taking detours during their storytelling performances. Such intertextual play is perhaps based on the assumption of the narrator that the audience would be familiar with the characters and stories hinted at. This would allow the audience to savour the correspondence "while listening to the performance and admire the storyteller's ability to weave those references into the story" (Orsini, 2015).

Of all such Pur??a Pravachana events, it is believed that listening to the oral performance of the ?r?mad Bh?gavata M?hapur??a will bring the same merit as other elaborate rituals that are prescribed in the Vedas. This belief has culminated in the dominance of the Bh?gavata in the oral performative tradition, alongside the R?m Kath? based on the R?mcharitam?nasa of Goswami Tulsidas. Despite the availability of the vast Pur??ic corpus, Bh?gavata Pur??a attracted Sanskrit commentaries by scholars and was performed in several ways, both in Sanskrit and in the

vernacular- through ritual recitation (called p?r?ya?a) ; reading and exposition involving sermons and songs during kath? events, or in ritual sacrifices (yajñas). Even today, the oral performance of the ?r?mad Bh?gavata, receives utmost reverence from keen listeners, who believe in its salvific power. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that the Bh?gavata Kath? far exceeds in popularity than the text of Bh?gavata. The continued mass appeal of the Bh?gavata Kath? can be gauged from the fact that there is no city or village where one would miss the posters, and banners announcing a kath? or pravachana, by a kath?k?ra, at any time throughout the year. Popular preachers draw thousands of listeners and have a dedicated group of listeners, who often travel to the places where the kath? is to be performed by the exponent. But what makes the kath? events so popular even during the present day, despite the proliferation of popular cultural products, is a matter that requires careful examination.

One of the factors responsible for the continued popularity of the kath?v?chakas is the fact that they derive their authority from the scholastic tradition of bards tracing back to Veda Vy?sa and his disciples. After organising the content of the scriptures, Vy?sa gave the responsibility of the propagation of all the ancient knowledge systems and texts to his most learned disciples- the Rig, Sama, Yaju and Atharva were given to Paila, Jaimini, Vai?amp?yana and Sumantu respectively, while Romahar?a?a was entrusted with the transmission of Pur??as. Romahar?a?a, popularly known as S?ta Romahar?a?a, is found as the narrator in many Pur??as. After his death, his son Ugra?rava, also a disciple of Veda Vy?sa became the narrator of the Pur??as and the

Mahābhārata. During the present day kathās, exponents often refer to Sṭa as Sṭa Purāṇi, referring to his (their) knowledge of the Purāṇas. From the beginning of Purāṇic studies in India, scholars have engaged in efforts to determine the roles and responsibilities of the Sṭa and endeavoured to fit the Paurāṇika Sṭas into the category of Sṭas who performed different roles, during different epochs, from charioteers to historians to genealogists, by investigating the origin of the word. It has been suggested that during the Vedic and post-Vedic age the Sṭas functioned as state officials who recorded royal genealogies, went to wars with the king and recorded their extraordinary feats, which were later sung during ceremonial occasions (Dayal, 2009). But by the time of the composition of the Purāṇas, the Sṭa appears as a performer, primarily of the Purāṇas. The later tradition of the Purāṇa Pravachana followed the exposition style of Sṭa Ugrāravā, with the inclusion, however, of congregational singing as mentioned earlier.

Like Ugrāravā, the present day Bhāgavata Kathās are performed by exponents who are learned in scriptures and other branches of traditional scholarship. They are well-versed with religious narratives and are trained in the commentarial tradition. These traditional bards have played a seminal role in the propagation of knowledge and in bringing the essence of Indian thought, i.e., the knowledge of the Vedic literature within the grasp of the masses, and in transforming its terse vocabulary into the language of the common people (Kapoor, 2019). In villages, towns and even cities of India, one can encounter kathās performed by the itinerant storytellers, the "oral literates" (term coined by Velcheru Narayana Rao), variously called as pundits,

kirtankars, kath?v?chakas, etc., who perform kath? based on a religious text and "operate within a culture that is both orally transmitted and literate at the same time" (Orsini, Schofield, 2015). Kapoor (2019) observes that the pervasive nature of the kath? traditions suggests that the material for these storytelling events were supplied by the Epics, Pur??as as well as folk literature, and which in turn "provided a narrative model for imaginative compositions in almost all modern Indian languages".

The second factor related to the significance of kath?v?chakas is that through his/her formulaic and at the same time versatile narration, the exponent can bring in transformative miracles for the audience, who witness the narrator's "hidden powers or cloaked identities in a context of narrative predictability, intimacy, proximity, and shared emotional experience" (Bard, 2015). Horstmann (2015) describes the skills of the exponents thus, "the ability to tell a good story and the rhetorical skill to draw home an argument and convince through a story are linked to the "embodied knowledge" of the kath?k?ra- and the effects are achieved, through precision, self-assurance, a wealth of details, and by invoking specific sources of authority. Storytellers can count on the audience's familiarity with certain elements and characters, which they manipulate and combine in new ways". In the present day too, "noteworthy is the speaker's parallelistic, additive style, which mixes elements of katha and sankirtan and reflects both the exigencies of extemporaneous delivery and the performer's associative and expansive approach to his material" (Lutgendorf, 1991).

Thirdly, due to their vast knowledge of various disciplines the storytellers continue to be held in high regard

as healers, religious leaders, guides, and culture secret keepers. As inheritors of an ancient tradition, the exponents have become important links as tradition bearers who connect the mythical past with the tangible present. They utilise their linguistic creativity to tell the stories in a unique way during every performance, which enchants the audience. But telling engaging stories is not the prime objective of the kath?, and neither of the kath?karas. The importance of the kath? lies in imparting instruction on the right of conduct, ethics, and morality to the audience through the stories of yore and strengthening the faith of the audience in spiritual vision of the Vedic seers. Through their oral performances, the kath?v?chakas fulfil their function as both religious instructors and cultural specialists who 'frame' the religious belief system of their community members and guide their social behaviour. "Each tale modulates and combines registers of instruction and entertainment -through humorous/subversive situations, vivid dialogues, emotional scenes, displays of technical knowledge, and so on-so that drawing a line between "entertaining" and "enlightening/instructive" tales seems quite artificial" (Horstmann, 2015).

During the field work conducted on Bh?gavata Kath? in January 2022, the audience's implicit faith in the exponent as an agent of transformation was observed. Most of the audience members who were interviewed responded that their association with spirituality began by attending a Kath?. While they attended the discourses on the insistence of a family member or friend, it gradually developed into a habit. The youngsters especially noted a positive change in their behaviour after attending the Kath? sessions and applying the instructions given by the exponents during the Kath?.

There were other members in the audience who attended the Kath? to fulfil a vow after their wishes were fulfilled, which for them meant that the identification of the Bh?gavata as the celestial wish-fulfilling tree was not just hearsay, but also a personal experience, which further strengthened their belief in the words of the exponents who reiterate in all their discourses about the efficacy of listening to kath?. The exponents' call to live according to the ?astras also resonates with the meaning system that the audience grew up believing in. However, the transformative effect of the kath? occurs differently and at different times for different people.

The spiritual ethos of the Indian culture can be witnessed in all its glory during the kath? performances. At the end of the kath?, audience members who listen to the kath? were also seen to discuss the content of the kath? amongst themselves, a process called vimar?a, which is of utmost importance in the spiritual growth of a devotee. As the rishis believed, once spiritual consciousness takes root in the heart of people, they would effortlessly stay away from vices and instead would engage themselves as well as others in constructive endeavours. The proof of the truth in this belief can be witnessed in the kath? venue, where everyone enters with a hope of transformation so that he also can contribute his worth as an important member of the society he lives in.

Cultures are dynamic and is always in flux. Its preservation and continuity have been ensured by the stories people told each other in a personal and group gathering. This is what made oral tradition an indispensable part of ancient societies. No man can live a life isolated from his environment. He needs to connect to everything around him to make a meaning of himself and his existence. Unlike the



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first man, he has a repertoire of myths and legends and tales and sagas to connect him to his past- the past of his forefathers and the world they lived in, of how the nature, animals and humans are kindred because of their common source of origin and why the world exists as an interconnected web. It allows him to form associations, understand his relationship with nature and in times of need, also connect to the wisdom of the past. The storytellers are but mediators in this web. Through oral transmission of scriptures, the people of yore have not just left fantastical stories of fairies and chimeras and nymphs, centaurs, and mermaids, but have also left a treasure of wisdom through parables, proverbs, songs, and tales; through them, they are always connected to their future generations. Yet, there are many stories needed to be heard and many tales needed to be told and their effect on the society studied before they are obliterated or meet the irreversible consequence of extinction.

