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***Ph: 0471 2308013***

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Col. A. RAJIV







## EDITOR'S NOTE

Cinema has been a fascinating study subject for Mass communication scholars. Ever since the film was created, the innovation of studying film as a subject grew to determine the many elements and the appearance of the film. In the current issue of the journal some such studies exploring both the aesthetics and cultural geography of Indian cinema are included. Various dimensions of representative landscapes in Malayalam cinema such as place, space, spectacle and political were examined in one study while the other focussed on the thematic visualisation of good and evil through different genres by an Auteur Indian film maker. A semiological analysis of dreams and hallucinations of characters in T.V Chandran films which deepen the concept of alienation is the theme of another study.

A path breaking thesis tries to see how Marshal McLuhan's emphasis on messages offers only a reductive version of memory. Author's arguments are rooted in Innis' discussion of the bias in forms of media.

Television soap opera narratives provide frameworks of understanding and rules of references about the way the imaginative world is constructed. Some of such prominent studies on soap opera are analysed in a review article. Digital public sphere has become a prospective space for many discourses. A user study argues that more and more digital interactions result in the formation and sustenance of digital public sphere threatening the current concept of mainstream media. A qualitative investigation as to how communication practices deal the changes of migration and diaspora experience is the topic of another study.

Novels as a form of imaginative communication always inspire the fantasy world of humans contributing to varying cultural pulses around the globe. An article on the famous novel, "A thousand splendid Suns" by Afghan born American novelist Khaled Hussein provides interesting account of emotional elements expressed in diaspora literature. Coverage of critical health issues by popular Malayalam newspapers, media coverage on the impact of demonetisation, significance of natyasastra hastas of Indian classical dance as nonverbal communication means are some of the other prominent studies reported.

The history of Malayalam journalism will be incomplete without the yeoman contributions of Sri. Devji Bhimji, a Gujarati who founded the first ever complete newspaper in Malayalam language namely Keralamithram. In the Stand point section, a memoir on him looks at the pioneering and innovative efforts of Sri.Devji Bhimji which later became a touchstone for many. Another article takes a look at the role of media in fostering political accountability and how effectively democracy reflects its underpinnings.

A personal chronicle on the struggles of a young man-Maxwell Fernandez-to set up a University department of Journalism, a historic overview on the role of DD in promoting Malayalam films, an audience study on mediated health communication in Kerala, an analysis of information overload resulting in more numbness among audience, a trend analysis on the use of augmented reality for TV story telling and a view point on the idea of imparting military training to all the youth are also included.

**Dr. M. S. Harikumar**  
Chief Editor



# Understanding the Cultural Geography of Malayalam Cinema

■ Mr MUHAMMED MUSTHAFA K. P.\*  
Dr LAKSHMI PRADEEP#

## ABSTRACT

**G**eographical knowledge is one of the earliest scientific inquiries sought by human beings. People all over the world explored new landscapes, its inhabitants, socio cultural aspects even before colonialism began. As a visual art cinema has a very complex relationship with landscapes. Often it creates artificial geographies. As Edward Said mentioned, Cinematic texts create imaginative geographies which cater to a perception about a space or place regardless of the facts. As Malayalam cinema reflects the contemporary Kerala society, current socio-political debates influences cinematic text. This article discusses signification Malayalam cinema about certain landscapes, certain societies, or culture and how it changed over time. It also explores the distinction in portrayal of a common Malayali culture and different sub cultures that are either marginalised or neglected for centuries. It also explains the different dimensions of representing landscapes in Malayalam cinema such as landscape as a place and space, landscape as spectacle, political representation of landscapes etc..

**Keywords :** *Cultural Geography, Malayalam Cinema, Kerala Society, Malayali Culture*

## Introduction

*‘Cinema is difficult to explain because it is easy to understand’ -  
Christian Metz*

Cinema is the art of twentieth century. It is the most influential art form in the history of mankind. The magical confluence of moving images creates unimaginable effects on the spectators. Cinema is often considered as a universal phenomenon like music and mathematics. It goes beyond the boundaries regardless of language, class, culture, nationality and territory. But every cinematic text

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\*Mr Muhammed Musthafa K. P. is an Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Farook College, Kozhikode

#Dr Lakshmi Pradeep is the Head of Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Farook College, Kozhikode

exists within its own spatial and temporal boundaries. As any other art form, interplay of dominant ideologies, collective consciences, socio political situations, economic systems etc. always have some influence on the cinematic texts. Since its inception, cinema has been criticised for its improper representation and imageries. People argue that cinema is a fantasy and an imaginary work need not be criticised for its political correctness, misrepresentation. Many film critics opine that cinematic texts, even though it is a fantasy movie are influenced by the socio political affinity of the creator.

Cultural geography refers to the study of place and spaces, it is the study of cultural norms, product and practices, and their commonality and variations across the place and spaces. As an academic discipline, cultural geography tries to investigate both representational and non-representational characteristics of culture. This includes arts, artefacts, landscapes as well as issues of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race across the geographies. As Benedict Anderson observes “culture can be defined as amalgamation of all human activities which influence and is influenced by the aspects of society, politics and economy. It encompasses a wide spectrum of human life including the material things, the social ideas, the performativity practices and emotional response that we participate in, produce, resist, celebrate, deny or ignore” (Anderson 1956). Culture does not exist in a vacuum. Every culture exists within a particular context. Cultural geography seeks to explore this convergence of context, culture and space.

Habermas’s idea of public sphere was widely discussed in academic domains (1964). The notion of public sphere is at the centre of participatory approaches to democracy. Its historical trajectory highlights its relevance for promoting democracy and political accountability. Critics like Talal Azad reject the westernised notion of public sphere. He explains that power structure exists within the public sphere. It is very relevant in the case of India in general and Kerala in specific. The cultural landscape of Malayalam cinema is constituted on the complicated social factors such as religion, caste, politics etc; even though the language is unifying the territory, there are many sub-culture existing within. Travancore- the southern part of Kerala has a different political history, culture and tradition from Malabar- the northern part of Kerala. As Benedict Anderson suggests, Media especially cinema united the ‘imagined community’ called Kerala in some way or other through the ‘national language’- Malayalam. (Anderson, 1983). But these kinds of unification poses the question of inclusion or exclusion of hundreds of sub cultures within Kerala. Be it of Adivasis who live in forest regions, or the

fishermen community who live on the shore of Arabian Sea. Cinema is often criticised for upholding and reinforcing the dominant notion about such communities.

## Methodology

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In the study on cultural geography of Malayalam cinema, researchers used the Textual analysis of randomly selected Malayalam films. Textual analysis is used by media scholars and researchers to analyze visual messages like films and music videos. Textual analysis is important for various reasons but it is usually used to describe the function, structure and content of the message contained in a visual text.(McKee-2011)

In Textual analysis, researchers seek to illuminate an aspect about the underlying politics or social context of the cultural object they are investigating.

Films before and after 2005 were selected to understand the differences in the portrayal of various cultural aspects. 2005 is selected as the base year as it indicates a major trajectory in the history of Malayalam cinema, popularly called “new generation” movement. It’s a matter of discussion whether the new generation is a major movement or not. But it’s evident that a new kind of audience had emerged and new approach towards Malayalam films was widely accepted as never before (Nair-2011)

## Changing the meaning of Signifiers-Urban-Rural Binaries

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Geographer David Harvey opined that film can throw light on ongoing debates of postmodern culture in which it can explain the multifaceted relationship between temporality and spatiality in the modern age particularly postmodern time. Harvey believes that, one of the prominent feature of this postmodern condition is the simultaneous completion of time and space and reterritorialization of time and culture. Which means that identity is no longer rooted in a specific place, but continuously renegotiated among the shifting semantic context of signs. Ongoing political debates, socio economic conditions and discourses on equality, gender issues etc. contributes to the context. For instance, Malayalam cinema has shifted its focus from villages to cities over time.

Urban and rural spaces and their cultural exchanges are one of the favourite topics of Malayalam cinema. Many of the earlier Malayalam movies portrayed cities as ‘evil spaces’ and villages as

places of innocence and virtue. Jayakrishnan in the 1987 Padmarajan movie ‘*Thoovanathumbikal*’ is portrayed as a feudal landlord who acts as a noble family man in his village and a vicious villain who leads an immoral life in town. In this narrative context, urban-rural binary is posed as interchangeable with virtue-vice binary. Women living in cities are depicted as ignoramus, arrogant, annoying and typical femme-fatale characters (movies like *Amma-ammayiyamma*, *Thalayanamanthram* are examples). In contrast to this, many of the Malayalam movies that released after the year 2000 presented the same urban-rural binary in reverse. Urban spaces are pictured as the paradise of progress and freedom; an evolutionary shift from the position of a detested land to the position of a dreamland. This shift was not limited to the urban spaces only, but it also changed the perspective towards the rural spaces too. Rural spaces, which appeared as reservoirs of innocence and virtue earlier began to appear as places that are dark, dirty, deteriorating and anti-developmental places where people backbite each other. (*Bangalore Days*, *Varathan*, *Ezra* etc.). An upsurge of city centred narratives in Malayalam cinema is another notable change.

Malayalam cinema has been constructing fantasised images of the city spaces outside Kerala in the Public consciousness of Kerala. Metro cities like Bombay, Chennai, Bangalore, Delhi etc. are romanticised as progressive places that are egalitarian and gender equal free spaces. The movie *Bangalore Days* has a great role in forming the Malayali ideal of Bangalore city. Mumbai is represented vividly as a place of freedom, anonymity, and opportunities (as in the movie *Ezra*) or as places of criminals, gangsters, smugglers and gang wars. (As in *Mumbai Police*, *Lucifer*, and *Bombay* etc.) Delhi is depicted as the centre of political power play and governance. (As in *Vellimoonga*, *New Delhi*). Other north Indian villages except these numbered metro cities are portrayed as undeveloped or under developed moonscapes where people are illiterate and unprogressive.

## Food, cinema and cultural representations

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The food and culture of a region are inseparably linked to each other. Even when the regional cuisines of a place are similar, there may be variations in certain aspects due to the influence of religion or ethnicity. Cinema perceives these variations in food culture from different angles. There are many Malayalam movies which bring out food as one of its major themes. *Usthad Hotel*, *Kammath* and *Kammath*, *Salt and pepper* etc. are examples. In Kerala, there exists a common, traditional Kerala cuisine which represents the cultural

identity of Keralite. Parallel to that, there exist many other cuisines that vary from each other based on ethnicity, community, culture, locality etc. In many Malayalam movies Namboothiri cuisine were satirized and mocked at. At the same time, vegetarian cuisine is presented as Holy, pure, and as part of high culture and nobility in Malayalam cinema. Muslim subculture is often marked through the use of food names such as Biryani, Pathiri, Neychor and other non-vegetarian foods. In a song from the movie *Neelakuyil* of P Bhaskaran there is a line in which the protagonist expresses his desire to eat Neychor cooked by his lover. Most of the Muslim characters of Malayalam cinema are gluttons who considers eating as a hobby. *Manikyakallu*, *Goodalochana* are examples. As indicated earlier Muslims are depicted as a subculture which exist inside the linguistic and geographical cultural boundaries that are common to Kerala society. In the movie *Meesha Madhavan* in which the story is set in a village named 'Check' in Palakkad, there is a character named Aminathatha, who speaks an odd language, when all the other villagers speak valluvanad Malayalam. It is also noteworthy that Aminathatha is speaking about Pathiri and Beef curry despite the very short screen time given to that character. In the movie *Kadhaparayumbol* which features Srinivasan as the main character, there is a Muslim family in the neighbouring house who speaks only about Biryani and other non-vegetarian foods whenever they meet the protagonist's wife. Agraharas, Brahmanic cuisine and other symbols representing Brahmanic culture are satirically represented in the movie "Romeo".

### **Landscape as space and landscape as a place**

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Landscape as space refers to the place where drama unfold. Unlike the landscape as place, the landscape in space is a concept which minimize the cinematic intervention and focusing the attention of the viewer on the social space and dialogue between actors. Example, landscape as space includes close ups of characters with a blurred background. Shots that remove the landscape revealing only an object and the sky or the action shot that moves rapidly through a landscape. Place provide a sense of realism by grounding the film narrative to a locational history. For example, Malayalam cinema often shows the stunt scenes in an abandoned land, or a factory, or in a market place.

Landscape as place refers to the place in which the film narrative is set. It often establish with a master shot, which is also called establishing shot. Many Malayalam movies begins with a wide angle shot of a village by which the viewer can relate the perceived



meaning of a typical Kerala village.

According to Bernard Nietschmann (1993), there are four ways in which a film can depict strong sense of place. Firstly, the story is narrated in such a way that allows the viewer to understand various geographical skills that are negotiated throughout the production. This enables the viewer never to be lost in narrative place. For example, the movie *Ordinary* is set in a high range area of Pathanamthitta namely Gavi. The narrative of the movie and the landscape of Gavi are inseparably connected in the movie.

Secondly film use multiple signifiers of the place allowing the everyday complexities of place to be available to the viewer. For instance, the movie '*Ayyappanum Koshiyum*' explore the beauty of the place Attappadi. At the same time it also discuss the complex power relations of state and the marginalised Adivasis of Attappadi. Thirdly, rather than positioning the place as background scenery, film can position the place in foreground as a supporting character. Example; in the movie *Carbon*, landscape works as a character by restricting or misleading the central character who was in an expedition to find a hidden treasure. In the movie *Daivathinte Vikruthikal* (mischiefs of God-1992) landscape is portrayed as a character. Father Alphonse is reluctant to leave the place as he has fallen in love with the place.

Finally, narrative can situate within the place rather than focusing simply on events and action. In the movie *Shutter* (Joy Mathew) the place is the key element in the narrative as the central character (Played by Lal) is locked in a shop room in front of his house with a sex worker. The proximity of the room with his house where his family resides, creates tension in the minds of the viewers. Here, the place acts as the key element in the progress of story line rather than events and actions.

## Landscape as spectacle

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Spectacle is something that are visually pleasing to the viewers. Landscape as spectacle can satisfy the scopophilic and tropophilic drives of the viewers. And for the short time, the voyeuristic appeal created by the narrative. Landscape as spectacle combine many functions in one image. A master shot, for example, can combine the function of place and as spectacle in films. Landscape is understood both as spectacle of beauty and spectacle in itself because of the fact that it creates curiosity and interest of the audience. As something beautiful, landscape as spectacle also encode certain power relation in the gaze of spectators as to what constitutes beauty, and who is gazing and

what is being gazed upon. These questions reveal the power structure underlining certain cinematic landscapes. It is interesting to note that western films depict the snow as an unpleasant and difficult time in human life while Indian cinema in general and Malayalam cinema in particular signify the snow with love, passion, and hope. Many romantic songs shot on the backdrop of ice, fog or snow fall. Here the landscape satisfies the scopophilic drive of the Malayali viewers as it is an unexperienced fantasy to many of them.

## Politics of representation

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Cinematic landscape as a position of representational forms as such should not be politically and culturally biased. Films are often considered as a window to reality. Therefore landscape cannot be studied objectively. A lot of meanings are embedded in cinematic landscape which reflects important themes and realities of the world. The significance of the film geography is that we can no longer talk of films representing or making a single coherent reality. This is because, everything is filmed with some perspective and the signature of the auteur and his or her ideology has a mark on the film output. So it is important to look at how particular meanings are ascribed to certain areas or people by the film as they appear on the screen. There is a power relation behind the construction of meaning and practice of viewing so that people can understand when, where and how to watch.

There are substantial differences between the projection of the city where it is made by non-Indian or a non-residential Indian film maker. It's important to note that how films such as *Salaam Bombay* (1988-Meera Nair) or *Slumdog Millionaire* (2009-Danny Boyle) portrayed India's economic Capital- Bombay. *Slumdog millionaire* was widely criticised for its projection of Dharavi Street of Bombay as white men's ethnocentric gaze. The landscape of the slum is spectacle to European viewers. Malayalam cinema also takes the same approach to the landscapes of Africa or other undeveloped regions of the world. *Escape from Uganda* (2013-Rajesh Mohan), the title itself suggests that the country Uganda is a kind of trap to be escaped. The movie *Sudani from Nigeria* (2018-Zakariyya) also projects the poverty of Africa. By positioning themselves with white men's ethnocentric perception, Malayali's gaze on Africa is problematic.

While explaining Laura Mulvey's patriarchal gaze (Mulvey, 1989), Gillian Rose challenged the white men's gaze in landscape

studies (2001). According to her, a landscape is not a monolithic construction. It takes different meaning in different situations according to the cultural and social differences across the world.

## Conclusion

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Cinema is a part of popular culture and at the same time it works as a text within a culture. Edward Said introduced the term Imagined Geographies in his seminal work 'critique to orientalism' (1978). Imagined geography refers to perception of a space created through certain imagery, text or discourses. The idea is similar to that of imagined Community proposed by Benedict Anderson. Imagined geography may not be a false perception. Cinema is a vehicle for creating such perception. The idea has wider implications. West's patronised perception and depiction of the non-west, be it Africa, Asia, or Latin America is constructed mainly through films. It can happen within a social structure too. So the control over production and distribution of perception is controlled through inclusion or exclusion of certain landscape and projection or rejection of certain communities.

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# Representing Good and Evil: Trilogy by Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra

■ Ms AKHILA C. K.\*

Dr J. A. H. KHATRI<sup>#</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*Indian cinema has witnessed great changes in the past few years. There were great films made under brilliant and fearless set of filmmakers, some of them became box office hits and others were critically acclaimed but some went unnoticed.*

*Good and evil is one such theme which has been represented since mythologies. It has been accepted and criticized since long, so is the clichéd hero and villain representations. But a few film makers have come upto the mark to show different other representations of the theme good and evil. Every time it is not about Ram killing Ravana or villain is somebody else. Present paper is a study on the representation of good and evil in the trilogy, 'Aks' (2001), 'Rang De Basanti' (2006), and 'Delhi-6' (2009) by Rakeysh Om Prakash Mehra. The researchers had tried to analyse the use of metaphors and blending two different genres in all the three films. The film maker has represented the theme in different manners in the movies. Researchers had tried to trace out the characteristics of the director as an Auteur Film maker.*

**Keywords :** *Good and Evil, Genres, Drama, Thriller, Paranormal Thriller, Political Satire, historical Drama Auteur Cinema, Metaphor, Mythology*

## Introduction

Primary source of inspiration for the popular Indian cinema is the Indian mythologies. The cinematic representation of various issues is a perfect amalgamation of modern and mythic narratives. Majority of our films, like our myths, deal with the dichotomy of good versus bad or evil. Unlike real life, good and evil are presented in a clearly demarcated form and the entire narrative of the film would be about the triumph of the good against evil forces. There is a protagonist, a hero, who is embellished with all human virtues and the an-

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\***Ms Akhila C.K.** is a Research Scholar at the School of Liberal Studies & Education, Navrachana University, Vadodara

<sup>#</sup>**Dr J..A.H. Khatri** is an Assistant Professor at the School of Liberal Studies & Education, Navrachana University, Vadodara

tagonist who is the opposite of him. The masculine pronoun 'him' is deliberate because, the feminine characters are yet to get the protagonist's role in Indian cinema. Of course, this standard narrative template has been challenged by many with more or less success. One such auteur is Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra. Coming from the background of ad-film making, Mehra wrote and directed his first film 'Aks' in 2001, starring Amitabh Bachchan, Manoj Bajpai, Nandita Das, and Raveena Tandon. And after that he directed six more films, last one released in 2021, 'Toofan'. Out of all these films, 'Rang De Basanti' (2006) and 'Bhaag Milkha Bhaag' (2013) were huge box-office and critical success.

The present paper deals with first three films of Mehra: 'Aks' (2001), 'Rang De Basanti' (2006), and 'Delhi-6' (2009). All three of these films are projected as commercial films and star some of the major actors and artists of the Hindi film industry. 'Aks' is about a serial-killer Raghu (Manoj Bajpai) who is chased by a dutiful inspector, Manu (Amitabh Bachchan). But the second half of the movie turns it into a supernatural thriller and the struggle of Manu to get rid of the evil spirit. 'Rang De Basanti' is about a group of Delhi based friends whose life changes when they started acting in a documentary about some of the violent revolutionaries of Indian Freedom Fight. It also addresses the issue of corruption through their friend's unfortunate death and the group's response to it. The film was an enormous success and has a cult status among the Indian youth. 'Delhi-6' deals with the day-to-day lives of the residents of Chandani Chowk of Delhi from the perspective of an NRI, Roshan Mehra (Abhishek Bachchan). The film presents a commentary of middle-class Indians, their aspirations, and troubles and how they deal with them. All three films were written and directed by Rakeysh Mehra, and later two films were also produced by him, giving him more artistic freedom.

## 1. Research statement

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The present paper goes with an argument that these three films, though dealing with various aspects and subject matter, form a trilogy presenting three different perspectives on the idea of Good and Evil. The authors adopt thematic and textual analysis of these three films to argue the same.

## 2. Textual Analysis

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Content analysis has been done on the three films to analyze the good and evil dichotomy in the selected films by Rakeysh Omprakash

Mehra. The researcher has identified that, out of the three films, only the first one directly deals with the notions of good and evil and comments on it.

The director, himself, stated, “in the first film, I was exploring the concept of good versus evil and that they are two sides of the same coin. The route I chose was a paranormal thriller.” (Jamkhandikar, 2009) The other two movies do not directly talk about it. But the films indirectly put the perspective to look at the notion of good and evil.

These conflict between good and evil is studied by the researcher under the context of different religious philosophies. The narrative structure of the films and semiotics had been analyzed to understand how the theme of good and bad is constructed in the films

## 2.1 Thinking Good and Evil

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There are various branches of philosophy which deal with distinct aspects of knowledge and society. The concepts of Good and Evil are studied under the label of ethics. Ethics, or what is normally known as Moral Philosophy, is a branch of philosophy that deals with the concepts of right and wrong behavior. It seeks to resolve the questions of human morality by defining and differentiating concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice and crime. (cf. Fieser, n.d.) The dichotomy of Good and Evil is considered particularly important not only in ethics and philosophy but also in religion and psychology. In Abrahamic religious influences, evil is considered the antagonistic opposite of good and as per the scriptures, the good should prevail and evil must be defeated. While in Buddhist tradition, the goal is to achieve nothingness or emptiness by recognizing the antagonist duality of good and evil as principles and not as reality (cf. Ingram & Streng, 1986).

When we talk about philosophy and films, there are various possibilities involved. There are films about philosophy, philosophical discussions, ethical dilemmas as themes. Films as a vehicle for philosophizing, using films to illustrate or interpret some important concepts for non-philosophers. Some films simply reflect upon the very form they use, a type of self-reflection for cinematic text. And fourth, philosophy as a model for theorizing on film. Kuhn and Westwell (Ibid: 312) briefly discuss and exemplify all these relationships of film and philosophy.

Durant (1961: 174) writes, “Good and bad are relative to human and often individual tastes and ends and have no validity for a uni-

verse in which individuals are ephemera”. The personified representation of good and evil is something that does not exist in the real world. It is a narrative construal that enables the plot to proceed. The dichotomy of good and evil is one of the most important dichotomies in textual investigations. Most of the literary works, including the cinema, develop on the conflict of good and evil, where evil helps us identify the good in people and the good people. Evil is portrayed as a personified immorality or injustice, who during the narrative is defeated by the good. As Barry (1995: 42) mentions, “we could have no concept of ‘day’ without the linked concept of ‘night’, no notion of ‘good’ without a ‘bad’ to define it against.” In cinematic texts, the concepts of ‘right’ and ‘good’ is directly associated with the idea of protagonist (cf. Khatri, 2013); evil is associated with the antagonist. Thus, the conflict between the protagonist and antagonist turns out to be the conflict between good and evil.

### 3. Aks

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The film ‘Aks’ was released in 2001 and was a directorial debut of Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra. The film has an immensely powerful cast of wonderful actors like Amitabh Bachchan, Manoj Bajpai, Raveena Tandon, Nandita Das, K.K. Raina and Amol Palekar. The film did not run well at the box-office but was acclaimed by the critics. Amitabh Bachchan won the Filmfare Critics Award for Best Actor.

The film begins as a political thriller, and in the very beginning the Foreign Minister of India is assassinated in Budapest and there is a threat to the Prime Minister as well. The very first dialogue of the movie says, “*jo honaa hai, so to hotaa hi hai*” which echoes Bhagwad Geeta’s statement “*jab-jab jo-jo honaa hai, tab-tab so-so hotaa hai*” meaning whatever is going to happen is bound to happen. But, just after few minutes, the killer speaks another line from The Bhagwad Geeta, “*na koi marta hai, na koi maarta hai. mai to sirf nimitt maatr hu.*” It says that nobody kills, and nobody gets killed, I am nothing but the medium and he adds that in this puppet-game, I, Raghavan, am a hunter and you, Manu Varma, are a prey.

The movie begins with this dichotomy of hunter and prey; the hunter being evil, and the prey is good. This dichotomy is clearly portrayed visually as well. Raghavan is always in black or dark clothes. His body language is also unusual. He enjoys killing his prey and like an artist leaves his signature in the form of a small mask. He also uses masks of various people and personifies them in killing. On the other



hand, Manu Verma is seen in various color combinations of dark and light. It signifies the basic proposal of the movie that good, and evil reside in the same being. Few scenes are kept just to develop the character of Raghavan and his insanity on screen so that the audience can know how evil he can be.

Raghavan was finally captured in a forest where he was hunting a wolf. Here again the hunter, the wolf, becomes a prey, which is symbolic of hunter, Raghavan, getting captured. The meeting between Raghavan and Manu in the prison is the turning point and key scene in the main theme of good and evil. Raghavan clearly talks about the dichotomy of good and bad people. He says that he is in prison because society does not want to see its own evil face. He says that he completes the good face by creating its opposition. Raghavan emphasizes the fact that it is just because of the fear of law and order that people are good, otherwise every 'Manu Verma' has a 'Raghavan' in him. If you remove the rules, you will see the real face of society. At this time, Manu tells him that Raghavan will be hanged till death, and everything will be over. Raghavan replies that 'something' will never end, where he clearly implies that the evil instinct will never end because it is not just a characteristic of Raghavan. In the court, Raghavan invokes another dichotomy of city and forest in which the city is central and considered civilized and good while forest signifies everything that is dark and evil. Thus, Raghavan questions the very nature of society and civilization.

Just after the court hearing, there is a song on Ram-Leela, which has a crux that Raavan will be there till Raam is there, they are two sides of a coin. The existence of good is not possible without the existence of evil. To escape from the prison at gunpoint, Raghavan was shot dead by Manu. Raghavan dies smiling on his face and then something happens that leaves Manu unconscious. In the hospital, Manu explains to his wife that this is a fight in which good must fight the evil, the masks and bodies may change but the fight continues.

In the next scene, the audience comes to know that Manu is possessed by Raghavan, proving Raghavan's words that 'something' may not die. And he starts killing the enemies of Raghavan. Possessed Manu meets Raghavan's lover Neeta and tells her that this is his opportunity to avenge Manu from his own body. Now, it has become a fight between good and evil within the same body, whichever energy is better fed will win. He meets Raghavan's brother, Mahadev, too. Mahadev is mentally challenged but an excellent mask maker. Manu tells him that he left the body of Raghavan as it was old. He has plenty of masks made by Mahadev. Mahadev is also the



name of Lord Shiva, and this statement clearly indicates the Hindu philosophy of life and death circle.

When Manu is taken to Guruji, he reiterates the same words. He claims that evil is a need of good; they complement each other. Raghavan says that good and evil are each other's reflections and shadows, they cannot be separated. Even at the end of the movie, when Mahadev, possessed by Raghavan was killed, the evil spirit of the Raghavan was reflected laughing in the mirror proving the fact that 'something' cannot be killed. If we see the Biblical story, even here the Satan is immortal till the doom's day. It cannot be killed.

The film is noteworthy for its performances and wonderful music by Ranjit Barot and Anu Malik. Ranjit Barot wins the Filmfare award for the best background score. The songs, very pertinent to the dark theme of the movie, are penned by Gulzar. The film presents the notion of Good and Evil in a new light. It clearly says that Good and Evil lies in the same body and it needs to be conquered by the individual. They define each other as dark defines light. When there is light, we think that darkness is non-existent, but it is still there, waiting for the light to get weaker. Same is the case with Good and Evil, evil energy is always there, we need to surpass it by our goodness both within and outside one's body. The script of the movie was entitled "The Good versus the Evil," and the title of the movie 'Aks' meaning "reflection," questions the dichotomy itself. It makes a clear statement that the Good and Evil are nothing but the reflections of one another. And this tool has been used quite extensively in the movie too, presenting Raghavan as the reflection of Manu.

### 3.1 Rang De Basanti

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Film 'Rang De Basanti' was directed and co-written by Rakeysh Mehra and it also contains an ensemble of cast: Aamir Khan, Siddharth, Sharman Joshi, Atul Kulkarni, Kunal Kapoor, Soha Ali Khan, R. Madhavan, and many more important and good actors. The film is about a group of friends from Delhi who hang at the University of Delhi, where they met Sue who has come to India to make a documentary based on the diary of her grandfather who served as colonel for the British Raj. In this process of working with her and for her in the documentary, these young friends become more conscious and receptive of their plight. Unfortunately, one of the friends, and Sonia (Soha Ali Khan)'s fiancée, flight lieutenant Ajay Singh Rathor (R. Madhavan) is killed when his MiG-21 jet malfunctions and crashes. The government authorities attribute the accident to pilot error and

decided to neglect the allegations of corruption in buying the MiG-21. Following the revolutionaries they played in the documentary, the friends decide to avenge their friend's death. But they were declared terrorists and brutally killed by the police.

'Rang De Basanti' questions the idea of what is good and acceptable from the perspective of time. Director, through amazing editing and collage, puts the old and new together in front of the audience. The documentary deals with the young 'revolutionaries' who were fighting against the foreign rulers, when the modern-time youngsters tried to do the same and categorized as 'terrorists.' The difference between these two situations is that of time and differing authorities governing the state. Something that was considered patriotic activity, in the dimension of time, turns out to be an anti-national act. The past and present are differentiated in terms of color tone: the past – the Indian fight for freedom – is presented in sepia shade.

The essential question the film raises is who decides what is acceptable and what is not. Who defines the validity of some actions and appreciates it as good. The ideas of universal good and morals are directly challenged within the same geo-political area, in the span of just 80-90 years. The violence against the establishment was normal, though it was a crime, in history because that violence was seen against the foreign rulers. Similar violence is seen as a crime and seen as an antisocial and antinational activity.

In the process of showing documentary making in the film, the director successfully projects some modern-day categorizations and breaks them through the medium of the same documentary. The idea of nationalism is one of the first such concepts. The sepia part of the film's nationalism was related to the people of the nation. The entire fight was to re-establish the self-respect of the natives. While the modern-day 'nationalist party' is more concerned with earning from the position they have. Because of the same reason, they were unable to accept the allegations of corruption, and used force against the peaceful protestors.

The ideas of religious nationalism and religious discrimination were also challenged. Lakshman Pandey (Atul Kulkarni), a staunch believer in religious nationalism and majoritarian supremacy, during documentary shooting realizes the futility and absurdity of religious fundamentalism. He was a follower of ruling party ethics, and an archenemy of liberal group of friends that included the Muslim as well. In couple of scenes, he was shown to avoid any contact with the Muslim character, Aslam (Kunal Kapoor); he did not sit beside him to eat; he also fought with DJ (Aamir Khan) and Sukhi (Shar-

man Joshi). But, in the shooting phase, he was encountered with history where Ramprasad Bismil, a Brahmin and Ashfaqullah Khan, a Pathan Muslim of Khyber tribe ate from the same dish and fought to save each other from the enemies. Audience can notice a substantial change in the character of Pandey when he gets ready to fight with his liberal friends against his own party and dies trying to save his Muslim friend.

Similarly, Karan (Siddharth), a boy coming from an extraordinarily rich and influential family, aimed to leave the country forever. He played the role of Bhagat Singh in the documentary of Sue. The passion of Bhagat Singh for freedom was completely incomprehensible for him. But, when he had to take the hard decision and steps to get justice for his martyred friend, he did not hesitate to kill his corrupt father and sacrifice his own life along with his friends. Someone for whom nation and patriotism did not mean anything, sacrifices life to awaken the sleeping conscience of the nation.

‘Rang De Basanti’ becomes a symbolic exploration of the notion of good. It states that ‘good and evil’ are relative terms; their meaning is not fixed. The very idea of good and evil is contaminated by the perspective. We tend to see these two notions in completely different domains, and they are seen as opposites. In normal Hindi movies, the good and evil are personified in terms of Hero and Villain and hence it becomes extremely easy for the audience to favor one over the other and attain poetic justice. This movie challenges our stereotypical gaze at the cinematic universe, where victory of Hero over Villain was the goal. The movie asks us to question the very idea of Hero and Villain, the personification of good and evil.

The film is famous for extraordinary editing which puts past and present side-by-side and makes the viewer read the different implications of similar actions. The music by A.R. Rehman is a catch in identifying youthful energy. It displays the youth and spirit of Delhi.

### 3.2 Delhi-6

‘Delhi-6’ is again the representation on Delhi and its middle class. This time also, like Sue in case of ‘Rang De Basanti,’ the story unfolds from an outsider’s perspective, Roshan Mehra (Abhishek Bachchan).

*Zarre zarre main uska noor hain, zaank khooD main woh na tujh se door hain  
Ishq hain usase to sabse ishq kar, iss ibaadat kaa yahi dastoor hain*

(Every particle of dust has His presence, look within, He is not far away, if you love Him, love all, this is the only norm of worship)

These are the opening lines of the film which convey the central idea of the film. A character of a mad fakeer, who always holds a mirror in front of other people, spoken these lines a few more times in the narration of the film. The film maker is trying to tell that one might be a follower of different form of gods. But if you want to love God, then start loving everyone around you which can make you a better human being. Here each one could resonate with the statement and with the invisible thread of humanity portrayed by the film maker.

‘Delhi-6’ as the title suggests, it is about the old Delhi city with the pin code-110 006 as Delhi was the first capital city ruled by Mughals and then became the capital of India. The ethnicity, cultural differences and beauty of the city has been captured by the cinematographer in the movie. Even though the movie was not really a box office hit, it was critically acclaimed by a lot of movie goers. The film also won awards for best feature film. The story is told in the perspective of young nonresident Indian Roshan Mehra (Abhishek Bachan) when he has come to the city to accompany his grandmother, Annapurna (Waheeda Rahman) to fulfil her last wish to reunite with her grounds. It is the journey of this young man who is fallen in the whims and fancies and the mysterious beauty of the city but gradually learns about the not-so beautiful and comforting side of the city which reveals class, caste, and religious discrimination, corruption, etc.

