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Contents

Editor's Note

This issue of CJR explores cultural communication, hyperlocal media initiatives, and diverse trends in cinema, alongside phenomena impacting the field of communication post-pandemic. It also delves into nuanced dimensions of wedding photography and disaster communication, providing scholarly insights into contemporary communication landscapes.

Sourav Saha begins by contending that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in online religious gatherings across various faiths, as communities turn to digital platforms due to social distancing measures. The article focuses on the e-satsang practices of the Satsang community in Deoghar, Jharkhand, India. E-satsang involves virtual congregations where devotees participate in rituals such as prayer, chanting, meditation, and devotional singing via platforms like Google Meet, Zoom, StreamYard, and YouTube. The study examines how these followers handle technical disturbances, termed jaantrik golojog, during online meetings. It introduces the concept of "noisification," suggesting that noise in the spiritual context is not inherent but created through the process of techno-spiritual disciplining. This process involves devotees learning to manage their environments by minimising unwanted noise, thereby discovering new ways to practice their faith and become ideal disciples.

Arya P G, Vidya R, and Muhammadali N explore the innovative landscape of contemporary Malayalam cinema, highlighting a shift from traditional linear storytelling to experimental narrative techniques. It focuses on the film 'Thallumaala,' which exemplifies this trend through its pioneering editing methods. The study investigates how non-linear narratives in Malayalam cinema, particularly in 'Thallumaala,' captivate audiences by employing advanced editing techniques. By analysing suturing techniques and suture rupture patterns, the research aims to reveal how 'Thallumaala' disrupts conventional storytelling norms, offering a deep understanding of film language and the complexities of editing. Using a qualitative content analysis approach, the paper examines the film's editing strategies through the lens of film theory and content analysis. This analysis not only deepens the appreciation of film as an art form but also provides critical insights for industry professionals seeking to innovate in cinematic storytelling.

The evolving landscape of wedding photography provides a compelling framework for examining cultural practices and personal narratives, particularly within the context of South Indian Hindu weddings. As wedding photography

transitions from traditional to contemporary styles, it encapsulates not only moments but also the emotions and stories that define these pivotal life events. The qualitative research conducted by Amrita S, Boobalakrishnan N, and Vishnu Achutha Menon investigate these emerging trends and styles, underscoring how modern wedding photography functions as a dynamic and evolving medium for preserving the essence of wedding celebrations. By engaging with the experiences and perspectives of couples from various South Indian states, this study offers scholarly insights into the multifaceted dimensions of contemporary wedding photography.

Athul Mohan and Anupama K P investigate the impact of the shift from traditional offline education to online learning on a single family in Kerala, offering a microcosmic view of broader societal implications. By focusing on the family as a fundamental social unit, the research uses in-depth, open-ended conversations with each family member. Conducted in August 2021, the interviews provide a rich dataset for narrative analysis, uncovering the complex challenges and adaptations the family faced. The study delves into their anxieties, and the emotional landscape shaped by the transition to online education. Through detailed depictions of their lived experiences, the research contributes valuable insights to the discourse on educational transitions in the digital age, highlighting the social and cultural impacts of this significant change.

The evolution of Malayalam cinema, particularly in its mid-way phase, is characterised by the introduction of global trends and innovative narrative patterns by pioneering directors. "Swapnatanam," a 1976 black-and-white film by K. G. George, serves as a significant case study in this context. Lalmohan P in his paper argues that the film reflects a deep connection with its socio-cultural environment, embodying early attempts to incorporate psychoanalytic themes in Malayalam cinema. While the film may not fit the strict definitions of a psychoanalytic work, its exploration of psychological themes and its production environment highlight its role in the broader cinematic and literary radicalism of the time. The study emphasises the importance of considering both content and the socio-cultural milieu in understanding the film's impact and contributions to the genesis of psychoanalysis in Malayalam cinema.

Shahana Sherin's article is based on the premise that cultural products, such as entertainment television productions, have become increasingly important in promoting transculturalism globally. Her study examines how the transnational

exchange of television dramas between India and Türkiye fosters transculturalism, emphasising cultural diversity and cross-cultural understanding. Through qualitative content analysis and review of YouTube comments, the research reveals that these cultural products act as soft power tools, influencing intercultural communication beyond geopolitical narratives. The findings suggest that television dramas can transcend and overpower traditional geopolitical narratives imposed by mainstream media and political agencies.