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Kapoor (2011) argues that the great traditions of the world can be classified into (a) intellectual, e.g., Greece, (b) ethical, e.g., Chinese, (c) material, e.g., modern Europe, and (d) spiritual, e.g., India

Vedic hymns are believed to have been/kjnm 'seen' by their rishis during a state of deep meditation. Since they

were not authored by any person, they are considered to have been divine vision which cannot be altered and hence, are referred to as *apauruṣeya*,

As observed during the field work on *Bhagavata Katha* in Prayagraj and Varanasi in January-February 2022.

*Parayana* is the ritual of reading a religious text over a period of time for gathering merit. The rules of the *parayana* and the stop points for each day is given in the text itself. Usually, during occasions like Navaratri, Chatumasa, Purushottama Month, or even otherwise, people take a vow to complete the recitation of a text with the intention of pleasing a deity to fulfil their wish, or even for only the bliss of reading the text.

As observed during the field work. However, the exponent may or may not be aware of this group, but officially they are not a part of the retinue, consisting of priests, musicians and other people that travels with the exponent during all his/her performances.

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## **Impact of Climate Change on Culture**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**G**lobally, people rely on the environment to uphold their culture. Culture is affected when climate change's adverse effects degrade the environment. Developing countries are at a greater risk of coping with the cultural changes resulting from climate change. People from developing countries who lack infrastructure and have fewer resources are more vulnerable to climate change. The lack of medical facilities in developing countries makes people prone to health hazards due to climate change. Agricultural practices and tourism are drastically impacted by climate change which affects culture. Historical monuments play a vital role in the environment's heritage, and the devastating effects of climate change have threatened them. This paper delves into how climate change has drastically impacted cultures worldwide. The study will also encompass the reviews of previous literature relating to climate change and culture. The study will involve news

articles focusing on climate change and culture. Overall, this study will highlight how climate change has impacted culture, show how climate action is the need of the hour, and sustainable development measures can be viewed as a long-term solution.

**Keywords:** *Culture, Climate Change, News Articles, Heritage, Livelihood*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Climate change is a significant threat and a complex issue in society. It has impacted the environment, culture, livelihood, economy, politics, and all the dimensions (NASA Report, 2020). Global warming acts as the primary reason for climate change. The greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and methane are the vital drivers of global warming as they trap heat from the earth and stay in the atmosphere for thousands of years. Sea level rise, intense rainfall, flash floods, cyclones, heatwaves, and droughts are some of the extreme impacts of climate change. In the 26th annual climate summit held at Glasgow; all the countries have committed to curbing greenhouse gas emissions by attaining a net zero target.

Climate change is not just a global issue but equally a local concern. The local communities are finding it difficult to cope with the worsening climate impacts. The ecosystem influences culture, and any disruption to the ecosystem will impact the culture and livelihood (Fletcher, 2022). Culture is affected when climate change's adverse effects degrade the environment. People from developing countries who live in more rural areas with a lower income lack infrastructure, have fewer resources and are more vulnerable to climate change. They are more vulnerable to developing health issues

by contracting diseases and illnesses with the effects of climate change. People in developing countries find it harder to cope with the devastating impact of climate change. Children, women, and the elderly are more vulnerable to extreme weather conditions due to their lesser immune systems. The effects of climate change result in air pollution through enhanced greenhouse gases, water pollution using waste and toxins, and extreme heatwaves resulting in skin cancer. The heatwaves also affect agriculture and food production due to drought, which creates famine and malnourishment.

The archaeological and heritage sites play a vital role in culture and are prone to climate change disasters. The monuments in the coastal region are at a greater risk of eroding by the impact of sea level rise and encroachment of flood water. Protecting heritage from climate change is a widespread challenge. The economy is affected in the places where tourism has relied upon as the number of visitors has decreased due to the impact of climate change. Major Indian cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Bengaluru are vulnerable to climate change in the environmental and socioeconomic aspects (Khalkho, 2022). The urban cities are where the major Indian economy is concentrated. With the drastic impact of climate change, an urban disaster begins disrupting the country's socioeconomic status. Coastal cities like Mumbai and Chennai are prone to sea level rise due to extreme climate events like intense rainfall, flash floods and cyclonic storms.

### **AIM**

**Analyse the climate change impact on culture.**

### **OBJECTIVES**

- ◆ To study the climate change impact on culture in

select countries prone to extreme weather events from the news articles on climate change.

◆ To determine the desired climate action and sustainable development measures that can be viewed as a long-term solution.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

◆ RQ1: Does climate change impact culture?

◆ RQ2: What are the cultural changes from the impact of climate change?

◆ RQ3: What are the suitable measures that can be viewed as solutions?

### **RESEARCH GAP**

◆ The study will analyse how climate change has impacted the livelihood and culture in countries prone to the adverse effects of climate change.

◆ The study will also investigate the importance of climate action and sustainable development measures.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Menjono (2014) examined how culture has influenced gender inequality and climate change vulnerability among various ethnic groups in Namibia. The researcher analysed the impact variables of climate change with gender-differentiated impacts. Regarding drought, the women had to walk long distances to fetch water. In connection to the climate change impact on agriculture and food production, men have the added privilege of migrating to longer distances for better employment opportunities. Regarding health crises and water-borne diseases, women are more vulnerable to health issues due to the increased workload and stress. The researcher concluded that climate change impacts in Namibia are not gender-neutral, as women are more susceptible to the effects of climate change.

Andharia (2015) explored the link between culture and tradition regarding disaster management practices in the Konyak community in Nagaland. The researcher conducted a qualitative ethnographic study with people of the Konyak community on the traditional methods they implement to handle disasters and their coping mechanisms. The researcher has stated that resilience is the key factor which the indigenous people possess to handle disasters. Nagaland is a disaster-prone state, and traditional practices like village planning, housing design, land use and spreading awareness made the Konyak community resilient towards disaster management.

Bayrak et al. (2020) have made a bibliometric and literature review analysis on the resilience of the indigenous people of Taiwan concerning climate change disasters. A total of 111 articles were analysed for the study. The researchers found that most of the studies were primarily focused on the post-recovery of the indigenous community from Typhoon Morakot. The researchers concluded that the studies focused more on the indigenous community's resilience than traditional ecological knowledge and wisdom.

Yin et al. (2020) reviewed the research papers and monologues on the impacts of climate change on the traditional livelihood of ethnic minority groups in China. Ethnic minorities not just become victimised by climate change but also adapt to the impact due to their approach from real-life experiences and not based on scientific methods. The paper highlighted that traditional knowledge is essential in adapting to climate change. The authors have concluded that traditional knowledge effectively



helped people understand climate change's influence on livelihood.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study has extensively investigated news articles that covered the impact of climate change on the culture and livelihood of the people. The news articles were taken from renowned news websites such as The Guardian, The New Indian Express, World Economic Forum, Greek Reporter and the like. The study delves into news articles that featured how the worsening climate change effects have affected the culture in countries like India, Bangladesh, Greece, Kenya, Malaysia, Japan, Yemen, Samoan Islands, and continents like Africa and Antarctica.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

A news article by The Diplomat titled "Ladakh at the Crossroads" featured how climate change has threatened Ladakh's traditional farming and culture (Rybarczyk, 2022). For generations, Ladakh was based on agriculture and followed a conventional lifestyle. With increased tourism and modernisation, Ladakh witnessed rapid economic growth. The rising tourism led to modern sanitation amenities like showers and flush toilets, which led to a decline in water availability. Ladakh was known for its rich agricultural practices. However, the rising tourism interests directed the region to focus on tourism-centred economic activities by opening restaurants, tour operating companies and guesthouses. This led to the decline of traditional and cultural practices in Ladakh. The transborder conflict with China brought the highest concentrations of armed troops. From the Indochina war in 1962 until the clash in 2020, larger military forces have been deployed, and the standoff

continues. The increasing movement of military vehicles and fighter jets has furthered pollution in the region. As Ladakh is already struggling to cope with the growing tourist attraction and army concentrations, climate change has further affected the area. Climate change has resulted in melting glaciers, which impacted irrigation methods and traditional agricultural practices. For generations, agriculture relied on the glaciers and the winter snow, but the melting of glaciers and decreased winter snow have affected the cultivation of fruits and vegetables.

A news article reported by The New Indian Express titled "Heritage Feeling the Pinch of Climate Change" stated how climate change had caused damage to the monuments of Hyderabad (Tiwari, 2022). Urbanisation is one of the prime reasons for anthropogenic climate change in Hyderabad. The lime mortar surface in the walls of the heritage buildings has started to crack and flake due to the increasing pollution. Along with the pollution, the vibration and the sounds of the overflowing vehicles have also damaged the heritage structures. The path towards haphazard urbanisation has resulted in the pollution of the Musi river, one of Hyderabad's primary water sources. Human activities, a significant contributor to climate change, have impacted the culture and lifestyle of Hyderabad.