The central idea of the movie is how Rakesh Mehra as a film maker has placed *kaalaa bandar*, “the monkey-man” as an allegory to represent the evil that resides inside the man alongside God. The director in his other films has already represented the existence of good and evil in diverse ways possible. In this film he is trying to look at it in a different manner which is by using the metaphor of *kaalaa bandar* - the monkey-man which was then a trending news in the city. Everyone was talking about it and was afraid of it. He has adopted the whole idea and used it in his movie to represent the inner evil which resides in us. The story revolves around the NRI Roshan and his exploration of the actual condition of the city and mindset of the people. Most important scene could be when Annapurna is taken to hospital and traffic is put on hold for the delivery of a cow. The level of worship in the people which is leading to be inconsiderate about a human being fainted and is taken to the hospital. In another scene two brothers – Madangopal and Jaigopal - perform the *puja-jaagran* which appears more of a fight and one-upmanship rather than worshipping.

The introduction of *kaalaa bandar* brings a new turn in the narrative of the peaceful neighborhood, especially when a Tantrik Shani Baba postulates that *kaalaa bandar* appears because God is hurt and angry as one temple was demolished for building a mosque in distant past. This brings violent communal riots to otherwise peaceful Hindu-Muslim communities. Ram-leela is used throughout the movie in episodes where each small episode is collaged with the real-life characters. When we see the quarrel between the Sharma brothers – Madangoal and Jaigopal, the scene merges with the Ram-leela scene where we see the support of Lakshman to elder brother Ram. When the character of Jalebi, an untouchable young woman, is introduced and unknowingly Roshan breaks the untouchability rule, the scene cuts to the episode of Sabri who offered Lord Ram her tasted berries and Ram consumed them. Sita's condition at Ashok Vatika is merged with Bittu Sharma's longing for Roshan. The incident of *Lanka Dahan* is put in collage with communal riots at Chandni Chowk. In all mis-happenings, to save themselves or unable to identify the real reason, the *kaalaa bandar* is presented as a culprit. As an audience, we can also notice the news of *kaalaa bandar* coming on various news-channels; on one hand, it shows the news of Chandrayaan-I launching successfully, and on the other, people superstitiously commenting on the various aspects of *kaalaa bandar*.

Film proceeds in questioning the distinction of 'us and them'. Roshan, when he sees the way his grandmother, Annapurna, was treated by the Hindu-Muslim neighbors, raises the doubt in his mind that the very difference of 'us and them' is missing. Everyone is living as one big family. But the categories exist, and when the metaphorical evil of *kaalaa bandar* becomes powerful, everyone sees others as evil. Here, everything done by in-group people – by the 'us' is good, and everything done by others is bad. Roshan has a dual status due to his parents' interfaith marriage.

#### 4. Play with the Genres

Bollywood, popularly known as 'Hindi song-and-dance film' (Kuhn & Westwell 2012: 225) has limited appealing genres. Keeping its audience in mind, the popular Hindi cinema does not experiment much with the themes, genres, and structure of the film. From the beginning, the audience is aware of the victory of the good, and in fact majority of them enter the theatre to witness this victory. Early Indian cinema began with the mythological subjects, and it never left the subject; even in modern cinema, these mythological and devotional implications can be easily read. The Indian films based on the social

aspects have a touch of Italian Neorealism. Apart from mythological and social, the Indian Nationhood is also an important and quite a successful genre in Indian cinema (cf. Dwyer 2007). Similarly, there will be regular flicks in the genres of musicals and family melodrama. As Kuhn and Westwell (Ibid: 41) rightly remark,

“Bollywood films typically incorporate a masala, a mix of genres, with musicals, melodrama, romance, action, ‘mythologicals’, and social dramas predominating. For example, the ubiquitous ‘melodramatic musical,’ its styles often informed by Hindi folk literature traditions and popular visual art conventions, is characteristically set in a highly non-naturalistic world; and its narrative, though linear, is almost always interrupted by song-and-dance sequences at arbitrary locations with no geographical connection to the story.”

Kasbekar (2006: 205) says that Indian Popular Hindi cinema follows ‘omnibus genre’ in which ‘romance, spectacle, comedy, melodrama, violence, pathos, and heroism are all inscribed into a single film’. Nandy (1981: 90) also makes similar observations that ‘Bombay film story does not generally have an unexpected conclusion’, and he adds, ‘It bases its appeal not on the linear development of a story line but on the special configuration which the film presents of many known elements or themes derived from other movies, or . . . from familiar traditional tales’

Under such scenario, Rakeysh Mehra takes a chance and plays with the idea of genre as well, as this fluidity and multiple generic identity of the film help him establish the main question that he is trying to raise. When we look at the concepts of good and evil in watertight categories, the movies that Mehra made would not have been possible. The movie ‘Aks’ that begins as a crime thriller, soon converts into a supernatural genre, and the criminal and protector start living in the same body, removing the physical differentiation of good and evil categories. Similarly, ‘Rang De Basanti’ successfully amalgamates a teen-adventure, docu-drama, and political commentary. Once mischievous gang of young friends, soon assume the attire of politically conscious group of revolutionaries. ‘Delhi-6’ primarily begins as a type of family and social drama, takes a turn, and becomes a powerful social satire that questions the very categorization of ‘us and them’ and with that destabilizes the superimposed positive and negative actions and values.

## 5. Conclusion

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Three films discussed in this article are not claimed to be interconnected by their makers. But the consistency of the theme and extremely specific attention to the details and implications of what is presented in them creates a chain of interconnected messages. From three focal points, the notions of good and evil are represented and elucidated in quite an entertaining manner. The greatest achievement of the auteur is fetching profoundly serious message without being didactic.

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## **Imagery of dreams and hallucination in visualizing characters' subjective experience of alienation: A psychoanalytic semiological study on T. V. Chandran's selected Films**

■ **Dr GOPAKUMAR A. V.\***  
**Dr RENJINI T.#**  
**Dr SUDHEER S. SALAM<sup>§</sup>**

### **ABSTRACT**

*The paper focuses on the imagery of dreams and hallucination in signifying the "Concept of Social Alienation" in internationally acclaimed Indian director, TV Chandran's Films. Psychoanalytical Semiological review of the film reveals that the director has adroitly used dreams and hallucinations of his characters to create psychosomatic signs for signifying the concept of alienation, and also could overcome the narrative's impossibility in visualizing the abstract subjective experience of the characters involved in alienation. This Semiological intervention has given the director the flexibility to disrupt the filmic narration to create coherence and meaning to the active viewer, and also could deepen the concept of alienation in these movies.*

*Keywords : Dreams, Hallucination, Psychoanalytical Semiology, Semiology*

### **Introduction**

The concept of alienation is deeply rooted in all the great religions and socio- political theories of the civilized epoch. According to Alan Baker, when we look into the epistemology of the term 'alienation', it derives from the Latin 'alius', meaning 'other', and elucidates the concept of separation or estrangement. The word has found applications in myriad domains of Philosophy, Theology,

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<sup>\*</sup>**Dr. Gopakumar AV** is the Head of the Department of Media Studies, Kristu Jayanti College, Bengaluru, India

<sup>#</sup>**Dr. Renjini T** is an Asst. Professor at the Department of Psychology, Govt. College for Women, Thiruvananthapuram, India

<sup>§</sup>**Dr Sudheer S. Salam** is an Asst. Professor at the School of Film Studies, Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University, India



Psychiatry, Social and political science, Law and Literature. Furthermore, the word “alienation” suggests separation and distance; it embodies the term “alien”, a stranger in a society who has no connections with others, meaning no ‘liens” of any sort (Baker, 1979).

The American sociologist C. Wright Mills explored the effect of alienation in modern society in his book “White Collar” in 1951, and observed that the modern consumption-capitalism has formulated a society where one has to sell his/her personality in addition to their work while studying the middle classes in the United States of America. (Wright Mills, 2002)

Soren Kierkegaard in the nineteenth century observed alienation from a Christian viewpoint, and considered alienation as separation from God because they are living too much in the materialistic world. Keeping this in mind, alienation can be described as a dearth in human being in relation to the world, and individuals need to bridge this gap by gaining their souls from God. Many twentieth-century philosophers and theologians were influenced by Kierkegaard’s like Martin Heidegger. (Stewart, 2012)

In the theory of psychoanalysis postulated in the opening of the twentieth century, Sigmund Freud proposed a theory of divisions and conflicts between the conscious and unconscious mind, between different parts of a hypothetical psychic apparatus, and between the self and civilization. Though the concept of alienation was not explicitly addressed, it postulated defense mechanisms, envisaging splitting, in both normal and abnormal functioning. (Mangal, 1990)

After the academic explosion in alienation research that characterized the 1950s and 1960s, interest in alienation research subsided (Geyer, 2001), although in Sociology it was maintained by the Research Committee on Alienation of the International Sociological Association (ISA). The topic gained prominence again in the 1990s, following the fall of the Soviet Union, globalization, the information explosion, ethnic conflicts, and post-modernism (Geyer, 2001). According to Geyer, the growing intricacy of the contemporary world and post-modernism encouraged a reinterpretation of alienation that fits the contemporary living ambience. Moreover, the works of Felix Geyer, Lauren Langman and Devorah Kalekin-Fishman, also addressed the issue of alienation in the modern western world.

In a broader philosophical context, especially in existentialism and phenomenology, alienation describes the meagerness of human being or mind in relation to the world.

## TV Chandran and ‘concept of alienation’

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TV Chandran is an Indian film director, screenwriter, and actor, predominantly working in Malayalam cinema. He made his directorial debut with the unreleased feature *Krishnan Kutty* (1981), and followed this with the Tamil film *Hemavin Kadhalargal* (1985). Chandran came into prominence after *Alicinte Anveshanam* (1989), which was nominated for the Golden Leopard at the Locarno International Film Festival. T V Chandran is most known for his art-house films which have references to history and undertones of politics and feminism. TV Chandran has won several film awards including six National Film Awards and ten Kerala State Film Awards. In addition to these, he is a recipient of a number of awards at various international film festivals. His movies are a kind of parallel Kerala history, and is about the subaltern study of Kerala from its formative periods (1948-1950) to the contemporary situation. Moreover, TV Chandran’s characters are created by the churning process of history, and viewers can see the concept of political and social alienation in TV Chandran films, highlighting the plight of marginalized societies in India.

## Methodology

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In this study an attempt has been made to study how the director uses dreams and hallucinations of the characters in the selected works to visualize the subjective experience of alienation. The method used here is qualitative study using psychoanalytic semiology, a combination of semiology and psychoanalytic method, where dreams and hallucinations experienced by the characters are interpreted as psychosomatic signs. The principle used here is interpreting symbols by finding a meaningful narrative in which they are embedded. The task of the psychoanalytic critic demands an intense and imaginative scrutiny of the text and careful attention to all responses. This is compared to unearthing layers of significance from an archaeological site. The perfectly interpreted text remains an ideal. This psychoanalytical intervention in semiology helps the researchers to decode the visual manifest content of the dreams and hallucinations experienced by the characters.

According to Sigmund Freud, the structure of the mind is made of three parts the conscious the sub conscious and the unconscious. Of these the unconscious is a vast store house of feelings, thoughts, repressed impulses instincts etc. It is only through the analysis of the unconscious that a person’s action, motives behavior can be

fully understood. These can be brought to consciousness through techniques like hypnosis, free association, and dream analysis. Furthermore, dreams allow us to explore the unconscious and has been described as the royal road to unconscious to signify their role in understanding a person (Freud, 1915)

According to John Lye, psychoanalytic theory could be utilized to decipher or interpret the concealed meaning within a text, or to better understand the author's intentions. Through the analysis of motives, Freud's theory can be used to help clarify the meaning of the writing as well as the actions of the characters within the text. (Lye, 1998).

Dreams are composed of latent and manifest content. Whereas latent content is the underlying meaning of a dream that may not be remembered when a person wakes up, manifest content is the content from the dream that a person remembers upon waking and can be analyzed by a psychoanalytic psychologist. A manifest content disguises and conceals the latent content into culturally acceptable meaning, the greater the force of the censors, the greater the distortion of the dreams in the artistic work. Exploring and understanding the manifest content of dreams can inform the individual of complexes or disorders that may be under the surface of their personality. Dreams can provide access to the unconscious that is not easily accessible. (Freud, 1900).

The visual analyses were made using VLC player, Windows Media Player, and film prints. For .avi and MPEG-4 files where the frame rate was 25, VLC player was used, and for the .VOB files, Windows Media Player was used, and scene numbers in the scripts were used for the film prints.

### **Dreams and Hallucinations in TV Chandran Films, and Concept of Alienation**

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According to film theory, the term oneiric ("pertaining to dream") refers portrayal of dream-like states in film, or the usage of dream or the dream-state to analyze a film. Furthermore, the close connection between dreams and films led to the formulation of the phrase "The dream factory," and has become a household expression for the film industry". Moreover, the dream metaphor for film viewing is "one of the most persistent metaphors in both classical and modern film theory" and it is used by film theorists using Freudian, non-Freudian, and semiotic analytical frameworks (Trifonovo, 2009).

Dreams are like films and television productions in that they are made up of images. They generally have a narrative structure, mostly

obscure and bizarre, and are frequently hard to fathom. According to Erich Fromm, dreams are understood to be the hallucinatory fulfillment of irrational wishes, which have originated in our early childhood and have not been fully transformed into reaction formation or sublimations. These irrational wishes are expressed as being fulfilled when our conscious control is weakened, as is the case is sleep, and this situation is more complicated because of a censorial agent which prevents certain forbidden thoughts to appear undisguised. Symbols come in this stage, and they allow us to sneak “forbidden” material by our internal censor (Fromm, 2013).

Whereas hallucinations are a parasomnia event that can target any sensory perception, be it visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory or other. Hallucinations are often confused with both illusions and dreams. Hallucinations occur in the state between waking and sleeping. The two forms of sleep related hallucinations are called hypnogogic (hypnogogia) and hypnopompic (hypnopompia) hallucinations. Hypnogogic hallucinations occur just before sleep, and may be accompanied by sleep paralysis, a state in which the subject is physically immobile, but fully conscious. Hypnopompia occurs upon waking, and may also be accompanied by sleep paralysis. Sleep paralysis is much more common in hypnopompia than in hypnogogia (Sacks, 2012).

According to Dr. Kass and Dr. Jenkins at New York University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Neurology, inter-relationship of hallucinations and dreams, the psychological function of dreaming and hallucinating, and their possible equivalence are considered in terms of psychoanalytic theory. Moreover, the subject undergoing hallucination maintains distinction between their dreams and hallucinations, but do not definitely differentiate the latter from their normal perceptions (Kass & Jenkins, 1970). Considering this, researchers are interpreting both dreams and hallucinations in a similar way.

These dreams and hallucinations require interpretation and this must be keyed to subjects’ life, and the subject can help one understand a dream’s or hallucination’s real meaning by liberated association, exposing all thoughts that come into one’s mind, and by restructuring the dreams and hallucinations. French thinker, Jacques Lacan, propose that the semiotics concepts, metaphor and metonymy are useful in understanding dreams. Keeping this in mind, the researchers has gone through the usage of dreams and hallucinations in the films selected for the study, and analyzed whether these dreams and hallucinations had any influence on the concept of alienation. (Stoltzfus, 1996)

**Film : *Ponthan Mada* (1993) - Pumpkin Mada**

**Storyline:** T V Chandran's *Ponthan Mada* is based on two short stories, *Ponthan Mada* and *Sheema Thampuran* by C V Sreeraman. Set in 1940s, the film is about the irrational bonding of the low-caste *Ponthan Mada* with his colonial landlord *Sheema Thampuran*, who was expelled to British India from England during his youth for supporting the Irish Republican Army. Crossing the class boundaries, the two communicate through *Thampuran's* window, with *Mada* hanging from a palm tree.

<b>Dream / Hallucination (with screen timing )</b>	<b>Signification</b>
The climax sequence where <i>Mada</i> plunges into water, sheds his working cap, and swims across the water body to reach the other side, where his wife <i>Karthu</i> , and <i>Sheema Thampuran</i> are waiting for him ( 01:45:48 to 01:47:43)	This signifies a kind of liberation, which never happened in his life, and finally he realizes his identity and becomes congruent with the personas of <i>Sheema Thampuran</i> and <i>Karthu</i> .
<i>Mada's</i> fantasy about murdering the Christian feudal lord in the <i>theyyam</i> costume by stabbing him on the chest. ( 01:25:34 to 01:25:49)	This signifies the catharsis of <i>Mada</i> , which is the purification and purgation of emotions, especially pity and fear, through art or any extreme change in emotion that results in renewal and restoration ( Scheff, 1979).
<i>Resmi</i> in her dream hears <i>Sheema Thampuran's</i> horse cart sound, and sees his image on the corridor. (00:41:47 to 00:41:57)	This is a temporary hallucination, and this temporary hallucination, occurs when a relationship has just ended or if someone dear to you has just passed away. The subject might hear the person's voice for a moment or briefly see his or her image. Typically, this type of hallucination disappears as the pain of your loss diminishes. This signifies <i>Resmi's</i> deep rooted association with <i>Sheema Thampuran</i> through the stories of <i>Mada</i> (Scheff, 1979).
<i>Mada's</i> fantasy in which he finds <i>Sheema Thampuran</i> and <i>Resmi</i> in a boat which he is pushing into water. (01:38:01 to 01:38:13)	This signifies his deep rooted association with <i>Resmi</i> through their interactions, and gives her a space next to <i>Sheema Thampuran</i> .
<i>Resmi</i> is fantasizing herself as the daughter of <i>Sheema Thampuran</i> , and dancing with <i>Sheema Thampuran</i> and his wife. (01:39:32 to 01:40:16)	This signifies her deep rooted association with <i>Sheema Thampuran</i> through the stories of <i>Mada</i> , and assumes herself as the daughter of <i>Sheema Thampuran</i> .

<b>Film : <i>Ormakalundayirikkanam</i> (1995)- Memories and Desires</b>		
<b>Storyline:</b> The film is set in rural Kerala during 1959, the year which the first democratically elected Communist ministry in India was dismissed by the Nehru government in the centre. The film is told through the eyes of a boy, Jayan who observes the happenings around him. The major characters in the film are Bhasi, the larger than life Communist supporter, Jayan's father, a Congress party supporter and a lunatic scientist who predicts the end of the world. The dismissal of the Communist government coincides with the death of the scientist and Bhasi's arrest.		
<b>Dream / Hallucination (with screen timing )</b>	<b>(with</b>	<b>Signification</b>
Jayan dreams a sequence in which his father Nambiar along with maid Mariyamma being chased by people, and pelted with stones.  (01:17:26 to 01:18:14)		In reality, when Jayan saw the illegal sexual relationship of his father with the maid, he is helpless and powerless to react, and that is fulfilled through the dream.
Jayan's nightmare of finding barber Nanu's face under the dried leaves  (01:41:54 to 01:43:06)		This is a temporary hallucination, and this temporary hallucination out of fear of losing a close friend signifies Jayan's deep rooted association with Nanu.
Jayan's nightmare visualizing the screaming Nanu of injury, and revolving on hairdresser's chair.  ( 00:47:31 to 00:47:41)		This is another temporary hallucination, and this signifies the Jayan's deep rooted association with Nanu.
Jayan's hallucination about the transformation of serpent god into a real snake.  (00:53:38 to 00:53:53)		This hallucination is out of intense anxiety created on him by the character Dr. Punnose Tharkan about the imminent dooms day, and this triggers mild hallucinations in him about the fear of death.
Jayan's hallucination about the transformation of black tea oozing out of a tea filter into blood accompanied by the screaming of Nanu.  (00:45:52 to 00:46:07)		This is also a temporary hallucination, and this signifies Jayan's deep rooted association with Nanu
Jayan's nightmare about a knife coming towards him.  (00:02:16 to 00:02:37)		This hallucination is out of intense anxiety created on him by the political violence happening at that point of time, and it triggers a mild hallucination in him about the fear of death.

**Film : *Vilaapangalkkappuram* ( 2008 )-Beyond Lamentations**

T V Chandrans's this film is based on the aftermath of the Gujarat riots of 2002. The story revolves around Zahira, a Muslim woman who flees Gujarat soon after the riots and arrives in Kozhikode. There, two doctors, Mary Varghese and Gopinath, bring her back to normalcy even while she is haunted by the problems related to the aftermath of the riots.

<b>Dream / Hallucination (with screen timing )</b>	<b>Signification</b>
Dream like sequence of Zahira, when she is with her care taker Gopalettan in tea estate, she sees and gently laughs at children going to school in their uniforms.  (01:01:41 to 01:01:54)	This dream situation conveys her missing school days and her lost sister in Gujarat riots.
Dreamy sequence where Zahira and her younger sister Shamla riding their bicycle through the streets and onlookers smiling at them, and suddenly the onlookers turns emotionless.  (00:04:38 to 00:4:53)	This scene act as an index sign, and indicates the upcoming Gujarat riots, where Muslims are mercilessly attacked by the local Hindu fundamentalists before the insensitive police and helpless local community.
Zahira's hallucination, in which she hears the sound of Shamla and sees her image among school children.  (00:46:16 to 00:46:24)	This is also a temporary hallucination, and this signifies Zahira's deep rooted association with her sister Shamla.

**Film : *Susanna* (2001)**

**Storyline:** The story of Susanna unfolds as Susanna tells about her past life to Rameshan, who approaches her with hatred towards Susanna. His hatred gradually changes into sympathy and later respect towards Susanna. Susanna's life enters a turbulent phase with her love towards planter Varkey's son. Varkey pressurises his son for an arranged marriage and even "helps" Susanna to abort the child, she had from his son. Varkey falls into a great grief with his son's accident death. He appears in Susanna's life in a different role after his son's death, that of a lover and a caretaker. Four more people, friends of Varkey, enter her life. These five men and Susanna involve in a mystical relationship, which is misconstrued by the society around them.

<b>Dream / Hallucination (with screen timing )</b>	<b>Signification</b>
Dream sequence of Susanna with her lost family members, where she is confessing to all the dead ones that she really loved and cared for them.  (01:19:45 to 00:20:39)	This signifies that always Susanna wanted to be with her family, but the social stigma as a prostitute forced her away from the familial relation, and she fulfills her wish through the dream.
Planter Varkey's dream in which Susanna is compared to Virgin Mary  (00:55:18 to 00:56:10)	This dream signifies a compassionate persona of Susanna, who in the later stages is not just a body for their sexual satisfaction, but someone to take care of their emotional needs
Susanna's hallucination in which she is pelted with stones (00:07:42 to 00:07:57), and whipped by people. (01:29:15 to 01:30:30).	These scenes bring a causal connection of Susanna's life with Mary Magdalene. Like Mary Magdalene, Susanna was also tortured for the sin of others.



**Film : *Padam Onnu: Oru Vilapam* (2003) -Lesson One: A Wail**

**Storyline:** In north Kerala, particularly in the Muslim community, girls are married off very early to prevent them from going ‘astray’. The marital status or age of the groom is immaterial. Women have no say even in their own lives. This film is the story of 15 year-old school going Shahina, who is forced to marry an elderly person who’s already married and living with his wife. On the contrary, for her husband, alliance with Shahina is a path to reach the Middle East. Shahina who is very passionate about her studies, breaks free, and tries to continue her studies. She is not about fulfil her dreams in education as the patriarchal system pull her down with new roles and responsibilities. The film is a wail, a wail for humanity and freedom.

<b>Dream / Hallucination (with screen timing )</b>	<b>Signification</b>
The fantasy sequence in which Shahina takes the daughter of Razak to a picturesque place, where they are liberating themselves, and enjoying the nature.  (00:52:07 to 00:53:16)	The fantasy sequences of Shahina refer to her unconscious desires for liberation, and it acts as a surrealist symbol of liberation from the medieval mindsets, which is practically impossible in real life situation.
Shahina’s dream about the forced sexual intercourse on Razia by her husband.  (00:23:12 to 00:23:19)	This scene (index sign) foreshadows the forced sexual intercourse on Shahina by her husband Razak.
Shahina when she comes out of the hospital with the baby, gets a visionary hallucination of her image as a school student disappearing into bushes, her school friend Janaki Kutty and school teacher Kasim appears for a moment, and then disappear.  (01:42:11 to 01:43:15)	This is a temporal hallucination out of shock and grief, and signifies her life’s transition from a daughter to a young mother, depraved of the childhood innocence.

<b>Film : Alicinte Anveshanam ( 1989 ) -The Search of Alice</b>	
<b>Storyline:</b> Set in northern Kerala, the film narrates the journey of Alice in search of her vanished husband, a college lecturer. During her quest, she slowly discovers disturbing aspects of her husband, including his descent from his earlier radicalism into bourgeois degeneracy. In the end she gives up her search and decides to take the responsibility of her own life.	
<b>Dream / Hallucination (with screen timing )</b>	<b>Signification</b>
Alice's hallucinations where she finds Thomas Kutty in the college corridor (Scene 28A) and in the hotel reception. (Scene 55)	This is a temporary hallucination, signifying Alice's deep rooted association with her husband Thomas Kutty.

The analysis has revealed that the director used dreams in the selected movies, and these dreams allowed the character to sneak “forbidden” material by their internal censor, and provided scope for the visualization of the concept of alienation, and also could overcome the narrative's impossibility in visualizing the abstract and subjective experiences. These surrealists elements in the form of dreams and hallucinations intentionally disrupt those cinematic conventions, and helped to create coherence and meaning for the viewer, and also deepened the concept of alienation in these movies (Berger, 1993). Along with dreams, TV Chandran also used temporal hallucinations of characters, which occur out of grief and shock due to their alienation, and experience these stimuli in visual and auditory form. Hallucination is visualized in films like *Ponthan Mada*, *Ormakalundayirikkanam*, *Vilapangalakkapuram*, *Susanna*, *Padam Onnu Oru Vilapam* and *Alicinte Aneshanam*. Furthermore, in these films, just like the dreams, characters escape into mental trance with sleep paralysis to adjust with the stark realities of alienation. Moreover, TV Chandran by presenting the dreams and hallucinations of his characters could bring surrealistic elements for signifying the concept of alienation, and also could overcome the narrative's impossibility in visualizing the certain abstract subjective experience

of the characters involved in alienation. And this psychoanalytic semiological intervention has given the director the flexibility to intentionally disrupt the filmic narration to create coherence and meaning to the active viewer, and also deepen the concept of alienation in these movies.

## Conclusion

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The research on the selected films revealed that TV Chandran has understood dreams as illusionary contentment of irrational wishes, and allowed his characters to experience this to bring forth the subjectivity in narration. The director has used this illusionary fulfillment in films like *Ponthan Mada*, *Ormakalundayirikkanam*, *Vilapangalakkapuram*, *Susanna* and *Padam Onnu Oru Vilapam*.

The subjective experiences of the protagonists liberated themselves through dreams from the harsh social and political realities of alienation. Furthermore, most of the dreams portrayed in TV Chandran films are lucid dream in which one is aware of the fact that he/she is dreaming. In a lucid dream, the dreamer has greater chances to apply some degree of control over their participation within the dream or be able to manipulate their imaginary experiences in the dream environment, and can be realistic and vivid. This incorporation of lucid dreams in the film could bring sanity to the protagonists and gave a coherent feel to the theme of alienation. By deploying this strategy in films, TV Chandran also joins filmmakers who have used oneiric or dreamlike elements in films like Luis Buñuel, Sergei Parajanov, Ingmar Bergman, Jean Cocteau, Federico Fellini, Stanley Kubrick, Alexander Dovzhenko, Andrei Tarkovsky, Lars von Trier, and Krzysztof Kieslowski. This oneiric film genre includes 1940s and 1950s film noir and surrealist films; moreover, oneiric elements were also noted in musicals, thriller and horror films. Like the dreams, TV Chandran also used anomalous experiences in the form of temporary hallucinations as experienced by his protagonists, which occur in a person in a state of good mental and physical health due to grief and shock. This benign hallucinations called apparitional experience, can be defined as one in which a subject seems to perceive some person or thing that is not physically present. TV Chandran uses apparitional experience to portray the subjective feeling of his protagonists who are under trauma of alienation, and effectively used in selected films.

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# The Medium is Memory

■ Dr B. HARIHARAN\*

## ABSTRACT

*This paper argues that McLuhan's claim that the medium is the message has canonized itself well into the network society of the present century. It tries to see how McLuhan's emphasis on message offers only a reductive version of memory. The paper tries to show that there is perhaps an intricacy of recall so crucial to the medium that is overly simplified as the message. Memory, that intricacy of recall, informs the dynamics of the medium and on that hinges the story of our knowledge society. The paper seeks to show that the medium remembers and has a stake in the story we tell to / of our knowledge society.*

*Keywords: Medium, media, message, memory, bias, space, book, fatw*

## Introduction

*At the outset, Buddhism was a single page. And this single page has gone on, starting with Ananda's re-transcriptions, to beget millions of books."*

(Jean-Claude Carrière 30)

The title of this paper makes a very important change to that celebrated aphoristic statement Marshall McLuhan immortalized in his work. McLuhan's claim that the medium is the message has canonized itself well into the network society of the present century. Canonization does offer its version of memory. And yet, there are other versions of memory as well. McLuhan's emphasis on message offers only a reductive version of memory for it is essential to ask how forms of media remember to become that cryptic message, that space of becoming. For it is that cryptic state of becoming that is captured in McLuhan's aphorism. There is perhaps an intricacy of recall so crucial to the medium that is overly simplified as the message. Memory, that intricacy of recall, informs the dynamics of the medium and on that hinges the story of our knowledge society.

Alternately, in the opening essay in his book *The Bias of*

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\*Dr. B. Hariharan is a Professor of Institute of English and Director of the UGC Area Study Centre for Canadian Studies, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram

*Communication*, Harold A. Innis seeks to show how western civilization has been profoundly influenced by communication which he discusses in detail and proceeds to give a remarkable account of how the evolution of media has shaped the character of knowledge (3 – 32). What Innis refers to as character of knowledge carries with it something of the character of media as well. For want of space, one example from an earlier discussion in Innis' text would suffice to illustrate this. Early on Innis traces the evolution of the form of the book in Athens which reveals something of how and what media remembers, which also facilitates the production and dissemination of knowledge. Innis writes,

'The Ionian alphabet was adopted in Athens in 404-3 B.C. suggesting the demands of the city for greater standardization in writing. Prose was brought to perfection by the middle of the fourth century and Plato sponsored its supremacy by ruling out the poets and by his own writing. When Athens became the centre of the federation in 454 B.C. the way was opened to greater flexibility in law notably through the contributions of orators to the improvement of prose from 420 to 320 B.C. By 430 a reading public had emerged in Athens and Herodotus turned his recitations into book form (8).'

This fascinating narrative of the alphabet in practice, the standardization of writing, and the evolution of a particular form of writing which shaped systems of law and governance work out an intricate mediation of thought which is also the story of the creation of a reading public. Innis offers here the story of the book narrating the ordering of words not limiting it to the materiality of ink, paper and glue. The material reality of the reader, however, is something that Plato seems to have missed when he ruled out poets, for time and again, the reader, mediating memory, remembers the philosopher and his act of censorship. Plato is gone; the reader and memory of censorship remain. Media are complexly embedded forms and it may be suggested that when Innis highlights the curious case of Plato banishing poets by his own writing, it serves as a very useful pointer instructive of such readerly thoughts embedded in forms of media.

Not surprisingly such acts of silencing like the banishment from the republic continue to be repeated in history in varying ways drawing attention to the intricate memory worked into the forms of media. Though not an explicit act of prohibition, the court of the Star Chamber of 11 July, 1637 decreed that two archbishops of London and the Chancellors of two universities will be vested as the licensing authorities. John Milton responded to the ordinance issued by parliament to license the press with his "Areopagetica." The form of media, then, is an involved ordering of the story of its becoming, which Innis captures in his recitation of Herodotus' recitations of

history into book form. If forms of media then remember to cite and re-cite, they speak from that cusp of becoming aware of the efficacy and reach of prior forms of mediation which is an ordering of the pathways memories traverse. It is an ordering whose nature depends on certain factors like the agent, the familiarity with the medium, the choice of medium, the quality of the medium, the resultant agency, and the evolving nature of relationship between the agent and the medium. All these can determine the kind of knowledge that is produced.

Or as Innis reminds us,

‘We can perhaps assume that the use of a medium of communication over a long period will to some extent determine the character of knowledge to be communicated and suggest that its pervasive influence will eventually create a civilization in which life and flexibility will become exceedingly difficult to maintain and that the advantages of a new medium will become such as to lead to the emergence of a new civilization (34).’

## Mediated memory

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A very interesting example of the mediated nature of memory that puts in perspective the complex structure of recall, complex because of the variables that make for different permutations, is again available in Innis’ discussion of the bias in forms of media. He writes, “Hecataeus of Miletus could say, ‘I write as I deem true for the tradition of the Greeks seem to me manifold and laughable’ and Xenophanes that ‘if horses or oxen had heads and could draw or make statues, horses would represent forms of the gods like horses, oxen like oxen’ (8). That is to say, what the medium remembers has a stake in the story we tell to / of our knowledge society.

Forms of media remember that form itself is continuously mediated. The form of knowledge we put on with its power is, in a sense, this memory of form. A very useful illustration of this may be perceived in the double life of Salman Rushdie as he went underground and lived under an alias which transfigured the names Joseph Conrad and Anton Chekov in life and memoir. The name Joseph Anton is quintessential memory of writing deemed true; it is an act of memory and of reading that lays bare how power systems have muzzled the prerogative to speak. The question that demands discussion then is “*Who shall have control over the story?*” (Joseph Anton 360).

What is at stake is the right to use the medium for that is the liberation of story. And yet, the medium is never innocent of intentions. Perhaps it is this trapeze act that is at the core of choosing to remember, to be reminded: “*We will tell you the story*, they said,



*and we will tell you what it means. We will tell you how the story is to be told and we forbid you to tell it in any other way. If you do not like the way we tell the story then you are an enemy of the state or a traitor to the faith. You have no rights*" (360). This narration, with its emphasis on the grand performance of the mediating self, now confirms that stories always have a slant towards the kind of memory it chooses to remember.