Manjusha P M investigates how people in Kerala, a region prone to disasters like floods, landslides, and cyclones, perceive and interact with Sample Cell Broadcast (CB) alerts. These alerts are crucial for disaster management, aiming to quickly share critical information during emergencies. The study focuses on participants from Kalikavu Village in Nilambur Taluk, using surveys to assess their awareness, perceptions, and experiences with CB alerts. The findings highlight factors such as trustworthiness, credibility, and communication strategies, providing insights for improving emergency communication. The research offers recommendations for disaster management agencies to refine their strategies, enhancing public preparedness and promoting stronger, more informed communities.

Dijil N and Abdul Muneer V explore how online hyperlocal media initiatives cultivate a sophisticated network of local storytelling, essential for sustaining a democratic public sphere and political system. It posits that the decline in local coverage by traditional media has spurred the emergence of hyperlocal media. The study analyses the nature and functions of hyperlocal news media, focusing on their content and community role. A review of content from hyperlocal apps and websites in Koyilandy, Kozhikode, indicates that these platforms have the potential to evolve into comprehensive community-based media, effectively filling the gaps in local narratives left by legacy media.

Kishor K and P P Shaju apply the spiral of silence theory to caste discrimination in academic institutions, focusing on Dalit and backward caste students. The paper examines a case where a female Dalit PhD scholar from Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala, launched a hunger strike against institutional casteism. By analysing print media coverage of her strike, the study shows a reversal of the spiral of silence theory, where the previously silenced opinion gains prominence.

Editor

Noise and Other Frequencies of Life: A Study of Online Religious Congregations in India

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Abstract

The rise of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a notable increase in online religious gatherings spanning various faiths worldwide. Against this backdrop, a modern religious community in India named Satsang, situated in the city of Deoghar, Jharkhand, has embraced the practice of what they call e-satsang or online satsang whereby the disciples participate in the collective rituals of sound and listening through online live streaming applications. Focusing on the case of e-satsang in Deoghar, the paper investigates how disciples of the Satsang community experience technical disturbances or jaantrik golojog in online meetings. Through an in-depth study of technical disturbance and noise in online satsang, the paper develops the concept of Noisification, which contends that noise is not a preexisting entity in the spiritual world of Satsang. Instead, noise is produced through practices of techno-spiritual disciplining, whereby disciples learn to discipline their environments by silencing the unwanted frequencies of life.

Keywords: *Noise, Noisification, Technical Disturbance, Digital Religion, E-satsang, Deoghar.*

Introduction

Surrounded by the cacophonies of a busy street in South Kolkata on a Monday evening, Jotno pointed his newly bought iPhone towards the sky, in search of a better signal. His frantic footsteps across random directions searched for a quieter place from where he could peacefully deliver his

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speech. After a few seconds, he located a mango tree in the semi-dark corner of an adjacent lane. Taking shelter under the tree, he unmuted his microphone, touched his forehead with the thumbs pointed at the middle of the eyebrows. His lips moved quietly as he chanted mantras, offered regards to his guru – Sree Sree Thakur, and finally began his speech. Meanwhile, Gopal from Dhaka city navigated his way out of the traffic, driving back home to prepare for his performance in the same congregation. Likewise, hundreds and thousands of devotees around the world, everyday, struggle with their devices to orchestrate the online satsang as a pleasurable experience of the divine. In pursuit of carrying the sacred vibrations of devotional melodies, devotees learn to silence the unwanted frequencies of life.

The rise of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a notable increase in online religious gatherings across religious traditions worldwide. With the global implementation of 'social' distancing measures, communities, both spiritual and otherwise, have turned to online platforms to organise collective gatherings. Against this backdrop, the followers of a modern religious community named Satsang in Deoghar (located in the east Indian state of Jharkhand) have embraced the practice of what they call e-satsang or online satsang. E-satsang is an online congregation whereby devotees virtually participate in the collective rituals of prayer, silent chanting, meditation, sacred recitations, devotional singing, and speeches through online video conferencing and live-streaming applications like Google Meet, Zoom, StreamYard, Facebook, and YouTube. Focusing on the case of e-satsang in Deoghar, I will explain how disciples of the Satsang community experience *jaantrik golojog,* or technical disturbances in online meetings. Through an in-depth examination of technical disturbances and noise in online satsang, I developed the concept of *Noisification*, which contends that noise is not a preexisting entity in the spiritual world of Satsang. Instead, noise is *produced* through practices of techno-spiritual disciplining, whereby disciples learn to discipline their lives by silencing the anomalous vibrations of their surrounding world.