A news article by The Conversation titled "Climate Change Impacts in Bangladesh Show How Geography, Wealth and Culture Affect Vulnerability" has reported how Bangladesh is worst affected by the adverse effects of climate change (Chowdhury, 2022). Bangladesh, a developing country, relies on farming and fishing and has suffered the most from the impact of climate change. During

the devastating floods in 2019, people had to wade through chest-deep floodwaters to buy kerosene and rice. The worsening climate conditions have hindered food security and increased the country's poverty ratio. With limited economic resources, children, women, and the elderly population are prone to climate change disasters in Bangladesh. A news article by Thomson Reuters titled "Climate Disasters Drive Bangladesh Children from Classrooms to Work" has reported how climate disasters have impacted children's education in Bangladesh. Extreme events like droughts, storms and floods made the people homeless and moved to the slums. It also increased the school dropout rate and the lack of healthcare facilities for children. During the flood, the water encroached inside the school premises, and many schools were permanently shut down in Bangladesh. Climate change has disrupted the education of children in Bangladesh.

A news article reported by Greek Reporter titled "Greek Cultural Monuments Threatened by Climate Change" has featured how Greece, known for its rich cultural heritage legacy, is impacted by climate change (Kokkinidis, 2022). The heavy rain, rising sea levels, wildfires and floods damaged the archaeological monuments. The entrance of the iconic site of Olympia, the birthplace of the Olympic games, was blackened by the wildfire. The intense rainfall has damaged the structural walls of the Acropolis. The constant rising sea levels have caused the water to encroach into the monuments, and the archaeological sites in the coastal areas are at a greater risk of eroding. The adverse effects of climate change have jeopardised the rich cultural heritage of Greece.

A news article by The Journal titled "Race against Time to Avert a Catastrophic Climate Change-Induced Famine in Kenya" has reported how famine has crippled Kenya as an effect of climate change (Connor, 2022). As a result of the climate change disaster, drought remains a colossal crisis in Kenya due to the failure of the rainy season. The devastating impact on agriculture and food security made the civilians starve as traditional foods were wiped out. Milk was also wiped out as the cattle were gone, making the children suffer from malnutrition and health crisis. With the growing number of cattle deaths, famine, and drought due to climate change, the citizens have begun to migrate, leaving their country for survival.

A news article by The Star titled "The Effects of Climate Change in Malaysia" stated how climate disasters are increasing in Malaysia and their impact on livelihood (Lum, 2022). The country is prone to flooding, and extreme flooding events have increased. Peninsular Malaysia is also warned of being vulnerable to sea level rise. Sarawak, Sabah, and Pahang have lost more than 30 per cent of its tree cover in the last 20 years due to deforestation, which makes the region vulnerable to climate change effects like global warming, soil erosion and flooding. With the alterations in precipitation and temperature, food production has been affected, and because of drought, the traditional cultivation of rubber and cocoa is now a big concern.

A news article by World Economic Forum titled "Climate Change Is Threatening Japan's Sushi Culture" has stated how climate change impacted Japan's famous food, Sushi (Nugent, 2022). Sushi is a rice-based dish involving raw fish, ginger, and wasabi. From streets to high-end

restaurants, Sushi has been Japan's most preferred dish, and the global Sushi market has also increased. Fish is a significant part of Japanese cooking concerning Sushi, and the constant increase in ocean temperature has endangered fish in Japan. Overfishing has equally resulted in the decline of fish numbers in Japan. The wasabi plant, another Sushi ingredient, is vulnerable to extreme weather conditions as it is grown in narrow valleys. The intense landslides and rains have brought catastrophe to the wasabi growing conditions. The persistence of climate change impact is a massive threat to the Sushi culture in Japan.

A news article by Relief Web titled "Yemen's Climate Crisis is Threatening Lives, Livelihoods and Culture" has featured how climate change has impacted the lifestyle of the Yemen population. Due to deforestation and desertification, Yemen has been hit by drought, sandstorms, and flooding. For commercial purposes and the increasing demand for wood, more than five million trees have been cut down in Yemen, which impacted agriculture and unemployment. Climate change has worsened the country's economy, forcing people to sell firewood as they do not possess any other source of income.

A news article by The Guardian titled "In Samoa, We Are Born into the Land, Climate Change Threatens to Take It Away from Us" has reported how climate change is a crisis in the Samoan Islands (Jackson, 2021). Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Tuvalu, these tiny nations in the Samoan Islands, are prone to be submerged by sea level rise. The Samoan Islands were famously known for their colourful coral reefs, and now all are dead from coral bleaching due to global warming. Due to soil erosion, the islands have become inhabitable

for agriculture and growing crops. The extreme weather events have forced the islanders to relocate and migrate, leaving their homes, identity, and culture.

A news article by The Equation titled "Climate Change Threatens Africa's Cultural Heritage" has featured how climate change is hazardous to the tangible and intangible Africa's heritage (Markham, 2021). The temperatures have increased by 0.5°C in the last 50 years, and Northern Africa is likely to be hotter with reduced precipitation. The warming has put mangroves, coral reefs and fisheries at a greater risk. The warming has also caused the melting of ice in Mount Kilimanjaro. The Ethiopian region is set to receive intense rainfall and is prone to severe flooding. The extreme rain causes eroding of the architectural and heritage sites in Africa. Coastal erosion and flash floods are a massive concern in Egypt as the historical sites are at a greater risk. Kilwa Kisiwani, the renowned archaeological site in Tanzania, is at a considerable risk of erosion and flooding due to a rise in sea level.

A news article by Antarctica Government titled "Climate Change Poses the Greatest Threat to Antarctica" has featured how climate change has worsened the Antarctic region. The human-induced climate change activities like commercial fishing, pollution, mass tourism and population expansion have affected the Antarctic region. With an increasing human footprint, the ice shelves have been melting faster due to the warming of the atmosphere. The extreme temperatures and the loss of ice sheets are vital concerns to biodiversity as the plants and animals are forced to accommodate the changing weather conditions. With the worsening extreme temperatures, climate change poses a massive threat to native

species, such as penguins which are already lesser in numbers and are at risk of extinction.

Sustainable development satisfies and gratifies the needs of the present and the future generation without compromising. In 2015, the members of the United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for 15 years as a universal call for development aimed at 2030. Climate action is the 13th goal among the 17 SDGs. Climate action is the need of the hour with the implementation of adaption and mitigation measures for climate change (World Wildlife Fund Report, 2020). Adaptation measure refers to altering human behaviour and adjusting to the climate crisis. It involves understanding local risks and developing plans to cope with the changes. Mitigation measures are the means to avoid and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. It involves governmental policies to curb the emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Reduce, Reuse and Recycle are the vital characteristics of sustainability as individuals, leading a sustainable lifestyle and connecting with the community will create a positive cultural change in society. Here are some sustainable development measures that can be effective and be viewed as a long-term solution (Concern Worldwide US, 2022).

◆ Transitioning to renewable energy like solar energy from using fossil fuels in sectors like energy, agriculture, transportation, industry, and urban planning would limit the global temperature rise to under 1.5°C.

◆ Food wastage is to be reduced to ensure sustainable food production and build resilience in agriculture. The leftover food can be donated to the underprivileged to eliminate hunger and malnourishment.

◆ Deforestation has to be prohibited as it results in overheating of the planet. More trees have to be planted as trees act as a carbon sink and decrease the carbon footprint. Transitioning to paperless and buying recycled paper products are the best practices to avoid deforestation.

◆ Water must be conserved and rationed as millions of people lack drinking water and basic sanitation facilities due to drought.

◆ Usage of reusable and eco-friendly products to eliminate the use of plastics.

◆ Proper disposal of solid, degradable, non-degradable, electronic, construction and medical waste is to be implemented.

◆ Use of public transportation and electric vehicles can reduce the usage of personal fuel-based vehicles to eliminate the fossil fuel emission from the vehicles.

◆ For urban planning, green designing and green building methods can be implemented to eliminate carbon emissions and reduce carbon footprint.