This act of reminding is certainly an instance of bias that helps identify the stakeholders in story telling/making. It draws attention to the making of relationships between not just teller-telling-listener, but also between the constituents of the medium used. Of vital importance is the story the listener had heard and grown up with to reshape it in print with far reaching consequences. Rushdie offers in his memoir the stories his father told him as a young boy to which he had listened. That narrative incidentally is tied to the invention of the family name: "Anis renamed himself 'Rushdie' because of his admiration for Ibn Rushd, 'Averrös' to the West, the twelfth-century Spanish-Arab philosopher of Cordoba who rose to become the *qadi*, or judge, of Seville, the translator of and acclaimed commentator upon the works of Aristotle" (22). This story of inheritance also narrates how the father was "a true scholar of Islam who was also entirely lacking in religious belief, had chosen it because he respected Ibn Rushd for being at the forefront of the rationalist argument against Islamic literalism in his time; and twenty more years elapsed before the battle over *The Satanic Verses* provided a twentieth-century echo of that eight-hundred-year-old argument" (23).

Alongside the memories of Anis' oral counter story that echo in this reported speech, it is pertinent to briefly note the discussion on modes of memory and the making of the Quran. Rushdie notes how Muhammad "came down from the mountain" and "began to recite;" "whichever of his close companions was nearest would write down what he said on whatever came to hand (parchment, stone, leather, leaves and sometimes, it's said, even bones)" (24). What Rushdie draws attention to is the multiple forms of media used to retransmit the mediated word of god which had to be arranged as "collective memory" (25). Obviously, such a collective memory is dependent on a relationship with the durability of the medium. What the companions of Muhammad practiced is best summed up in Innis' discussion of the bias in communication: "The written letter replaced the graven image. Concentration on the abstract in writing opened the way for an advance from blood relationship to universal ethical standards, to the influence of the prophets in opposition to the absolute power of kings, and to an emphasis on monotheism" (Innis 39).

## Durability of memory

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With newer ways of transporting the written letter across space, the durability of the medium gives way to durability of memory when the media becomes light and is easier to access. The durability of memory is nebulous and so much more uncertain even as it plays a very fascinating role in the shaping of story. Durability of memory that characterizes newer forms of media is also very much an act of homage to the evolution of media and memory that enable narration. This kind of durability is perhaps the illocutionary force of forms of media. Much hinges on memory, rather than message. A discussion of such illocutionary force will not be complete without a return to the storyteller / writer.

For, in the midst of all this is the writer who emerges, growing up with the changing mode of communication and its effect on society, though it is not an immediate causal relationship. It is evolutionary, and so questions arise about the quality of relationships that make stories. This insists on addressing contentious issues that recall Plato's banishment of the poet in an even more insistent manner. The question "Who has, who should have, the power not only to tell the stories with which, and within which, we all lived, but also to say in what manner those stories may be told?" (Rushdie 360) then continues to plot the illocutionary force of memory. For, to write is to acknowledge the media that makes writing possible and with that the tradition of 'writing' itself. Forms of media are never neutral.

It may be surmised that the issue of not being neutral is inherent to the ever changing modes and it is certain that this does shape societies and the attendant value structures. And yet, there is also a strong faith in an absolute, unchanging medium which is a little more than mere curiosity. Ronald Deibert writes in *Parchment, Printing, and Hypermedia: Communication in World Order Transformation* how "...texts were considered sacred fonts of wisdom from a pure past and an Other World – a belief that often manifested itself in worship of the medium itself, to which was attributed metaphysical, quasi-magical powers" (Deibert 51). Even the belief in an unchanging medium is a formal recollection that the story is unchanging. That offers a version of how the medium effects a miracle.

As Deibert quotes Marc Drogin's discussion of the invention of the alphabet by the gods:

'Since God or the gods invented the alphabet – everyone believed it to be divine inspiration – the letters were holy. Since it was letters that formed words, the words were equally holy. In a time when what was holy was born of the miraculous and when the fine line

between miracle and magic was difficult to discern, the three terms could be easily interchanged. Letters and words were miraculous in origin and therefore were the stuff of magic” (Qtd. In Deibert 51).’

And yet, Deibert draws attention to how media theory is strongly inclined towards “technological determinism” (7). It is only fair to recognize the shaping instincts of media that do offer multiple versions of the word of knowledge and the world.

‘A good example to explore the stuff of magic and what kind of social thinking emerge through interpretive and deterministic bias can help provide more insights on the memory load forms of media are at times made to carry. The story of painting in India had an interesting transformation with the introduction of lithography. One sees that there have been many versions of cows painted when one studies the history of Indian art. But the cow painted with the coming of the lithograph stands unique. This cow has eighty-four gods on its body, which is borrowed from popular mythology. As C.S. Jayaram points out, the introduction of lithography and printing created very different spaces. These were spaces that created a Hindu cosmology. The multiple lithographic prints of the cow with eighty-four gods embedded create many more texts, sub-texts and contexts open for interpretation. “The presence of eighty-four gods within the body of the cow was a common feature in many popular lithographs. As a space that embodies a Hindu cosmology, the cow thus became a proto-nation, grounded at the same time in an exclusionary foundational violence that marked out Islam and untouchable beef-eating practices as the incompatible ‘other’” (Jayaram 41). Obviously, the cow in those many lithographs becomes ‘a miracle of rare device,’ to adapt the lines from Coleridge’s poem “Kubla Khan” for there is a conflation of an orally remembered mythological story of plenitude onto a recent technical innovation that tries to carve a space in the fledgling political imaginary of the idea of a nation struggling to be heard.’

Shifting to more recent times, old monopolies have given way to the new. Media have a strong spatial bias characterized by their portability and are essentially expansionist. As Deibert puts it, “Everyone has the potential to reach everyone else instantaneously in the hypermedia environment – ‘publication’ and ‘broadcasting’ are open to all who are connected” (Deibert 135).

### **Khomeini’s Fatwa**

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And yet, to grasp the full import of this kind of connectivity, it is essential to revisit the narrative relating to the fatwa issued by Ayatollah Khomeini as this has a bearing on the life of an enduring

form of media, namely the book. Rushdie's memoir describes at the close of the second section how the fatwa was issued by "a mortally ill old man lying in a darkened room." The old man's son "arrived at the offices of Iranian television with a document in his hand. A fatwa or edict was usually a formal document, signed and witnessed and given under seal, but this was just a piece of paper bearing a typewritten text... The piece of paper was handed to the station news-reader and he began to read" (134 – 135).

The consequences were far reaching for the publication industry as "The book had gone out into the world and the world has remade it" (Rushdie 90). As the world was stepping into the last decade of the twentieth century, the book was burnt in many countries and Ayatollah Khomeini's edict, 'a piece of paper bearing a typewritten text' exercised deathly authority over life. With the fatwa, there was no level playing field. Instead, there were economic compulsions. England never did go the whole hog to remove or lift the ban because they had big stakes in Iran. Germany had big stakes in Iran. So too did France. The US also was not very keen about this. The drama became much more than the book; it became much more than the ban. It is quite reasonable to argue that Khomeini was forced to ban the book as he had to call off his war with Iraq; "Khomeini had been forced, in his own words, to 'eat poison' and accept the unsuccessful end of his Iraq war, which had left a generation of young Iranians dead or maimed. The fatwa was his way of regaining political momentum, re-energizing the faithful" (Rushdie 142). Logically then, "*The Satanic Verses* was being used as a football in a political game that had little or nothing to do with it" (134).

## Conclusion

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The fatwa is interesting because it extended the spatial bias. The paper handed over to the news-reader is durable, and is portable. It promotes expansionist bias. How did this paper, this fatwa promote expansion? How did it promote empire? The world got to know about the fatwa because of the radio which is media with a spatial bias. The document that was there, that none of us have seen, that probably none of us would ever see; that edict acquires a force of intent. That is the property of the media. Its durability ensures the quality of the media. For this reason, one cannot retract on it. Ayatollah Khomeini is supposed to have uttered it. And it is given under his seal, so he cannot go back on it. As long as the quality of the media determines the durability of the media, it ensures the life of the decree. This is the bias and memory of the media. The edict written on a space biased media is an instant of recall of a particular form of law that had evolved thanks to the alphabet in practice. And this is what we

really need to look at when we look at the political one-up-man-ship in the context of the whole drama that had panned out in the name of Salman Rushdie.

What is the life of the fatwa? The life of fatwa is Joseph Anton because that was the name Salman Rushdie had to assume when he had to go into hiding and with a reward on his head. We never could see Joseph Anton. Only the people of Scotland Yard could see him. For the rest of the world, he was invisible. Salman Rushdie was a name. They were trying to put a body to that name and kill him. This is a mediation of a body and a name, something which was visible and at the same time, not visible. Joseph Anton, almost a character, is almost a pretext to live the life of Salman Rushdie. Joseph Anton becomes a kind of spatial enclosure that is at once media remembering to name itself into existence. For, "Each new medium requires a long learning process, all the longer because our brains have been moulded by the languages that preceded it" (Jean-Claude Carriere 35). The medium is memory.

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# Review of Soap Opera Studies Across the Decades

■ Dr P. P. SHAJU\*

## ABSTRACT

Television soap opera narratives, one of the most popular genres across the world, provide explanations for the way society presents itself. These provide frameworks of understanding and rules of reference about the way the world is constructed. Analysis of manifest and latent content of soap opera is one of the important approaches to study this genre of narrative. Some of the leading studies in the topic is explored in the article.

*Keywords : Manifest content, Latent content, Gratifications theory*

## Introduction

Television primarily adopts a narrative form and most programmes are in a story-telling format. Narratives are ‘the ways in which a society speaks to itself (Sollers, cited in Laing, 1998). In the perspective of Barker (1997), narratives are capable of providing explanations for the way things are. They can also supply answers to the question: how shall we live? They offer us frameworks of understanding and rules of reference about the way the world is constructed.

Among the various television narratives, soap opera has been one of the most popular genres all over the world. According to an estimate by Allen (2004) there were 64 daytime radio serials in the

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\*Dr. P. P. Shaju is an Associate Professor at the Dept of Journalism, Mary Matha Arts and Science College, Mananthavady, India

US in 1940. The ten highest rated daytime programmes there were all soap operas. Of the 30 top-rated daytime radio programmes in 1948, 24 were soap operas. With advent of television this genre became a favourite of the viewers. Many of the television soap operas in the US and UK have run for more than 30 years. This is also the case in India beginning with the first serial *Hum Log* to *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*. The case in various Indian languages including Malayalam is not any different either. Thus, the soapmania is a universal trend. As a result, researchers all over have focused their attention on studying soap operas from various perspectives.

Fiske and Hartley (1978) have pointed out two approaches to study television. The first is to analyze the *manifest* content of television. It is based on a non-selective monitoring of the total television output for a specified period. The second approach is the *latent* content of TV programmes, that is, the meaning generation of the messages among the audience. The following pages contain some of the important studies belonging to these two approaches.

Herzog (1944), one of the pioneers in the uses and gratifications theory, conducted a study on radio soap opera fans to assess their reasons for listening to the soaps. She interviewed 100 radio soap opera listeners and came up with three major types of gratifications that the listeners sought from radio soaps. Among the gratifications sought by the listeners, the first was a means of emotional release, the second was opportunities for wishful thinking and the third was the advice obtained from listening to serials. Incidentally, her study was an important shift from the passive audience to the active and gratifications seeking audience. Herzog's study, though limited to radio soap operas, was path breaking in that it showed the way for similar studies on television soaps too.

One of the earliest major studies of television content was made by Smythe (1953). He analyzed drama programmes broadcast in New York City in the first week of January 1953 and found that drama disproportionately focused on people in their courting or child bearing ages and in portraying the young and the old. The males outnumbered females by two to one. The sexual discrimination was repeated in the central characters of stories, where males again outnumbered females by two to one. But among villains the male dominance was four to one. Villains tend to be older than heroes and were less likely to be white Americans. Thus, Smythe's study is an analysis of the representation of various sections of society in television soap operas of the period.

De Fleur (1964) studied six months' output of TV drama in a Mid-



Western town in the US in the early 1960s. He focused on the careers represented in TV and how it compared with the real world of careers in the US and the resultant impact on children's future careers. He found that there was an over representation of prestigious jobs on TV drama whereas half of the actual labour force held jobs of modest prestige. This was especially true for males. De Fleur argues that television presents least often and as least desirable (from a child's standpoint) those occupations in which its younger viewers are most likely to find themselves at a later stage of their lives. DeFleur further adds, 'television may be instructing children in ways that are not readily apparent even to close observers – ways that may lead to later disappointments as the individual enters the labour force'. (1964, pp 69-70)

However, Gerbner (1973) disagrees with the above notion when he states that 'to be true to life' in fiction would falsify the deeper truth of cultural and social values served by symbolic function. He adds to the argument by stating that the symbolic world is often very different from the 'real' world. The power and significance of symbolic function rest in the differences.

In another related study Greenberg (1999) examined a day time soap opera *Sunset Beach*, broadcast in southern California, and came up with the following observations. This soap is peopled by young and middle-aged women, all of whom are extraordinarily beautiful, thin, and chesty, and an equivalent group of men, all of whom are extraordinarily handsome, slender, and muscular. The soap opera, thus, sets standards of desirability for males and females based on the above parameters. On viewership pattern the study concluded that soaps are likely to be watched more by women than men, younger and older adults than mid-age adults. Similarly, more nonwhites than whites, single adults than married adults, the less educated, non-working women and those living in small cities or towns were far more regular in watching the *Sunset Beach*.

As cultural studies began to take roots, audience-centred approach gained ground in media studies. In that direction, David Morley (1980) conducted an extensive study from the perspective of Stuart Hall's reception analysis, to determine the ways in which audience make sense of media content. Morely showed an episode from *Nationwide*, a BBC television news magazine programme, to 29 groups of people drawn from various levels of British society ranging from business managers to students and trade unionists. After watching *Nationwide*, the groups discussed the programme and provided interpretations. Morely tape-recorded the discussions



and then placed the views expressed by them into three categories as classified by Hall (1980). The categories being: dominant, negotiated and oppositional decoding. The upper-class group consisting of business managers considered the programme as mere entertainment and they had no dissonance with the views expressed. This decoding was categorized as dominant. Another group of shop stewards liked the format but objected to the message. They, however, felt that the programme failed to address the fundamental economic issues. Morley labelled this reading as oppositional. The groups of teacher trainees and liberal arts students had made a negotiated reading. In general, very few groups articulated the dominant decoding. Many of the groups made negotiated and oppositional readings of the programme.

Pursuing a similar approach, Hobson (1982) examined an early evening British soap opera *Crossroads* broadcast in the early 1980s. Her study was not a textual analysis but rather the meaning the soap generated on various groups of viewers. She argued that the meanings and pleasures cannot be read off the text in isolation but that this process is deeply embedded in the social contexts of viewing. The meanings generated vary from one viewer to another. Hobson concluded that the audience of *Crossroads* derived a diversity of meanings and pleasures which were quite different from those assumed by its producers, writers, actors and sponsors. Thus, the oppositional reading was found to be in evidence.

A textual analysis of American daytime soap operas within the context of feminist theory was carried out by Modleski (1982). She argued that women viewers of soap operas constructed different meanings and pleasures compared to male-oriented programmes. She did not consider soap operas to be feminist or progressive texts, but rather observed that their formal structure and thematic concerns are well connected with domestic demands placed upon women within the patriarchal system. The open narrative form of soap operas enabled viewers to relate the families of the serials with their own. The narrative structure of soap opera – cutting in the middle of conversations from one plot line to another, interrupted constantly with commercial messages – resembled women's domestic life.

Ien Ang's (1985) *Watching Dallas* (first published in Dutch in 1982) is considered to be one of the most famous projects in the field of qualitative audience research on a television soap opera. It was one of the first studies to treat audiences of popular media seriously. American soap opera *Dallas* was hugely popular in Holland as in several other countries. Several commentators opined that its success

was an indicator of American cultural imperialism. Ang placed an advertisement in a Dutch women's magazine which invited people to write to her with their accounts of why they liked or disliked the serial. The 42 letters which she received in reply formed the basis of her study. Her analyses of the viewers' letters suggested that people enjoyed and related to *Dallas* because they found it emotionally realistic. The domestic problems, rows, moments of happiness and disappointments of the soap were readily identified with by the audience. For some viewers *Dallas* presented a fantasy of happiness and fulfillment in its presentation of a happy relationship between the characters Pamela and Bobby, which apparently gave them some hope for their own lives. Other people claimed to watch *Dallas* without taking it seriously. Some others hated the show but that did not stop them from watching it. Ang observed that there is no singular explanation for the popularity of *Dallas*. Each viewer has his or her own more or less unique relationship to the programme. Thus, this study indicated to the negotiated reading by the audience.

### Studies on Indian television soap operas

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Although television broadcasting in India was formally launched in 1959, its presence was felt only from the 1980s when Doordarshan network began widening its reach from the metros to urban, semi-urban and rural areas. On account of such an expansion, Doordarshan began to broadcast entertainment programmes in order to attract more audience by launching soap operas with pro-development themes. Singhal and Rogers (1989) define a pro-development soap opera as a melodramatic serial that is broadcast in order to both entertain and educate audience in some aspect of development. Thus, *Hum Log*, India's first pro-development soap opera was planned and broadcast on Doordarshan network during 1984-85. A total of 156 episodes lasting 22 minutes each were broadcast for a period of 17 months. It was a path breaking serial modeled after Mexican telenovela.

Singhal and Rogers (1989) made an elaborate study of *Hum Log* using several types of data such as content analysis of the episodes, audience survey, analysis of sample letters of feedback from viewers and more detailed responses from selected respondents. Audience survey was conducted among 1,170 adult viewers residing in rural and urban areas of Delhi, Pune and Madras. From the viewers' responses, it was found that *Hum Log* was immensely popular in Northern and Central India. In Madras, the serial was not that popular on account of language barrier. On analyzing the content of 149 of the

156 episodes, it was observed that several pro-social themes such as family harmony, status of women, character and moral development, national integration, family planning, health, problems of urban life and national welfare programmes were highlighted in the episodes.

In analyzing *Hum Log*, Singhal and Rogers also applied the social learning theory as envisaged by Bandura (1977). Social learning theory is a social psychological theory about the ways in which humans learn social behavior through observation of the behaviors of others. *Hum Log* study revealed that several lead characters of the serial were considered positive role models to be emulated. This study also looked into the para-social interaction with *Hum Log*. Horton and Wohl (1956) consider para-social interaction as the face-to-face interpersonal relationships that can develop between a viewer and a television character. Over a period of time, the characters become a part of audience's imaginary neighborhood and friendship. Such a para-social relationship developed between *Hum Log* characters and its viewers. The viewers felt that the characters of the serial were real and that they 'knew' the characters even though they had never actually met them. Thus Singhal and Rogers study reiterated that the respondents exhibited a high degree of para-social interaction with characters of the serial.

Another study conducted by Krishnan and Dighe (1990) on the content of Doordarshan programmes over a month in July 1986. The aim was to analyse the content of television programmes in relation to women. Two main trends were shortlisted in the treatment of women in DD programmes, namely, affirmation and denial. The results of the study highlighted that DD programmes affirmed women to be physically and mentally housebound. They were engrossed in homemaking, deriving meaning for their existence and achievements from their husbands and children. Women were portrayed as passive and subordinate. Similarly, the study also came up with the finding that viewers were denied an insight into the ongoing struggles of women to achieve personhood. Whenever these struggles and protests were covered, they were treated in a superficial manner. The division of public and private space was also analysed in the study and it was found that the affirmed aspects of womanhood were situated and contained within the home. Similarly, women were denied representation in public space which was largely monopolized by men.

Purnima Mankekar (1991) elaborately studied *Mahabharat*, a religious epic, serialized on Doordarshan from September 1988 to July 1990. She particularly laid emphasis on the public disrobing

of Draupadi, one of the important female characters of the epic and the wife of the five *Pandava* brothers. Mankekar investigated the televisual experience of women viewers of *Mahabharat* on the discourses of nation, sexuality and gender. The researcher drew inputs from the *Mahabharat* crew as well as women viewers. According to the production team of *Mahabharat*, Draupadi indexed the position of women in society and her rage reflected the power of women. However, this power must be contained in the interest of the family and also the nation.

Much against the intended meaning, Mankekar study among women viewers of New Delhi on the public disrobing episodes found the presence of oppositional reading with large number of viewers held Draupadi as an icon of women's vulnerability. Such an oppositional reading as Mankekar reasons out stems from the daily experiences of women's emotional, financial and sexual vulnerabilities in Indian society. Draupadi's rage also had several interpretations. For some, it was a symbol of women's power. She did not bow her head and accept the public humiliation. Instead, she initiates revenge on her tormentors. Mankekar concludes from her ethnographic study that Draupadi is considered a role model for the contemporary Indian womanhood in contrast with Sita, an ideal role model for the traditional Hindu womanhood.

A textual analysis of *Mahabharat* was investigated by Mitra (1993). The findings of the study indicated that the serial projected a preferred set of everyday practices. Four key elements – language, region, religion and gender – were analysed vis-à-vis the televised version of *Mahabharat* serial's portrayal. Although India has numerous languages and dialects, Hindi is the preferred language of Doordarshan and it was the case in this serial, too. Mitra observed that *Mahabharat* serial positioned Hindi as the language of *Bharat* in which the greatest epic is read and reproduced. The images and essence of India are portrayed as being Hindu, North Indian, Hindi-speaking, male upper class and upper caste.

The religious epics of *Mahabharat* and *Ramayana* have been reproducing a Hindu hegemony. Gender-wise, the status of women has always been secondary to that of men as portrayed in the televised version of the epics. Mitra affirmed that *Mahabharat* serial reproduced the prevailing male-centred gender practices that are specific to Hindu-Hindi-North Indian traditions.

The impact of television programmes on women in Kerala was studied by V. T. Usha (2004). The study among a sample of rural and urban women in Thiruvananthapuram revealed that gender

stereotyping of women as dutiful wives, daughters, mothers, housewives and underpaid domestic helpers in television serials abounded. The messages in these programmes in general confirmed with the conventional role assigned to women. Another significant finding of her study was that television characters that are deemed role models perpetuated the subservient image of women. Most of the women audience, whether they were educated, employed or housewives strive to be obedient and self-effacing in order to fit into the frame of the ideal mother, daughter, sister, wife or in-law. As many as 90 per cent of the respondents held the view that an ideal wife/mother/sister/daughter-in-law/daughter should be obedient, submissive and self-sacrificing.

## Conclusion

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The above studies on soap operas throw light on the different streams of research in this field. Though limited in number, most of the above cited studies are in line with reception analysis, that is, the manner in which the audience generates meanings from the given television texts. Popularity of television serials all over the world has suffered a dip on account of the emergence of more engaging entertainment programmes, increasing reach and affordable digital platforms. But the basic themes, storyline and structure of serials have not changed much keeping pace with changing times. It is the task of researchers to further explore the portrayal of women and manner in which audience negotiates meanings from television serials across cultures.

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# Digital Media Engagement and Transformation of Public Sphere

■ Mr BIBU V. N.\*

Dr NITHIN KALORTH<sup>§</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*Online media has been revitalizing the communication sphere all over the world. The unique features of the online digital communication media like interactivity, de-centralised architecture, costless reproduction, sharing and hyper textuality have stirred discourses on the possibilities of this novel medium in the strengthening of democratic communication.*

*This paper intends to portray the online media platforms in the context of digital public sphere. A public sphere be a space distinct from both state and the market. Public sphere is an integral outcome of the democratic discourses where freedom of expression, inclusivity and access to all sections of the people is crucial and perennial. The traditional media systems like the print and broadcast media are highly commercialized and functions according to the whims and fancies of the rulers and business barons. They provide a little space for the deliberative democratic discourses due to their commitment towards the state and the market. The new online digital media offers immense possibilities in the formation and sustenance of a digital public sphere. It is formed through discussion about a domain of common interest. Also, it represents a new space of discussion for many who had previously been excluded. The last aspect is that ideas presented in the public sphere are considered based on their merits, disregarding social status. German philosopher Jurgen Habermas emphasizes the universal access from all classes of people as key to the public sphere.*

*Keywords : New media, Public Sphere, Social Media, Habermas, Counter Publics.*

## Introduction

Martin Luther once said that If you want to change the world, pick up your pen and write". There is no doubt in power of words in changing world. Great personalities in the world changes the principles and fundamentals of world through their writings and speeches. The public forum through which they communicated is also vital as it gave potential for the message. The power hierarchy in a

<sup>\*</sup>*Mr Bibu V. N. is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Journalism, St.Xavier's College, Vaikom, Kottayam Dist., Kerala State*

<sup>§</sup>*Dr Nithin Kalorth is an Assistant Professor at the Times School of Media, Bennet University, Greater Noida, UP*



society is also directly related to the authority on public sphere and public opinion.

Opinion leaders and influencers preferred mass media over traditional way of public speaking and writing (McKee, 2009). The public gets more influenced by mass media than they think. This influential function of mass media is exploited by promoters and advertisers for their commercial benefits. On other hand, media needed support of such power centres for sustainment. In such case, there is no doubt that media houses need to rely on content sponsored from such power centres. This will also lead to evade the voices of unheard. Thus, the public sphere and forum gets diluted and need for a counter-public occurs.

According to Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988), media operate through 5 filters:

1. Ownership
2. Advertising
3. The media elite
4. Flak (negative responses to a media statement or program) and the
5. Common enemy.

The work on political economy of the mass media is focused on western media and its role in democracy. Their arguments blasted apart the notion that media acts as a check on political power. The media informs and serves the public so that we can better engage in the political process. Media tell us what those in power need them to tell us so that we can fall in line. The work on Manufacturing Consent, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky focused on so called neutral media which were supported and operated by political power and promote political agenda through media outlets. Jurgen Habermas, and others, argued that these ambitious demands are not fulfilled in contemporary societies, mainly due to a “structural transformation of the public sphere” (Habermas, 1989) during which the mass media emerged as a major but deficient forum of public debate. He criticized that mass media, and commercial mass media, do not further deliberation. They must drastically reduce complexity in their coverage so that only a fraction of all issues, actors, and arguments can be published. This is problematic, according to Habermas, because the mass media’s ways of selecting and presenting issues are biased by economic pressures and political preferences.

## Digital Public Sphere

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There is no doubt of need for an alternative space where the voices of unheard can be presented and discussed. Traditionally, activist and artists occupied public places like streets and forums to discuss and take part in dialogue and disclosures. But this public domain had its own disadvantages related with circulation, logistics and mobility. With advancement of technology and liberated network policies, internet or digital space helped to fill the gap of that alternative medium.

This paper is an effort to place digital public sphere as a prospective space for discourses relating to women. The digital media offers a heteropian space where women can voice their voice. The presence of digital space for women provided much more than feminism (second-wave feminism and third-wave feminism), which were defined by gender binary and gender roles. The shift from “gender feminism” to “equity feminism” which is also a dictum of postfeminism was fulfilled by the digital space. The collaborative efforts from journalist, activist and users helped in delivering discussions and deliberation. This renewed feminist politics that emerge from the interface of digital platforms and activism present, examining the role of digital media in affecting the particular ways that contemporary feminist protests make meaning and are understood transnationally, nationally, and locally.

## Background of the study

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In the month of October in 2017, a two-word hashtag created turbulences and fierce deliberations in both the real and virtual world. #Me Too was a strong expression of women which went viral in the online world. The campaign was intended to provide an umbrella of solidarity to the victims, majorly women, of sexual assaults and harassments from different spheres of social life. Soon after the inception of the campaign, allegations of sexual misconduct and harassment precipitated against Harvey Weinstein, the American film producer from many women actors of Hollywood like Alyssa Milano, Gwyneth Paltrow, Ashley Judd, Jennifer Lawrence and many more.

Alyssa Milano played a crucial role in popularising the campaign by tweeting the world to show solidarity and support to the cause of this movement. The phrase got tweeted millions of times over twitter and other social media like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube etc. #MeToo hashtag campaign, encouraged individuals to share their suppressed stories of sexual misconduct, created a cavalcade of alle-



**Figure 1**

gations across multiple industries that brought about the swift ouster of many men in positions of power both in the United States and, as it spread, around the world (Wikipedia, 2017). The campaign was swiftly adapted into #BalanceTonPorc, #YoTambien, #Ana\_kaman and many others all over the world.

As a culmination of the hot deliberations perpetuated by the #Me Too campaign, TIME magazine has selected the ‘Silence Breakers’, the people who functioned behind this campaign, as the TIME’s Person of the Year for 2017. The key person behind the transformational movement #Me too, Tarana Burke, clearly puts down in her statement as,

“For too long, survivors of sexual assault and harassment have been in the shadows. We have been afraid to speak up, to say ‘Me too’ and seek accountability. For many, the consequences of doing so have been devastating”.

The bold words of Tarana Burke reflect the stark realities associated with the communicative realm of women all over the world. About the harder paths a woman would suffer for sincere and brave communication.

In the retweets to Alyssa’s distinct tweet on October 15<sup>th</sup>, many women expressed their joy and relief for finding this as a door to open their experiences filled with misery and suppression. In a retweet, a woman named Lucre Orlando feels so relieved out of this platform of

sharing. She even expresses her inability in the past to voice against such brutal acts of violence.



**Figure 2**

#Me Too is a transformational one, but we need to look beyond the celebrity inclusions and associated media attentions behind this campaign. We are certainly able to redefine the role and way a woman could communicate in this 'interesting times' of new interactive digital online media.

## Digital Media as Mainstream

There is no argument on the potential of digital media in captivating the social movements and digital activism. From humble days of internet (Web 1.0) to techno centric developments of networked spaces (Web 2.0 and Web 3.0) which are more user orientated and democratic, the digital media emerged as integral part of social media movements.

The social website serves as a platform for hash tag to bring out collective ideology creation. These are short pieces of information meant to be shared among their followers/friends in twitter, Facebook

and similar social sites in an attempt to make it viral (Lasorsa et al., 2012). The social media platforms support journalist in performing and promoting their work. Hermida (2010) defines 'ambient journalism' as omnipresent in social networking, which is a collective team of audience and journalist. The term citizen journalism has become complicated since the audience who "share" or "hash tags" the events just takes a role of users and does not possess the profile of a journalist. Pavlik (2013) argues that the technological development has positively affected the news business. He opines that the innovation strategies in the news media are proving successful in at least three areas. These are:

- (1) creating, delivering, and presenting quality news content.
- (2) engaging the public in news dissemination and discussing process both through citizen reporters and through social media
- (3) employing new methods of reporting optimized for the digital, networked age (Pavlik, 2013).

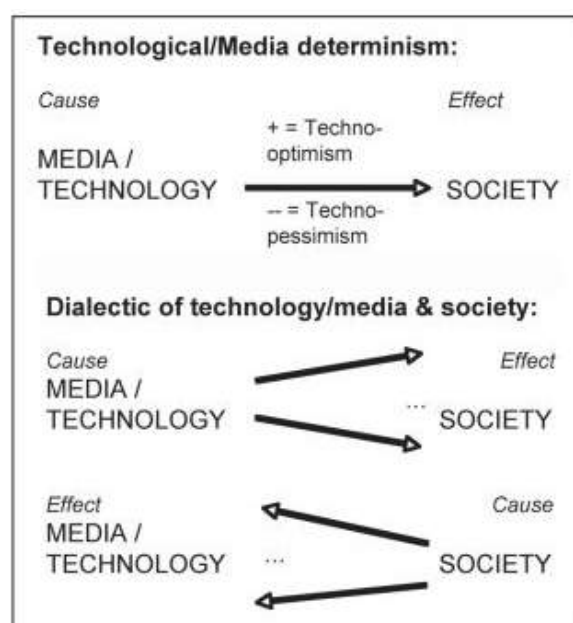
Apart from creating and controlling the news, there is more scope of digital space. From far, the digital space is more democratic and open but there are rudiments of monopoly by organizations like Facebook, Google, and others. They try to personalize and professionalize lives of individual and connect the, through the network which are made for social movements. Juris (2008) warned the adhesive effect of globalized corporations taking over the digital spaces and questioned its possibilities of democratic deliberations. Juris stresses on how new technologies practice a "dual politics", attempting to influence dominant politics, but also to create the embryonic foundations of a new society and he quotes "anti-corporate globalization movements involve a growing confluence among networks as computer-supported infrastructure (technology), networks as organizational structure (form), and networks as political model (norm), mediated by concrete activist practice" (p. 11).

### **Technological determinism**

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The technology driven activism always attract the masses of kind. When it provides a platform for public sphere deliberation it also attracts community without any intents but with an affection for technology. The online support from such communities otherwise criticised as slacktivism (Christensen, 2011) on social media. The authors like Fuchs (2012) argues that "Technological determinism overestimates the role of technology in society. It ignores the fact that

technology is embedded into society, and that it is humans living under and rebelling against power relations, not technology, who conduct unrest and revolutions” (p. 378). Hirst showed no doubt on the role of social media in playing offline as well as online mobilization of social movements (p. 5). The arguments of technology driven always concentrated on techno-utopia (Techno-optimism) and techno-dystopia (Techno - pessimism) which basically studies the cause and effect with media and technology on society which is detailed figured in following illustration from Fuchs (2012. p. 386).



Castels (2015) had hope in technology for the good will of community and better result of digital networks in social movements which were alike agreed by Breuer (2012) who finds a positive relationship between digital media exposure and political assignation and engagement. Breuer (2012) agrees the power of digital media to (p. 2) in mobilizing the protest in authoritative social setting. Tufekci (2017) sees “Technologies can also have different efficiencies and potencies which coexist with their affordances on multiple spectra” (p. 122).

## Study method and findings

When we look towards the course of Indian feminism #Me Too gave a boost towards the feminist voices. India had another incident which can be considered as path igniting movement in digital space.

The Nirbhaya gangrape case 2012 and aftermath protest on Indian streets and digital space proved that digital space for women in here to stay and there is a much work needed.

This paper studied digital media users (n=130) from India to understand their presence and understanding of the digital public sphere as an adobe for gender issues. The research was designed to bring both quantitative findings such as their preference and proceedings on digital sphere and qualitative findings to evaluate their statement and emotions.