Satsang, Sonic Theology, and New Religious Movements

Satsang emerged as a prominent spiritual and cultural movement in the early 20th-century Indian subcontinent under the tutelage of Anukulchandra Chakravarty (1888 – 1969) – a physician, poet, performer, philanthropist, and spiritual guru. Lovingly known as Sree

Sree Thakur Anukulchandra or simply Sree Sree Thakur, Chakravarty was born in the village of Himaitpur in the Pabna district (now located in Bangladesh). He received training in allopathic medicine at the National Medical School (presently Calcutta National Medical College or CNMC) and returned to his village to serve as a local physician in Pabna. During his medical practice, Chakravarty was utterly perturbed by the rising dependence on medicinal objects, which he believed was adversely affecting patients' mental well-being and hindered optimum cure. Encountering the curative incapacities of allopathic medicine, Chakravarty formed a musical group and conducted *Kirtan* sessions with friends to cultivate the medical benefits of sound.

While Sree Sree Thakur nurtured a persevering conviction over the therapeutic richness of sound, his tryst with sound was beyond the vision of medicine. The wide range of his *baanis* or spoken verses around various topics such as science, politics, philosophy, education, agriculture, economy, health, and spirituality are often anchored around a metaphysical orientation towards sound. Not only did he speak verses in rhythmic meters, but his vocabulary had certain elements that suggest the conscious deployment of sound as both a practical tool for therapeutic experiments and a metaphysical tool for comprehending the philosophy of life. In a compilation of verses titled *Anusruti* or Pursuing the Audible (1962), Sree Sree Thakur offered philosophical reflections on life and spirituality through poetic expressions of sound and listening. Under a thematically curated chapter titled "*Shabdo-Bigyan*" or "The Science of Sound," Sree Sree Thakur's words have been scripted as follows: "*Tomar shottar ekti onu. Ekti shobdo-jhonkar,— Bhor duniyar ortho achey. Shaadho, dhoro — tuk taar*" (Sree Sree Thakur Anukulchandra, 1962, p. 47). It can be translated as "*The hidden meanings of the whole universe are consolidated in an atom of your being – in the form of a sound-vibration. Pursue and behold the secret workings of that sound, that vibration.*"

Sree Sree Thakur compared a living individual being with an atomic vibration. His affinity towards sound and music manifested through his unique style of "sonic thinking" (Herzogenrath, 2017), whereby he imagined, experienced, analysed, and described life and the world *through* sound. Amidst the rising political unrest, communal violence, illnesses, poverty, and theft in Himaitpur and neighbouring villages in Pabna, Chakravarty and his mesmerising march of Kirtanic processions on the road gained immense popularity, attracting people from distant

villages and towns. Soon, stories of miraculous healings through Kirtan spread throughout the Bengal province, instilling hope among the masses that "*Anukul mora manush bnachaate paarey*", which means "Anukul could enliven the dead" (Bhora, 1964).

After migrating from Pabna and settling in Deoghar in the preceding year of the partition in 1947, Chakravarty regularly spent time with his disciples in the ashram. Visitors would gather from different parts of the world with curiosities, doubts, and longing to listen to him. For some, listening to his words of wisdom was merely a source of pleasure. Some sat scribbling notes diligently, keenly and carefully working to capture the sequence of words, with precise rhythmic meters, spontaneously flowing from his lips. These notes were later read to Thakur for approval and rectified accordingly before being sent to the Satsang Publishing House. In addition to listening to the mellifluous words of their beloved Thakur, devotees engaged in daily musical gatherings whereby they participated in the collective rituals of prayer, silent chanting, meditation, devotional songs, and speech. The daily practices of hearing, memorising, scribbling, proof-reading and publishing the sacred sayings of Thakur, as well as singing, humming, and dancing to the myriad frequencies of sacred tales and tunes in the quiet atmosphere of the Deoghar ashram, nurtured a specific craft of listening among the devotees that decisively shaped their perceptions about life and the world in ensuing decades.