## **CONCLUSION**

Climate change is a global phenomenon that has impacted many countries' cultures and livelihoods. In India, climate change has impacted the Ladakh region with the melting of glaciers, affecting traditional agricultural methods. The increasing pollution due to urban expansion has affected the walls of the heritage monuments in Hyderabad. Extreme weather events like drought, storms and floods have made the people homeless, impacted their culture of fishing and farming, and increased the school dropout rate of the children in Bangladesh. In Greece, the wildfire has blackened the walls of Olympia, and the intense



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rainfall has damaged the walls of the Acropolis. The colossal drought crisis in Kenya has wiped out traditional food, which has caused nationwide famine. Due to deforestation, Malaysia has lost more than 30 per cent of its tree cover, and the traditional culture of rubber cultivation is affected due to drought. The increase in ocean temperature has resulted in the decline of fish numbers and the growth of wasabi plants which has threatened the Sushi culture in Japan. In Yemen, deforestation has led to drought and flooding, which has impacted agriculture and caused unemployment. The Samoan islands have lost their colourful coral reefs from coral bleaching due to global warming. The warming has also resulted in melting glaciers in Mount Kilimanjaro, and the flash floods from extreme rainfall have eroded the architectural sites in Africa. Antarctica's warming temperature has resulted in the loss of ice sheets, which has threatened native species like Penguins and is at risk of extinction. Climate Action and Sustainable Development are the utmost priority of every nation to limit the worsening effects of climate change to control its devastating impact on the culture and livelihood of the people. News media should play a vital role in shaping public opinion about climate change's adaptation and mitigation measures.

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**Decoding Cultural Aspects of Woman-Man  
Binding by Examining the Narrative  
Structure of Tamil Movie 'Iravin Nizal'  
Using George Varotsis's "The Screenplectics  
Model of Complex Narrative System"**

*-Dr. Valarmathi Subramaniam &  
Dr. Mangala Vadivu Vivakaran*

**Narrative Theories**

**O**n tracing the narrative theories, the research found the very first notions of narrative form that were presented in The Aristotle's "Poetic" book that could have been written between 347-342 BC (Varotsis, 2015). The Epic (Related to Story in narration), which gives a holistic meaning of what the story tells which Aristotle mention as the length. The Tragedy (Related to Scene/Event in Story), which is incongruity of apparent things that build heroic structure from assigned experience which is stated as meter (Aristotle, 1962) Adding further Aristotle expands tragedy into six elements such as, Plot, Character, Thought, Language, Melody and Spectacle (Andrew, 1976)

The first century BCE brought in complex theoretical view that differed from underlying concept of Aristotle 'Epic and Tragedy' theory. Roman Poet Horace demonstrated an emplotted narrative pattern by altering linkage and combination from the pre-existing story structure (Liveley, 2019, pg.68). He suggested "No play should be longer or shorter than five acts" (Kline, 2005, line 189) which was decoded by a German Novelist Gustav Freytag which is known as Freytag's pyramid.

Towards end of nineteenth century when film was born and embarked narrative structure with the inception of first narrative film 'The Life of an American Fireman' in 1905, produced by Edwin S Porter, the diegesis theory up theories based on photographic images. Hugo Munsterberg's 'The Photoplay: A Psychological Study' book published in the year 1916 (Andrew, 1976) known to be the first major on narrative theory of cinema. He states, "The photoplay tells us the human story by overcoming the forms of the outer world namely, space, time, and causality, and by adjusting the events to the forms of the inner world, namely, attention, memory, imagination, and emotion" (Munsterberg, 2005).

The theorists interest geared upon images and its manipulative characteristics. Hence the narrative theories shifted from words to visuals. The German author Rudolf Arnheim states,

"There is no essential difference between literature and film. Literature uses words for description; film, pictures. In both media the guiding ideas are not given in abstract form but clothed in concrete episodes" (Arnheim, 1957, Pg 144, Line 1-5) in his book "Film as Art".

Silent era became the paramount phase of development in the history of film that has taken up multitudinous shapes in narrative form across USA and European country. Many film theorists and film practitioner developed film theories which serves as foundation models till date.

Sergei Eisenstein one of the notable film maker and theoritician on 'Montage' is being taught in almost all film school till date. The montage theories are applicable in almost all fictional films extending to contemporary modern films. The immeasurable ability in making films assured his infinite richer writing and deep understanding about the formative theory of film.

Another theoritican Christian Metz states film as "Filmic discourse is specific through its composition. Resembling true languages as it does, film, with its superior instance, is of necessity projected "upward" into the sphere of art where it reverts to a specific language. The film total can only be a language if it is already an art." (Metz, 1974).

While many theoretical frame work underlying the narrative structure of films, George Verotsis states that they are relatively invariant in examining the differences in content and context from story to story (Varotsis, 2015. pg 34). Verotsis propose Screenplectics model to anticipate the repetitive occurrence of similar deep structure in the works of complex narrativity (Varotsis, 2015. pg 33).

The film titled "Iravin Nizal (Shadow of Night)" that has been taken for this research is claimed to be the first single shot non-linear narrative film. Hence it would be more appropriate to analyse the intended aspects of the research paper using the "screenplectics model of complex narrative structure" framed by George Verotsis.

The research first examine the story of the film and then analyse the from surface structure to deep structure of the film by applying the theoritical frame work of George Vertosis. Upon arriving the deep structure using the model the cultural aspects of woman-man binding would be examined by decoding the arrived deep structure.

### **Online Story of "Iravin Nizal"**

Nandu the protagonist of the film abandoned at birth is forced to become a criminal as a consequence of pressing need of survival in the society of fake Godman, Drug abuser, Loan Sharks and betrayl pushes him into darkness space of life. Though the story outline is allude like many commercial films of rise and fall it greatly varies in terms of narration and technicalities used in the film.

### **Surface Structure the Plot-Algorithm**

Films narration commonly uses three act structure where the act one introduces the characters and the act two sets up the problem and the act three resolves the problem which is also known as plot-algorithm. On looking at the surface level of the narration of the film "Iravin Nizal" the plot algorithm can be derives as,

#### **ACT 1**

Abandoned child molded by social pressure pushed into crime world

#### **ACT 2**

Rescued by love and while leading a happy life misguidance surrounds crime cloud over him

#### **ACT 3**

On losing his love life due to ghosting his past he commits suicide

Since the movie is non-linear in temporal narration the first two acts are dispersed in the film from the beginning.

### **On-Screen Story of the Film**

The film begins with the protagonist picking gun and while travelling in car he is surrounded with his past life memory of his marital life. On reaching the destined location he breaks a wall and enters the space for taking taking up revenge from where the narration of his past takes place splitting up into four stages fo his past life. The first two stages are abandoned infant at birth and sexually abused childhood. The second two stages are teen and adulthood where he is betrayed by his girlfriend during his teen and gets a devine wife who he loses because of his financial crisis. The other characters are designed so that each character reflects certain disparagement of the society.

Since the research is aimed at man-woman binding aspect, the sequences that depicts man-woman association has been extracted from the film and were listed in linear fashion from the view point of protagonist of the film. There are five stages of his life has been taken up for narrating the intended story of the film.

The first stage, Infant life: Mother been murdered by drunken man who is in unmarried relationship with thw infant mother.

Childhood: Sexually abused by Police officer rescued by transgender woman who put him into selling drug where he is exposed to man-woman indulge in sexual activities in doped condition.

Teen: Abused by drunken father seeking solace from a girl with whome he falls in love. She later betray him for money and moves on with another man who is wealthier than the protagonist Nandhu.



Adulthood - Getting a life partner purity and divine in nature who goes through trauma of been sat nude because of protagonist loan repayment issue. After a while she commits suicide with a fetus. Dejected Nandhu seeks peace in a Godman place where he witness a woman getting pregnant through the Godman but gets revealed that she plays game for snatching the Godman wealth. Upon knowing her hidden incitement he end up killing her in an argument of money share between them.

The fifth stage of grown up adult he marries a woman for defaulting loan her father takes from him. He illtreats his wife until she delivers a baby named Arputha. While moving on life with sins his own consciousness kills him of seeking manumit for his sins.

The surface structure reveals an overview aspect of protagonist life and the number women he gets interogated during his life. To extract the cultural aspect and decode the interdependence of the characters the narrative structure has been decoed using the screenplectics model of complex narrative system.

Screenplectics model of narrative theory helps to understand not only the self reflection theory but also the holistic process that goes into the developing of narrative structure in the story being told by the narrator.

Non-linear narrative structure of story telling is not a new phenonenon in 21st century. The landmark silent film "The Birth of a Nation" directed by DW Griffth in 1915 based on the novel The Clansman (1905) by Thomas Dixon haile for its technical excellence and narrative style adapted in the screenplay structure. There are hundrends of films which has incorporated non-linear narrative structure that are complex in narrative form have been shaping the cinema.