It is a matter of no argument that social media is catalysing the space of digital public sphere. The Web 3.0 which is anchored by social media and new media algorithms enable and liberate users to participate, curate, promote and defend their ideology. The social media groups (public and private), chat rooms, online events, memes, and interfaces are changing the norms of public sphere. The opinion leaders are on shift and valid inputs and received and criticised with more democratic procedure. Even Twitter is a leading social media platform for social activism, in India, Facebook is most popular and effective social media for personal and social communication. The same trend was seen in current study were >95% of users are following on Facebook (Figure 3) which is followed by YouTube, Twitter and Google Plus. Users also believe that Facebook (>83%) is most efficient in articulating one's opinion in Indian scenario (Figure 4). It is also an interesting finding that people rely on websites for getting engaged with gender related disclosures. This catalyse the role of independent and other mainstream websites which work in the area of gender issues and women rights.

The articles and posts on websites and social media are read, shared, and discussed on digital public sphere where users become agents of change. There are digital sphere instruments which enable users to act and react on the front. These instruments (like hast tags), play crucial role in the deliberation.

From Figure 5, it can understand that maximum users find themselves in engaged on digital public sphere by sharing (>76%) and comments (>60%) the ideas and posts of others through which they agree their ideology and help them to reach within their community. Other statistics from our study also shows the positive notion on the user engagement in digital public sphere on women and gender issues. Such as posting own opinion (>48%), using hash tag (>46%), using various reactions to others post (>43%), changing profile picture as part of online campaign (>33%) and unfriend or block the profiles (>27%) to show the protest.



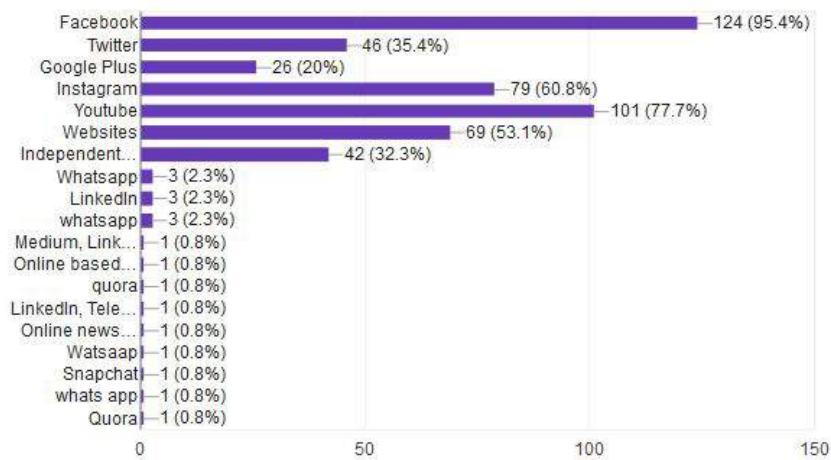


Figure 3

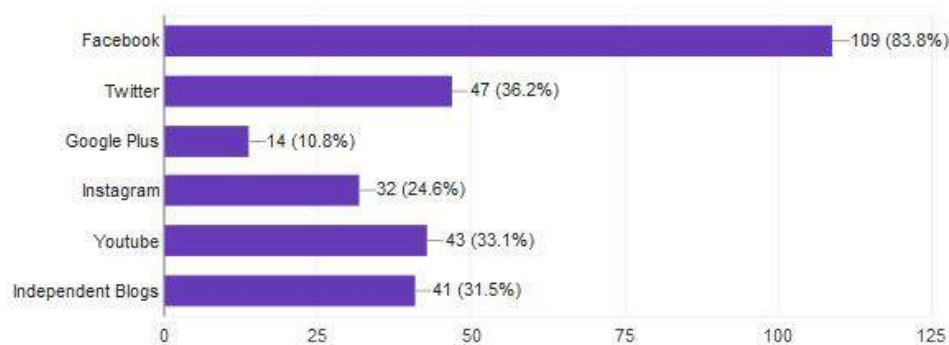


Figure 4

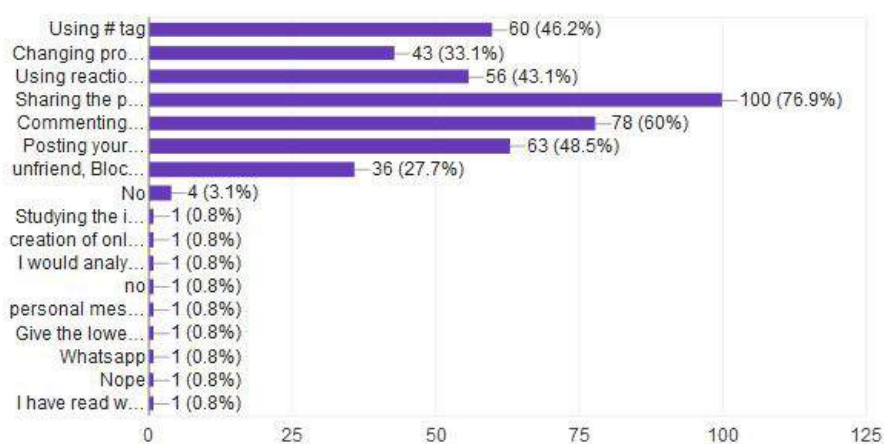


Figure 5



## Conclusion

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The study thus finds digital public sphere as a prospective space for discourses relating to women. The digital media offers a heterotopian space where women mirror their views and distinguishes themselves from what is outside.. Their articles and posts on websites and social media are read, shared, and discussed where users become agents of change in the discursive domain of communication. This sort of digital interactions demonstrate the formation and sustenance of digital public sphere and allied counter public.

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## Novels as means of diasporic communication: a case study of “A Thousand Splendid Suns”

■ Dr RAJESH KUMAR B. M.\*  
Mrs JISHA M. D.<sup>§</sup>

### ABSTRACT

*This paper tries to analyse the ways through which an Afghan born American novelist uses literature as a way to express the feelings of a diaspora who experienced war and exile. In the novel A Thousand Splendid Suns, Khaled Hosseini provides a historical background of his homeland Afghanistan through the lives of Mariam and Laila, the main characters. The country itself is a protagonist and its decay and violent politics over the last half century, ranging from the communist takeover in the late 70's through the United States invasion of 2001, till 2003 is blended with the sufferings and resistance of the two women characters.*

*Keywords : Diasporic Communication, Homeland, Historical Romance, Civil War*

The social interaction and communication within the diasporic communities, among dispersed sections of the same diaspora and beyond the limits of diasporic communities, all take place in space. Some of these spaces – also defined as ethnoscapas and mediascapas by Appadurai (1996) – are grounded in very specific places – such as the neighbourhood – while others exist virtually and in non-places (Urry, 2000). Social interaction and relations are no longer dependent on simultaneous spatial co-presence; there are also relations developing with the *absent other* through mediated communication. When place ceases from being a singular and restricting context for social relations, the experience of time and space becomes distanced (Giddens, 1990) and diasporic communities break off the specificities and singularities of place and expand their potentials for communication and community.

Experience of ethnicity in early childhood, within the home, critically marks a sense of belonging. As cultural boundaries stretch, stability

\*Dr Rajesh Kumar B. M. is an HSST in Journalism at GMHSS Vellamunda, Wayanad

§ Mrs. Jisha MD is an Assistant Professor (Guest faculty) at the Govt. College, Mananthavady Wayanad

becomes less adequate as a synonym for home. Home in the case of diasporic populations is always ambiguous and incomplete. It is never as fixed and permanent as the ideal perception of *The Home* assumes it to be: private, safe, fixed, a shelter to return to.

## Research statement

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This paper details how the diasporic communication uses novels as a means to express deep and fond concern over the homeland. The study is focused on the novel “A Thousand Splendid Suns”, the way how a refugee reflects the views on the socio-cultural situations before and after a civil war and exile.

## Study Method

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This study uses content analysis method to analyse the means of communication that expresses the feelings of a diaspora through novels.

## Analysis and findings

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Khaled Hosseini is an Afghan-born American novelist and physician who was born in Kabul in 1965. His family moved to France in 1976 and four years later they sought asylum in the US where they later got citizenship. As a writer living outside the country of birth and ethnic origin, he is naturally categorized under diaspora writers. He has written three novels: *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And the Mountains Echoed*.

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* focuses on the experience of women in three successive periods: pre-war Afghanistan; during the Soviet occupation and the civil war; and, under the Taliban dictatorship.

The novel weaves thirty years of turbulent Afghan history through an intensely powerful story of family, friendship and, ultimately, hope. The title of the novel is taken from a poem by Saeb-e-Tabrizi, a seventeenth century Persian poet, about the city of Kabul:

*“One could not count the moon that shimmers on her roofs,  
Or the thousand splendid suns that hide behind her walls.”*

Ironically, this is neither the modern Kabul nor the one Hosseini’s characters inhabit; it is an idealized city, a dream. By describing Kabul as the home of a “thousand splendid suns” Hosseini is not trying to disparage Kabul in the backdrop of the many sorrows that envelope it, but rather to show its complexity and the beauty that always exists in the hearts of its people. After twenty-seven years of absence, Hosseini returned to his homeland and met people from all walks of life. As a

sensitive expatriate writer, he pens the devastating history of his country over the last thirty years with a rare perspicacity and insight.

Khaled Hosseini provides a historical background of his homeland Afghanistan through the lives of two women characters. The women, Mariam and Laila, brought up in two different family situations, come under the same roof because of war and loss and their fate as co-wives of a horrific husband, Rasheed. As they endure the ever-escalating dangers around them, in their home as well as in the streets of Kabul, they come to form a strong bond, the bond that unites fellow sufferers and also enables them to endure suffering with grit and strength. Hosseini shows how a woman's love for her family can move her to shocking and heroic acts of self-sacrifice and how, in the end, it is love which becomes the key to survival. The country itself is a protagonist and its decay and violent politics over the last half century is blended with the sufferings and resistance of Mariam and Laila. The novel deftly narrates political events with dates and facts to tell us about contemporary Afghanistan and of its rich and glorious past.

Mariam, the illegitimate daughter of Jalil, is informed of the happenings in Afghanistan and the rest of the world by her father. As the novel opens, Jalil tells her as she sits on his lap that Herat "had once been the cradle of Persian culture, the home of writers, painters and sufis" (4). Hosseini portrays his homeland as a land of cultural abundance. He evokes the glory of the city through its ancient architecture and history. Jalil's account impresses Mariam as he describes its lushness then: "... the green wheat fields of Herat, the orchids, the vines pregnant with plump grapes, and the city's crowded, vaulted bazaars" (4). Afghanistan was a monarchy for over two hundred years. From her father, Mariam learns that King Zahir Shah, who had ruled Kabul for forty years, was overthrown in a bloodless coup by his cousin Daoud Khan in 1973 and that the latter then became the president.

In the first part of the novel Mariam's story is narrated parallel to the historical events. The peaceful life of Mariam with her mother turns into a tragic one as she loses her mother. She is forced to marry a middle-aged widower, Rasheed. From then her life becomes difficult as she has to face the oppression of a patriarchal society. The author's ability to weave the historical events integrally into the narrative is the strength of the novel. The novel describes how the assassination of Mir Akbar Khyber, intellectual and political leader, led to the overthrow of Daoud Khan's republic in the Saur Revolution. A revolutionary council of the armed forces was then established leading to the formation of the socialist Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, eventually bringing upon the country Soviet occupation, Taliban, civil war etc.

The second part of the novel focuses on the life of Laila, cherished

daughter of educated parents who always encourage her pursue education and cultural accomplishment. Her father has the opinion that under the communist regime women have more rights than they ever had before. He had made it clear to Laila from a young age that the most important thing in his life, after her safety, was her schooling. He says that marriage can wait, education cannot. "A society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated." The novel attempts to dispel some of the Western misconceptions about Afghan women and shows us that they had not suffered repression before the Taliban seized power. It is the role of women that Hosseini has chosen to explore in depth and he does so vividly through the stories of Mariam and Laila.

Once Laila's father took her and her friend Tariq to some places in Kabul. They reached Shahe-e-Zohak, the Red City, built some nine hundred years ago to defend the valley from invaders. They were shown the giant stone sculptures of the Buddha in Bamiyan Valley and Laila's father said that Bamiyan had once been a thriving Buddhist centre. This makes them aware of the rich, varied history of their country. By including the Buddha statues in his narratives, Hosseini establishes the continuity and fluidity of cultural-religious traditions and reminds us how easily history can be forgotten in the face of fundamentalist beliefs, be they communist or Islamist or any other.

Hosseini's narratives progress onward on the wheels of the political incidents in Afghanistan. In 1988, the Soviet Union signed a treaty and they were to leave Afghanistan; but the communist regime would stay with Najibullah as the Soviets' puppet president. In January 1989, Najibulla surrendered and the Mujahideen came to Kabul. Soviet convoys left the city and then onwards Afghanistan was called the Islamic State of Afghanistan with Barhanuddin Rabbani as the president. But the Mujahideen found the enemies in themselves. Kabul's days of reckoning had come through the factional infighting among the Mujahideen liberators.

In 1994, the Taliban overthrew the Mujahideen warlords in Khandahar and established themselves in the city. Their leader was a mysterious, illiterate, one-eyed recluse named Mullah Omar. In 1996, the Taliban captured Kabul. They imposed strict laws regarding clothing and behaviour, especially on women. Women were no longer allowed to appear in public without male relatives; they were to wear burqa always; they were forbidden from attending schools, and so on. The Taliban smashed the remnants of the Kabul Museum and did away with any aspects of Afghan culture that predated or conflicted with Islam. The university was shut down and its students were sent home. Paintings were ripped from walls. Television and all other forms of entertainment were banned. Books, except *The Koran*, were burned in heaps and bookshops were closed down. They shut down the cinemas

too. Musicians were beaten and imprisoned. The punishments were given before the public at Ghazi stadium.

The freedom and opportunities that women had enjoyed between 1978 and 1992 were things of the past during the Taliban rule. Hosseini in his postscript says that he met people from all walks of life in Afghanistan during his return in 2003. He saw fully covered women walking along. Then, a number of questions arose in his mind about their identity, sorrows, hopes, longings, happiness, disappointments etc. Hosseini says that *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is his attempt at imagining answers to those questions. He explores the inner lives of the two fictional women and looks for the very common and ordinary humanity beneath their black veils. This novel is Hosseini's modest tribute to the great courage, endurance and resilience of Afghanistan and its ordinary people.

Mariam's sufferings became worse because of Rasheed's decision to marry the orphaned Laila. Laila also had to face the cruelties of Rasheed as she gave birth to her lover's daughter, Aziza. But out of this unhappy household grew a friendship which would bind the two women in a union as close as any marriage and which would endure beyond death. Laila compared Rasheed with the Taliban: "You're just like them" (275). Mariam's mother says to the daughter; "Learn this now and learn it well, my daughter: like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman. Always you remember that, Mariam." (7).

Mariam and Laila faced cruelties both within and outside the home. In the streets they were beaten by Talibs while trying to escape from home. Once, a young Talib questioned Laila as she was alone, which was against the Taliban laws. He beat her with a radio antenna and said, "I see you again, I will beat you until your mother's milk leaks out of your bones" (313). But she did not give up. She took a different route down side streets. Sometimes she was caught, questioned and scolded. Hosseini says that as a writer and as an Afghan he could not think of a more important or compelling story than the struggle of women in his country. Just as Laila and Mariam experience abuse from Rasheed in their home and from random men as they venture out on the streets of Kabul, the country has been abused and traumatized by outside forces. The bond of love between Mariam and Laila became their strength to endure and resist the ruthless patriarchal oppression. Mariam gave Laila a relaxed, happy and tension-free life with Tariq and her children by killing Rasheed. Mariam was later punished by death and Laila's family went to Pakistan.

The Taliban destroyed the 2000-year-old giant Buddha statues in Bamiyan evoking an outcry around the world. Ahmed Shah Massoud, the respected Mujahideen leader, was killed in September 2001. Later, a plane crashed into the World Trade Centre in New York and the US

declared war on Afghanistan. After the American invasion, Laila heard of the positive changes in Kabul, the rebuilding of roads and schools and improvements for women and she wanted to be a part of it. She recalled her father's words and wanted to fulfill them: "When this war is over, Afghanistan is going to need you." (343). So she decided to return to Afghanistan from Pakistan.

On her way back to Kabul she wonders how every Afghan story is marked by death and loss and unimaginable grief. And yet she sees people finding a way to survive. Laila starts working in a school and she feels Mariam's spirit everywhere and senses it as a powerful and benign force behind Kabul's reconstruction. Laila thinks that Mariam's death is not unusual but her sacrifice is a part of the continuing narrative of Afghanistan. Her death was for Laila's well-being and so she plans to devote her life for others and for the reconstruction of Kabul. In the last chapter it is clear that the removal of the Taliban was beneficial for Afghan women. The reader can feel Hosseini's longing for a beautiful return to life for the oppressed people of Afghanistan in his narratives.

## Conclusion

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Hosseini, a native of Afghanistan living in America, expresses his deep and fond concerns over his homeland in all his novels. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is depicting the memoirs of a member of Afghan diaspora and can be considered a historical romance in which attention remains largely focused on the women. He tries to bring America's and the world's attention to the faces and feelings of Afghanistan. The novel reflects the aspirations and agonies through this diaspora literature and portrays his homeland as beautiful even against the backdrop of war and devastation. His characters communicate the great need for creating bonds of amity between the Afghan people and the rest of the world.

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## **The Consciousness of locality in the age of social media; A Study based on the social media communication practices of Gulf Malayalees during the Nipah Epidemic**

■ **Mr YADUNANDAN S. R.\***

**Dr LALMOHAN P.<sup>§</sup>**

### **ABSTRACT**

*The changed digital media landscape has significant turns on the everyday communication practice of migrants who exiled from native space. This research study investigates on how social media communication practice mediated with the consciousness of locality of Gulf Malayalees during the outbreak of \*Nipah in Kerala. The study considers the context of Gulf Malayalees who migrated from the Northern districts of Kerala to UAE. Nipah epidemic has created a situation which was never experienced before in the context of diaspora and their everydayness is been redefined in many ways. Earlier cultural transactions between social groups have generally been restricted, sometimes by the facts of geography and ecology, and at other times by active resistance to interactions with the Other, electronic mediation transforms pre-existing worlds of communication and conduct (Appadurai,2000). This study tries to understand, how social media platform Facebook mediated with the consciousness of locality during the Nipah outbreak in Kerala. Broader concern of the study investigates on how communication practice deals the changes of migration and diaspora experience. This study addresses the instant communication practice and to explore how such practices influenced the imagination of locality. Considering the traits of the area, qualitative approach was employed for the study. Social media communication practices of Gulf Malayalees differ from other practices of communication in its method of channelizing content and building the feeling of sense of belongingness between two distant geographical areas on a continuous basis.*

*Keywords : **Consciousness of locality, Gulf Malayali, Social Media, NIPAH***

Communication and the concept of distance cannot be limited with the geographical parameter. This study explores how social media communication practice deals the consciousness of locality of Gulf Malayalees. The study problematizes the communication practices as social activity and gives importance to the orientation

*\*Mr Yadunandan S. R. is a Research Scholar at the Dept of Media Studies, Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University, Tirur, Kerala*

*<sup>§</sup>Dr. Lalmohan P. is an Asst Professor at the Dept of Communication and Journalism, University of Kerala*



of locality in communication. The study tries to analyse the issues in communication in the purview of practice and experience. How social media communication practice function with the consciousness of locality of Gulf Malayali is the major concern of the study. Consciousness of locality can be understood in terms of perception about the social reality, sense of belongingness and mediation between close relationships.

### **Theoretical approach of the study**

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In this study Gulf Malayali is a representative part of diaspora. The scrutiny of theories explores the context of communication practices within the structure of locality. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai opined that present day migration studies should consider the networked formations of internet. Research studies adopt newer methods with the changed concept of space and place (Appadurai, 1996). Appadurai defined the concept of locality as the convergence of similar minds in a particular area. Appadurai see locality as primarily relational and contextual. Bonding or mobility is the key concepts in the framework of locality. The traits of locality are induced with an individual from birth onwards. Appadurai see this process as the production of local subjects. This study thinks of locality framework as an orientation of communication of Gulf Malayalees. Consciousness of locality is related with the perception about the social reality, sense of belongingness and mediation between close relationships.

### **Methodology**

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#### **Statement of the Research problem**

1. The social media practices of Gulf Malayalees and the possible affiliation to the idea of consciousness of locality during the Nipah epidemic period.
  - a) Evaluation of the conversational statements of the samples dealing with the experiences of the “local” in particular.
  - b) Discussion on the conflicts and likeness of Homeland Communication to Host land Communication via digital platform, Facebook.
2. The role of Facebook mediation, with a focus on visuals and subsequently the consciousness of locality of Gulf Malayalees during the Nipah epidemic period.

- a) Inferring the visual images of Facebook during the particular time frame during the specific issue of Nipah and the potential aspects of mediating the concept “local”.
- b) Focussing the idea of “Diaspora” through Facebook mediation and its interrelationship to the subliminal consciousness of locality.

This research study investigates on how social media communication practice mediated with the consciousness of locality of Gulf Malayalees during the outbreak of Nipah in Kerala. Study considers the context of Gulf Malayalees who migrated from the district of Kozhikode and Malappuram in Kerala to UAE. Qualitative approach is adopted for the study. Conversation analysis method is selected in data collection and analysis process. Conversation analysis denotes a research approach aimed to infer the social interaction process, along strictly empirical lines of social interaction as a continuing process of producing and securing meaningful social order (Flick. Uwe, 2009). Documentation is regarded as the first step of analysis. Secondly finding out and sorting the relevant information. Third step is the categorisation of significant areas related with the research objective. Fourth step deals with the categorisation of relevant information and this become the part of research report (Flick Uwe, 2009).

Facebook has been chosen as the source for the samples in this study considering its popularity among the social media platforms. Facebook visual based interactions between the time period of 2018 May to July 2018 is taken for the analysis of study. Social media communication practice is analysing in terms of how this communication method is been employed for creating the connectivity between relationships and involve with the consciousness of locality of migrants. Video posts tend to reproduce the experiences related with the locality and experience that affect complex sensorial channels. This phenomenon is significant in the context of diaspora communication. Emotive quality of videos also plays a vital part in the study canvass.

## Context of Nipah Epidemic

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Nipah virus epidemic reported in Kerala from 2018 May last week and lasted till July first week of 2018. During this period Nipah reported in Malappuram and Kozhikode districts in Kerala. Nipah virus is reported as a virus transmitted to people and animals

through fruit bats. The first Nipah outbreak was reported in Malaysia in 1998. 105 people were killed in that casualty. Later Nipah was reported in Bangladesh. Seventy percent of the affected people were died in that incident. In India Nipah was first reported in the Silguri, Nadiya districts of West Bengal, Seventy people were died in that incident (National Virology institute,2013).Nipah case reported in 2018 May in Kerala was the second only case reported in India. In Kerala the outbreak build widespread panic, with families in the affected areas and the nearby areas where the cases reported. The speculation of how the virus was transmitted, created panic social condition. Nipah was the major topic of interest in various media platforms during this period of time. People who were in the affected areas, those who were in panic condition like people belonging to different strata of society were part of the information exchange happened through different channels. Migrants who belong to these areas were also part of the information reception regarding the serious social condition. People migrated from Kerala to Gulf countries will definitely have anxiety over the social context of Kerala. The two ends of communication may become more intense and active in panic conditions. Nipah was reported in Kozhikode and Malappuram districts from where significant numbers of people were migrated to Gulf. The instant communication situation is part of the changed communication strategy of the Malayali diaspora in Gulf. As far as the Gulf Malayalees were concerned Kerala is the place where they invest their earnings and dream their prosperity in future.

This study explored the issue of Nipah epidemic with the social media communication practices of Gulf Malayalees. Unorganized mediation was also a part of the communication practices during this period. Diasporic communication system developed in the way of accessing different channels of information. Social media platforms were also part of the changes in communication system and mediating practices of the migrants. Mainstream traditional media have faced limitation on covering the actual social context during the period. Facebook communication practices regarding the issue are crucial with the factors of internet digital media. The initial evaluation proved that the issue was the major topic of interest and information flow during the period in social media. Spreading of communicable diseases affects the future and prosperity of the affected. It gradually destabilizes the progress of the affected area. Overcoming the social evil, awareness, controlling measures, mobilization were regarded significant during the time of epidemics and disasters. Communication was inevitable during such a condition.

## Analysis and Findings

### Sample description

Sample Number	Education	Age	Native place
1	S.S.L.C	40	Kozhikode
2	Pre-Degree	47	Kozhikode
3	Plus two	26	Malappuram
4	Degree	28	Kozhikode
5	Degree	27	Kozhikode

### Locality and social media communication practice during the period

Nipah outbreak was reported in the districts from where large number of people was migrated to Gulf. Primarily the above said factor was significant with communication practices regarding the issue. The analysis is significant on the premises to check, how the issue became the part of diasporic experience and what the common traits of the communication experience were. Communication was also part of the crisis management process in different ways. Solidarity with homeland/locality, representation in homeland social exchanges were key areas of diasporic mediation. These factors were integral part of the research enquiry. Research area dealt with how did the physical absence of migrants created further exchanges from the diasporic space with their homeland locality.

*I was known about this disease during the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Perunnal Fasting. I was not aware about the seriousness of the epidemic. Day by day information from native place increased the panic feeling in me. There was a temporary ban for the exporting of products from Kerala during this period. (Sample 1)*

The disease had distributed the social fabric of many social networks during this period. Here respondents indicate how they had received the initial information about Nipah. Respondent shared that the information created the feeling of fear. The production or the mediation of feeling is a key aspect of the initial communication practice. Temporary ban of products from Kerala can be sited as an example for the precautionary measures taken in international level. These conversations showed that Nipah was a major topic of discussion during the period. Migrants from the affected areas, and working in UAE were informed about the crucial situation

of their native land. The environment and social relationships of locality were significant factors of research enquiry. Conversations indicate about the orientation of locality in the information exchange which a key factor during the period. The study consider locality as the major factor related with the communication practices of the migrants. Assimilation factor may not change the personality traits of the diasporic individuals from what they acquired from their locality in homeland. Social institutions were also part of the information exchange and the initiation of disease control measures.

*Some of my friends are from Perambra. We used to discuss about the issue every day during that time. Bangladesh citizens and Malaysian citizens were also with us in our camp. Actually they were surprised that we could contain the epidemic without much causality. (Sample 1)*

Analysis of the conversation indicates the respondent's sense of belongingness with the locality and it's significant in everyday communication during the period. Neighbourhood concept envisaged by Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai is significant in analyzing the social situation in everyday communication practice. Immediacy factor with the locality and social relationships were considered as the vital factors related with the communication practices of Gulf Malayalees during this period.

*My house is only 10 km away to the place where the first case of Nipah reported. From the information received from native place, I understand people were facing panic condition and isolation. Much information regarding the issue which I know are through Facebook feeds. Some of my friends in Gulf were from the affected area. I saw the isolated public places in my native place through some of the Facebook lives (Sample 3)*

The respondent explains the proximity with the place where the Nipah case was reported. Immediacy factor is also reflected with the common element of locality. It's important to consider the communication behaviour of live videos. The theme and content of the live video may influence the consciousness of diaspora regarding the dominant issue of discussion in social media. The frequency of communication methods were also mentioned in the conversation.

### **Mediation of information and the consciousness of locality**

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Multiple nodes of communication, unregulated chances, convergence character of the media play a pivotal role in the mediation between the host land and homeland. These factors were

explored in the analysis.

*I have not faced such a situation ever before. I have been in Gulf for the last ten years. My home is near to the place where the first case of Nipah reported. I was fearful of the information including the platforms of Facebook. (Sample 1)*

Here the conversation part indicates the feeling of panic faced by the respondent during the period of Nipah outbreak. Here the respondent mentions the geographical proximity between their house and the place where the cases reported. Pierre Bourdieu viewed that the factor of territory is significant on the mobilisation and emotional attachment with a place. In nutshell, the interplay between territory and immediacy with the place is significant on understanding the communication strategy of Gulf Malayalees. Bourdieu opined that the territory is significant on the mobilisation of common interests. People acquire the habits, skills and character of a system through this structure (Bourdieu, 1977).

The factor of social imagination of Gulf Malayalees is also significant on analyzing the social situation of the period. Social imagination can be defined as an individual's thoughts about their immediate locality based on the inputs getting through different communication channels. Mediation plays a crucial role in social imagination regarding the locality. Information flow in Facebook during the period of Nipah was an influential variable in creating the diaspora consciousness. The conversation indicate that panic conditions existed by knowing the updates from their locality. It can be inferred that the social context experienced by the user who upload information from the affected areas may also get influenced the content which they shared in Facebook.

Fear factor was dominant at the grass root level. This should be seen as a crucial factor with the mediation of knowledge from homeland to the diaspora consciousness. Gulf Malayalees got exposure with the psychological situation of the people who were from their locality. Here diaspora got exposure with the consciousness of the people who were from the affected areas. Arjun Appadurai observed locality as the orientation of people follow even when they face any kind of emergency (Appadurai, 1996). Locality is the combination of the migrants day to day communication practices.

*In Facebook I have seen the photos of public places of my homeland that I could see people who wear masks. It is really painful to see such pictures. I was tensed after watching all these pictures in Facebook (Sample 3)*

Interpersonal communication was also part of the communication practices of Gulf Malayalees. Rumours, Fake information were also speeded during this period. It can be observed that such social contexts influenced the content uploaded in Facebook. Here the conversation indicates the involvement of locality in practice.

*I have seen the live video of the health officials in Perambra Talook Hospital, they explained their experience of social boycott in public transport. I could understand that bad condition prevails in the social context of my native place. ( Sample 1 )*

Respondent points about the social boycott faced by the health officials in Perambra Taluk hospital. The conversation indicates the empathy of the respondent while he saw the live video in Facebook. This can be observed as the mediation of the social situation in the affected area and how that video produced such a feeling with the diasporic individual. Here the communication context mediates the experience of the people who are affected. Social experience of the user is significantly influencing the content which they post in the media platform. Representation with the social exchanges of the homeland was significant with the diasporic practice with the social media. Here the conversation showed how they gone through the information and what opinion formed on the basis of it.

### **Social relationships and communication practice**

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*I tried to follow the information shared by people whom I know personally. I felt it was more credible than other information. (sample 3)*

*A lot of information are available in Facebook about Nipah. I saw an incident which happened in my native place in which a youngster was isolated suspecting Nipah infection (sample 5)*

Here the conversation indicates about the individual's memory related with their experience on knowing the instant updates from their locality. The first case showed the significance of offline relationships and the authenticity of information. The second case indicates the migrants reception of information about the social situation at a deep rooted level as the after effect of Nipah. Analysis of both contexts also reveals that those who were accessing information about the epidemic through different communication channels understood the authenticity of various information. This communication context defines the relevance of networked forms of social relationship. Here the immediate environment of the migrant adopted for evaluating the believability of information. Conversation of sample 3 indicates



about the significance of their offline relationship. Social scientist Xavier Busthamente found similar inference regarding the role of offline relationship in online communication the observation is based on the study undertaken about the African migrants in Brazil. The study problematised the context of Orkut communication of the migrants. Busthamente found that information flow and frequency influenced by the factor of offline relationship. The study inferred continuity and frequency as the visible feature of diaspora communication (Busthamente, 2010). Shared information messages were to be analysed in accordance with the social relationship and its networked manifestation. Social scientist H. Rheingold observed three significant factors related to the internet assisted communication practice, that are debate, mobility and the formation of social relationships (Rheingold, 1993). Social scientist Jennifer Brinkerhoff opined that networked forms of social relationships are significant in the mediation with the context of diaspora (Brinkerhoff, 2009). The concept of neighbourhood defined as the network where less distance and immediacy for social relationship. Similarly in the context of this study structural feature of social media is showing the immediacy and less distance between network relationships. Instant communication is the key character of social media. This observation is significant on analysing the diasporic practice happened in the social media regarding the Nipah issue.

*I used to call home every day; you know we could see so many updates in Facebook and other media. I discussed these things with them whether they were knowing about all these things (sample 1)*

Here the respondent considers family members as the participants of communication. The respondent indicates about the fluid form of communication. The individual crosschecked the updates received in Facebook with the family members. This is to be observed as the nonlinear pattern of communication about information exchange.

*I have seen the pictures of medical college in Facebook page. Pictures and updates are regularly updated in that group. I felt authentic information are shared in that page. (Sample 5)*

In diaspora communication migrants may involve with the pages which represents the social relationships and belongingness of their locality. These networked formations become the platforms of information exchange between the diasporic space and the locality in homeland of the migrant. Communication practices during the time of Nipah is significant with the above said observation. Those who are following the pages may get regular updates regarding the theme of the page. Admin control the different sort of mediation in a page.



This is to be observed as the slight form of gatekeeping exercise in an internet video platform. Social scientist Manuel Castells theory of network society is significant on interpreting the above said process of communication practice (Castells, 2000). Social scientist Bruno Latour observed that human –technology exchange become the translation of an individual's identical traits with the technology (Latour 2005).

Networked form of Facebook communication reproduces the features of locality where the migrants belonging to. Social scientist Andonio Alonso and Pedro, J, Oiarzabal observed cultural flow, individual and social mediation, sense of belongingness with the locality where the migrants origin. They added that online networked forms of the self of users are significant with this factor (Alonso, Oiarzabal, 2009). The medium also influences the identity formation process of the diasporic individuals. These networks lead to the networked platforms of vernacular features. Alonso mentioned the character of new media as the plasticity of mediation (Alonso, 2009). Alonso observed technology is capable of sustaining the social relationships in native place.

### **Locality and production of consciousness, analysis of diasporic experiences**

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The production, dissemination and reception of information have got newer interpretation in digital mediation. Consciousness making is a complex process in nature. Day to day practices and transactions are significant with the formation of consciousness. Diasporic experience deals with the separation from a physical space. Mediation becomes crucial in such conditions. Social scientist Arjun Appadurai observed the role of virtual neighbourhood formations in the information exchange process in the context of diaspora. This is to be noted as the networks of simultaneous transaction process (Appadurai, 1996).

The reception of content through different means of mediation is significant with the production of consciousness. Migrants tend to form perception and opinion based on the information through social media based networks.