Terms such as *dhwani* (sound)*, shobdo* (word)*, torongo* (vibration)*, jhonkar* (resonance)*, kompon* (quakes)*, spondon* (heartbeats)*, chchondo* (rhythm)*,* and others have appeared extensively in the *baanis* of Sree Sree Thakur. Likewise, these words have seamlessly insinuated into the everyday imagination of a Satsangee life-world, whereby the devotees express, articulate, and make sense of their lives *with* creative expressions of sound and *through* sound – cultivating the spiritual pedagogy of "sonic thinking." at a collective level. (Herzogenrath, 2017). Although developed in the context of media philosophy instead of classical theology, the theory of sonic thinking may not be seamlessly transferable to the world of religious sense-making practices, especially in the Vedic framework of the Indian subcontinent. Nevertheless, the concept of sonic thinking still stands as a cognate lens through which the sonically animated Satsangee lifeworlds could be grasped. According to the German scholar Bernd Herzogenrath (2017), sonic thinking is a particular mode of thinking whereby sound does not remain a mere object

of thought. Instead, it becomes a tool of thinking. Criticising the outright objectification of sound in sound studies, author Bernd Herzogenrath (2017) suggested this alternative line of argument, which promotes thinking *with* sound and *through* sound instead of thinking simply *about* sound. (Herzogenrath, 2017). Seasoned by the *baanis* of Sree Sree Thakur rooted in the ingrained practices of sonic thinking, the ways in which the modern-day Satsangees on this date tend to imagine, experience, and articulate their relationships with the world through words like "*dhwani*", "*torongo*", "*chchondo*", "*tuning*", and "*sound waves*", it seems that the Satsangees have developed a distinct mode of spiritual sensibility driven by sonic thinking whereby they not only think but as well as feel, sense and articulate life *through* sound.

While sound has been the chief architect in the history of the Satsang movement in India, noise remains an eclipsed phenomenon. With regard to the extensive terminologies of sound, the word noise barely appears in the spiritual discourse of Satsang. It is not a coincidence but an epistemic crisis, which will be explained step-by-step throughout the different sections of this article. Interestingly, in Bangla, the native language in which most of Sree Sree Thakur's verses were written, there is no dedicated term to denote noise as a distinct phenomenon. The cognate Bangla term for noise is *shobdo-dushon*, which means sound pollution. But, surprisingly, in Bangla, there is no vernacular equivalent to the English word Noise, which is originally derived from the Latin word Nausea. This appears as an asymmetry between languages, capable of generating asymmetry of meanings, imaginations, and sensibilities. This asymmetry serves as a crucial vantage point for our study of noise, all the more because the theological pillars of Satsang are erected upon the Vedic concepts of cosmic sound – *shabd-brahman*.

In Hinduism, *Shabd-brahman* depicts the primordial causal sound of the universe. It is the ultimate source of all creations. It is the vibrational force from where all forms of life are believed to have come into origin, often posited in the syllable Aum or Om. As members of a 'modern' socio-religious community, on the one hand, the Satsangees are vulnerably exposed to the pervading atmospheres of urban cacophonies. On the other hand, the spiritual discourses of cosmic sound, which design their worldly perceptions of things, do not offer a conceptual frame of noise as a spiritual entity. Therefore, it becomes essential to ask: what happens to a language or a culture that is historically immersed in the ideas of sound and aurality but does not have a term for noise, which it

encounters on a daily basis? Furthermore, how do the theological discourses of sound and listening make sense of a modern invention: noise? I would insist that we look at the emergence of new religious communities in India and South Asia, such as Satsang, that aspired to revive and reorganise the discourses of sonic theology in the age of neo-liberal economy – an era often characterised by the burgeoning wave of industrial noise and auditory hazards (Schafer, 1993).

The emergence of contemporary guru-based movements in India can be traced back to the colonial era of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Gold, 1987; Juergensmeyer, 1991). This trend gained significant momentum in the twenty-first century with the ascent of the neoliberal state (Warrier, 2004; Srinivas, 2010; Copeman, 2012; Jaffrelot, 2012; Lucia, 2014).