Ever since the inception of story narration in film the narrative form has taken up exponential changes from simple form of story telling to complex form of story telling. The recent movie that has been criticised for its unconventional narrative structure of intersecting three different time zone. The three time zone represents three different narrative structure that conveys the impact of evacuation in Dunkrik war. While Dunkrik is endorsed as non-linear narrative story structure that intersects a complex narration of time zone one of the recent Tamil movie titled "Iravin Nizal" is an exceptional first ever non-linear story narration that deals multitudine time and space but taken in single shot.

Starting from 1970s, directors like Bheemsing, Balachandar, Rudraiya, Barathiraja have been representing the hurdles a woman faces in the society and voice for woman. The purity obsession of men towards woman-man relationship considering a monumental part of human especially for women is a global consensus. Yet Tamil Nadu stigmatise pre-marital sexual contact by a woman more seriously than by a man. It is common to see victimised woman characters for either knowing or unknowing sexual contact with a man is being considered as sin and she is being distained from doing any other activities of her life as if sexual purity is the only goal for living a life. While such aspect is being imposed upon woman the 2022 released movie "Natchatiram Nagarkirathu" broke thr stereotypic representation while another film film "Iravin Nizal" held the stereotype representation of woman in man-woman binding aspect. While the film "Iravin Nizal" having stereotypical perspective over man-woman relationship at the surface level of the plot structure, the other film is being

raved for its non-stereotypical characterisation praising the director as 'a hopeful step towards men writing women well' (Jose, 2022). This research study decoded the portrayal of man-woman relationship influenced by the self reflection phenomenon of the narrator and not reflecting the socio cultural changes.

### **Representation of Man-Woman Binding Relationship in Tamil Cinema**

Cinema is not just a medium of entertainment, it reflects the human relationship, economic stature, socio-political scenario and culture of the society. Tamil Nadu is known for its stardom culture driven by the fantasy of cinema that even alter the political cloud of forming Tamil Nadu Government by which political party . Not only politics that gets deduced of cinema, each and every aspect of life gets ascendant with the cinema. From fans of Rajinikanth being taking up smoking as a style to taking up love life lighter by the fans of Vijay, Tamil movies exert greater influence over the society (Thahir, 2021). Recalling "Children grow up in a more mobile and individualized world structured by both fewer and weaker external authorities" (Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture), films greatly influence the perspective of young minds in man-woman relationship construction (Wolf, 1991 - 26 (43)).

With the advent of OTT platforms global diversification of cultural diallution started gearing up among the young minds who are the majority movie viewers of OTT platforms (Kumar, 2021). While the western thought of man-woman relationship not confining in a sphere of sexual purity, the Tamilian culture swills on stigmatising pre-marital sex as sin or betrayal of man especially excering good-bad

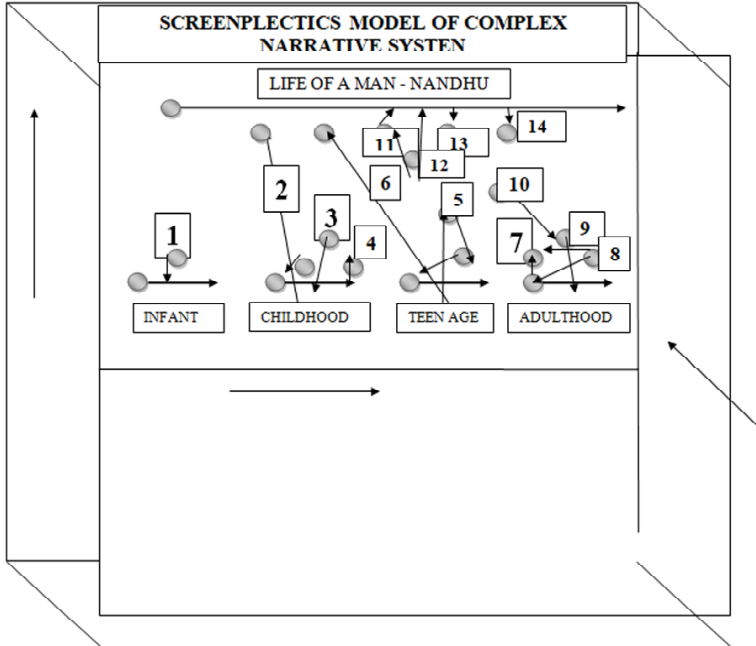
characterisation on woman. The year 2022 marked reflection of contrast perspectives on the pre-marital sex of man-woman relationship through the films, "Iavin Niza (July, 2022)" and "Natchathiram Nagarkirathu (Aug, 2022)". The former film is an usual portrayal of woman endorsing as bad character upon her physical relationship with a man of her choice before marriage shown as betrayal of her boyfriend. The later, in contrast has broken the stereo type representation of pre-marital sex as sin and breaking the gender typecast cultural reflection of woman being portrayed as good-bad by confining her relationship with man endorsing not indulging in sex as purity.

On watching a movie the final take away of audience is very important to which the narration would be reticulated to give the holistic feel to the audience. In-spite of being the world first single shot non-linear narration, listed in Oscar selection from India, the film was cladding with many negative criticism on the final take away of the film. On analyzing the surface structure of the film, The director Radhakirishnan Parthiban prevail sundry topics from abusive relationship, drug influence, eluding girlfriend, divine wife, loan sharks, child sexual abuse, rage, murder blended with strong use of foul language in the film "Iraivin Nizal".

### **Decoding the narrative structure using Screenplectics Model**

The five stages of the protagonist life is represented in horizontal x-axis scale. Six characters, Mother, Father, Girl Friend, First Wife, Second Wife and Daughter who are directly related are represented in vertical axis. The police Officer, A transgender woman, first villain (who takes away his girl friend), Loan Shark, Godman and his woman disciple,

MLA who keeps Nandhu as his Benami and his wife who has secret relationship with Nandhu are represented in Z axis who play the interdependence characters.



1.Nandhu sucks milk from dead mother breast who is murdered by drunken abuser

2.Police officer who sexually abuses Nandhu during childhood is being revenged after he gains power. The officer is being made lower his pant and been beaten on butt as a revenge.

3.A transgender women who feeds him send him off to sell Gnja where the child gets exposed to man woman indulging in sexual activities being dopped.

4.Drunkard Father abusing Nandhu to get money

5.Nandhus Teenage girlfriend

6.A gunda who indulge in sexual contact with his girlfriend is been revenged by indulging in paid sex with the gundas life partner. The dialogue objectify a woman like "you have taken away my girl and now with my power I am taking away your girl".

7.Nandhu loses his devine wife as a result of debit problems with a loan shark who undress his wife and make her sit nude. Nudity linked to loosing her purity following which she commits suicide.

8.Loan shark who makes his wife nude over loan default

9.Kills a pregnant woman on money sharing contradiction who becomes pregnant in illegal relationship but projecting a wealthy saint as a reason for her pregnancy

10.Saint who indulge in inappropriate activities and make women pregnant

11.MLA who keeps Nandhu as his benami and lend money.

12.MLA wife/step-wife who is also in relationship with Nandhu.

13.Marrying a woman (buying wife) on failing repayment of laon her father has taken for his yoinger daughter marriage.

14. Daughter whose name is Arputha because of whome is takes right path and becomes good man, abandon father due to his past crime activity.

There are fourteen main characters who interact with the Nandhu the protagonist of this film apart from numerous other characters who branches out as supporting characters in the film. Of all these fourteen characters one way or other physical sexual contact has been endorsed as the relationship

between a man and a woman either in direct mode or through indirect sarcastic way the binding element has been shown only physical sexual contact.

The screenplay structure takes non-linear shape starting from the grownup man Nandhu and moving on to the childhood of Nandhu with his own voice of narrating his own life. He is shown sexually abused by a police officer after which he is given shelter by a transgender woman who send him off to sell dope where he happen to spot man-woman satiate in sexual activities by consuming dope. The narrator profess that a child who lost his mother at birth raised in such an ill situation is vulnerable to get negative character in him.

Starting from the infant life to the grownup man Nandhu is shown entangled in man-woman-sex-money-power-revenge for which the cultural aspects of the society is being blamed. The question arises in this context is whether the cultural bind between a man and woman is only physical sexual contact or is it the element of self experience reflection of the narrator that gets reflected in the narration.

While the narrator justifies the characterisation and the use of fowl language and double meaning dialogues as the societal normal, the audiences who watch the movie expressed discomfort in watching certain scenes and the use of overdosed fowl language in the film. Hence the research is aimed at decoding the cultural aspects of this phenomenon especially societal perspective on man-woman binding.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Since the film reflects lower class socio background class of characters, the samples are collected from similar background people while coming out after watching the film in theater.