*I remember the pictures of people who adopted the preventive measures of using masks in public places. Pictures are really shocking. I used to discuss the updates in Facebook with my friends through telephone. (Sample 5)*

The analysis of conversation segment indicate that the

communication experience of the receiver influenced by the content and context of mediation. Respondent's conversation indicate about the preventive measures adopted by the people who were in the affected areas of Nipah. The mediation of a picture formed the feeling of panic and fear with the receiver. The by-product of this communication process is the involvement of fear factor with the individual. Reception of information may also communicate with the complex structure of local sensorium. The acquired information may involve with the memory of the user regarding the place, geographical features, people etc. The comparison identifies the visible change between the situation during the Nipah and the migrants existing memory with that place.

*Sister Lini's demise was a sad news for us. Everyone posted their condolences and grief over her demise. I had long chat with family members regarding this* (Sample 3)

*Lini sister's demise was a sad feeling. I have seen and read many posts on this matter.* (Sample 5)

Here the two conversations indicate the feeling and emotion which have been created by the news images and posts regarding Sister Lini's death. The analysis of the conversation indicate how the mediation of feeling become a part of diasporic experience.

### Facebook communication practices and false consciousness

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The spreading of fake news was a major concern during the time of Nipah outbreak. Social media communication was actively part of communication practices during this period. This communication practice as significant with the mediation of information from the migrants locality. The structural feature of social media to offer enough chances to a user to share any kind of information on it was evident.

*I tried to know news and information through other media as well. I saw a lot of information during this period. I shared authentic information and was careful about fake news. I was confident only to share information shared by Government agencies and doctors.* (Sample 3)

Conversation indicates that information exchange about the daily updates was active during the affected period of Nipah. The communication model of social media cannot be seen as in a linear nature. The simultaneity and frequency were important with the communication practice.

*I have seen a lot of information popularized by government agencies during the period. I shared such information in Facebook (Sample 5)*

*Many people shared separating, communal content regarding the origin of the epidemic. I have been working as a driver there. So I got enough time to check Facebook and Whatsapp to get information. I enquired daily updates from my friends in native place while chatting. (Sample 3)*

*Other media platforms were also used to know about the situation in locality. I got enough time during the day time. (Sample 1)*

These conversations indicate how fake information in Facebook was known to the users. Instant character of the media found as the spreading of fake information within large public. The authenticity of the information were least considered in the dissemination of information. This had led to serious problem of the circulation of fake information.

Gulf Malayalees followed the news of Nipah through different channels and some of them were contradictory in nature. Conversation indicates that such situation produced dilemma among the Gulf Malayalees regarding the social situation of their native place. The character of the media is a reason for the unpredictable flows of information. The analysis of conversation showed that the individual who mediate the message influenced the mediation of different issues regarding the Nipah outbreak. The convergence character of the social media can also be sited as a significant reason with the spreading of information. Hypertext character of the social media is to be considered with this. Hypertext signifies from linear structured and hierarchical forms of representing and decentralised and changeable media conversations indicate that unscientific and guesses were spread in the form of authentic information. This trend could be sited as a significant reason for the development of false consciousness regarding the social situation among the migrants.

Most of the respondents indicate about the presence of multiple media platforms adopted in their day to day communication practices during the period. Conversation indicates that many of the fake information were created anxiety and panic condition with the Gulf Malayalees. Conversation showed that some of the post which got many of reactions led them to think about the credibility of the information. Here the number of reactions can also be evaluated as the subsidiary of the mobilisation of users who possess similar opinion or it can also be concluded as the result of the mediation.

During the Nipah outbreak official symbols and signs were used to

spread fake information in Facebook. Unauthentic information were become the part of the Facebook network. This was led to the creation of panic and fear with the receivers of information. Gulf Malayalees were also part of this experience. Networked structure and social media have no gatekeeping on the sharing of information. This was also a significant reason to the spreading of fake information. The analysis showed that communication of fake information spread through the networked channels of users. They got exposure through these channels. Fake identities, fake profiles were also to be seen as significant reason for the spreading of fake information. The day to day communication chances of the Malayali diaspora showed the involvement of multiple media platforms. Many of them indicate that they considered the news of Radio and other institutional media channel sources as more reliable platforms. They used the Radio, T.V news for cross checking the information, news they received through internet assisted platforms. Anonymity had been as source and root of anti-social behaviour with the internet assisted platforms during the panic condition.

## Conclusion

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The communication practices of the Malayali diaspora in Gulf may be considered as the production of consciousness regarding the epidemic and social situation. The production of consciousness got exposure with different channels of communication. During the period, most of the respondents were considered family and friends in locality as the major participants of communication exercise. This analysis considered the participation of Gulf Malayalees with the public awareness and daily issues during the period. Facebook groups and pages were sources of information exchange with the Gulf Malayalees. The after effects of the social media based communication practice were mounting fear among the diasporic individuals. Origin of the epidemic, daily updates, public awareness and pre caution measures were part of the diasporic communication practices during this period. Here locality played the role of a common attribute of the communication practice. Social media enabled communication practices during this period followed the non-linear pattern in communication. The exploration of Facebook visuals and the consciousness of locality inferred that mediation of visuals is significant part on sustaining the experience of locality of Gulf Malayalees during the period. Primarily based on the sensory stimuli's from visuals individual actively reproduce the memories regarding the locality.

The analysis showed that the social relationships of the homeland were the major channels of communication between the two ends of communication. Networked forms of the social relationships become the nodes of sharing the social experience during the period. Even though the migrants were physically away from their locality, they updated information through different means of communication.

A digital community status is realized through social media networking which is active with the members of the diaspora involve in various types of activities in social media. The creation of such communities and networks can be regarded as the production of virtual neighbourhood concept envisioned by Arjun Appadurai (Appadurai,1996). The analysis showed how social media communication practice highlights the reality of locality of migrants and how they involve with such realities.

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# Natyasastra Hastas as Non-Verbal Communication Mode: A Semiotic Analysis

■ Ms ASWATHY NAIR M. A\*

Dr M. S. HARIKUMAR#

## ABSTRACT

Dance is one of the greatest and special forms of nonverbal communication. In dance, the human body is used as a medium or instrument which transforms itself from the realm of movement to the realm of meaning. This study explores the importance of Natyasastra hastas of Indian classical dance forms in the process of communication. Participant Observation and Expert Interview methods have helped the researcher to conduct the study. The results have revealed that hastas effectively convey the meaning to audience but often with varying degrees of comprehension.

**Keywords :** *Nonverbal Communication, Natyasastra, Hastas, Mudras*

## Introduction

*H*astas means hand gestures or signs used in art forms, particularly in Indian traditional art forms, for communicating meanings with its audience. Each *hastas* can be used for conveying or communicating various meanings, thoughts, feelings, ideas, etc. *Hastas* develop or converse diverse meanings when placed in various contexts. They are symbolic and expressive in nature. Ancient texts on *hastas* elaborate further on the subject using *slokas* known as *Viniyoga Slokas* regarding the usage and other aspects. The scientifically accepted term for hand gestures is *hastas* whereas it is commonly known as *mudra* ( symbols ).

\*Ms Aswathy Nair M. A. was an MCJ students of the 2016-18 batch at the Department of Communication and Journalism, University of Kerala

#Dr M. S. Harikumar is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Communication & Journalism, University of Kerala



In 'Yoga: One Woman's View' (1984) authored by *Devi Bhavanani*, questions whether there are means of communication, which are subtle, refined, and delicate beyond words. She answers how the individual mind can communicate with its own emotions and body. In India, a whole language grew up which was capable of expressing the subtlest spiritual truths, the most refined human emotions, and thoughts without resorting to the gross vehicle of verbal communication, which alters any situation it expresses. That form of communication was called the *Science of Mudra*. Mudra means a 'gesture'. It can be a gesture of mind (*Manas Mudra*), a gesture of the body (*Kaya Mudra*), a gesture of the hands (*Hasta Mudra*), a gesture of the feet (*Pada Mudra*), a gesture of the face (*Mukha Mudra*) or a gesture of the eyes (*Chakshu Mudra*). The author explains how unconsciously people use gestures in their daily life throughout the world. *Devi Bhavanani* also states that body talk has become popular in pop psychology circles in the West. We unconsciously communicate much of our real self to those around us, simply by the way we hold our body, our hands, face, and feet. In India, this human phenomenon has been uniquely observed, codified, structured, and refined into both a science and an art. The *Hasta mudras* or hand gestures are a highly developed aspect of the art and considered as a science of communication with the divine. They are used for a variety of reasons such as to represent the meaning of the song, convey deeper feelings, bring out inherent qualities, invoke the numerous forms of the divine, or in some cases, they may be simple aesthetic ornamentation.

As *Ragini Devi* explains in her book *Dance Dialects of India*, there are various mudras with the help of which the performer can express not only various objects, but also actions, emotions, or abstract notions – and that amazingly reflects the communicative function of Indian dance. The author of *Mudras – Yoga in your hands*, *Gertrud Hirschi* quotes mudra specialist *Ingrid Ramm Bonwitt* in his book- the hands are the bearers of important symbols, which are still universally understood in the East today. With his or her hands, the Indian dancer expresses the life of the universe. Through its variety of interpretive possibilities, the rich symbolism of the dance language of gestures gains a greater significance for the mind than words could express. *Susanne K. Langer*, an American philosopher, and educator, in 'What is Dance? Readings in Theory and Criticism' define gesture as vital movement and suggest that dance motion is a gesture or an element in the exhibition of gesture.

The *Natyasastra* is considered one of the earliest and best

treatises on Indian Dramaturgy and arts. The first chapter of the treatise says *Lord Brahma* is the creator of *Natyasastra* though *Saint Bharata* is traditionally accepted as the author of the *Natyasastra*. The treatise consists of thirty-six chapters containing six thousand *granthas*- (a *grantha* is of 32 syllables). *Natyasastra hastas* are practiced by different art forms all over the nation *Bharatanatyam*, *Kuchipudi*, *Mohiniyattam*, *Kathak*, *Odissi*, and *Manipuri*- despite the geographical, cultural, and societal differences. *Abhinaya*, the word is derived from the root of *ni* –which means to take or carry, with the preposition of *abhi* meaning towards. So referring to the meaning of the word, the traditional *slokas* says, *abhinaya* means carrying the performance towards the audience. *Abhinaya* expresses the meaning of the performance through sub-varieties of physical gestures. *Abhinaya* is of four kinds- *Angika* ( physical), *Vachika* (verbal), *Aharya* (costume and makeup), and *Sattvika* (emotional). Of these four categories, *hastas* belong to *Angika* ( physical).

The ninth chapter of the *Natyasastra* deals with *hastabhinaya*, acting with hands. *Hastas* are of two categories- *Nrittahastas* and *Abhinaya hastas*, the latter can be divided further into two *Asamyutha Hastas* and *Samyutha Hastas*. The first set of mudras (gestures ) are *Asamyutha Hastas* consisting of twenty-four which are normally portraits with a single hand, both hands can also be used if required. The following comes under *Asamyutha Hastas*- *Pataka*, *Tripataka*, *Kartarimukha*, *Ardhachandra*, *Arala*, *Sukatunda*, *Musti*, *Sikhara*, *Kapittha*, *Khatakamukha*, *Suchi*, *Padmakosa*, *Sarpasirsaka*, *Mrgasirsa*, *Kangala*, *Alapallava*, *Chatura*, *Bhramara*, *Hamsasya*, *Hamsapaksha*, *Sandamsa*, *Mukula*, *Urnanabha*, *Tamrachuda*. Whereas *Anjali*, *Kapota*, *Karkata*, *Swastika*, *Kadakavarthana*, *Utsanga*, *Nishata*, *Dola*, *Pushpaputa*, *Makara*, *Gajadanto*, *Avahitta*, and *Vardhamana* together forms *Samyutha Hastas*. *Chathurasra*, *Udvrta*, *Talamukha*, *Swastika*, *Viprakirna*, *Arala Khatakamukha*, *Aviddhavakra*, *Suchimukha*, *Recita*, *Ardharecita*, *Uttanavanchita*, *Pallava*, *Nitamba*, *Keshbandhu*, *Lata*, *Karihasta*, *Pakshavanchitaka*, *Pakshapradhotaka*, *Garudapaksha*, *Dandapaksha*, *Urdhvamandali*, *Parshvamandali*, *Uromandali*, *Urahparshvadamandali*, *Mustikaswastika*, *Nalinipadmakosha*, *Alapadmolbana*, *Lalita* and *Valita* are the *Nrittahastas*.

## Theory of Rasa

*Bharata* has set apart the sixth chapter of his treatise for the subject and has named the section '*Rasadhyaya*'. Since the literal meaning

of *Rasa* is taste, *Natyasastra* uses illustrations based on food as well. The items having different flavors give us general satisfaction of taste, that general feeling of satisfaction is *rasa*. Human emotions also have distinctions same as the distinction between flavor and taste. Love, affection, liking, wrath, revulsion, irritation, oppression, pleasing, despising, censure, etc., are innumerable separate emotions. But we experience it as love, laughter, anger in a general way. The words 'how successful the artist is in expressing a particular emotion', in the first extract, also draw our attention to another important factor in the *Natyasastra*, i.e. the audience. Whenever it refers to the viewers, it insists that the audience should consist of well-informed people, sympathetic and well versed in distinguishing good from the bad.

## Understanding Body Language

*Albert Mehrabian* (1971), one of the notable experts in non-verbal communication and author of books like *Silent Messages*, conducted a study among the three main elements of communication-verbal, vocal and visual. The verbal refers to the words; vocal refers to the resonance and intonation of the voice and visual refers to the non-verbal behaviour while conversing. *Mehrabian's* research findings, in fact, focused on communications with a strong emotional/feelings element.

His equation, was Total Liking= 7% Verbal Liking (words) +38% Vocal Liking (tone of voice, inflection) + 55 % Facial Liking (non-verbal physical behavior )

*Mehrabian* says: 'This and other equations regarding the relative importance of verbal and non-verbal messages were derived from experiments dealing with communications of feelings and attitudes. Unless a communicator is talking about their feelings or attitudes, these equations are not applicable. Here he says the verbal aspect is in fact important in conveying the message. The intended meaning is also conveyed through the tone of the voice and body language/ non-verbal communication. We often tend to depend more on non-verbal behavior if there is a contradiction between the verbal and non-verbal aspects. So it is safe to say that the significant portion of meaning conveyed and interpreted between people is through body language. *Paul Ekman's* study on facial expression in the 1960s concludes that expressions of anger, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, and surprise are universal, not as had been thought to be culturally determined.

## Semiotics - The sign language

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*Umberto Eco* defines semiotics as ‘semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign’. Semiotics involves not only the study of what we refer to as signs in everyday speech but also of anything which stands for something else. In the semiotics sense, signs take the forms of words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects. Semiology is a way of analyzing meanings by looking at the signs which communicate meanings. Because society is so pervaded by media messages, semiotics can contribute far more than our understanding of ‘the media’ in the narrow sense of mass media. The power of the semiotic approach lies partly in its applicability to the much wider field of meaning-making which includes artistic performance, fashion, theatre, computer games, literature, and architecture. Contemporary semiotic practitioners study signs as part of semiotic sign systems (such as medium or genre) and not in isolation. They study how meanings are made and how reality is represented. We can trace the theories on signs from the history of Philosophy from ancient times onwards (*Todorov* 1982), the first explicit reference of semiotics as a branch of Philosophy can be seen in *John Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690).

The following theoretical perspectives on semiotics are significant in understanding the in-depth aspects of the same. *Peirce’s* three divisions of semiotic theory- consider three characteristics of any perceptual experience. First, in order to produce meanings, all signs, including mental ideas, have qualities that can be apprehended through sense perception. Second, the qualities of any particular thing make it distinguishable in relation to other things that are different. And third, the distinguishing characteristics of any given sign will have the potential to generate meaning to one who recognizes potential consequences associated with its existence.

## METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH STATEMENT

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In the current study the researcher made an effort to identify the significant role of *hastas* used by the performer in meaning making during Indian classical dance performances. Audience interpretations of the implied meanings arrived at by viewing various *hastas* and artists’ attempt to renovate and reinvent them were also analysed.

The researcher has adopted a qualitative methodology for analysis. Participant Observation and Expert Interview methods were selected since Communication perspectives related to *hastas* could well be analysed by observing and interacting with the audience during a

performance. Also opinions were sought from experts regarding the role played by *Natyasastra hastas* in the process of making more meaning to the expressions. The opinions of experts in the field were valuable to understand the technical aspects of Indian classical dance form as a communicative art. There for the researcher has purposively chosen exponents from various classical art forms- *Bharatanatyam* exponent Rama Vaidyanathan and *Mohiniyattam* dancer and teacher Aswathy A Nair.

The researcher has attended concerts on various dance forms organized in the Thiruvananthapuram and Palakkad districts of the state of Kerala and observed audience's understanding of the *hastas*. The researcher has chosen selected performances from *Nishagandhi Dance Festival*, in Kanakakunnu, Thiruvananthapuram from 20<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> January 2018, and *Gowri National Cultural Festival -2018*, Palakkad from 9<sup>th</sup> February to 14<sup>th</sup> February 2018 for studying the viewer's capacity and an understanding degree in terms of *Natyasastra hastas*. The performers have used *hastas* from various treatises on dance and not just *Natyasastra*.

Participant observations were exercised on the performances and the audience of the following dancers from the *Nishagandhi festival* organized by the Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala - *Alarmel Valli (Bharatanatyam)*, *Girish Chandra*, and *Devi Girish (Kuchipudi)*, group performance of *Kaishiki Dance Academy (Odissi)*, *RituPrakash (Bharatanatyam)*, *Pasumarthi Mrityunjaya (Kuchipudi)*, group recital by *Nadroop-trained by Kathak exponent Shamte Bhate (Kathak)*, *Vidya Pradeep (Mohiniyattam)* and another group presentation by *Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy (Manipuri)*. The researcher has also seen the concerts of *Rama Vaidyanathan (Bharatanatyam)*, *Dr. Vedantam Venkata Chalapathi Sita Prasad* along with *Pasumarthi Mrityunjaya* and her students (*Kuchipudi*) conducted as part of *Gowri National Cultural Festival-2018* in association with Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

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### Audience interpretation of *hastas*

The interpretation of *hastas* by the audience have shown a significant variation. People who are trained in any of the Indian Classical art forms were more likely to understand this kind of a semiotic representation. They found it easy to perceive the theme/ ideas intended by the performer without missing out on the essence of

the recitals. However a layman who rarely follows or views classical dance performances found it difficult to comprehend *hastas* when presented alone. But they all feel much relieved when *bhavas* or expressions shadows *hasta*. As noted in Natyasastra classics another category of *rasikas* (viewers) who did not receive any training in connection with Indian classical dance or music but those who were familiar with the art form could understand the denoted meaning of such signs since they used to be frequent viewers. So one can even understand the denoted meanings of the signs without having any academic or practical knowledge on the subject by simply increasing the frequency of viewing.

### Deciphering the connoted meaning of *hastas*

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The most loved and admired portions of the selected performances occurred when the dancers used *hastas* for communicating the implied meaning. The audience never realise that *hastas* used here did not actually stand for their signified meaning. For instance, in one of those performances, *Alapadma hasta* was used for representing full moon and *Hamsapaksha* for 'asking to come'. *Suchi hasta* in right hand facing upward and rotating with *Trishoola hasta* in the left were regularly used to represent the world or to show the presence of Almighty. Here the audience instantly understood the concepts. The connoted meanings were often conveyed with the support of *abhinaya*. In those instances, the *hastas* used for denoting implied meanings were mostly non-verbal gestures that we use in our daily life which helped the audience to understand the meanings precisely. For instance, *Hamsapaksha* (connoted meaning) was similar to the non-verbal gesture we usually use for inviting, the *Alapadma* placed in the space corner to the forehead indicated only the moon to the viewer since the shape and position of the moon was easily understood through the sign. One need not require to learn *hastas* to interpret such contexts but could easily understand the formulation of *hastas* in such contexts observing the facets of nature.

### Communicating the theme through *hastas* alone

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*Hastas* do communicate the theme, but as mentioned before only the trained individuals or persons who are familiar with the art forms have the capacity to interpret the meanings of *hastas* without further explanation or inclusion of *bhava*. The layman found it difficult to interpret the concept without the presence of *bhava*. Here *rasa*



cannot be produced in one if the performer fails to provide sufficient *bhava* as a supplement to the *hasta*. In some contexts, when the plot/theme were familiar to the spectators, the communication took place through *hastas* but here if *bhava* is absent, *rasa* will not be produced and hence people may see the story but they will not feel the story.

### **Role of *abhinaya*/expression in making *hasta* understandable**

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*Abhinaya*/expression has a prominent and significant role in making the *hasta* understandable. Based on the expert opinion, *abhinaya* forms an integral part of the dance and one cannot exclude or limit the possibilities of its implementation. Even for communicating the connoted meanings of *hastas*, *bhava/abhinaya* is essential. According to Rama Vaidyanathan, the Bharatanatyam exponent, *hastas* are in fact complementing the communicative aspect of *bhavas*, she also points out that the performer can communicate through *abhinaya* especially *mughabhinaya* alone.

Aswathy A Nair, the Mohiniyattam exponent has a similar view on *abhinaya*. She also believes *abhinaya* has more relevance in the communication aspect than *hasta* itself. She also opined that the performer must enhance her communicative abilities through *bhavas* to reach out to the audience. According to her, commoners will only understand the *hastas* if the accompanying *abhinaya* serves the purpose. Here both the exponents emphasize the relevance of *abhinaya* in communicating effectively with the viewers.

### **Attempts made by performers in renovating *hastas***

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Rama Vaidyanathan has included the *hastas* from various Indian classical dances for conveying the meanings and values which is otherwise difficult to communicate using only the traditional *Natyasastra hastas*. There are *hastas* for denoting planets, gods, relationships, birds, etc. and she has adapted them for her productions as well. Whereas Aswathy A Nair strongly believes in the revival of *hastas* without abandoning the tradition. She is also studying various traditional texts on dance for understanding the potentials of the same and has started experimenting more with *Nritta hastas* since they help in making the productions more appealing which gradually resulted in great outcomes. Here both of them believe in making efforts to enhance the concept of *hastas* but not at the cost of compromising the traditional notions.

## Key Findings

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1. Audience who were trained in any of the art forms, as well as those who were familiar with these art forms (frequent viewers), found it comparatively easy to follow *hastas* whereas layman found it difficult to interpret.
2. Viewers found it interesting to follow the connoted meaning of *hastas* since they were similar to the non-verbal gestures of human life and hence could comprehend the theme easily.
3. *Hastas* when standing alone is able to communicate with the audience (the trained audience understands better than the ordinary viewers) but here the performer failed to invoke *rasa* in viewer's mind.
4. The experts strongly believed that *Abhinaya* has an inevitable part in communicating the meaning of *hasta* to the audience.
5. The experts were constantly engaged in reviving *hastas* for enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the presentation.

## Conclusion

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The facet which distinguishes dance from other art forms is its ability to communicate through signs and symbols. The semiotic aspect of dance forms is the major factor behind making the art form unique. The study was conducted to understand the importance of *Natyasastra Hastas* in communication through a qualitative study method. The trained viewers and the frequent viewers of the art form found it comparatively easy to follow the *hastas* whereas the layman found it difficult to interpret the *hastas*. So *hastas*, even after having accompanied the richest traditional form for years since its origin fails to reach out to the ordinary viewers to a great extent. However most of the ordinary viewers were able to comprehend the theme easily when the performer conveyed the connoted meaning of *hastas* since they used very effectively the non-verbal gestures of everyday human life. The researcher also understood that communication through *hastas* as a stand alone gesture is theoretically possible but even at those junctures the performer fails to invoke *rasa* in the receiver's mind, i.e., the viewer would not feel the emotions/feelings of what the artist was trying to communicate. Art indeed become



inadequate and meaningless if it fails to make the audience feel the subtle emotional elements as intended by the performer.

The prominence of *abhinaya* in making *hastas* more digestable was considered an important aspect by exponents of the dance. According to *Rama Vaidyanathan*, if the performer is not incorporating *bhavas* while using *hastas*, it ends just as *nrithahasta*. She also conveyed the importance of *abhinaya* by saying that the performer must feel the emotion herself for communicating the intended meaning, then only audience will be able to experience it. Conversations with the experts made the researcher realize the importance of *abhinaya* in communication. The researcher has observed the zenith of comprehending the aspect of *abhinaya* by the viewer especially in *Rama Vaidyanathan's* performance where she portrayed the deserted *Ravana*. It was also interesting to note that the artists were constantly engaged in reviving *hastas* by adopting *hastas* from other art forms and also from treatises on dance by studying them carefully. The dance of Bharatanatyam depicts each and every object or emotion through gestures and body language. It is a gestural language reflecting a thorough knowledge of whole universe. The dancer uses her body as a language to express most mundane to the most abstract concepts or the most common to the uncommon emotions and feelings. There for it can be concluded that the viewers could understand the denoted meanings of the signs i.e., *hastas* even without having any academic or practical knowledge on the subject but by simply increasing the frequency of viewing. Every single viewer could understand the connoted meaning of the *hastas* when accompanied with *abhinaya*. *Abhinaya* has an individual and significant space in dance and it can effectively communicate with the audience even in the absence of *hastas*.

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# Mediated Health Communication in Kerala: An Audience perception

■ Ms JAIS MERLIN P. AUGUSTINE\*

Dr M. S. HARIKUMAR#

## ABSTRACT

Media plays a vital role in the dissemination of new health practices. Mediated communication makes great impact to the health care of the individuals and people largely depend on media to obtain different kinds of health information. Critics allege that information related to health and lifestyle in media sometimes create chaos and fear among the society. Overload of information on and about health results in changing the existing beliefs and practices of individuals in society. It is in this context, the present study explored the media consumption habits of the public and the impact of huge amount of information related to health and wellbeing. An opinion survey was conducted to understand the audience preferences. The study found that both print and electronic media have greater role in health communication while the exaggeration and over emphasis of health related issues by the media may lead to many unethical events.

**Keywords :** *Information overload, Health communication, Media and health awareness*

## Introduction

The Public health care systems in the state of Kerala became a model for many of the other states in India. Public health was a key factor in the ‘Kerala Model of Development’ – a term often referred by Development Economists. In 1956 when the State was officially formed on the basis of language, the life expectancy of male was 44 and female was 45. But now, the life expectancy of male and female is 72.5 and 77.9 respectively (Govt. of Kerala, 2018).

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\*Ms Jais Merlin P. Augustine is a Ph.D Scholar at the Department of Communication & Journalism, University of Kerala

#Dr M. S. Harikumar is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Communication & Journalism, University of Kerala

The literacy rate was 40.4 % in 1956 and now it become 96.2%. The progress achieved in the educational levels of people have reflected in their health indicators as well. People became more aware and conscious about their health and well-being. Besides influencing the various policies and activities of the Government, media also contributed greatly in creating an increased level of health knowledge in the society.

But recent studies have shown that the glow of '*Kerala Model of Development*' is gradually fading. Privatizations of healthcare system and lifestyle changes in society have become a major problem in this sector. Globalization paved the ways for commodification of health care system. This has resulted in exorbitant treatment costs and inefficient health care management. A study conducted by 'Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad's' (KSSP's) has revealed that at least 15 percent families spend over 30 percent of their total income on healthcare alone. The prohibitive expenditure of treatment eventually led to the financial crisis of individuals (Ramankutty, 2015).

Changes in the lifestyle of the people also pose a challenge to the present health care system of the State. Public approach towards health habits are also altering fast with children and adults largely attracted to a fast food culture. Westernized food habits and physical inactiveness resulted in the prevalence of lifestyle diseases like diabetes, hypertension, elevated cholesterol, obesity and heart attack.

Here comes the role of media in creating awareness on critical health issues. The health and medical science related news reports, articles, features, special programmes, discussions, expert interviews and public interactions presented by various media play a crucial role in health communication. Media influences and shape the perspectives and behaviours of the society in health care habits. Newspapers, Television, Magazines, Radio, and Online media are dedicating a portion of their 'space' and 'time' for providing news related to health. But many a time the print, audio-visual, and new media are overloaded with misplaced health information. Media attach prominence to certain issues and facts repeatedly to grab more attention from audience. There is an allegation that, media deliberately present such health issues exaggerated. This may lead to create an unwanted fear or dilemma in individuals regarding the spread of diseases and other health problems.

### Past studies

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The mass media can perform a great role in the creation of health awareness among the society. The various media platforms

disseminate health information very effectively to the public.

The global public health organization 'Unite for sight' explains as in 'The role of media in health promotion (2018)', "the mass media, in the form of the radio and television, are an effective way to persuade target audiences to adopt new behaviours, or to remind them of critical information. Besides informing the public about new diseases and where to seek help, they can also keep the public updated about immunization campaigns".

The mass media are actively involved in the healthcare needs of the society and they educate people on various health related issues. "Media empower rural populations and inform large numbers of people of seasonal or daily variations for such activities as an immunization campaign or availability of a new product or service, teach new health skills such as how to mix oral rehydration solution, promote new health behaviours, motivate ad hoc or organized listening groups, and increase community acceptance of health workers." Says Boyd, Barbara (1995) in the work, *Unlocking Health Worker Potential: Some Creative Strategies from the Field*.

According to Dr. Sunitha B. Nair (2009), Nowadays, people in Kerala rely more on health magazines and accept their suggestions as an index for shopping for the 'health care products'. She observed that, "The idea of health which is disseminated by the prominent health magazines became the concept of health in the contemporary public sphere of Kerala. Their representations are highly influential in shaping the preferences of people and in objectifying their concerns."

However, the health care sector of Kerala is facing some challenges and there should be some regenerative measures to overcome the problems. Lekshmi S. and others (2014) in a study titled *An Emerging Issues In Private And Public Healthcare System of Kerala* pointed out that the health care system of Kerala need a revitalization with the organisation of community health services, environmental and health awareness programmes, education and communication campaigns through drama and other folk media, mass media including electronic media, print materials and other support activities.

## Objectives of the study

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The primary objective of the present study was to explore the audience perception regarding the health communication practices of various media.

The specific objectives were,

1. To identify the role of media in creating awareness on health care
2. To understand whether media exaggerate health content for vested interests.
3. To find out the media consumption habits of the audience

## Study Method

Audience perception was measured via a public opinion survey conducted through a structured questionnaire. A sample of 50 respondents from 20-75 age group categories were chosen for the study. The study locale was Karyavattam Campus of the University of Kerala in Thiruvananthapuram district and Pala municipal town in Kottayam district. The questionnaires were self-administered by the respondents.

## Analysis and Findings

### Sample Description

The study sample had 50 respondents of various age categories from 20-75. Twenty five of the respondents were from the University of Kerala, Karyavattam Campus in Thiruvananthapuram district and the rest of them were from the Pala Municipal town in Kottayam district. Purposive sampling technique was employed to identify the respondents.

Gender	N	Percentage (%)
Male	24	48
Female	26	52
Total	50	100

*Table 1. Sample Description by Gender*

In the whole sample, the female representation was 52%.

Age group	N	Percentage
20-39	25	50
40-75	25	50
Total	50	100

*Table 2. Sample Description by Age*

The study focused on respondents of 20-75 age groups. 50% of the respondents were in the age group of 20-39. And 50% belonged to the age group of 40-75.

Responses	Male N (%)	Female N (%)	Total N (%)
Greater	5 (20.8)	2 (7.7)	7 (14)
Average	16 (66.7)	24 (92.3)	40 (80)
Nil	3 (12.5)	0 (0)	3 (6)
Total	24 (48)	26 (52)	50 (100)

**Table 3. Media and health consciousness: Audience Evaluation**

Table 3 indicated that, 80% of the respondents agreed that various media have helped them to increase the intensity of health consciousness at an average level. 92.3% female respondents stated that the media has a significant role in developing health awareness. 14% respondents said that media greatly helped them to increase their attention towards health practices. Only 6% felt that media had no such role in creating health awareness.

Responses	Male N (%)	Female N (%)	Total N (%)
Greater	4 (16.7)	2 (7.7)	6 (12)
Average	15 (62.5)	17 (65.4)	32 (64)
Nil	5 (20.8)	7 (26.9)	12 (24)
Total	24 (48)	26 (52)	50 (100)

**Table 4. Health content in the media and resulting anxiety**

Table 4 revealed that the mediated health content led to create anxiety among the audiences about their own health conditions. 64% of the respondents stated that the health content in various mass media made them to be more anxious about personal health status at a moderate level. And 12% of the respondents were very anxious



about their health condition. But 12% said that the mediated health content never resulted in such a pressure on them.

Responses	Male N (%)	Female N (%)	Total N (%)
Greater	5 (20.8)	3 (11.5)	8 (16)
Average	15 (62.5)	18 (69.2)	33 (66)
Nil	4 (16.7)	5 (19.3)	9 (18)
Total	24 (48)	26 (52)	50 (100)

**Table 5. Exaggeration of health content by media: Audience Evaluation**

66% of respondents believed that media had exaggerated the facts and news related to health issues at a moderate level. While 16% opined that the media had exaggerated the facts regarding health information at a greater level, and male respondents were the majority (20.8%) who agreed with the observation. 18% said that the media never engaged in such practices (Table 5).

Responses	Male N (%)	Female N (%)	Total N (%)
Greater	4 (16.7)	5 (19.3)	9 (18)
Average	15 (62.5)	18 (69.2)	33 (66)
Nil	5 (20.8)	3 (11.5)	8 (16)
Total	24 (48)	26 (52)	50 (100)

**Table 6. Mediated health content and resultant phobia among public**

Table 6 showed that 66% of the respondents agreed that media created some type of phobia through the content on health issues at an average level. People became panic about their health status and also with the health care system of the State. 16% of the respondents said that there is no such kind of phobia. While 18% felt that mediated health content created great fear or phobia in the society.

Responses	Male N (%)	Female N (%)	Total N (%)
Greater	6 (25)	7 (26.9)	13 (26)
Average	9 (37.5)	11 (42.3)	20 (40)
Nil	9 (37.5)	8 (30.8)	17 (34)
Total	24 (48)	26 (52)	50 (100)

**Table 7. Commercial and political agendas through mediated health content**

40% of respondents said that, there is a role played by media to set political or commercial agenda on health issues at an average level. 26% felt that there may be very strong political or commercial intentions behind the deliberate portrayal of health news and facts and most of the female respondents supported that observation (26.9%). 34% of the respondents thought that media has no such intentions in health communication (Table 7).