In a neoliberal society, where state responsibilities have gradually been supplemented and surrogated by contemporary guru-led organisations, devotional governance has been pivotal in reshaping collective spaces and identities in an increasingly pluralistic world. Scholars of "guru-governmentality" (Pandya, 2016 and Ikegame, 2012) have explained the innovative methods through which modern gurus and their institutions acquire and wield power while emerging as alternative agents of governance (Ikegame, 2012; Pandya, 2016). These ultramodern "multifarious" gurus (Copeman, 2012) employ artistic techniques of governance (Lucia, 2014) to attract followers from diverse religious, cultural, racial, national, class, and political backgrounds, thus becoming influential agents of control in a decentralised society (Warrier, 2004; Copeman and Ikegame, 2012; Morse, 2012).

Scholars have further delved into the role of the body and the senses in exploring the emergent forms of devotional governance (Ikegame, 2012; Pandya, 2016). They have elucidated how sensorial engagements have vitalized and animated the life of modern guru-based movements in India and beyond (Lucia, 2014). However, despite the rich empirical evidence supporting the significance of sound, listening, and aurality, existing research on the sensorial dimensions of the contemporary guru field in India still needs a comprehensive analysis of the aural and acoustic dimensions of guru governance. This omission is particularly surprising given that guru-worship practices in nineteenth- and twentieth-century India were popularised through sound-oriented rituals, and music served as an alternative source of indigenous healing (Kakar, 2007). Music was

deployed for its "religious" potential among twenty-first-century gurus, as it helped attract followers from diverse cultural and political backgrounds (Gold, 2012). Therefore, the myriad sounds and silences of modern guru-worship in South Asia have remained neglected as illegible noise to the analytic ears of contemporary scholarship on what Lucia (2022) rightfully coined as the "guru field". The study of online satsang, technical disturbances, and noise in Deoghar-Satsang attempts to bridge this gap by excavating the auditory politics of sacred sound vs. unwanted noise in new religious movements in India.

Noise, Technical Disturbances, and Virtual Meetings

Due to widespread lockdowns and travel restrictions during the pandemic, almost all forms of public gatherings, spiritual and otherwise, have been affected. As a result of this crisis, virtual meetings emerged as a feasible and safer mode of communication. However, besides the advantages, the online mode also posed new challenges. From virtual classrooms (Singh et al., 2022) and offices (Yuliana, 2022) to online rituals (Othman, 2022) and medical consultations, virtual meetings have exhibited a common crisis of human attention, frequently disrupted by technical disturbances and noise. In their study of virtual classrooms, Pulalon et al. (2021) demonstrated how noise and technical disturbances posed challenges to online teaching and learning. According to their findings, online classes hindered effective learning due to the intrusion of weak internet signals and background noise. The sounds of vehicles, dogs barking or television, laughter, and kids playing in the surrounding environment often sounded exhaustive to the participants. These ambient sounds emerged as background noises that distracted the students. According to these students, the noise "distracts" them from the class while causing a disturbance to learning (Pulalon et al. 2021, p. 75). Such noises can be a source of stress and anxiety (Large, 2021). Online classes become complex learning sites because the background noise affects the focus and concentration of the students, which are crucial elements of learning. Muting has been an essential ritual for virtual meetings. It has been noted that, during the meeting, if the participants failed to mute their microphones, the background noises from their surrounding environments caused disturbance to the other participants. People have expressed disdain for hearing commotion sounds from the other end during virtual meetings.

The mute button has emerged as the harbinger of a habit among people lured by the seductive agency of silencing themselves and others. They claim, and I quote: "When individuals fail to mute their microphones, other participants hear only the background noises and not the speaker, losing their ability to listen to speech." (Karl. et al., 2022, p. 02). When employees work from home, it has been said that they need to be cautious about the background noise around them. Since these sounds are ambient sounds that are inevitable and can't be done anything about, instead of suppressing and controlling these sounds, one can simply mute their microphones so that others do not face issues of distraction and disturbance. People have gone to the extent of using third-party apps to silence the sound of background noise. Therefore, it is evident that when participants get frustrated in virtual meetings, they adopt innovative techniques to control the noise intrusion (Karl. et al., 2022).