Hundred samples have been collected from ten different theaters consisting five female and five male respondents from each theater. Three questions focussing on man-woman relationship were asked. Do woman prefer money over relationship? Do the loan lender abuses woman of the family for not paying back the loan? Do woman get married to man for not paying back the loan taken? The total sample consisting fifty female respondents and fifty male respondents were listed and analysed using SPSS Anova testing method.

Sample error: Though the theater were selected based on ticket rate there is probability of upper class people coming to that theater which gives error in Socio background variation. Age group is not defined which could be an error in maturity level of answering the questions.

#### Preference of money over man

Upon asking the viewers on whether woman prefers money over man the immediate and quicker response is 'no'. sixty four percent of male and eighty six percent of female group opted no as their response.

While two percent female group opted yes as their response and twenty six percent of male responded as yes questions finding reason for on gender response variance. Whereas almost equal number of male and female are standing neutral for this statement.

#### Do Loan shark abuse Woman of the Family physically.

Upon asking the viewers on whether loanshark abuses woman of the family, seventy six percentage of male group responded 'no' while eighty six percentage of female group responded the same. Here also there seems to be gender variance in the statement. The yes and neutral percentage doesn't vary much the no response shows variance.



Marriage for defaulting Loan taken

Upon asking Marring woman for loan defaulting, all the respndants immediately said no while only two woman said may be but not heard in real life.

### CONCLUSION

On decoding the narrative structure of the film Iravin Nizal there are three different women who interrogate in the life of Nandhu the protagonist of the film arising three questions on cultural aspects of man-woman binding. The first aspect of "Money over Man" there seems to be significance difference among male-female perspective. The Anova test reveals the P value as .006 and F as 8.012 having mean value, .5918 and .1961. The other two questions has no significance variance among the gender. But in all three aspects the people response is negative to that of the cultural aspect shown in the movie. Though there are minor differences among the gender cultural perspective on man-woman binding aspect both the gender stand on the other side in all three cultural aspects that have been depicted in the film "Iravin Nizal". Hence the study concludes that the cultural aspects shown in the film on man-woman binding is personal reflection of the film narrator and not the societal reflection of the cultural aspect.

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**Personal is National:  
No-hate and Non-hurt in a Plural Bharatvarsha**  
*-Prof. (Dr.) Biplab Loho Choudhury*

**THE STORY IN 1978**

**I**n 1978, a school boy of 14 could not tolerate that a neo-convert to another religion would bash deities of his religion in an assembly in a mosque which he could hear through loudspeaker. His house was in between two Muslim paras (settlements) in south suburban area of Kolkata. He went straight to the mosque where his uncles and friends from two paras offered Namaz. He requested with folded hand to an uncle to stop bashing against his belief. The uncle was a rich man who patronised such assemblies for providing religious sermons. Initially he did not accept the prayer of a young sensitive mind. But on second thought, he stopped the Neo-convert's lecture and saw to it that no other-religion bashing happens in future assemblies.

The boy moved from that area in 1985 but still he pays visit to those paras because he feels them his own. They also equally recognise him as their own. Even when they

visit Santiniketan, he gets call and attends. This is the author's own experience.

### **MULTIPLE IDENTITY AND ONE BROAD CULTURE**

Each of us don many identity hats. From the closest at micro level to the farthest at macro level- Sub-caste, caste, sect, religion, language, ethnicity, domicile and citizenship are to stay with us. A close look reveals that the identity emerges gradually in a gradient of expanding telescopic circle from occupation and kinship, belief system, speech, race, property qualification to political existence. Culture in the broadest understanding is the expression of sustainable acquisitions pertaining to all identities except the last two although loosely we talk about political culture.

However the partisan politics, by weakening community living and sharing, and the economic liberalisation in alien terms, are taking tall of leisure, pleasure and community-based occupational groupings. As the pattern is bound to change, so the cultural edifice.

Root of our problems is reductionist thinking about identity hats where bigger hats are convenient to forget in the name of vote and rights without onus. From Eighteenth century onwards till today it has become common place through the propagation named education and divisive politics.

Though lip service is given to commonality in our cultural strands across the subcontinent, but it stops there. How do we overcome this stagnation inertia? Hopes are there.

### **RECENT CONTEXT**

That Nupur Sharma and Naveen Kumar Jindal of Bharatiya Janata Party were stripped of their onus to speak on behalf of the party and suspended amidst pressure for talking against Hazret Muhammad, the founder and last avatar

of Islam is appropriate. This is a learning in a country like ours for all political and religion-social dispensations. In our country, no one should hurt sentiments of any other citizen or of any other country in the name of religious belief or belief of sects within the same religion, or in the name of language or race.

In fact, for long, against such offenders' roll, we have had equally impressive roll of people who offers respect to other religions, languages, races. I read in a Hindi book by Kripashankar Choubey that contribution to develop Hindi language goes equally to Bengalees, Marathis, Gujaratis, Tamils and so on. Jyotiprasad Agarwala's contribution to develop Assamese also merits attention. We expect a policy which makes such contributions normal for people of North to south, East and West and vice-versa; can we call it the followup action of the traditional normalcy of the mega culture thy named Bharat in context which is juxtaposition of the own and the alien (alien because acculturation has been less than the subjugation).

### **THE PROBLEM**

However, the problem lies somewhere else of which we just listen to the top of the noise. Why anyone should dare to talk bad about any other religion, language, race, sect or caste for vicarious pleasure or showing supremacy? Why at all, pontiffs would be having the courage to asperse on avatars, deities and profounders of sects? Why temples of all denominations would be the places of bashing other religions or other sects. within the same religion? Why in TV debates or in public lectures, leaders or intellectuals have the license to spew venom on belief systems- religious, social and cultural?

What may be the solutions to the deteriorating mind-scape over last seven decades ? What should be the conditions for solutions to last for long? What are the spanners to be made ineffective?

### **MEDIA ECOSYSTEM**

Solution is not completely a government affair now as much before the police and judiciary enters damage is already done. Take the story of a boy named Souvik Mukherjee could not enter his village in Illambazar area in Birbhum in West Bengal from 2018 because in an altercation with his Muslim friends, he offended them which was recorded. The recording spread like wild fire, enraged believers and they threatened to kill the boy. However, it did not come to news that his friends also offended his belief. His voice was numbed as he never thought of alleging friends over some comments. The boy Souvik was wrong in speaking ill but equally wrong were his friends. Alas there was no uncle like I found in Khan Mohammed Lane, Calcutta 61 in 1978 to save the situation and to assuage the hurt feeling.

We are far away today from 1978. The media ecosystem have changed due to mass self communication gadgets' ability to spread any message through social media platforms. It is now possible that any recording by any Tom, Dick or Harry can erupt fire in mind of believers. It is more possible that fake video or audio can be created and circulated to make some swift gains such as revenge or so-called democratic wins. Add to it shrill cry in primetime television and eighty percent negativity trend in first page of newspapers- falsehood and propaganda are ruling the ecosystem.



The community communication spectrum is fast losing its community communication resources such as folk and classical media compact. This is actually depleting the cultural resources of the society very fast. This has deleterious effect in communities, rising against divisiveness and protecting community against threat to belief and living.

### **COMMUNITY FIRST**

Therefore first responsibility lies with the community as first two levels of identities are juxtaposed in intricate fashion herein. This is more so in multiple-group based communities within same or different ethnicities or belief systems. The often quoted logic that the religion should be practised within home or within same-belief community and not to be practiced in public hurting others' sentiments is easy to say. This logic may be even converted into more stringent enforceable laws to show how sincere governments are, but policing is always a matter of after-incidence action that does not matter at all when common man is at the receiving end. If it was so the constitutional provisions of practicing religion along with reasonable restraints so that it does not infringe upon others any way or frighten them would not have fallen short to make us more civilised.

In our society religious men are still well venerated, let them take onus to preach no-criticism of other beliefs (sect or religion) in temples, mosques, churches, monasteries and gurudwaras. Let them sermon the common sense spirituality making followers believe that once the skin of difference in religious rituals and praxis are removed the spiritual core is achievable. Let community seniors preach that the purpose of finding out peace with reasoning and joy

is in the feeling of being connected to 'one and all'. As this is in every scripture, why to foul your mouth by aspersing avatars, deities, saints of other sects or religions. Is it not that the men and the women

We follow in crores for hundreds and thousands of years have changed lives, transformed places and spread the message of unity in different formats?

### **HOLISTIC EDUCATION**

The next but the most important institution to intervene with holistic approach are the teachers. Can we show our future citizens that the same body of mine has physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology, system of a society in coordination, aesthetics and ethics of sharing and cooperation? We need to change our pedagogy and rewrite content for first ten years of life as this are the years when brain cells develop in formation of orientations towards family, neighbourhood, community, society, religion and country. If we provide integration orientation in holistic teaching and practicals, they would never resort to such wrong doing.