Responses	Male N (%)	Female N (%)	Total N (%)
Regularly	1 (4.2)	1 (3.8)	2 (4)
Occasionally	2 (8.3)	4 (15.4)	6 (12)
Never	21 (87.5)	21 (80.8)	42 (84)
Total	24 (48)	26 (52)	50 (100)

**Table 8. Audience dependency on mobile applications for health practices**

The results showed that 84% of the respondents never depended on mobile applications for their health care. This has indicated that the mobile apps are yet to get wide acceptance in our society. But 12% of them use these apps occasionally and only 2% use them regularly (Table 8).

Responses	Male N (%)	Female N (%)	Total N (%)
Regularly	2 (8.3)	3 (11.5)	5 (10)
Occasionally	12 (50)	13 (50)	25 (50)
Never	10 (41.7)	10 (38.5)	20 (40)
Total	24 (48)	26 (52)	50 (100)

**Table 9. Use of Social media for health related information**

Though the social media play a major role in modern man's communication strategy, only 25% of the respondents have occasionally depended on them for health related information, while 20% of the respondents have never used social networking as a source for health knowledge. According to the survey, there were only 5% respondents who have depended social media regularly for health and allied knowledge.

### **Media consumption habits of respondents**

The questionnaire survey has indicated that majority of the audience depended on health magazines to increase their health knowledge. 54% of respondents read health magazines for the same. And 40% of respondents used newspapers for health awareness. 30% depended on visual media and 14% use internet for health care. Only 4% depended on radio for health information. In total, the study found that health magazines and newspaper are the widely accepted media for health communication. In general, people greatly depended on print media for health information compared to electronic media.

The study has also pointed out the audience perception on the reliability and objectivity of media in the presentation of health content. 54% of respondents considered health magazines as the most credible and objective source of health information. At the same time 38% accepted newspaper as the most reliable media for health communication. 28% supported TV and 12% supported internet as a credible source. Only 10% of the respondents considered radio as the objective and credible media for health knowledge. In general,

majority of the respondents observed that the print media as the most reliable and objective medium for health communication.

## Conclusion

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Media has a key role to play in health communication and people have recognized mass media as a major source of health information. Through this study it has been found that the print media still commands wide acceptance among the public as the most reliable source for health information. Many have pointed out that the electronic media too play a marginal role in health communication.

The media content may result in positive and negative influence among the public. Mass mediated health content which create unwanted phobia and anxiety on the health status of individuals may in turn damage the well-being of the society in the long run.

Exaggerated and manipulated content by the media may lead to the distortion of facts thus resulting in adverse effects of the entire health practices of the society. Hence media should be more objective and highly impartial while communicating health and related issues. Thus, adhering to the high standards of professional ethics and integrity in health communication is expected from mass media.

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# Reporting Critical Health Issues: A Comparative Content Study on the Coverage of *Nipah* Outbreak by Malayalam dailies

■ Ms AMRUTHA C.V.\*

Dr M. S. HARIKUMAR#

## ABSTRACT

Communicating health information through mass media is a challenging task due to several reasons. However, mainstream print media have been playing crucial role in health communication across the globe. A robust presence of print media including widely circulated newspapers in Malayalam is the major reason for practitioners and policy makers to convey their messages on Health through such media. Detailed reports on issues of health, expert opinions and articles on remedial measures are categories of content included in newspaper columns. On 19th May 2018, Nipah Virus infection, a critical health outbreak had hit the state of Kerala for first time and mass media played a vital role in the dissemination of information related to it. The researcher has purposively chosen two prominent Malayalam dailies namely Mathrubhumi and Madhyamam to study the coverage of the health outbreak. A detailed content analysis of the dailies proved that both the dailies have adequately covered the pandemic with quality reports, apt pictures, graphics and follow up stories.

*Keywords :* **Health communication, Nipah virus outbreak, print media**

## Introduction

A healthy individual needs both mental and physical health for the wellbeing in the society. Health can be defined as the ability to adapt and manage physical, mental and social challenges throughout life. Peoples are always concerned about health related news and frequently search for up to date information. As the fourth pillar of democracy, Media act as one of the major information source. Conventional media play a major role in disseminating health

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\*Ms Amrutha C. V. was an MCJ students of the 2017-19 batch at the Department of Communication and Journalism, University of Kerala

#Dr M. S. Harikumar is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Communication & Journalism, University of Kerala

information by publishing reports on real issues and incidents with factual information.

The study and practice of communicating promotional health information, public health campaigns and health education is termed as health communication. Health communication aims to make health literacy among its audiences including the patients. Academically, health communication is a discipline in Communication studies which aims to seek to increase people's knowledge and awareness among health and demonstrate various health practices in a large audience and advocate a health policy; influence attitudes and behaviors towards a health issue and so on.

The research of health communication surrounds the dissemination of health-related information. The goal of health communication research is to identify and provide better and more effective communication strategies that will improve the overall health of society. The process of health communication can be taken place in many ways including interpersonal communication between a doctor and a patient and through mass communication by various mass media including print, audio, visual and new media.

Recently health communication has a paradigm shift from interpersonal communication between doctor and patient to mass media itself. This is due to the ease of access of information. Everything is available in a single finger touch. When people want to take a checkup from a physician, they can do it easy with an E-doctor who is available in internet. But in critical health outbreaks, this electronic communication may not be much worthy. In such situations most of the people used to follow conventional mass media such as print media for taking advice and precautions.

Print media act as the major advisory source in by providing the opinions of experts, graphical interpretation of previous information, advising comments to the people and so on. They present technical terms and scientific jargons in simple language, which is understandable to the common man.

Nipah Virus outbreak caused significant morbidity and mortality in humans and major economic and public health impacts. It is one of the most important bat borne pathogens discovered in recent history. Virus may be found in fruit or juice contaminated with bat saliva or urine. Another sources for infection is contaminated drinking water. The outbreak affected the lives of many peoples in vivid geographical locations. If an outbreak is suspected, the animal premises should be quarantined immediately.

The first Nipah virus outbreak was reported in Kerala on 19<sup>th</sup> May

2018 and the second outbreak of the virus was in 6<sup>th</sup> June 2019. Nipah outbreak was reported in the Perambra region of Kozhikode district of Kerala on 2018. The outbreak was localized in Kozhikode district and later spread to the adjoining Malappuram district traced to the fruit bats in the area. The outbreak claimed the lives of 17 peoples. The outbreak was officially declared terminated on 10 June 2018.

Among the leading Malayalam language newspapers *Madhyamam* and *Mathrubhumi* were taken for the current study since both of them are headquartered in Kozhikode district of Kerala where the Nipah virus outbreak was hit first time in Kerala. Both newspapers-*Mathrubhumi* and *Madhyamam* have published large quantum of content related to the disease during the outbreak period

## Past Studies

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The researcher has reviewed some of the past studies related to the current work.

Franca SY, Hedley T T, Emilia EM, Armand E, Samuel T (2017) in their study titled '*Approaches to Print Media Advocacy for the Control of HIV/AIDS: Case of Cameroon Tribune and the POST Newspapers*' reported the distinguishing characteristics of external media advocacy and internal media advocacy. This study also pointed out that even with the pre-eminence of the audiovisual media, the print media remains relevant to health promotion in general and the control of HIV/AIDS in particular. According to their findings print media is the best way to reach the primary advocacy targets of every advocacy plan in Cameroon.

Fadi El-Jardali, Lama Bou Karroum, Lamya Bawab, Ola Kdouh, Fara El-Saved, Hala Rachidi, Malak Makki in their study titled '*Health Reporting in Print Media in Lebanon: Evidence, Quality and Role in Informing Policymaking*' provides a structured reflection on the role of media and the factors that influenced health reporting including context-specific strategies that would enhance the quality and promote the use of evidence in health reporting.

Hezron Mogambi, Wambui Kiai, Ndeti Ndati in their study titled '*Priming HIV Messages in Kenyan Print Media*' investigated the role of print media in combating HIV epidemic in Kenya. According to the researchers, the print media in Kenya lack consistency in the coverage of HIV issues. They observed that Print media in Kenya lack a clear editorial policy on the coverage of the epidemic that could guide in a sustained and effective method of coverage of the epidemic.



In the article, 'Coverage of Sanitation Issues in India' Nayeem Showkat *et.al* says Media plays an important role in our society as its purpose is not only to inform the public about current and past events, but it also determines what we think and worry about. According to the author, with more in-depth coverage and investigation, this written form of communication creates a longer influence on the minds of the reader.

'Assessment of newspaper reporting of public health and the medical model: a methodological case study' by Barbara Westwood and Geoff Westwood *et. al* states that health reporting is subjected to the topicality and newsworthiness of issues which are of limited life such as the introduction of a new technology or the outbreak of a particular disease.

### Study objectives

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The general objective of the present study was to analyze the role of print media in health communication with a reference to the Nipah outbreak on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2018 reported in the Kozhikode and Malappuram districts of the State of Kerala in India.

The specific objects of the study were,

1. To assess the quantity and spacial distribution of news content by selected newspapers during the Nipah virus outbreak
2. To study the role and responsibility of print media in reporting critical health care issues with a special reference to the Nipah outbreak.

### Study Method

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The researcher has carried out a quantitative content analytical study of Nipah outbreak coverage in Malayalam dailies namely *Mathrubhumi* and *Madhyamam* ; which were published from their Kozhikodu units. The unit of analysis were news items, pictures, features, columns, special stories of human interest and editorials spread across various pages.

### Sample Description

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The researcher has selected *Mathrubhumi* and *Madhyamam* newspapers for the current content analytical study. The Kozhikodu editions of both these dailies during the Nipah outbreak were taken for the study (May 21<sup>st</sup> to June 14<sup>th</sup> 2018). Nipah related news items including pictures, articles, human interest stories, editorials and

other related articles were measured in column centimeters. Various sub categories of contents related to Nipah outbreak in both these dailies were also analyzed.

## Summary of Findings

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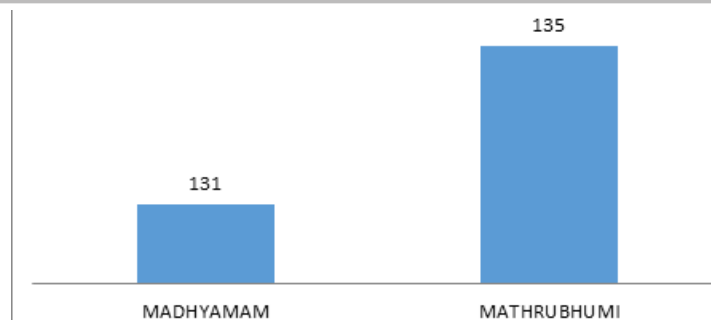
From the detailed content analysis, it was found that the inner pages of both the dailies-*Mathrubhumi* and *Madhyamam*- contained more number of news items related to the Nipah Virus outbreak during the study period. A total of 95 news items related to the outbreak were found in the inner pages of *Madhyamam* daily during the study period. Only 24 news items were presented in the front page of the daily. 12 editorial page articles or editorials were also appeared in the *Madhyamam* daily during the study period. It was also found that inner page news items occupied more space in the *Madhyamam* daily than the front page news items and the editorial page. A total of 2029.3 column centimeter area was allotted for news items in the inner pages of *Madhyamam* daily and 624 column centimeter was given for editorial page articles. The front page news items of *Madhyamam* daily on Nipah Virus outbreak constituted 478.4 column centimeter only.

In *Mathrubhumi* too, more number of news items related to the Nipah Virus outbreak were given in the inner pages during the study period. A total of 103 news items related to Nipah outbreak were appeared in *Mathrubhumi* daily during the study period. 19 news items were presented in the front page of the daily and 13 items as editorials, expert opinions and detailed reports regarding the Nipah Virus infection were also provided. It was found that inside news items related to the outbreak had occupied a space of 1471.1 column centimeter during the study period. 713.1 column centimeter space was utilized in the front page whereas 494 Column Centimeter was devoted in the editorial page of *Mathrubhumi* daily. Human interest stories related to Nipah outbreak were also given prominence. Such stories were presented well with tinted boxes and graphics to attract the reader eye. A total of 46 human interest stories have appeared in *Madhyamam* and *Mathrubhumi* dailies. *Mathrubhumi* had given 25 human interest stories which occupied 383.9 Column Centimeter space while *Madhyamam* published 21 human interest stories which occupied 511.76 Column Centimeter space in the inside pages of the newspaper during the study period.

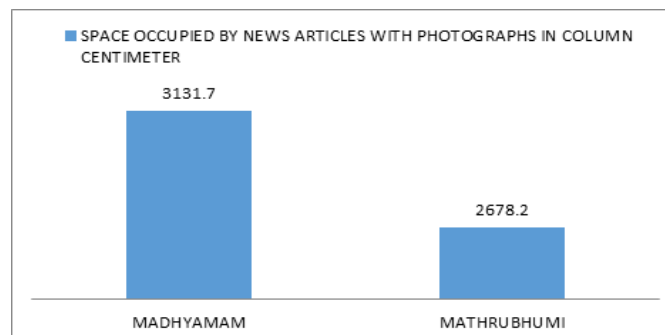
It was found that *Mathrubhumi* had provided an extensive coverage on the NiV infection than *Madhyamam* with a total number of 135 news items during the study period. *Madhyamam* published

131 news items during the study period. Graph 2 shows the space occupied by news items along with photographs in *Madhyamam* and *Mathrubhumi* dailies during the study period. It was found that *Madhyamam* allotted more space on Nipah coverage with 3131.7 Column Centimeter. *Mathrubhumi* provided 2678.2 Column Centimeter space for the same.

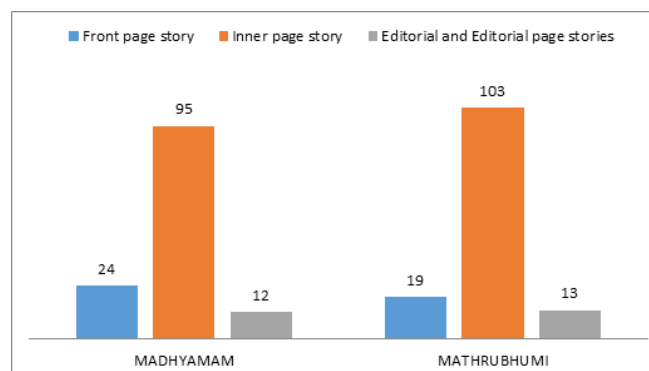
## 1. COVERAGE GIVEN BY MADHYAMAM&MATHRUBHUMI



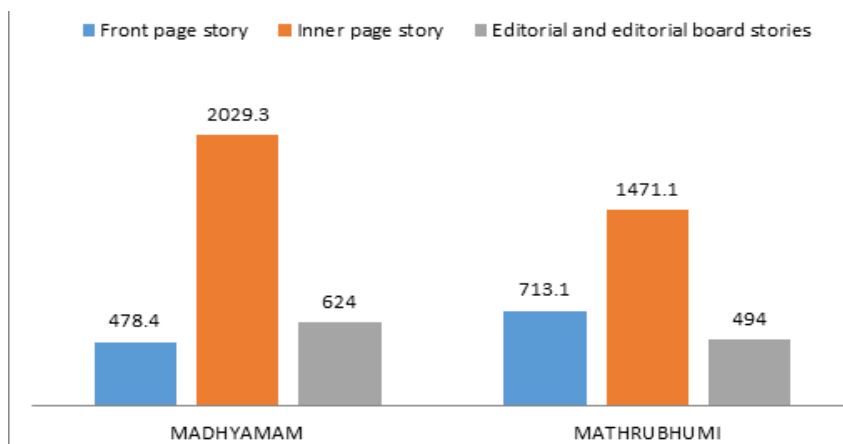
**GRAPH: 1 – Number of news items published by *Madhyamam* & *Mathrubhumi* dailies on Nipah outbreak during the study period**



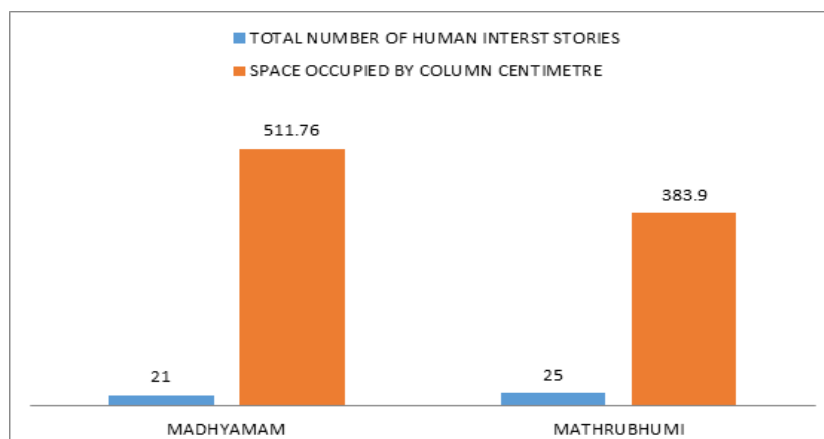
**GRAPH: 2 - Space occupied by news items along with photographs in *Madhyamam* & *Mathrubhumi* dailies.**



**GRAPH: 3 - Number of news items along with photographs**

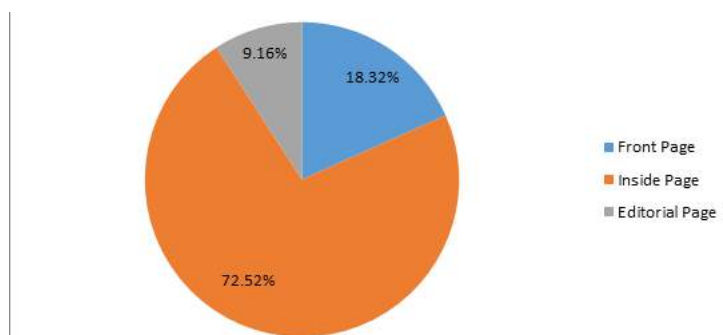


**GRAPH: 4 - Space (Column Centimeter) occupied by news items with photographs**

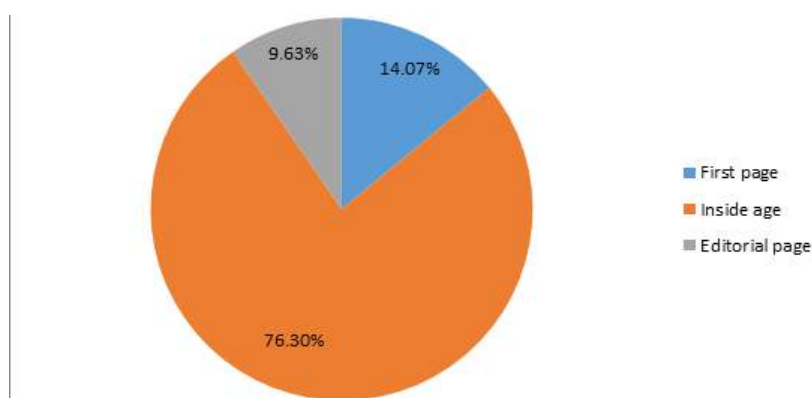


**GRAPH: 5 - Human interest stories published by *Madhyamam* & *Mathrubhumi* dailies on Nipah outbreak**

## 2. NEWS ITEMS ACROSS VARIOUS PAGES



**GRAPH: 6 – News items in *Madhyamam* daily**



**GRAPH: 7 –News items in *Mathrubhumi* daily**

## Conclusion

From the present study it was found both *Mathrubhumi* and *Madhyamam* newspapers had given extensive coverage to the Nipah outbreak by publishing a variety of news items including graphics and photographs. Both the dailies have given special arrangement to devote more number of news items in the inside pages of the newspaper. Local pages were converted to special pages on almost all the days to accommodate more space to news stories related to the pandemic. Though *Mathrubhumi daily* has an edge in the number of news items published during the study period, *Madhyamam* provided more news items with pictorial representation. *Mathrubhumi* was also found to be ahead in terms of providing more space in the editorial pages to the coverage of Nipah compared with *Madhyamam*. But *Madhyamam* had provided more space in the front pages to news stories related to the pandemic during the study period. Both the dailies have made special efforts to retain the reader interest by providing news stories with human interest elements. Other than hard news content; features, articles and columns by experts and editorials made an impact on retaining the reader interest in both the dailies. Quantitative assessment of the content during the study period have proved that Malayalam dailies have taken apt measures to devote adequate space to report a health issue of serious concern.

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# Media Coverage on the Impact of Demonetization and Resultant Public Opinion

■ Ms NANDANA U. S.\*

Dr M. S. HARIKUMAR#

## ABSTRACT

The present study was an attempt to look at the impact of demonetisation on the public and how the media have helped in creating an opinion on this among the public. The study adopted a mixed method approach-A quantitative opinion survey and a qualitative content analysis to meet the objectives. The results of the survey revealed that people went through a difficult time and the media provided them more information about the decision of demonetization and its implications. People also perceived that media exert a great influence in forming opinions about demonetisation and its after effects. The content analysis showed that the print media had provided more in-depth coverage on various aspects of demonetisation.

*Keywords : Demonetisation, Impact, media framing, priming, agenda setting*

## Introduction

Indian banknote demonetisation decision announced on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016 was an unexpected decision from the Government of India. Prime Minister Mr.Narendra Modi declared to the Nation the decision on demonetisation at 8 pm on that day quoting the recommendation of the Reserve bank of India. It was an important decision impacted the economic and social scenarios of India.

The action was reportedly taken to wipe out the black money from India and to check the money inflow for nefarious activities such as

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\*Ms Nandana U. S. was an MCJ students of the 2015-17 batch at the Department of Communication and Journalism, University of Kerala

#Dr M. S. Harikumar is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Communication & Journalism, University of Kerala

terrorism. The unexpected announcement and the shortage of cash experienced in the following months quaked the economic system of India. Rupee notes on 500 and 1000 denominations have suddenly become invalid and people had to go to banks to collect money in exchange of their invalid notes. That was a huge and tiresome task for people making them to wait in the long queues for hours to exchange money. Banks became crowded and Government also announced many restrictions on cash exchange, withdrawal, deposit and ATM withdrawal. No Bank could provide enough money through ATMs because of the non-availability of notes. The Reserve Bank of India printed out new 500 notes and 2000 notes subsequently to quench the thirst for new notes.

The demonetisation decision was widely covered by the media across the country. Supporting and opposing views have emerged. Political parties in the opposition, economists and common people had mixed views on the decision. It became a major topic of discussion for Indian media for at least about three months thereafter.

## **Demonetisation**

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Demonetisation is the act of stripping a currency unit of its status as legal tender. Demonetisation is implemented for modifying or re issuing the national currency. Thus the existing currency (old units of currency) of certain denominations were withdrawn and substituted with new currency units. A recent example of demonetisation occurred when the nations of the European Monetary Union adopted the Euro. In order to switch to the Euro, authorities first fixed exchange rates for the varied national currencies into Euros. When the Euro was introduced, the old national currencies were demonetized. However, the old currencies remained convertible into Euros for a while so that a smooth transition through demonetisation would be assured.

## **Indian Bank Note Demonetisation**

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Demonetisation is not a new thought in the Indian economy. Rs 1,000 and 10,000 bank notes were withdrawn in 1946. In 1954, Rs 1,000, Rs 5,000 and Rs 10,000 notes were reintroduced. During post-Emergency, under the High Denomination Bank Note (Demonetisation) Act, 1978, the Janata Party government led by Prime Minister Mr. Morarji Desai demonetised Rs 1,000, Rs 5,000 and Rs 10,000 notes. They took that decision to tackle black money. Later in 2011, the UPA government announced that coins of 25 paise and less would be withdrawn from circulation from June 30 that

year. But the demonetisation decision from the NDA government was a surprise to the whole country and citizens. The explanation for the invalidation of notes was to stall black money circulation and corruption. The decision was later portrayed as a surgical strike against black money, corruption, and fake currency notes that fund terror.

The first few weeks after the announcement saw the whole social and economic system going a confused way. People didn't get a clear picture of what was happening. Long queues in ATMs and banks to get the notes to be exchanged was the first immediate effect. During the initial weeks banks were not able to tackle the problem effectively. There was a shortage of new notes in exchange of invalid 500 and 100 notes. Government and RBI announced earlier that there would be enough notes as soon as possible. They also announced the introduction of new currency notes for Rs 500 and Rs.2000 denominations in the economic system instead of the invalid notes. Common people were the most affected as they didn't get new notes in exchange of their invalid notes. There were also restrictions imposed by the government on the exchange limit and withdrawal of money. The unexpected announcement caused much distress and panic particularly in rural areas. But majority of people were seem to be supporting the decision of the government since they felt they were becoming partners in the country's fight against corruption and terror. Some noted economists also supported the move but many of them pointed out problems, loopholes and ill effects of such a decision which shook the economic system of the Nation as a whole.

## Media and Demonetisation

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At first, the media in general extended full support to the decision. Most media houses supported vehemently and only a few have opposed the decision and tried to give a detailed picture about the implications. Media also provided information to people about the instant guidelines by the government and RBI regarding the issue of demonetisation. Every media outlet in the country had tried to cover the situation in varying proportions and to throw more light about the restrictions imposed on currency exchange and related paraphernalia.

## Theoretical back ground of the study

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Some of the prominent theories related to Media effects such as *Agenda setting*, *Priming* and *Framing* were found to be relevant while studying the role of media in the coverage of demonetisation.

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## Study Objectives

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The general objective of the current study was to study the role of media in forming public opinion related to the economic decision of demonetisation announced by Govt. of India in 2018.

### Specific objectives were:

- To study the media coverage on the issue of demonetization
- To analyse the role of media in forming public opinion related to demonetisation

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## Methodology

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A mixed method approach was used for this study where opinion survey and content analysis were done. A public opinion survey was conducted in the capital district of the state of Kerala (Thiruvananthapuram) among 150 respondents. This structured survey questionnaire was specifically prepared with an aim to find out the opinions on the impact of demonetisation among people and how the media have helped them in forming an opinion. A content analysis of the selected newspapers were also done to understand the characteristics of content published during the study period. Selected newspapers namely *Mathrubhumi* (Malayalam) and *The Hindu* (English) which have covered the news of demonetisation from second week of November 2016 to December 2016 and first week of January 2017 were qualitatively analysed.

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## Sampling for the Study

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The general public who were exposed to mass media, especially newspapers in the state of Kerala were taken as the population of this study. A total of 150 respondents was taken from the urban and rural areas of Thiruvananthapuram district through purposive sampling technique. The two leading dailies in English and Malayalam- *The Hindu* and *Mathrubhumi* were selected as sampled newspapers. Only single editions (Thiruvananthapuram) of both the dailies were studied. 37 issues (30 issues from 2016 November 9th to Dec 8th and 7 issues from 2017 January) of both *The Hindu* and *Mathrubhumi* dailies were taken as the sample for analysis of the content.

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## Analysis and Findings

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### Content Analysis

The researcher has deliberately chosen *The Hindu* and *Mathrubhumi*

as they were popular newspapers in Kerala and many studies have shown their high credibility index compared to other newspapers from the state of Kerala.

### ***The Hindu***

On Nov 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the first day after the announcement of demonetisation, *The Hindu* carried the main news story on the decision of demonetisation. But, the first issue after the sudden declaration of withdrawal of 500 and 1000 currency notes didn't provide more news about demonetisation. There was a special page devoted to this and opinion columns and photographs were also carried on the issue of demonetisation. On subsequent days demonetisation had been the major news item in *The Hindu*.

Often the first page carried at least a news story on it. Editorials on this subject were few in number during this period, but the editorial page has included Cartoonscape, a regular cartoon column which criticised the decision of demonetisation on many occasions. *The Hindu* allocated adequate space for news related to demonetisation. Each issue carried news stories dealing with different aspects of demonetisation. During the study period a large number of news stories about the declarations about the withdrawal of money, depositing etc. by the government were published. Some stories have portrayed the inconvenience and difficulties caused due to the demonetisation in various sectors. Considerable space was found devoted for giving critical viewpoints on the decision. The opposition party's marches, strikes, arguments against the decision were also widely reported. The news related common man's problems with cash withdrawal, effects of it on different sectors including farming, business, big and small industries were also given attention and enough space on many days. Issues from 2016 November 9<sup>th</sup> to 2016 December 8<sup>th</sup> were analysed and it was found that too many stories, opinion strips, articles by prominent persons, letters to the editor were also focussed on the issue of demonetisation.

Analysis of content in issues of the first week of January 2017 has revealed that the importance given to the coverage of demonetisation has shown a decreasing trend. Even though they had allotted some space for news related to it in the inside pages, overall emphasis was lost. The first week of January was selected for analysis because the government had assured to minimize the difficulties and the restrictions on withdrawal and deposits were also removed. The New Year issue came out with a first page news story "Modi thanks

people for enduring note ban pain”. Post demonetisation news items related to the situation in markets and other sectors were analysed in many sectional pages. There were also news stories which analysed the impact of demonetisation on the upcoming assembly elections in States including Uttar Pradesh.

*The Hindu* has tried to provide a balanced picture on the situation in the country as they devoted large space for the effects of demonetisation and problems created by the ban of high denomination currency notes. They neither supported nor opposed the government or Prime Minister for this decision as clearly evident from their editorial stand. But they provided lot of news stories, articles, cartoons and columns on the positive and negative aspects of demonetisation.

### ***Mathrubhumi***

The researcher has analysed the content of *Mathrubhumi* daily from November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016 to December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016 and the issues in the first week of January 2017.

Most space in the first page of the issue of *Mathrubhumi* in 2016 November 9<sup>th</sup>, was devoted to the major news about the declaration of note ban by PM Mr.Narendra Modi.

Inner pages also included some news items related to it. The issues on the following days consisted of a large number of news items on demonetisation. The op-ed page (9<sup>th</sup> page) had more number of news stories and often it was made a special feature page for the news on demonetisation.

In the first few days, the newspaper supported the government for taking a good step to abolish black money and terrorism. Later the newspaper reported news about various types of problems related to the ban of currency. The newspaper also provided more importance to the news related to the Kerala angles of demonetisation like the confusions and difficulties related to the co-operative banks and other related sectors in Kerala. For many days it continued to be the main news on the front page. The strikes of political parties, decisions of political leaders, opinion columns also grabbed space in the inner pages.

On all these days the first page carried atleast a single news item on demonetisation. The newspaper also published many editorials which presented both sides of the issue of demonetisation. Opinions of experts and other officials were also given. Demonetisation was the major subject for discussion in the cartoons- ‘*Kakadrishti*’ and

'*Exikkuttan*' many a times and also in other sketches of the cartoonist Mr. Gopi Krishnan.

Difficulties experienced by common man in the withdrawal and exchange of valid notes were also covered in detail. News related to online banking, cashless economy, online payment systems etc. were also given in various pages. In the last days of November, the news related to demonetisation was somewhat faded but the issues in the first week of December provided more priority to it. The newspaper of 8<sup>th</sup> December 2016 came with a feature of one month of demonetisation with a centre spread special page covering the issue in-depth.

The issues in January first week did not provide much importance to the news when compared to the months of November and December. But each issue included a few number of news items about demonetisation. The New Year issue came with a lead news about demonetisation after Modi's speech about post demonetisation. The researcher found that *Mathrubhumi* has covered the news on this issue more or less in an unbiased manner. They published opinion columns which supported the decision but reports from staff journalists with a strong criticism were also published. The difficulties experienced to rural folk, farmers and man on the street were given prominence in many news related and human interest features. Editorials published during this period were also critical of many of the actions of the Government even though the positive aspects of the decision were also hailed.

## Analysis of the Survey

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The opinion survey was conducted among 150 respondents in Thiruvananthapuram district including both rural and urban localities. Among the 150 respondents 74 were males which constituted 49.33% of the total population and 50.67% were females. Respondents were of different age groups from the age of 18. The highest age of the respondents was 70. 25.33% of respondents belonged to the 18-28 age group, 24 percent in the 29-40 age group, 28% in the 41-55 age group and 34 percent had age more than 55.

30 % of the respondents were graduates and around 30% (29.33) of the respondents were postgraduates. 14.67% belonged to plus two and 26% had education up to 10<sup>th</sup> standard. 23.33% were students, 20% were govt.employed which also included Rtd govt.employees. 18.67% were private employees, 20% were self-employed and 18% belonged to other categories.



The respondents consumed different media forms for accessing daily news. Some of the respondents also used more than one media for knowing news around them. Newspapers were the most used medium for getting daily news. Respondents relied television as the second priority to access daily news. Among the respondents 66% were daily readers of newspapers and 32% were occasional readers.

Majority (65.33%) of the people came to know about the decision of demonetisation on November 8, 2016 from Television. There were also respondents who knew the decision through newspapers (16%), digital media (12%), and from other people such as friends, relatives and acquaintances. Television played a major role in announcing the decision of demonetisation by the Govt. of India. People viewed the live telecast of the announcement of the decision for demonetisation by Prime Minister Mr.Narendra Modi while he was addressing the people of the country through visual media. Many (40.67%) of the respondents thought the decision of demonetisation was a right one taken by the government while majority (49.33%) objected to it.

Most (54.67%) of the respondents have opined that the decision of demonetisation was not a timely one. Some ( 24.67% )of the respondents reported that it was the right time to make such a decision. The decision of demonetisation caused difficulties in every sector of human activity. Majority (84%) have responded that they had inconvenience after the decision of demonetisation. Many (34.67% ) have responded that even though it caused inconvenience, they did not mind it at all. Majority (65.33%) of people have faced personal or professional crisis after the demonetisation decision. Some (34.67%) of the respondents reported that they didn't go through a personal or professional crisis.

Most (63.33%) of the respondents have opined that it was a right move by the government. Among them, many (40.66%) didn't completely agree with the decision and they thought that there was a need for better planning. People who totally disagreed with the statement was a minority (36.67). Most of the respondents (53.33%) have said that the government took a decision without considering the hardships to people in the country. But some (30% )of the respondents did not agreed to it. Few (16.67%) of the respondents were neutral in their stand. Only a minority (15.33%) have agreed that the demonetisation would improve the quality of life of the common man in India and many (28% ) have disagreed with the statement.

Demonetisation is a long term process and it is still progressing. After the analysis of survey results, it was found that only some (24%) of the respondents have perceived it as a bad experience while



some have ( 14% )perceived it as good. Majority (56%) have opined that it could have been taken after due preparation and consultation. A few (6%) couldn't identify whether it was good or bad. Majority of respondents (44.67%) had the opinion that the decision of demonetisation was not a right decision taken at the right time. But some ( 37.33%) had supported the statement.