In online rituals, these disturbances also disrupt the pursuit of spiritual attunements, whereby devotees fail to attune their hearts, minds, and bodies to the divine force. Such disturbances must be examined from a cross-cultural lens, which can magnify the transactions of meanings between divergent theological and technological schools of thought. Thus, the *jaantrik golojog,* or the technical disturbance in Deoghar-Satsang, is more than just a technical disturbance. Instead, it indicates a significant crisis in spiritual meaning-making among the Satsangees – a linguistic, philosophical, and epistemological crisis. I will share an ethnographic vignette to portray and engage with the magnitude and depth of this crisis analytically.

Listening to *Jaantrik Golojog* and Distorted Sounds of Devotion

An online congregation was organised by the devotees of a small town in the North 24 Parganas in West Bengal, India, called Singerber. The evening prayer and recitation of sacred texts came to an end. Suranjana was about to sing a song. On this day, the internet connection was extremely poor. Usually, devotees get engrossed and swayed in the enchanting sound of melodies, but there was a lot of technical interruption on this day. It became utterly difficult for many of us to follow the music properly. As a result, the two-hour-long session was a playful symphony of noise and technical interruptions. For the first few seconds of Suranjana's performance, her voice was distorted. She waited and then resumed. Her voice crackled. It was not audible. The lyrical, melodic, and rhythmic sequences were barely intelligible. Despite

multiple attempts, I could not fathom the music properly. After a few seconds, I recognized that the words were barely intelligible and filled with noise. The audio frequencies of her voice were getting lost, and distorted audio fragments pervaded the entire room where I was seated. Along with one hundred and thirty-five other participants from various parts of the world, we kept our cameras off and microphones muted during the session and kept listening to the sequence of noisy interruptions and distorted audio granules.

At the end of this performance, the host Chandan, while enjoying the Ethiopian green landscape outside his bedroom window, unmuted his microphone and calmly responded: "Joyguru Maa! Due to some technical disturbance, we could not listen (*srobon*) to the song properly. Today, the internet connection is extremely poor. But, despite these interruptions, we have to conduct this session."

Immediately after this performance, the host (Chandan) announced Gopal Kukri's name, who was on his way back home. Being on the roads, he could not perform. Gopal unmuted the microphone and requested the host to delay his slot: "Dada! Joyguru! I am currently driving back home. It's too noisy here. Kindly delay my slot so I can perform after two more songs." The next song was sung by Kalpana Mondal – a middle-aged female devotee from Bamungachi – a neighbouring town in the North 24 Parganas in West Bengal, India. She began her performance with an introductory note. As soon as the sounds of the harmonium reached my ears, her voice crackled, just like Suranjana. She cleared her throat. The sounds of her voice and the harmonium made a fleeting appearance. Then, the audio withered away. For the next twenty seconds, there was no audio signal.

SILENCE.
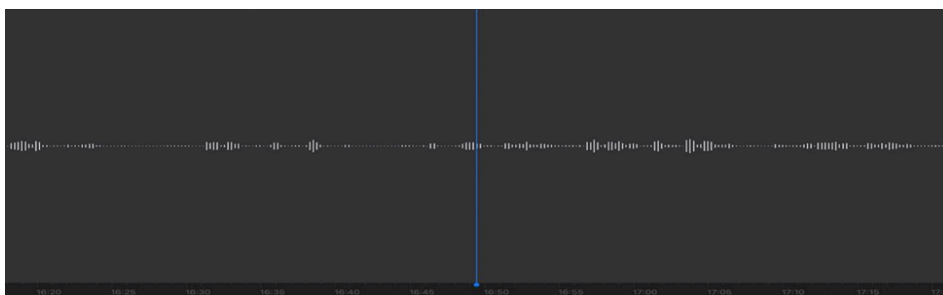
The above image is a graphical representation of fluctuating audio frequencies, as captured through a screenshot during this particular online congregation. The gaps here refer to several pauses that devotees experienced as an outcome of the disturbances.

Kalpana inquired: "Dada! Is it audible? Last week, I was performing in another Satsang where the internet (*net*) connection was poor and we faced a lot of technical disturbances *(jantrik golojog)*"

Chandan responded: "Maa! It is not distinctly audible (*kom shona jachche*). Can you change your position and move to another place (*ektu shore jaan okhaan theke*)?"