National Education Policy 2020 talks about holistic approach. We need to change our primary teacher's training in that approach and ensure that every educational centre, be it general school or Anganwadi centre or minority-run school follows this for first ten years of a child's life. It does not have much cost but the belief to make us a country which would again be able to sustain its trans-generational quotient of harmony without hurting. This is for people of all religion or sect.

### **STATE ROLE**

State has only one role, ensure shift of politics. Our politics across the line has become selfish of one goal, to

amass more power and pelf like a capitalist without welfare in mind. Otherwise, why to treat people differently or places of worship differently for the purpose of revenue amassing? If one religion's temples may be under government management, it means three things. First, that is the default religion accepted by the government and so is the responsibility. The other, the government wants to oppress people of that religion. Third, the state looks at that religion as money cruncher playing on belief. This goes against the scientific and secular spirit of the Constitution in the eye of common man.

Can state create imbalance between places of worship in terms of intervention or abstention? People of different religion would naturally be afraid and grouping closer. There is no end to it. State has the role to be minimalist but not allowing indiscipline and chaos in the name of religious freedom.

Today's Bharat is the Bharatvarsha (the South Asian Subcontinent of unity in accepting diversity without aspersion to any identity) of the old still remaining as the high hope. The Muslims who remained in Bharat after partition or who did not leave for Bangladesh afterwards, or the Hindus who did not leave Pakistan or Bangladesh till tortured to the extreme represents the Bharatvarsha across the subcontinent. The Parsis who fled persecution in Persia long back and made this country their home as the jaggery mixes without trace in water, the Christians who did not see like the fellow-religionist imperials of British era are no exception. the Biashnabas, the Shaktas, the Saivites, the Brahmos, the Buddhists, the Jains and the Sarna religionists who remained within the same way of life need to muster

strength to start corrections from within with renewing the promise of no hate and no hurt to fellow countrymen. The same is true of Muslims or Christians. The author is stressing on core of religion because this is the area of severe unease in the mind of common man. This has been aggravated by unsocial social media in the name of truth.

Let us have arguments in the format of vada and jalpa, but not inviting bitanda where we are only happy refuting others without reaching a common orientation or listening to them because this is the Sanatan way of Indian life and living. Every Indian has the equal responsibility for the same.

### **THE END**

Few days back I went back to my multiple -religionist community. I was shown the mosque by a childhood friend of mine. He was highly enthused showing me the religious place. I have been happy that the place is looking nice. This nicety needs to be harboured in our belief systems rather than dividing.

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## **Cultural Reporting in Regional Language Press of Marathwada**

*-Dr. Shekhar Magar*

### **ABSTRACT:**

**N**ewspapers are friend philosophers and the guide of common man. They also play an important role as a protector of culture. Especially the language newspapers are closely connected with the soil. They are always busy in reporting, cultural activities such as festivals, yatras, local music concerts, folk dance, art, paintings & various entertaining programmes. In this paper special light has been thrown on cultural reporting. The primary concern of cultural reporting in the regional press. Four Objectives have been decided. To study the status of cultural reporting in the language press of Marathwada region. To understand the difficulties in cultural reporting. To suggest remedies for improvement. To provide a future dimension of cultural reporting. Descriptive design will be used & content analysis of three leading newspapers published from Aurangabad such as Divya Marathi, Sakal & Lokmat in october-2022 Cultural reporting is related to creative

journalism based on arts and enlightening work. The language press in Marathwada also pinpoints this phenomenon. The leading News papers like Divya Marathi, Lokmat and Sakal are providing special reports on festivals such as Ganesh jayanti, Navratri & Diwali. Village level yatras are also covered by describing people's involvement in many activities such as local drama Bharud, skits & Wagnatya. The purpose of information, education and entertainment is served which is the basic objective of journalism. The individuals, institutions as well as public policies efforts are included in cultural reporting. In language press, the arts are usually understood on the basis of literature, visual arts, music, film, theater, dance, photography & architecture and designing. Hence news items related to these activities are given priority In the language press. A cultural reporter files four to five news items every day. The Sunday supplement of local newspapers published cultural features critical reports and reviews. The Rasik of Divya Marathi, Akshar of Daily Lokmat & Saptrang of Daily Sakal. These are all a special pullout covering literature, art and culture. The regional reporter who covers a bit of culture, explores societal and community context. A journalist in the language press evaluates currents within society and draws conclusions on its basis. Cultural Journalism in the Marathwada region is based on holistic examination of allround activities related to people's participation in free & fair cultural events in day to day activity.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Newspapers are friend philosophers and the guide of common man. They also play an important role as a protector of culture. Especially the language newspapers are closely

connected with the soil. Arbindo Ghosh has rightly observed that, 'India must defend herself by reshaping her cultural forms to express more powerfully, intimately and perfectly her ancient ideal.' 1 Rural newspapers can throw light on all these problems and can support the cause of cultural reporting. Further he has observed that, 'When we try to appreciate a culture, and when that culture is the one in which we have grown up or from which we draw our governing ideals and are likely from over-partiality to minimize its deficiencies or from overfamiliarity to miss aspects or values of it which would strike an unaccustomed eye, it is always useful as well as interesting to know how others see it.' 2 The cultural reporter has to undergo this process to understand the strength & limitations of Indian culture in local perspectives. Arbiondo opined that, 'The question before us is whether Indian culture has a sufficient power for the fortifying and ennobling of our normal human existence.' 3 The cultural reporter in the rural area has to answer this question and he or she should focus on human approaches.

Dueze M observed that, 'Journalism culture is described as a shared occupational ideology among newswriters.' 4 Cultural reporter is also a news worker & he or she shares local cultural experience with readers. The cultural reporter also understands diversity in an interesting manner. In this paper special light has been thrown on cultural reporting.

Deuze M has pointed out that, 'Descriptive research is used to describe characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. It does not answer questions about how/when/why the characteristics occurred. Rather it

addresses the "what" question (what are the characteristics of the population or situation being studied.)<sup>0</sup> Descriptive design has been used & content analysis of three leading newspapers published from Aurangabad such as Divya Marathi, Sakal & Lokmat in October-2022 has been presented. Cultural reporting is related to creative journalism based on arts and enlightening works. There is a need to understand various dimensions of cultural news. In this tradition there is a continuous process of evolution which unfolded here.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. To study the status of cultural reporting in the language press of Marathwada region.
2. To understand the difficulties in cultural reporting.
3. To suggest remedies for improvement.
4. To provide a future dimension of cultural reporting.

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:**

Concepts are very important and they have been described as key factors in the research process. P.V. Young has observed that, 'Each new class of data, isolated from the other classes on the basis of definite characteristics, is given a name, a label, in short a concept. A concept is in reality a definition in shorthand of a class or group of facts.'<sup>6</sup> In this background the following concepts are briefly presented.

### **CULTURAL REPORTING:**

Cultural reporting is a complex concept. Mellodine Sommier stated that 'Cultural reporting has been defined by many scholars as Culture is a concept that has been discussed extensively, giving rise to multiple approaches and uses of the term across fields of study.'<sup>7</sup> The cultural reporting is also such a field.



Supriya Nair opined that, ‘cultural journalism remolded itself with the popularization of new digital media houses and online platforms for traditional print publishers. Today, we can explore the world of culture like never before as the virtual stage ensures that every aspect of culture is taken into account and written about—a concept that was alien to print media.’<sup>8</sup> It appears that cultural content is gaining significance on digital platforms.

### **REGIONAL LANGUAGE PRESS**

Media has become very powerful in regional languages. A media historian Robin Jefry rightly asserted that, ‘By language newspapers, we mean newspapers published in different languages spoken in the country. They are also called regional newspapers. In India, language newspapers are published in more than 100 languages. But the main papers are published in 16 principal languages.’<sup>9</sup> Marathi is one of these languages in which the regional language press is very powerful.

### **MARATHWADA**

Marathwada is the central place of Maraharastra which is also called central Maharashtra. P. V.

Kate has opined ‘The term Marathwada means the house of marathi speaking people. That is land occupied by the Marathi speaking population of the former Hyderabad state.’<sup>10</sup> Marathwada is a region of eight districts. In all these districts Marathi language is the leading language of the people.