Majority of the respondents have agreed that the media have influenced the opinions of people on the issue of demonetisation. Most (54%) have totally agreed with it while some (8.67%) have very strongly agreed with the decision. A few (16.67%) have disagreed and some (5.33%) have strongly disagreed with the statement provided related to it.

## Summary of Findings

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Major inferences from both the content analysis and survey are given below;

1. Majority of people still depend newspapers to access daily news.
2. The decision of demonetisation had caused much inconvenience and hardships to people in their personal or professional sphere.
3. Majority of the people did not think that it was a right decision taken at the right time.
4. Majority of the people also had the view that the decision of demonetisation could have been announced after prior preparations and consultations.
5. Print media provided a huge coverage to the news on and about the decision of demonetisation.
6. The selected newspapers have supported the decision by the government on demonetisation.
7. The media played a major role in influencing the opinion of people on demonetisation.

## Conclusion

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The main purpose of the study was to identify the impact of demonetisation and the role of media in creating opinion among the public. The research has revealed that demonetisation had a significant impact on the society in different spheres. People perceive the changes as both positive and negative but majority have opined

that the decision of demonetisation could have been announced after prior preparations and consultations. People were sensitive to the decision of demonetisation and they had their own opinions on this issue. People had lot of hardships as a result of this decision and they felt it could have been done with diligent planning. Only a minor section of respondents felt it as a good move while majority opposed the view. It could have been implemented successfully by minimizing the difficulties faced by common people. The study also revealed that media exert major influence on opinion formation among people on the decision of demonetisation. The inferences from this study could be well be linked with existing theories like agenda setting and priming. People gained information about various aspects of demonetisation through different media forms and newspapers have played a pivotal role. Mediated content in turn influenced people to concentrate their attention more on such issues and formal and informal discussions based on such content led them to arrive at firm viewpoints on the impacts of demonetization.

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**standpoint.**

A thick red horizontal bar underlining the word "standpoint."



# **DevjiBhimji - The Unsung hero of Malayalam Journalism**

■ Dr S. ANILKUMAR\*

History is riddled with the stories of heroes and zeros. Unsung heroes and unnoticed sagas have no place in the almanac. Yeoman's contributions of pioneers were brutally suppressed and doyens were overlooked, maybe due to the priorities of the chronicle writers. The history of Malayalam Journalism too is not an exception with Devji Bhimji, a Gujarathi who devoted his entire life for the upliftment of Malayalam Journalism couldn't find an appropriate place in the annals. Devji was the founder of the first ever complete Malayalam Newspaper, 'Keralamithram', during the year 1881.

Devji Bhimji, basically from Kutch migrated to the land of Malayalam in search of a livelihood at the age of 10 in 1839. He did diverse jobs including that of a sales boy and an accountant with wholesale merchants and finally became the owner of the first modern printing press in the princely state of Kochi. He later became instrumental in the production of the first complete Malayalam Newspaper.

The expedition of Devji towards the wonderful world of

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\*Dr. S. Anilkumar is the Regional Director & Academic Head of the IIMC, Kottayam

printing initiated with the beginning of 'Malabar Printing Company Ltd' in 1860, in collaboration with two other persons and the launching of the first English Newspaper 'Western Star' from Cochin, in 1862. The Company acquired a big Colombian press and metallic types from Mumbai. Charle Lasson, the founder editor of 'Madras Mail' had been appointed as its Editor. Gradually the owner trio launched yet another publication, a translated version of 'western star' titled 'Paschimatharaka' during August 1864.

Later Devji withdrew from the partnership and decided to start his own printing press. He visualised a huge business opportunity in the publishing sector and procured a printing press in 1867. It was named as 'Keralamithram' and he started publishing books like *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Sreekrishna Karnamrutam* etc. "Devji can be considered as the doyen of the publishing industry in Malayalam," wrote Perunna K.N.Nair, noted media historian and journalist of yesteryears.

Corruption and nepotism was at its peak during the time and being a philanthropist Devji decided to launch a newspaper for the welfare of the public. But starting a newspaper was not an easy task for him. Even before the initiation of the newspaper, the authorities of the royal regime slapped an order directing to surrender all the printed matter published so far by his press.

The order of pre-censorship slapped by the royal regime was totally unexpected. Devji repeatedly requested the authorities to revoke the order, but in vain. The regime was so hostile and issued still another order also directing the publisher to close down the press and all allied publications. Devji approached all officers of the princely state, from Tehsildar to Diwan without any result. Finally, he approached Mr. Henry Nevin, the then British Resident for Travancore and Cochin with a mercy plea. He was convinced and declared the order as null and void.

The highhandedness of the royal regime was a shot in the arm for Devji. It strengthened his commitment to champion the cause of the common man and fight against corruption and nepotism. The rampant corruption prevailed in the judiciary and miseries experienced by the citizens of the princely



state thereon was the major reason that prompted Devji to start his newspaper writes, Mangalathu Kunjunni Achan, the second editor of 'Keralamithram'. It was this commitment that actually invited the wrath of the Government, opined Sri Paravoor Gopalapillai in Bhashaposhini.

Finally, on the first of January 1881, the first copy of his newspaper, Keralamithram (Friend of Kerala) was released. It was a weekly newspaper published on every Saturday uninterruptedly. The first editor chosen by Devji for his newspaper was none other than the young Kandathil Varghese Mappillai, the founder editor of Malayala Manorama.

The inefficiency of the government machinery, denial of justice to common man and difficulties faced by the citizens became topics for the newspaper. Literary articles, book reviews, and news analysis made the newspaper a favourite among the subscribers.

Sober style of presentation was the hallmark of 'Keralamithram'. Without malice, without fear or favour, Keralamithram became the real mithram of Keralites. For DevjiBhimji, 'facts are sacred and comments are gentle. But that didn't mean that the government machinery became soft and gentle towards the newspaper.

As the newspaper was a joy to read, the readers also held it in high esteem and regard. Mahakavi Ulloor, the great poet of yester years and author of the acclaimed '*Bhasha Sahityacharithram*' also appreciated this newspaper and jotted "I was a regular reader of Kerlamithram, right from my childhood. It is very difficult to explain the bliss and thrill that I experienced while going through this paper. With this newspaper, Devji Bhimji has truly enriched the Malayalam Language".

Sri. P. Govindapillai, the famous litterateur, during the period mentioned. "No other newspaper could provide special news and events like Kerlamithram".

A special pull-out/supplement was also circulated under the title 'Kerala mithropapathram' (supplement of Keralamithram) from 1884 which dealt with topics such as literature, agriculture, education, medicine, science and

commerce. Kerala mithropapathram can be regarded as the first newspaper supplement in Malayalam. In appreciation of his dignified journalistic practices, social service and philanthropic activities, the Maharaja of Travancore invited Devji to the royal durbar at Thiruvananthapuram and presented a *Veerasrunmghala, anki, and ankavastra*.

However, the adventure of Devji and the saga of Keralamitram were buried unceremoniously in the conundrum of history, because of reasons unknown.

The whole state of Cochin mourned his death on 27 October 1894. Even the Prince of Cochin expresses his grief as 'the loss is irreparable'. Malayala Manorama in its editorial categorically said, "Devji Bhimji was the first non-European to undertake printing in Malayalam".

## Maxwell - His blood, sweat and tears

■ Mr P. J. JOSE\*

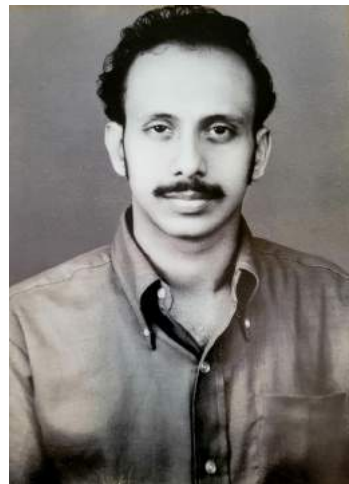
Half a century ago an ambitious young journalist, a gold medallist in Journalism from the Mysore University joined the Kerala University as a Lecturer in Journalism. His mission was to establish a Department of Journalism in the University and to start a post-graduate degree program in Journalism.

He was a native of Ernakulam belonging to the Anglo-Indian community, simple and straightforward in his manners, exuding the spirit of journalism from tip to toe. His entry to the capital of Kerala, also the capital of intrigues from time immemorial, on the wings of enthusiasm and optimism later turned out to be the beginning of a catastrophic end to his career, dreams and life.

This man was Mr. Maxwell Fernandez, the founder of the Department of Journalism in University of Kerala. It is heartening to know that the alumni of the Department have conferred on him the title of Professor, which, if he were alive, would have considered as an insult rather than an honour.

A brief description of his appearance and manners would not be inappropriate at this stage.

When I first met him in the year 1978, he was in his late



*Sri Maxwell Fernandez (Late)  
Founder Head of the Dept.  
of Communication and  
Journalism, UoK*

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\*Mr. P. J. Jose retired as Joint Registrar, University of Kerala in 2001. He was consultant in a Govt. run educational Institution from 2001-2017.

twenties. A man of medium height and fair complexion with an exceedingly disarming smile. He is more often seen struggling to push back a few strands of hair dangling on his forehead with a receding hairline. Although an Anglo-Indian, his Malayalam accent was spotless without the influence of any regional dialect. His permanent accompaniments were a Lambretta scooter and a waterproof blazer coat. A long gold chain visible on the side of his neck has its own story to tell, later on.

The first year of service (the honeymoon period) was a nightmare for him. Assisted only by a typist and a peon he was compelled to complete the task of finding accommodation for the Department in the Kariavattom campus, acquiring furniture and equipment and setting up a library with books in all the disciplines relevant to Journalism and Communication. As we know, in the public service, accountability counts more than accomplishments. If you spent public money in the most honest manner but fail to account for the last penny in the prescribed format, you will be branded as a blackguard, a fraudster or a cheat. As someone might have warned him of the danger involved in financial transactions, he set out to find a suitable person to entrust the administrative work with confidence. That search ended with me. I still wonder what quality he found in me without any previous interaction with me. Anyhow that was the beginning of a strong relationship between us and I could share most of his dreams, aspirations and apprehensions.

He could set up all the necessary infrastructure before the course started according to the schedule fixed at his time of appointment. Problems began to crop up one after another with the sanctioning of the course. Everyone in position of authority had his own axe to grind. The initial intake for the course was fixed at 25 seats, a number quite unwieldy for a Department with one teacher. The admission was based on an entrance test conducted by the Department. Pressures mounted on to manipulate the test results to accommodate nominees of local chieftains and media celebrities. I still wonder how he could withstand such pressures without deviating from the right path! A famous media person even threatened to manhandle him for not heeding to his recommendation.

It was planned that classes are to be conducted using the services of guest lecturers from the departments and senior media professionals. They cannot be compelled to come to Kariavattom and engage classes unless adequately compensated. But he succeeded in engaging eminent teachers from universities outside Kerala and leading journalists from the media. The University provided a revolving fund to meet such expenses and the replenishment of the spent amount

was subject to elaborate and time consuming formalities. Such delay often resulted in cash crunch and he had to mobilize his personal resources to overcome such situations. The first victim of such casualty was his gold chain that adorned the vault of the bank manager in the Kariavattom campus more often than the bosom of our protagonist.

As stated earlier, the first batch consisted of 25 students including 5 selected from working journalists. The average age of the students in the class exceeded the age of the teacher and the general attitude of the class was hostile and threatening to the young teacher. One can imagine the distress of the teacher in front of a group ready to pounce upon him and tear him apart if he commits any mistake inadvertently.

In spite of all the adverse circumstances, the first batch of students had the best possible instructions and facilities that will ever remain a dream for the subsequent batches. They had access to the latest books on journalism and Communication, audio video equipment, teleprinter service and training in the production of journals in Malayalam and English. History will testify how fortunate the first batch of students were!

Proceeding any further with the story without mentioning the financial background of Sri.Maxwell Fernandez wouldn't help in understanding his sad predicament. As Lecturer in the Department his take home salary was around Rs.850 p.m. He was staying in the Teacher's Hostel in the Kariavattom campus. A lion's share of his salary was spent for fuel charges and for entertaining guests of the Department. His typical day begins with a trip to the city either in search of guest lecturers or for arranging transportation for those already agreed to take classes on that day. Most of the evenings were also spent on the same errands and on visiting the residences of University officials for building rapport with them for the speedy disposal of files related to the Department. Without the financial support of his sister, his survival during that period would have been impossible.

Once the Department firmly was established in the campus, many aspirants for the academic posts in the Department, especially those who have served as visiting Professors and teachers began to play their cards to down their anchors here. The number of his antagonists increased in proportion to the increase in the activities in the Department. The presence of the founder of the Department would overshadow their prospects, they might have thought. This resulted in a series of conflicts with persons who had vested interest in the future of the Department.

We have read about the stupendous task undertaken by Prince Bhageeratha to bring the holy river Ganga to earth from

heaven. He propitiated Lord Shiva to bear the impact of the mighty force of the descent of the river by allowing the river to fall on Shiva's tress, which would otherwise have destroyed the earth. He later had to appease the wrath of many sages who were offended by the caprices of the river along its course towards the destination. In a microscopic level the installation of the Department can be compared to the descent of Ganga, but there was no Shiva but Maxwell alone had to bear the impact on his balding head and he could in no way appease the wrath of the offended feudels. The enormous pressure that devastated his mental and physical health. He resigned his job and returned to his native place without saying formal adieu to anyone.

Then one may wonder why a man of such caliber and enthusiasm with commitment for the cause of furthering journalism education suddenly disappeared from the scene and accepted a position in a parochial newspaper for biological survival. Everyone connected with him including the first batch of students is well aware of the circumstances that led to his tragic resignation from the Department and ultimately from life. What he lacked in his career was the support of a political godfather and the awareness that the persons who benefitted most with the establishment of the Department would stab him from the back.

#### PS

*As one one of the distinguished visiting faculty once remarked, I was 'his Man Friday' throughout my association with him. I still keep a tomb for him in my mind with the epitaph:*

**‘കപടലോകത്തിലാത്മാർത്ഥമാരെ  
ഹൃദയമുണ്ടായതാണെൻ പരാജയം’**

# Understanding Media and the Polysemic Contours of Political Accountability

■ Dr SIMI VARGHESE\*

## Introduction

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Joe Biden's speech after swearing in as the 46<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America at the Capitol on January 20, 2021 reverberates with the quintessential facets of Political Accountability. 'Each of us has a duty and responsibility as citizens, as Americans, and especially as leaders – leaders who have pledged to honour our constitution and protect our nation – to defend the truth and to defeat the lies' - the most fantastic and crystal clear explanation of Political Accountability hitherto spoken by the helmsman of a country. Political Accountability has toppled down empires and nurtured many as national satraps. In China, the dimensions of Political Accountability are different from that of India. An accountable government allows its citizens to participate in its decision making. As Karl Popper

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*\*Dr Simi Varghese is an Associate Professor at the Dept of Communication and Journalism  
Prajyoti Niketan College, Pudukad, Thrissur*

opined, contrary to dictatorship, democracy enables people to control their leaders and to oust them without kick-starting a revolution. Political Accountability strengthens a politician to make choices on behalf of the people. The people in turn are entrusted with the ability to reward or sanction the politician. Political Accountability gathers momentum when the government officials act in the best interests of society or face consequences. Just like a chameleon changing colours, Political Accountability attains different hues in different countries.

Tracing the etymology, 'accountability' stems from late Latin 'acomptare' meaning to account, a prefixed form of computare, to calculate, which in turn has been derived from 'putare' which means to reckon. The word was first developed in ancient Egypt. The phrase Political Accountability is when a politician makes choices on behalf of the people and the people have the ability to reward or sanction the politician. In representative democracies, citizens delegate power to elected officials through periodic elections which help them to represent or act in their interest. It is the responsibility or obligation of government officials to act in the best interests of society or face consequences.

Political Accountability attains different dimensions in different countries. In China, Political Accountability is different from that in western countries. Communist Party discipline is the bedrock of Chinese Political Accountability and it thoroughly investigates the actions of those who violate Political Responsibility. The North Korean hue attached to Political Accountability is slightly different. North Korea denies basic freedoms in the country and operates a network of political prisons and forced labour camps which systematically brutalize and often result in the deaths of those the government accuses of crimes. Kim Jong Un subjugates the core values of freedom, lock, stock and barrel. The investigations by the UN Commission of Inquiry unraveled that the North Korean government had committed systematic human right abuses of unforeseen magnitude hitherto seen anywhere in the contemporary world – extermination, murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, sexual violence etc.

Indian democracy is unparalleled by most institutional



standards – coalition politics, competitive elections, free press and fair judiciary. Indian hospitals, schools, police stations, local courts and water supply offices etc function in such a way as the practical translation of institutional ideals make the Indian experience in many aspects. But the dismal picture is on the other side as the incompetent doctors prescribing life-threatening treatments at health centres, apathetic engineers abstaining from their basic duties, corrupt officials in government offices, abuse of power by the police department, lack of augmentation and maintenance of roads etc bear ample testimony to the rampant corruption, absenteeism, indifference, incompetence, or outright failures in the implementation and delivery of services. The failures point to the structural crisis of accountability.

### **Characteristic features of Accountability**

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- a. It cannot be delegated like responsibility
- b. It cannot be reduced
- c. It is always upward
- d. It is unitary

Authority and responsibility always trickle down where as accountability goes upwards. A subordinate is accountable to his boss above him and he should be accountable to only one boss. More than one boss generates confusion and friction. Different bosses give different orders and expect varied types of performances.

### **Accountability Standards**

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The extent of responsibility assigned and authority delegated decide the extent of accountability of the subordinate. The subordinates are accountable only for the acts done by them within the limits of their authority.

### **Benefits of Political Accountability**

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- a. Time and effort spend on unproductive behaviour and distracting activities have been eliminated
- b. When people are accountable for their actions, they are

effectively taught to value their work.

- c. Accountability enables the team member to become skilled and confident.

Democracy is not always the best mode of governance, but the most preferred mode of governance. Democracy is not proven as the best mode of government since a number of autocratic/military junta led countries have gained better pace in development than democratic countries in history. For eg;- the Gulf countries. Nonetheless, democratic form of government is the most preferred mode of governance across the world. Though democracy is not the best option, it is the most preferred one. The reason being the perfect manifestation of Political Accountability in democratic governance. Dreams and aspirations of the people of a nation get better addressed in democracy than any other mode of governance, which speaks volumes of political accountability.

Political Accountability is the essential feature of democracy and it cannot flourish without democracy. Democracy is the globally accepted form of government. More than 165 countries of the world have democratic system. Though functioning of democracy varies from country to country, the social and economic stabilities are significantly relevant.

### **Vertical Accountability**

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Vertical Accountability is the support and control exercised by the electorate via voting mechanisms and the actions performed by civil societies to limit the actions of elected officials. This role is largely undertaken by citizens (voters and civil society) and media.

### **Horizontal Accountability**

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Horizontal Accountability includes legally empowered agencies of the state willing to take action on unlawful actions.

Nonetheless, an invisible but invincible third eye emerges viewing both Vertical Accountability and Horizontal Accountability and the over-arching population as a whole.....

This is the fourth palladium of democracy after Judiciary, Executive and the Legislature, the MEDIA. Media performs three key roles in promoting Political Accountability.

- a. Watchdog function
- b. Civic forum
- c. Agenda setter

A free, fair and objective media can never be viewed as a luxury that elite countries alone can afford. It should be always viewed as a requisite and indispensable ingredient of representative democracy. Media entered the scene around the 1780s with the introduction of newspapers and since then it has matured by leaps and bounds. Media has definitely played a crucial role in moulding young minds. Media often play a greater role in enhancing the economic and political development of citizens in any country in the world. It creates a broad range of information and communication to stimulate citizens on the various developmental issues in their country. Media is an important factor in promoting democracy and the Rule of Law. It should be given the opportunity of freedom of expression and to deliver messages to the people without being oppressed or intimidated by the authorities of the respective countries or any entities that have the authority to prevent information from the people.

Democracy is meaningless without a free, neutral and active media. Truly, without media or free press, democracy cannot be successful. Democracy and media go hand in hand. Media strengthens not only the democratic values and norms, but also quickens the speed of development. Recent years witness greater interface between the common man and media. It is the media which has become the part of the life of those people of India, who are mostly dependent on it for various wants including information and entertainment. Media keeps the people awakened and there is no denying the fact that it has become one of the major instruments of social change. Amartya Sen sees the media watchdog not just against corruption, but also against disaster. 'There has never been a famine in a functioning multiparty democracy. A free press and the practice of democracy contribute greatly to bringing out information that can have a enormous impact

on policies for famine prevention....a free press and an active political opposition constitute the best early-warning system a country threatened by famine could have.'

The role of media as 'detective' is a critical adjunct to the role of the press as public watchdog. Controversially, the press can also play the role of democracy and good governance advocate. James Wolfensohn of World Bank says: A key ingredient of an effective development strategy is knowledge transmission and enhanced transparency. To reduce poverty, we must liberate access to information and improve the quality of information. People with more information are empowered to make better choices.

Free Press is not a luxury. It forms the vortex of equitable development. The media can expose corruption. They can keep a check on public policy by throwing a spotlight on government action. This helps people voice diverse opinions on governance and reform and help build public consensus to bring about necessary changes. Media act as a catalyst for democracy and development, helping to make public participation meaningful. If media is honest and committed in its job, democracy will definitely function more efficiently. The loopholes present in any democratic system can certainly be plugged to the fullest satisfaction of the people.

## Case Studies

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### Delhi

Constant tussles and tangles with BJP government help Kejriwal raise his stature from being a state satrap to a national leader, and show that he can stand up to Modi's might. Amid the rising political heat in the capital at that time, with patients being turned away from hospitals because of lack of oxygen and ventilator, the Chief Minister was trying to tell voters the shortages were not his government's faults but a result of the Centre's uncaring attitude to the restrictions states like Uttar Pradesh and Haryana put on the movement of oxygen trucks to Delhi. Indirectly, he was trying to manifest his Political Accountability to the people of Delhi, whom he has to approach for the next elections.

### **Kerala**

The Leftist Government assumes the reins of Kerala a second time whether by Kit Politics or not, they got the green signal from the people for their Political Accountability. Political Accountability of Mr Pinarayi Vijayan and team was accepted by the populace of Kerala. It happened for the first time in the 64-year history of Kerala, a political party getting its second term to rule.

### **West Bengal**

Assessing the state of affairs, though the BJP targeted West Bengal heavily during campaigning, the state was comfortably held by the incumbent Ms Mamata Banerjee, a fierce Modi critic. What happened in West Bengal? Trinamool Congress won more than 200 seats in the 294 seat Assembly. For the third time, Ms Mamata Banerjee has been exalted to the helm of affairs as the Chief Minister. Several reasons go in for this success. She is also India's only female Chief Minister. The BJP had pulled out all the stops for electioneering with Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi leading its campaign from the front. Despite the massive blitzkrieg campaign by the BJP targeting Mamata's 10 years of rule since 2011, TMC swept Bengal for a third time. Her decision to contest from Nandigram manifested her killer instinct, an attitude considered a must for a leader, irrespective of the fact that BJP played its bait on Suwendu Adhikari, once a Mamata confidante and now a BJP leader who is also known as a local Nandigram hero.

### **Tamil Nadu**

The victory by MK Stalin led DMK represents a generational shift in Tamil Nadu. Several factors have contributed to the success of DMK.

#### **a. Anti-incumbency against AIADMK**

Political parties clamour that Edappadi Palaniswami lacked the charisma to put on a credible fight against Stalin, the fact remains that the AIADMK had been in power in the state for last 10 years. Anti-incumbency, did set in specially in the absence of a towering personality like Jayalalitha.

However, the results clearly indicated that the AIADMK is not a spent force.

The party appears to have retained the support of its core support base in the western parts of the state and parts of South Tamil Nadu.

## **International Case Studies**

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### **Ghana**

Though high level corruption and low levels of transparency plagued Ghana during 2011-2013, a comparative series of public attitude surveys covering 35 countries had been conducted by Afrobarometer survey. They analyzed the system and people on which rests the responsibility to hold the government accountable. Voters, the media and political parties - all play an important role in holding leaders accountable by examining, questioning and utilizing government policies.

The media is also considered by most Ghanaians as another key watch dog institution. Citizens who think that their representatives are corrupt might also have less trust on the state which undermines the quality of democracy because citizens might disengage from participating in politics and become politically apathetic. Afrobarometer survey suggests that as specific active members of the democratization process, Ghanaians want their leaders to be accountable. Corruption or at least the perception of it as being widespread among various public officials bears testimony to the need of a nation-wide campaign and political will on the part of those in authority to fight this menace.

### **Tanzania**

A study was conducted in Tanzania to gauge the underpinnings of political accountability there. The study has been conducted by a consortium led by Oxford Policy Management and UK comprising the Christian Michaelsen Institute, Bergen. The study analyzed the expectations which Tanzanian citizens have with respect to power-holders and with respect to their own entitlements and the channels they use. The study examined the local accountability

landscape in more depth emphasizing the relation between formal and informal accountability channels and between elected and appointed officials. It included two elements – a micro-survey and an ethnographic survey. The survey gauged the responses of 90 people in three regions of Tanzania and assembled quantitative and qualitative data on citizen's perceptions with respect to accountability and entitlements utilizing both a formal questionnaire and focus group interviews. The ethnographic study measured their accountability mechanisms in practice. It selected a thickly populated district of Arumeru and a team of eight researchers comprising six Tanzanians and two Europeans.

Political strategists and academic literature suggest that accountability mechanisms generally operate according to a logic woven around three criteria:

- a. Transparency
- b. Answerability
- c. Controllability

Nonetheless, politics has always been the business of the powerful – patriarchs, nobles, bureaucrats, landlords who possess power and status. Effective mechanisms of accountability speak volumes of the quality of democracy. These powerful systems of accountability definitely hinder governments from executing draconian policies. Accountability does not always rests with obeying laws or maintaining international standards but it is strongly fortified with institutional objectives and public consciousness.

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# **Role of Doordarshan Malayalam in promoting Malayalam cinema: A Historic overview**

■ Mr DEEPAK NAIR G\*

Dr M. S. HARIKUMAR#

## **Introduction**

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Nowadays, it has become impossible to spend a day without being surrounded by moving photographic images. When the still photographs began to move, the movie came into existence. Cinema as a scientific invention came into existence in 1888, when a French inventor named Louis Le Prince filmed the movement of a horse carriage while it was passing through the Leeds Bridge in England. Louis Le Prince, then, might not have imagined that his invention would one day influence the world. Now the cinema has become a popular form of entertainment worldwide.

The origins of Indian cinema can be traced back to 1896, when Harishchandra Bhatvadekar, popularly known as Save Dada, filmed a wrestling match held in Mumbai. According to officially accepted film history, India saw the birth of its first feature film in 1913 by the title 'Raja Harishchandra.'

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\*Mr Deepak Nair G is a Ph.D scholar at the Department of Communication and Journalism, UoK

#Dr. M.S Harikumar is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Communication and Journalism, UoK

## The Beginnings of Cinema in Kerala

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Malayalam cinema has contributed a lot to the Cinema of India in the realms of art and technology. Many prominent filmmakers from the state have won worldwide accolades, and the first Indian 3D Film, 'My Dear Kuttichathan', came out from this state.

In the year 1907, Kerala state witnessed the first cinema exhibition. Trichur, now popularly known as the state's cultural capital, was the venue. An industrialist named K.V. Joseph made the projection possible in a tent with a hand-cranked projector. In 1913, K.V. Joseph built the first-ever permanent movie theatre in Trichur with an electrically operated film projector and christened as 'Jose Electrical Bioscope'. Soon cinema halls began to be established in other parts of the state. Initially, viewers enjoyed silent films made in Europe accompanied by Malayalam commentaries by explicators. The first Malayalam movie, 'Vigathakumaran,' was released in 1928; JC Daniel, a doctor with no previous experience in film making, was behind this venture; he is regarded as the father of Malayalam cinema. The movie Alam Ara in the year 1931 took Indian cinema to the talkie era. After seven years, in 1938, Malayalam cinema saw the birth of 'Balan', the first-ever Malayalam talkie. Until 1947, Malayalam films came out from studios in Tamil Nadu, with Tamilians as the producers.

Malayalam cinema has now completed ninety years of existence and has many accolades under its belt. In the digital era, Malayalam cinema has been churning out an average of 120 films a year. In the current period of unfettered competition from various Media, box office returns alone cannot guarantee a film's profit. Most of the films reach a breakeven point only because of the hefty sums Malayalam satellite channels pay to buy the Film's telecast rights. In addition, channels telecast songs from the latest movies and produce shows intended to persuade the public to visit cinema halls.

The proliferation of Multiplexes, wide release, advancements in digital technology, new ways of storytelling, big-budget productions have all taken Malayalam cinema to new heights. Now Malayalam cinema is released worldwide.

## **Doordarshan Malayalam**

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Television has an important place in our daily lives, considered one of the cheapest forms of audio-visual entertainment. In 1920, experimental television broadcasting started in the United States of America. On September 15, 1959, television came to India with innovative transmission from Delhi. The regular daily broadcast began in 1965 as part of All India Radio. In 1976 Television acquired a distinct identity after being separated from All India Radio and was renamed Doordarshan. At present, Doordarshan is one of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting media units, Government of India.

The history of Doordarshan in Kerala began with the commissioning of a low power transmitter at Thiruvananthapuram on November 19 1982; the aim was to telecast Delhi Asian Games. From January 1, 1985, Doordarshan Kendra at Kudappanakunnu started telecasting Malayalam programmes daily for 3 hours. In the beginning, Malayalam programs could be watched only by those who reside in and around Thiruvananthapuram city. At present, Doordarshan Kendra Thiruvananthapuram, with three production centres, currently produces and telecasts 168 hours of Malayalam programmes per week. As a Public Service Broadcaster (PSB), DD Malayalam always ensures telecasting an excellent blend of education, information, development, and entertainment programmes.

## **Doordarshan Malayalam and Cinema**

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Doordarshan Kendra, Trivandrum, an authentic precursor of the revival of cultural traditions of the state, is a part of Doordarshan National channel. As far as film exhibition goes, Doordarshan wears the twin cap of entertainer and propagator of good cinema. In its latter's role, DD Malayalam is more popular. Till the year 1982, Malayalees had to go to theatres to experience the magic of the cinematic medium. After the arrival of television, visual media experiences were within the reach of their fingertips. They could watch movies at their homes, which they had to depend cinema halls earlier. In addition to weekly cinema screenings, they could also enjoy various television genres based on the same visual grammar of cinema like documentaries, telefilms, advertisements, serials, and film songs daily.

## Weekend Films on TV

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Thiruvananthapuram Doordarshan Kendra followed telecasting a Malayalam movie on Saturday evenings during its initial days. The first movie screened through Doordarshan Malayalam Kendra was 'Thurakatha Vaathil' (1970), directed by P.Bhaskaran, on January 5 1985. Along with this, Keralites had the opportunity to watch Hindi movies telecast from Delhi on Sunday evenings. In addition, National Doordarshan Kendra had a scheme of telecasting award-winning regional language films every Sunday at 2 pm. These movies were in languages other than Hindi. At that time, Doordarshan was the first and last resort for the ordinary public, who did not have access to Film society screenings and regional language films other than Hindi. Keralites had the opportunity to acclimatise with the artistic masterpieces from other Indian languages like Bengali, Assamese, Kannada, Oriya and appreciate the works of Indian masters like Satyajit Ray, Girish Kasarvalli, Mrinal Sen.. to name a few.

## Late-night films

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During the late 1980s and early nineties, every Friday night after 11 pm, National Doordarshan Kendra showed Internationally acclaimed movies by world-renowned filmmakers like Bergman, Kurosawa, Fellini, etc. Many film lovers could familiarise themselves with the works of international masters, which they had no opportunity before. Along with die-hard cinephiles ordinary public then showed a great interest in watching those movies. These late-night shows inspired many to join film societies and learn more about cinema.

## Telecasting twice a day

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After the arrival of commercial Satellite channels and facing stiff competition from various quarters, Doordarshan Malayalam now telecast one movie twice daily at 3 pm and 10 pm. Films from all genres, box office grosses, middle cinema, parallel cinema, black and white classics find a place in the daily telecast

The selection and telecast of films through Kendra happen through the following steps.

- There will be notifications in major Malayalam and English

dailies inviting Films from Producers interested in one time telecast of their films through the channel. Along with the publication of the notification, there will be announcements regarding the same through the channel too.

- Channel fixes the year limit for movies. For example, Films released after 2000 will only be eligible. Films with 'A' and 'UA' certificates will also be not eligible.
- The Kendra will constitute a preview committee with eminent members from various fields to preview submitted films.
- After preview, the committee will shortlist and grade films based on merit and overall artistic quality.
- The committee will grade Films A, B+, B and C grades. 'C' graded ones will not be eligible for the telecast.
- 'A' graded films get rupees One lakh, B+ films get Seventy-five thousand rupees, and B graded films will get a sum of rupees 50,000 for a telecast.
- The right holders will receive a payment within sixty days of the telecast of their movie.

### **Film production by Doordarshan Kendra:**

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During the late eighties, Doordarshan Kendra made effort in producing Malayalam films having high aesthetic quality. For this purpose, they employed National award-winning Malayalam film directors. They were provided with adequate funds to bring out their work of art. Most of the films made as a part of this plan enjoyed high critical acclaim, some of them went on to receive awards in various categories at the state and national level, and many of them found birth in reputed International film festivals.

### **Films produced by Doordarshan**

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#### **Mathilukal (1989 )**

Director – Adoor Gopalakrishnan.

Based on the autobiographical novel by Vaikom Muhammed Basheer.

It was screened at the prestigious Venice film festival. At National Film awards in 1990. won four (Best Director, Actor, Audiography, Regional Film)

**Kadavu (1991)**

Director- MT Vasudevan Nair.

Based on SK Pottakkad's story 'Kadathu Thoni'.

Screened in numerous international film festivals, won the special jury award at Singapore International film festival, Asia Future Prize at Tokyo international film festival, Two national awards (Best feature film Malayalam, Best screenplay ), Three Kerala state film awards (Best feature film, screenplay and Child artist )

**Unnikkuttanu Joli Kitti (1989)**

Director- V.R.Gopinath

Based on VR Gopinath's own story

The movie had won an award for Best Film on other social issues at the National level.