Kalpana responded: "Should I move somewhere else? Wait! Let me move to another place (*onyo jaygay jaai*)".

 SILENCE for ten more seconds.

Kalpana began her performance and sang the first line on Chandan's command:

> *Doyal tomaar leela bojha daay*
>
> *Oh kind lord! It is difficult to fathom your miracles*

At the outset, the lyrics and the melody were distinctly audible. When fluctuations reappeared, a comment immediately popped up on the chat box: "Net Problem." As she continued singing, the words *Doyal tomar* were audible, but *leela bojha daay* got eclipsed. Precisely, the words *bojha daay* were fragmented into detached audio granules. After the end of the performance, Chandan unmuted his microphone and responded: "Joyguru Maa! The same problem. The sounds were fluctuating (*sound up-down korchilo*)"

Kalpana enquired: "Joyguru dada! I think today, everyone is facing the same problem. There is some issue with the internet connection. Was the music at all intelligible (*bojha geche*)?"

Chandan replied: "It was intelligible *(bojha geche)*, but there were lots of fluctuations (*up-down korchilo*)"

Kalpana responded: "I moved to a different location as you suggested. But what can we do? This is probably what *Thakur* wants. Everything happens in accordance with His desire (*ichche)*".

Noisification: The Techno-spiritual Ritual of Silencing

The above vignette suggests that when technical interruptions occur, the distorted audio granules make it challenging to focus on the music and cause displeasure. They create a lot of noise. At this juncture, let us contemplate for a moment and ask ourselves. In a community with a history of more than one hundred years, where the bodies of practicing disciples are habituated to the daily sounds of enchanting melodies, devotional music, and the plethora of environmental sounds, how would they react or respond to the digital noise? How will the noise of distorted audio in laptops and smartphones affect the lifeworlds that have followed the rigorous routine of morning and evening prayers without these devices? Or, how would noise affect the world of spiritual seekers who have dedicated their lives to the devotional service of their love lord, Sree Sree Thakur, through a strict regime of sonic discipline? However, in my journey to explore the impact of noise among people who are habituated to music, I realised there was no noise at all. The commonsensical understanding of noise that I held on to for so long while growing up as a musician in the proximity of 'musical' instruments was least relevant in the spiritual worlds of my interlocutors whose lives are governed by the concept of cosmic sound. After listening to my interlocutors carefully, I realised that the concept of noise does not exist in the spiritual framework of cosmic sound.

Manoj, a 27-year-old disciple of Sree Sree Thakur, comes from the state of Assam in India. For much of his life, Manoj worked as a professional musician (a vocalist) who toured from one part of the country to another part as a singer. In our two-hour-long conversation inside the newly built state-of-the-art ashram studio in Deoghar, Manoj and I discussed the historical transformation of devotional music in Satsang. In his explanation, Manoj probably unconsciously blurred the thin line between music and noise. He said: "If the whole universe belongs to Thakur, then all the sounds in the universe would also belong to Him. If He is the creator of the Universe, then every living being belongs to Him. And the sounds created in this Universe – all belong to Him." As I kept listening to him, I could place his thoughts in the larger umbrella of the concepts of *Shabd-Brahman* and *Shabd-Guru*. The entire Universe is created out

of the primordial causal sound, and the Guru or the spiritual guide is the living embodiment of that sound. In Manoj's imagination, no sound belongs outside the devotional purview of the sacred sound (*Shabd-Brahma*) or the sonic guru (*Shabd-Guru*). In other words, in the spiritual imagination rooted in the idea of cosmic sound, noise does not exist as a concept. For a moment, as a student of anthropology, I was compelled to think that noise, my object of inquiry, was actually absent in my field. I was wondering what will happen to an anthropological inquiry that encounters the absence of its object of study in the first place.