### **INTRODUCTION TO LANGUAGE PRESS OF MARATHWADA:**

The language press in Marathwada region is varied & complex as well as multi linguistic. It has been pointed out

that Marathwada region is being backward & developing, in the nizam's period.

there was very little scope for the development of language newspapers. The state language Urdu was supported by the nizam govt. On the contrary, marathi, telugu & kannada newspapers were looked down upon. In Marathwada region Laxman Phatak published Nizam vijay in 1920 in the state of hyderabad. Further A. K. Waghmare published Marathwada weekly from hyderabad in 1934.<sup>11</sup> in Marathwada region language newspaper flourished only after 1960. Leading into development of districts newspapers venders centers in remote places. Prof. S. M. Garge observed that, 'A. K. Waghmare was Lokhitwadi of modern Marathwada & he created awareness of agriculture, industry and educational development. <sup>12</sup> He worked as a link between Marathwada and other marathi speaking regions of the state. Marathwada newspaper turned into a daily on August 15, 1967 & it ended in 2006 due to economic crises. The first daily of Ajintha was published in 1959 & ended in 2008. The rural daily such as Zunjar neta & Champavti Patra in beed. Godatir samachar & Prajawani (Nanded) Yashwant & Ekmat in Latur. Dilasa & Gavwala in Parbhani are some of the newspapers which are struggling for existence & stability.

### **STATUS OF CULTURAL REPORTING:**

It has been pointed out that, 'contemporary journalism shares many similarities with the approaches found in cultural journalism, such as interpretation, emotionality, and subjectivity.'<sup>13</sup> On this background the status of cultural reporting can be very well studied in current sociological perspectives. Marathwada's Newspapers are always busy in cultural reporting, cultural activities such as festivals, yatras,

local music concerts, folk dance, art, paintings & various entertaining programmes. In this paper special light has been thrown on cultural reporting. The current trends in cultural reporting are noted below.

1.The primary concern of cultural reporting in the regional press is based on understanding the core culture of regional activities.

2.Cultural reporting is related to creative journalism based on arts and enlightening work. The language press in Marathwada also pinpoints this phenomenon effectively.

3.The leading News papers like Divya Marathi, Lokmat and Sakal are providing special reports on festivals such as Ganesh jayanti, Navratri & Diwali.

4.Village level yatras are also covered by describing people's involvement in many activities such as local Drama Bharud, Skits & Wagnatya.

5.The purpose of information, education and entertainment is served which is the basic objective of cultural journalism.

6.The individuals, institutions as well as public policies efforts are included in cultural reporting In language press.

7.The arts are usually understood on the basis of literature, visual arts, music, film, theater, dance, photography & architecture and designing.

‘Cultural journalism research, including comparative perspectives and understanding potentialities of cultural journalism, is a challenge.’<sup>14</sup> These observations can be strengthened on the basis of content analysis.

### **CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SUNDAY SUPPLEMENTS**

Content analysis is an important sociological method. About this method burnold Beralson asserted that, ‘Content

analysis is a research technique for the objective systematic & Quantitative description of the manifest content of the communication' 15 In this process the content analysis of the three newspapers was studied & The report has been presented below.

Sr. No	Name of the paper	No. of items	% of the paper
1	Divya Marathi (Rasik)	13	8.7
2	Daily Lokmat (Akshar)	11	7.9
3	Daily Sakal (Saptarang)	09	6.5

On the basis of the above table following three inferences can be drawn

1.The divya marathi is leading in publishing cultural news items

2.in the cultural content these items are included such as article, Report, Features, stories, astrology & other news items

3.Lokmat's Akshar Pullout is at number two position. Cultural reporting it has presented topical subject effectively

4.Daily sakal's Saptarang, a special supplement, has given justice to local news items. These items are selective & they are based on depth coverage.

### **MAJOR FINDINGS:**

After field work and content analysis of three newspapers, following major findings have been drawn;

1.Cultural reporting forms an important part of the regional language press of Marathwada.

2.The local press covers cultural items Such as festivals, yatras & special events encompassing all casts & communities

3.Cultural news items are changing in fastest manner after globalization

4. Traditional folk arts, folk culture which are in oral form. They can be described as the backbone of cultural reporting. In Marathwada Gondhal, Jagran & Wag or Loknatya are mainly presented in cultural reporting.

5. The life of a folk artist is the message of cultural news.

### **NEW SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS:**

It has been pointed out that, 'Sociology is a social science that focuses on society, human social behavior, patterns of social relationship, social interaction, and aspects of culture associated with everyday life.'<sup>16</sup> Cultural reporting being a sociological process it can be analyzed in a special perspective. It has been further noted that It uses various methods of empirical investigation and critical analysis. Here such a technique was adopted for the study of cultural reporting.

Now in this last part new sociological analysis has been presented. The crux of this entire discourse is that cultural reporting is a unique social phenomenon. It has revealed that in regional language newspapers the sense of local culture, deeply rooted. What is more important is the critical understanding of facts from a sociological perspective. Entire process of collection & dissemination of news can be recorded as a social process. The cultural reporting In Indian Language newspapers in general and Marathwada in particular, is based on presenting the local festivals in a colorful manner. When there is a Festival like Diwali Or the Dashera, one way in the newspapers presents the historical and cultural background of these festivals. Secondly, they throw light on preparations of the festival & thirdly When the festivals are at the Amidst at the thick of the celebration. They give photographic representation

of these festivals in a very decent manner. Modern printing technology has also assisted the newspaper to present the cultural festivals in a better manner. Dr. Ratnakar Pandit, 'Who studied local news in Aurangabad for research work under the supervision of Prof. V. L. Dharurkar. He suggested that Cultural news should be separately treated. 17 In Marathi it is described as Utsav Warta he really implemented it and started a column Utsav warta, in lokmat newspaper. Which represented various stories about the yatras in the Panchkroshi e.i. Periphery. The various villages in Marathwada region In the state. At the time of this festival, various aspects are covered in dramas and wrestling competitions. Many times the melodrama Or Tamasha Is also performed in the yatras. This is part of entertainment in rural areas.

The modern sociological approach focuses on critical study of cultural products It has been pointed out that, 'The linguistic and cultural turns of the mid-20th century, especially, have led to increasingly interpretative, hermeneutic and Philosophical approaches towards the analysis of society.' 18 The cultural news is truly a social cross section of media content.

In this festival news presentation of the festivals. They conduct interviews regarding certain creative activities of local folk activity & present them. Sharing of experiences is presented in very Interesting manners. The interviews of the old age persons & senior citizens is also an important part of the content. Sometimes a very interesting story. Which is unsung and unexplored is also presented by the regional language press media. That is also a very Important or unique aspect of this Festival coverage.

In the festival coverage Involvement of the people, Persuasion of the local culture, transformation of the villages which occurs during these festivals is part of coverage. In the wake of automation, the festivals are also now slowly changing. Machine based Cradles are also used based on new technology which are free from accidents. Further Biopic small films are shown On a small screen so that people can pay and see these video films on the local level. So this video parlor is also appearing on a voluntary basis. This is the impact of technology on local cultural events. Sociological change has been studied by many scholars. Sociological reasoning predates the foundation of the discipline itself. Social analysis has origins in the common stock of universal, global knowledge and philosophy.<sup>19</sup>

Cultural reporting in the changing world has certain common features showing that each technological revolution has brought a new communication revolution leading towards new social & cultural life.

### **SUMMARY:**

Thus all these findings clearly show that the cultural reporting in the language press of Marathwada has considerably changed after seventy five years & it is on the cross road of change. It is taking a new shape in the 21st century. Hence news items related to cultural activities are given priority In the Marathwada's regional language press. A cultural reporter files four to five news items every day. As well as the Sunday supplement of local newspapers published cultural features, critical reports and reviews. The Rasik of Divya Marathi, Akshar of Daily Lokmat & Saptrang of Daily Sakal These are all a special pullout covering

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literature, art and culture. The regional reporter who covers a bit of culture, explores societal and community context. A journalist in the language press evaluates currents within society and draws conclusions on its basis. Cultural Journalism in the Marathwada region is based on holistic examination of allround activities related to people's participation in free & fair cultural events in day to day activity. Depth reporting, creative understanding & critical analysis is the base of the success in cultural reporting. This is the core formula of the success of the regional language press.

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The book titled 'Media & Culture' is a collection of selected papers and articles written by top media educators of the country. Featuring contributions from a diverse range of internationally-recognised experts and practitioners, this volume discusses recent developments in the media field in relation with cultural communication. Media also plays a cardinal role in disseminating our daily life cultural practices. It is said to reflect our culture norms and values and it has widened our choices and increased cultural expression with flow of information. Cultural values also shape mass media messages when producers of media content have vested interests in particular social goals. People can produce and symbolise cultural identities through the media. Offering a truly global perspective, the book focuses on relationship between media and culture in the digital ecosystem.

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