**Money Order (1990)**

Director-PN Menon

Based on M.Govindan's story by the same name

**Oru Yathrayude Anthyam (1991)**

Director- KG George

Based on Parappuram's story by the same name.

**Marattam (1990 )**

Directed by G.Aravindan

Scripted by Kavalam Narayana Panikker.

By 2007, Doordarshan Malayalam took steps to adapt short stories of Thakazhi Sivasanakra Pillai for the big screen and entrusted Filmmaker Adoor Gopalakrishnan with the directorial charge. 'Naalu Pennungal' (2007) was the first film and the second film 'Oru Pennum Randaanum' came out in 2008. Both films possessed a four-chapter format based on independent short stories by Thakazhi. Later, Adoor Gopalakrishnan released these films in Cinema halls as 'Naalu Pennungal' & 'Oru Pennum Randu Aanum'. For 'Naalu Pennungal', Adoor

Gopalakrishnan won Best Director and B. Ajithkumar, the best Editor awards at the National level.' Oru Pennum Randu Aanum' fetched the best director award for Adoor at the state level in 2009.

Telefilms are often regarded as miniature versions of feature films. Since the initial stages, the channel had been telecasting telefilms made under its belt. The channel has also telecast on a sponsorship basis, many short films produced by outside producers.

By 2004 Doordarshan Malayalam undertook another scheme for adapting famous Malayalam literary works to Television screens under the scheme 'Kadha Saritha'. For this purpose, they provided funds to National and internationally reputed local filmmakers to adapt Malayalam literary masterpieces to television.

### **Telefilms made under the 'Kadha Sarith Sagaram' scheme**

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- Oru Vellapokkathil (Thakazhi ) –Director- Jayaraj,
- Yathrakkidayil (MP Narayana Pillai ) – Director-Shaji N Karun,
- Oru Manushyan (Basheer ) -Director- TV Chandran,
- Rachiyamma (Uroob) -Director- Harikumar,
- Thyagam (Parappuram ) –Director- KR Mohanan,
- Oru Koottukaran (Thakazhi ) -Director- Adoor Gopalakrishnan.
- Pankiyamma (Thakazhi)- Director- Adoor Gopalakrishnan.
- Ullurukkam ( Vaikom Muhammed Basheer) -Director- Shyama Prasad.

The second and third phases of Katha Saritha began in 2006 and 2008, respectively. In these phases, directing short films was entrusted to the staff producers of Doordarshan.

### **Telefilms that came out in this phase**

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- 'Sakunam' ( Kovilan/ 2006), Director- Baiju Chandran,
- 'Mothiram' (Karooor Neelakanda Pillai/ 2006), Director- MA Dileep,
- 'Prathiknjaa' (Kesavadev/ 2006 ), Director - A.Anwar,

- ‘Makal’ (Rajalakshmi/ 2006 )Director- GR Kannan,
- ‘Manushyaputhri’ ( Lalithambika Antharjanam/ 2006), Director-G.Jaya Kumar
- ‘Koorakal’ (E.Hari Kumar/2006 ), Director- K.Jyothish Kumar,
- ‘Aanineyum Pennineyum Kurichu’ ( M.Mukundan/ 2008), Director -KS Rajasekharan ),
- ‘Ramettan’ (T.Padmanabhan/2008), Director-K.Ananda Varma,
- ‘Driksakshi’ ( Madhavikutty/2008)Director-D.Rajan.

### **Film songs Programme**

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From the very initial stages they have been showing Malayalam film song programme ‘Chitrageetham’. This programme used to have a great fan flow. Although this programme has lost its charm after the arrival of numerous full-time entertainment satellite channels, Doordarshan still continues to telecast it.. Later the channel started another film song programme titled ‘Smrithilayam’ dedicated to films from the Black and White Era.

### **Interviews with film personalities**

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From the initial days itself, Kendra had the practice of inviting film personalities to the studio for interview programmes. All-time famous actors like Amitabh Bachchan, Dev Anand, Ashok Kumar, Jaya Bhaduri, Kamal Hassan had come as guests and shared their experiences for Keralites through Doordarshan. When there were no other channels, people were often glued to the Doordarshan channel to watch their idols talk. Almost all Malayalam stars and technicians have come as guests innumerable times for various programmes. Some of them have anchored various shows for the channel.

### **Film education**

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For the promotion of film education, Doordarshan has conducted a few quiz shows on cinema. When Malayalam cinema was nearing seventy, the channel telecast a series on the history of Malayalam cinema, running many episodes. Through this programme, viewers had the privilege of knowing the course of the history of Malayalam cinema. Most of the



interviews with film technicians had a tinge of film education in them when they shared their experiences with the medium of cinema.

Doordarshan has telecast many documentary programmes on eminent filmmakers. The most notable among them was 'Adoorinte Sarga Prapanjam', penned by famous film critic MF Thomas and directed by Baiju Chandran. This documentary deeply analyses the art and craft of Master filmmaker Adoor Gopalakrishnan and makes a trip through his movies.

After the death of Satyajit Ray in 1992, Kendra produced a programme on the art, craft and films of Ray. Prominent Malayalam filmmakers, technicians and actors shared their experience watching Ray's movies and how it has influenced them.

In addition to this, Doordarshan has a fair share of comedy programmes that use clips from movies, programmes for promoting newly released films, film quizzes etc.

### Coverage of film events

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Since 1985, the Doordarshan Malayalam channel has been covering state film awards. The channel had done a live telecast of opening and closing ceremonies of the International Film Festival of India, when Kerala was its venue, in 1988 and 1997.

The International Film festival of Kerala (IFFK) is nearing twenty-five years. During these years, the channel has covered the opening and closing ceremonies of the festival, except one at Kozhikode. During IFFK, the channel does curtain-raisers and daily round-up of the festival. Serious film lovers find it a great treat.

### Conclusion

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As a policy, only 28 % of the telecast time is spent on entertainment by Doordarshan. Films, comedy shows, film-based programmes, plays, programmes on art find a place in this category. Hence Doordarshan Malayalam is not able to give more importance to films and film-based programmes like other commercial satellite channels.

Till the arrival of other Malayalam satellite channels, Doordarshan Malayalam enjoyed a monopoly, and its contents were well received by the public without any complaints. Many noted filmmakers credit their visual perception was shaped by Doordarshan Malayalam channel, and many film personalities

have begun their visual media career with Doordarshan. Many offbeat films could see the light of the day only through Doordarshan.

Most of the Malayalam satellite channels were reluctant to telecast films before 1980, but still, Doordarshan holds the practice of giving equal importance to the latest as well as old films on the menu. Currently, Fridays are devoted to the screening of black and white films.

Most of the films funded and produced by Doordarshan like 'Mathilukal' and 'Kadavu' are considered classics in Malayalam cinema. The channel has entertained and educated many through films and film-based programmes. Along with in house programmes, the channel has telecast film-based programmes from outside producers on a sponsored basis.

'Chitrageetham', the most popular film song programme, had satisfied the entertainment appetite of the previous generation. Film songs which were shown as advertisements through 'Chitrageetham' have persuaded many to view the full movie in theatres.

Recently the channel do not give prominence to programmes related to films due to the paucity of funds. Currently, Doordarshan has only one film based programme. In the coming days, it is believed that the Doordarshan Malayalam channel will give more importance to film-based programmes intended to inform, educate and entertain the masses.

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# **Fictionalizing television news in regional channels via augmented reality**

■ Dr RAJEEV MOHAN\*

## **Introduction**

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**N**ews from its essence demands to be realistic and authentic. Events reported as such without any bias and adhering to the core news values are of high importance. Technology evolving rapidly brings a regular transformation in its presentation. Malayalam television news channels always have shown a trend of cloning the latest visual structure adapted by one after the other. This study tries to dissect the technology elevated form of news presentations enhancing the content clarity. As the technological thrust is relied much it brings a change in the form and structure of the news presented. Content is enriched with fictional expressions that becomes quintessential for the meaning making enterprise. Performativity of the news presenter becomes decisive in the created ambience of the screen. Emulation of the form and structure of news presentation to performance ascertain its acceptance. Leading Malayalam

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*\*Dr Rajeev Mohan is an Asst. Professor at the Dept. of Media studies, Thunjathezhuthachan Malayalam Sarvakalasala, Tirur*

television news channels in Kerala like *Manorama news*, *Mathrubhumi* and *Media One* which are the early adapters of augmented reality news performing media houses are considered for the analysis.

Audience of television news are put to engage in receiving a new visual experience by the augmented reality entangled news production. Television news production in the regional language media also demands to imbibe the socio-political artefacts in and around. News is performed with authoritative facts supplemented with graphical representations, data inputs and virtual or augmented reality accompanied with background score. Another key element of change observed in the dissemination of news is that it needs to be performed all along. The current study take a look at some of such developments.

### **Technologically developed media content**

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News reading has been replaced with news presentation after the advent of private broadcast channels. In recent times it has evolved into news performance supported by the advanced technology. Augmented reality (AR) is the new form developed and used for such performing. From its origin augmented reality is widely applied for entertainment purpose especially on games for a three dimensional visual sensory experience. Television screen space is considered as a created frame setting an ambience for the news content. As a result presentation of news shifts its form to performance of news. Hence, augmented reality supplements or catalyzes the news events performed more rather than narrated or reported. The sole idea of news content is ideally expected to be non-fiction, realistic and away from gimmicks. 'The complexity of message was not supposed to be elaborated' (Watson, 2003: 38).

### **Performance, Performativity**

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Performance is reiterated as planned behavior or restored behavior which is done in repetition considering the ambience set for action. Aware about the context to

behave makes the performance possible (Schechner, Sep 28, 2014). Context and circumstance of the happening may be diluted as the presentation grabs more importance. The media content can be denoted as a 'text'. In the process of communication the meaning making perspective happens with the composition of different textual, audio and visual elements clubbed to it. 'Occupying the special attention of analysts in recent years is the relationship between texts, the way they interconnect, interweave and interact upon one another... What does the individual make of all this; how does one text influence another in the mind's eye and what part is played by the response of other individuals? (Watson & Hill, 2012: 306). 'Performatives often embody evaluative connotations, indicating approval or disapproval on the part of the encoder' (ibid: 222). The totality of message while adjoining several signs and symbols may lead to alter the actual desired meaning. Persona as described by Erving Goffman, is a way of an individual behaving as per the demand of a particular social situation. At different points the performance is influenced with one's self portrayal and in the case of media it can be out of a preset studio ambience. Performing the actualities happens after understanding the foreground and backdrop of the space assigned for it (Schechner, Sep 30, 2014). Beholding a conscious delivery of content the studio floor turns out to be a marked place conducting another staged performance.

### **News performers reaction as real to unreal**

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A distinguishing feature about news from other 'text' is that it regards to the reflection of actual events. Advanced technology in its application simplifies the news content and elevates it to an exaggerated exhibition of the content. Technology has made the communication prospects stronger and broader in the aspects of accessibility and reach. The form of the media type undergoes rapid evolution by the influence of technological development. Prominence of the message in news does not just stick in its imbibed meaning. It will be elevated to the way it is actually presented. Alike other non-news programs news also have been redefined in its presentation style. One major reason that could indirectly affect the plight is that the media organization as a whole is

funded by same corporate advertisers. So this may in return demand a form replicating each production regardless of its aimed objective. Transformation of the existing television screen space also influence the form and structure of news. Exaggerated versions of presentation enacted by the presenter of news leads to bring out a performer of news. Choice of elements included in the news content by and large depends on the digital tools available for its making. While performing in a pre assigned situation the realistic approach go diminishing to an unrealistic mode and thus the line of division between fiction and non-fiction fades in between.

News being performed and performativity upturns the actual socio-political situation. 'Digital cultures are performative cultures... conditioned by techno social processes and agencies, and they afford new possibilities for performative practices and interventions (Leeker, Schipper & Beyes, 2017). Considering the social behavior of the mass in the choice of dress, food habits and lifestyle depends highly on the social-cultural upbringing. This is where a news performer appears wearing coat and suit that extricate them from common onlooker. The private television channels are those influentially introduced the new attire and kinesis for its presenter. The position from sitting and reading was evolved to sitting and presenting finally into standing and performing recently. Reality is extended to the modern coinages like virtual reality and augmented reality both generated and amplified by the influence of technology. Unreal becomes a normal as such coinage tends to dissolve the gap in consideration with newest trend. All the counterpart media organizations set similar standards to emulate the other inclining to cope with the situation. The audience thus experiences the information as they experience similarly from non-news programs.

Similar time other channel programs like mega serials and reality shows otherwise leave a competition to the news channels. The sponsors and advertisers may also be interested in financing such performed news. The frame of the television screen transformed into wide screen adjusts itself into placing different objects that includes the performer. There is an 'acting' area assigned for the performer to stay

with and react leaving apart the augmented reality to fly, crawl or pop in. Thus the news performer entertains the spectator with actions and reactions.

## **Objects, Effects, Leitmotif**

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To sum up, technology enabled crystal clear viewing options of 4K full HD screens create more scope for multidimensional viewing experience of programs. Size, shape, texture and nature of objects regardless appear on the screen. Describing a war situation brings a Patton tank, regarding a sea affair brings a Ship, air related descriptions brings an Aircraft, rescue operation situation brings a fire force van etc. As well as this macro sized objects the micro sized things like eusocial insects, birds and microbial formations are also demonstrated. Effects contemplate both audio and visual in an augmented reality production. Special effects like smoke, clouds, snow, sound of helicopter, engine etc. are used to exaggerate the watching experience. The performer of news needs to react and interact to all factors surrounding so as to make the connection of everything heard and shown in the screen. Principle of leitmotif, demonstrating something is going to happen or already happened is applied in addition. It elevates the mood of the performance accompanied with back ground music either subtle or loud all along. Another optimum use of technology happens with the teleportation technique where conjectural procedure of transporting an object from one space to another is made possible. The reporter of news, interviewing persons behind news et al brought to the studio floor in front of the news performer making a feel of both facing together and conversing at the same space.

Audience of news experiences the show with high engagement to the audio visual sensory. News essence shifts from actuality to formalistic approach. Performativity of news performer starts with affirming and authoritative use of words, statements and language in total. As debated and discussed all times regarding the objectivity of news and the choice of truth the formation of a content widely gets affected by the political selection of the creator. Along with all these an authoritative statement, reiteration of ideas

and preset notions of the news organization together will decide the standpoint of a particular news item. Being more concentrated on the digital creation of news event it shifts the focus from informing to performing. Such news producing channels need to critically examine its production patterns that fictionalize the content for entertaining its presumed audience. This has to be done for the wellbeing of the knowledge society that develop ideas out of such visual treats.

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# Information flood adding to more narcotization?

■ Dr M. S. HARIKUMAR\*

## Introduction

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Time play a key role in communication processes as well as human behaviours. Social and cultural aspects are dynamic in nature and thus time bound. Many well established theories in Social science discipline have either experienced major shifts in focus or became totally irrelevant with the passage of time. Hence when we evaluate old theories in the light of new experiences the principle suppositions of such formulations may not hold right with the present day realities. But there are exceptions. The narcotic dysfunctions of media, a theory proposed by Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton in 1946 is an apt instance.

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\**Dr M. S. Harikumar* is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Communication and Journalism, UoK

As in the case of plenty of significant theories in mass communication, this too was catalysed in the American context post World War II. The term was first used in a journal article titled “Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action”, by Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton. Paul Lazarsfeld was an Austrian-born American sociologist and Robert Merton was considered as a founding father of modern sociology.

## Functions and Dysfunctions

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According to Merton, the functions of mass communication can either be manifest or latent. Manifest functions are the readily observed and intended consequences of the media. Latent functions on the other hand refer to the impacts that are not as easy to be observed or those which are unintended. In other words manifest functions are clearly visible to creators and users of mass media whereas latent functions are hidden and often unnoticed. Surveillance of the Environment, Correlation of parts of Society, Cultural Transmission, Entertainment are considered as some of the manifest functions of mass media while narcotization effect, creation of new hyper reality and mediated quasi-interaction are termed dysfunctions.

## Narcotizing effect

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Narcotizing dysfunction occurs when mass media overwhelms people with information on a certain issue, they become uninterested in it, and cannot act on the information. Here, knowledge is substituted for action. According to this theory, the huge supply of information individuals receive may create only a concern for the namesake with the problems or issues of the society. It would cause the negligence of the actual societal action, covering up mass apathy by superficiality. So, it is called dysfunctional.

It shows the inherent dysfunction of mass media as well as social media during objectionable and controversial events and incidents. This theory suggests that politically uninterested and dormant or static people have no interest in forming a social mass. Hence the overwhelming information

of mass media has resulted in becoming passive in the social activism of the people. Hence the more information we have at our fingertips, and the more time we spend consuming, the less likely we are to actually take real world action to address an issue. Rather, we confuse merely being informed with taking actual action. “The interested and informed citizen can congratulate himself on his lofty state of interest and information and neglect to see that he has abstained from decision and action”. We’re all “superficially concerned” with the problems of society but this is merely insincere most time. Of course Lazarsfeld and Merton were writing long before the advent of the internet and social media. Even they couldn’t imagine the “narcotizing” effects of the massive amounts of information that confronts the average person on a daily basis.

### **Numbness or blindness**

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Marshall McLuhan discusses numbness as the desensitization of the mind and body due to the stimulating shock of new technology. Walter Benjamin’s discussion of artistic media as a distraction is also a type of numbness caused lack of attention to the media. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s analysis of the homogenizing power of the culture industry can also be perceived as causing a numbing effect on the masses. By these few examples, it is apparent that the concept of numbness can be applied to many levels in media theory: to the individual versus the “masses” and to the cognitive mind versus the physical senses. Psychological studies have shown a negative correlation between overexposure of media violence and sympathy for violent events. On another level, numbness can also be interpreted as a type of blindness. Psychological studies on perceptual blindness refers to the inability of noticing an object when it is actually there.

Flood of information from multi mediated sources compete each other to occupy a place in human memory. Most of such content have a short life of seconds to a couple of minutes. Individual capacity to store and retrieve information do vary contextually. However the technological extensions of humans have enabled them to store millions

of terabyte of data into computer networks which facilitated retrieval when needed. This convenience has ultimately led to the sustained laziness in humans as far as information assimilation through their own brain is concerned. Repeated coverage of same kind of events and issues by media and their increased editorial efforts to make such events more dramatic for the audience often end up as failures. In certain cases though gratification is assured to the audience, their cumulative impact will be null. As a result audience are no more actively sensitized but highly desensitized and the desired action expected from them will be completely absent. Multiplicity of media coupled with a toast of sensationalism on content presentation washed away the trust of audience. The choice before the audience is another factor which led to this trust deficit. Concept of a loyal reader or viewer became a myth and media firms are confused to select which ways to retain their attention. Many media firms offer a temporary remedy of overdoses of 'shocking' content in a single day. This too has adversely affected the credibility elements of media content in the longer run.

### **We like, share and comment**

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Many of us watch and share and like and comment on videos of atrocities against weaker sections of society including women, corrupt officials and politicians accepting bribe in various forms and videos of political leaders mocking a reporter's disability, and on and on. And we just stop right there. We've become completely comfortable feeling as if we've had an impact on the real world by participating in a virtual one. We rant and argue and at the end of the day we're satisfied that we've made a difference. Yet, at the end of the day, society has changed none — the social issues remain or perhaps even worse.

We live in a time ripe with easy-to-access information and technology made to empower the user with ease of use. However, it is the simplicity of modern technology and the wealth of information that has resulted in a generation defined by information overload.

The brutal but obvious truth is we are hopelessly caught in a state of overstimulation. Ironically, even articles about the

dangers of dopamine addiction are likely to fall on deaf ears because the risks are common knowledge – it is the internet having us in a vice grip and every attempt to do something about it feeds to the problem. The overflowing of information causes us to be more callous and numb to emotional events. There is bound to be emotional disconnection when one encounters national tragedies and proceeds to scroll down to the next shiny object instead.

### Disconnect to relief

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We are in constant danger of our brains going haywire, the idea of taking a few moments of our day to disconnect should not feel diabolical. Whether it be journaling your thoughts, meditating or taking a walk, it is essential in relieving ourselves of these digital burdens. Knowledge is indeed power but too much of it is making us colder, indifferent and depressed.

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# Conscription - Is that a way ahead for India?

■ Col. A. RAJIV\*

In March 2018, the Standing Committee on Defence in its report tabled in the Parliament has brought back the simmering issue of 'Compulsory Minimum Military Service' for debate. By recommending five years of compulsory military service to those aspirants who desire to join Central and State government gazetted services directly, the Standing Committee has taken into account the fact that there exists a perennial and alarming shortage of officers and men in the Armed Forces, which need to be filled up. The Parliamentary panel asked the Ministry of Defence to push the case with more vigour and earnestness. Far too many questions pop up. Is India going to be fully militarised? Will conscription suit a nation like ours? What is conscription in the first place? Before I attempt to answer them my way, let's take a sneak peek into history.

In the period 1791-1750 BC, during the reign of Hammurabi, the Babylonian Empire used a system of conscription called 'Ilkum' in which, those who were eligible were mandated to

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*\*Col. A. Rajiv is a IVth Semester MCJ student of the MCJ 2018-20 Batch of the Dept. of Communication and Journalism, University of Kerala*

serve in the royal army during times of war and in return for their services, they were conferred a right to hold a piece of Govt land. Under the feudal conditions for holding land in the medieval period, all peasants, freemen/commoners and noblemen aged between 15-60 years living in both the countryside and urban areas, were summoned for military duty when required by either the King or the local lord, bringing with them weapon and war equipment according to their wealth. This system was widely practiced in the Scandinavian countries. Another form, 'Military Slavery', was practiced in the Middle East, beginning with the creation of the Corps of Turkish slave-soldiers called as 'Ghulams' by the Abbasid Caliph al-Mu'tasim. In the 14th century, a slave army called 'Kapikulu' was developed by the Ottoman Sultan Murad. Modern conscription or the massed military enlistment of a nation's citizenry, was devised during the French Revolution, to defend their State from the atrocities of European monarchies. In the Russian Empire, serfdom was practiced from the beginning of the 19th century. In 1874, Russia introduced universal conscription in the modern pattern, an innovation made in the system, thereby making it possible to abolish serfdom. The new military law declared that all male Russian subjects, when they reached the age of 20 were eligible to serve in the military for a period of six years. In the US, the Selective Service System recruited men for the World War-I, initially in an age range from 21 to 30 but later expanded its eligibility in 1918 to an age range of 18 to 45. In Britain, this was commonly known as "call-up" and extended to the age of 51. The Nazi Germany termed it a 'Volkssturm' (People's Storm) and included men as young as 16 and as old as 60. In India, in ancient times, some sort of conscription did exist in form of clans who were the designated fighters for the king irrespective of whether the members of such clans desired to take up arms. In recent history, though it had been contemplated many times, differing political ideologies and unfathomable diversity has either scuttled the process or derailed it completely.

I'm in uniform, an Army Man, and personally against the concept of conscription. This short article is an attempt to champion my thoughts on how 'Conscription in a democracy like ours' qualifies to be a perfect oxymoron. As a person



in uniform, I can vouch for one thing. I am a Kargil war veteran, having actively participated in the operations and can doggedly state that I was not forced to join this noble profession to protect my motherland. Me and the many like me joined under our own volition. Bring in conscription, push in a few youngsters into uniform, train them for a couple of years, and voila, you have a fighting fit Army! Is that so? No Sir! No way!. Just a few months of training or may be a two year service period would never equip them to match the professional standards of a well trained voluntary soldier nor give them that mindset, that we so adore in the bravehearts of our nation. Conscription, the word itself, reeks of a conspiracy against personal liberty. Conscription is an all round disaster, a political conundrum, where large sums of money is pumped in to train unwilling scapegoats on very rudimentary matters of the military. And the legal hassles connected with this madness is just mind blowing. I wish to quote a very recent case from Singapore, reported by AP news on 28 Jan 2019.

*SINGAPORE (AP) — A memorial service was held Sunday for a Singaporean actor and soldier who died from injuries at a military exercise, a case that has renewed scrutiny of the tiny Southeast Asian nation's system of mandatory conscription. Reservist **Aloysius Pang**, 28, was taking part in military training in New Zealand last weekend when he was crushed while repairing an artillery vehicle. He died Thursday after several surgeries. With a population of just 5.6 million people, Singapore sees conscription as a key element of its national security strategy. It requires most men from after the age 18 to serve full-time in its armed forces, police force or civil defense force for two years and after that take part in training obligations for another 10 years.*

*Those who dodge their service are arrested and jailed.*

I learned with trepidation that Pang is the fourth conscript to die during training since late 2017, leading to calls for more protection for soldiers and greater accountability on the part of the military. In other words, I feel he was pushed

onto death by compulsion perpetrated by the state. Is India ready for this?

Advocates of Conscription would argue that the aim of compulsory military service is not a step towards making every Indian battle worthy, but to instil discipline into a multitude of our citizenry. Well, I for one, very strongly believe in the inexorable requirement of a citizenry being disciplined. By some uncanny quirk of fate, at the age of 46, I'm now a college student at the prestigious Kerala University, undergoing a Master's course in Mass Comm and Journalism from the much-acclaimed DCJ as part of my study leave. I have as my classmates and college mates, children of around the same age as my older daughter. I look at them and their antics every single day, off and on class, and wish they were a bit more disciplined. But then I wonder, why think of disciplining only a minuscule of the population who are aspirants to the state and central govt employees? Do these people who advocate this proposal agree to a situation where lawyers, who are not govt employees, remain in-disciplined? Don't they want to see discipline doctored into the medical profession? Should the guild of entrepreneurs be above law? Can a society afford to have their politicians arguably beyond the ambit of our constitution? The society cannot be permitted to easily palm off the onerous responsibility of 'disciplining a multitude' to the Armed forces. Discipline should start at home at the hands of the parents and finish at school at the hands of the teachers. We have organisations called the NCC, Scouts and Guides, Student Police and the like. Conscription mongers may pinpoint the inadequacies of these. Spruce them up, I'll say, than look for alternatives.

Then comes the aspect of freedom of choice, adequately enshrined in unequivocal terms within the Indian constitution under article 19 which extols personal liberty. One of the fundamental rights is freedom of profession, trade, occupation and business. Implementation of mandatory military service would be in complete violation of this right. Conscription must also be considered as a form of forced labour and such form of enforced and involuntary service would be against the very essence of democracy which has liberty as one of its strongest pillars. All through the chequered history of our

nation, we have had voluntary armies, albeit clan based in some instances. People with the Kshatriya blood coursing through their brains, had come ahead in large numbers with no coercion (mostly) to protect their flag. In a nation like ours, where we pride ourselves as being tolerant to not just people but ideologies, why should an occasion be created for a Jain to compulsorily pick up arms? Why should people who strongly believe in the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence be asked to be prepared for war, to kill or be killed? Let me term such people conscientious objectors. A conscientious objector is an individual whose personal beliefs are incompatible with military service, or, more often, with any role in the armed forces. In some countries, conscientious objectors have special legal status, which augments their conscription duties. For example, Sweden allows conscientious objectors to choose a service in the “weapons-free” branch, such as an airport fireman, nurse, or telecommunications technician. The reasons for refusing to serve in the military may be varied. Even in the western world, some people are conscientious objectors for religious reasons. In particular, the members of the historic peace churches are pacifist by doctrine, and Jehovah’s Witnesses, while not strictly pacifists, refuse to participate in the armed forces on the ground that they believe that Christians should be neutral in international conflicts. Come on people, let’s not send personal liberty for a toss in the garb of trying to ensure discipline in a minor sections of the populace.

More than 20 countries around the world, including North Korea, Russia and Israel, presently have a system of compulsory military service for all its citizens, believing compulsory military service would instil a sense of patriotism and make citizens more disciplined and committed. Before we take umbrage of the countries that follow conscription, I wish to state that developed countries like France and Spain have stopped conscription in 2001. Sweden has shed it in 2010 and Germany in 2011. I entice you, my worthy readers who have read this far into my stream of thoughts, not to live in the false belief that only people in uniform are patriotic and serving the nation. Any true, rule abiding, tax paying citizen, who gets goosebumps on hearing ‘Vande Mataram’ or feels a rush of adrenaline seeing the national

flag on a high mast, I believe is a true Indian. The Prime Minister's Office, very recently, had advised the HRD Ministry to include elements of Sainik Schools curriculum in regular schools aimed at promoting discipline, physical fitness and a patriotic outlook and on that note, we must aim at COMPULSORY MILITARY BIASED EDUCATION than conscription. Shortage of officers, especially in junior ranks of the Indian Army, has been engaging the attention of policy planners, the public and the media. However, to imagine that conscription is the solution to fill up these posts is nothing but preposterous, to say the least. Armed forces reflect the society from which they are recruited and enrolled in the first place. With economic liberalisation and increasing globalization, job opportunities for the educated youth have increased manifold. Traditional professions such as the civil service and the military do not seem to be very popular among the youth. I can say this authoritatively, having recently served the Sainik School Kazhakootam here as it's 19<sup>th</sup> Principal. Times have changed. I studied in the same school from 1983 to 90. Most of us were eager to don the uniform back then, most of them are not now. Don't believe me? Check the records. This school which stands first/second in CBSE class XII results among Sainik Schools is unable to ensure that even 10-15 of their students clear the UPSC exam for NDA, which is the first step towards the uniform.

In conclusion, leaving aside sentiments, I feel that training the bulk of the youth would require establishing large numbers of training centres all over the country and would involve huge expenditure in their maintenance and upkeep. The likely benefits of imparting military training to all the youth will not commensurate with the expenditure involved in such an effort. This would translate into an unmanageable figure and will also be a big drain on limited resources of a developing country. In a country with such a large population, conscription is an exercise in futility as the Govt would have no trouble finding a large number of volunteers. The Indian Armed Forces currently consists of about 15 Lakh soldiers who are professionally trained and have devoted their life to their country *willingly*. Conscription, at best, may give India

a vast army of 50 times the present strength of men who are bitter, unwilling and not professionally trained, thus requiring more resources for a less efficient force. And it might have struck you right, somewhere while reading this article. We are not even thinking about women, the volunteers of whom, we are unable to accommodate fully even under the present scenario.

I remain. Jai Hind.

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## ARTICLE CONTRIBUTORS

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**Mr Muhammed Musthafa K. P.**

Assistant Professor,  
Department of Journalism and Mass  
Communication, Farook College,  
*musthafahcu22@gmail.com*  
Mob: 8606043182

**Dr Lakshmi Pradeep**

Head of Department of Journalism and  
Mass Communication, Farook College,  
*lakshmi@farookcollege.ac.in*  
Mob: 9946197296

**Ms Akhila C. K.**

Research Scholar  
School of Liberal Studies & Education  
Navrachana University, Vadodara

**Dr J.A.H. Khatri**

Assistant Professor  
School of Liberal Studies & Education  
Navrachana University, Vadodara

**Dr Gopakumar A.V.**

Head, Department of Media Studies,  
Kristu Jayanti College, Bengaluru,  
India

**Dr Renjini T.**

Asst. Professor, Department of  
Psychology, Govt. College for Women,  
Thiruvananthapuram, India

**Dr Sudheer S. Salam**

Assistant Professor,  
School of Film Studies, Thunchath  
Ezhuthachan Malayalam University,  
India

**Dr B. Hariharan**

Professor, Institute of English  
Director, UGC Area Study Centre for  
Canadian Studies, University of Kerala  
Thiruvananthapuram – 695034

**Dr P P Shaju**

Associate Professor, Dept of Journalism,  
Mary Matha Arts and Science College,  
Mananthavady, India

**Mr Bibu V. N.**

Assistant Professor,  
Department of Journalism  
St.Xavier's College, Vaikom, Kottayam  
Dist. Kerala State, PIN -686607  
*bibuvn@yahoo.com*  
Mob: 9744248914

**Dr Nithin Kalorth**

Assistant Professor,  
Times School of Media, Bennet  
University, Greater Noida, UP  
MOB.No.8891008303,  
*nithin.kalorth@bennet.edu.in*

**Dr Rajesh Kumar B. M.**

HSST Journalism,  
GMHSS Vellamunda, Wayanad.

**Mrs Jisha M. D.**

Assistant Professor (Guest faculty)  
Govt. College, Mananthavady, Wayanad

**Mr Yadunandan S. R.**

Research Scholar  
Dept of Media Studies,  
Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam  
University, Tirur, Kerala  
*ysryadunandan@gmail.com*

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## ARTICLE CONTRIBUTORS

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**Dr Lalmohan P.**

Asst Professor,  
Dept of Communication and Journalism,  
University of Kerala  
*plalmohan@gmail.com*

**Ms Aswathy Nair M. A.**

MCJ (2016-18), Department of  
Communication and Journalism,  
University of Kerala

**Dr M. S. Harikumar**

Asst. Professor & Head  
Dept of Communication and Journalism  
University of Kerala  
Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, INDIA  
*msharikumar@gmail.com*

**Ms Jais Merlin P. Augustine**

Ph.D Scholar  
Department of Communication &  
Journalism, UoK  
*jaismerlin@gmail.com*

**Ms Amrutha C. V.**

MCJ (2017-19)  
Department of Communication &  
Journalism, University of Kerala

**Ms Nandana U. S.**

MCJ (2015-17)  
Department of Communication and  
Journalism, University of Kerala

**Dr S. Anilkumar**

Regional Director & Academic Head  
IIMC Kottayam  
*anilvadavathoor@gmail.com*

**Mr P. J. Jose**

Joint Registrar (Rtd.)  
University of Kerala  
Sagara, T.C.3/288,  
Thrippadapuram (North)  
Kulathoor P. O., Pin: 695583

**Dr Simi Varghese**

Associate Professor  
Dept of Communication and Journalism  
Prajyoti Niketan College,  
Pudukad, Thrissur – 680301, Kerala  
*simivarghese@prajyotinetan.edu.in*

**Mr Deepak Nair G.**

PhD Scholar,  
Dept. of Communication & Journalism,  
University of Kerala

**Dr Rajeev Mohan R**

Asst. Professor & Head,  
Department of Media Studies,  
Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam  
University, Tirur, Kerala, India.  
E-mail: *rajeevjournalist@gmail.com*  
Mobile (+91) 9895919443

**Col A Rajiv**

IVth Sem MCJ  
Department of Communication &  
Journalism, University of Kerala





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Department of Communication and Journalism  
University of Kerala  
Thiruvananthapuram  
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[www.keralauniversity.ac.in](http://www.keralauniversity.ac.in)  
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