Anthropologist and sound studies scholar David Novak (2015) states that noise is a relational concept. It is always identified in relation to something else. Novak identified three dimensions – aesthetic, social, and technological. According to the aesthetic dimension, sounds that appear undesirable to the ears appear as noise. For instance, non-musical or non-speech sounds are regarded as noise. This bifurcation is found in the nineteenth-century theories of music and acoustics by the pioneering German scholar Herman Von Helmholtz (1885). According to the social definition, sounds that defy the social normative contexts are defined as noise. For instance, the sounds of music played by the Italian migrant workers in the streets of nineteenth-century London were regarded as noise by the local British residents, who considered quietude and silence as markers of normative aristocratic and orderly behaviour (Cockayne, 2008). Finally, according to the technological definition, sounds that disrupt the process of communication in technological media appear as noise. The sounds of distortion and fuzz in radio and magnetic tapes appear as noise (Novak, 2015). Similarly, the sounds of distorted audio in e-satsang fail to generate the pleasure of experiencing the divine presence of the guru and appear undesirable to the ears of Satsangees. These are also sounds that break the norm of uniting with the divine lord Sree Sree Thakur and disrupt the process of communication with Him. Distortions are undesirable, norm-defying, and disruptive in the spiritual pursuit of sonic discipline. Therefore, they appear as noise in Satsang.

Sound studies scholar Salomé Voegelin (2021) defined noise as a social misfit. According to Voegelin (2021), noise in modernity is considered as the sound that "does not fit into a semantic, musical, artistic or cultural and political regime" and hence "remains unrecognisable and unintelligible" (Voegelin, 2021). The unrecognisability and unintelligibility of distortion prevail in its inability to fit within the semantic, musical, artistic, and cultural regime of Satsang – an

organisation that is founded upon the discourse of sacred sounds, precisely cosmic sound (*Shabd-brahman*). Recently, anthropologist and sound studies scholar Tom Rice has defined noise as "sound out of place" (Rice and Pickering, 2017, p. 01). This theory finds its roots in the theory of dirt by British anthropologist Mary Douglas, who wrote, "dirt is matter out of place." Douglas wrote, "When something is classified firmly as anomalous, [such as dirt], the outline of the set of which it is *not* a member is clarified" (Douglas 1966, p. 47). In alignment with Douglas's theory, Rice and Pickering proposed that sounds are matters or material components perceived as anomalous and ambiguous. The theory of noise as sounds out of place may find resonance in the work of sound studies scholar Douglas Kahn, who proposed that certain sounds emerge as noises in the first place because they "exist where they shouldn't" (Kahn, 1999, p. 21). Like dirt, they are perceived as unclean and undesired. In the process of being identified as aural dirt, the uninvited sounds delineate the contours of its opposite – what is clean, what is acceptable, and what is desirable. Thus, noise plays a significantly productive role as it creates the boundaries of what it is not and from which it is excluded—noise becomes the excluded Other. It is the undesirable, the unwanted, and the disruptive Other.

However, the concept of noise as an unwanted Other does not fit well in the spiritual imagination of cosmic sound in Satsang. In the English verses of Sree Sree Thakur, it is difficult to find the English word Noise. On the contrary, the word Sound appears extensively. Be it in the topics of science, politics, morality, philosophy, education, and health, the word sound features extensively. Contrastingly, the native language in which Sree Sree Thakur articulated his verses, i.e., Bangla, surprisingly does not have a vernacular equivalent to the English word Noise, originally derived from the Latin word Nausea. It has to be remembered that the disciples barely used the word noise to refer to the sounds of distortion. Instead, they used words like technical disturbance or *jaantrik golojog* to refer to noise.

If we recall Manoj's words, we will find echoes of oneness in Vedic and Sikh discourses of sonic theology. In Hinduism, *Shabd-Brahman* signifies the idea of cosmic sound. Be it music or noise, everything originates from the same source. In Sikhism, *Beejnaam* and *Satnaam* signify the seed name, which is considered the seed of all creations. Be it music or noise, everything is believed to have emanated from the primordial seed sound or the cosmic sound. Hence, the theological

framework of cosmic sound in Satsang does not seem to resonate with the Western theories of acoustics founded on the dualities of desired sounds and unwanted noise. This is not surprising since Novak has already pointed out the presence of cultural disparities in the study of noise. Novak wrote that "[m]any languages do not distinguish noise as a category of sound" (Novak, 2015, p. 125). As a result, the meaning of noise may appear differently in different languages and cultures. Similarly, Satsang, which is an amalgamation of Hindu and Sikh traditions of thought, does not explicitly distinguish noise as a spiritual category of sound. But that does not mean that noise does not feature in the lives of Satsangees at all. As a modern religious community, the members of Satsang are certainly exposed to the urban avatars of noise. From loud music to cacophonies of traffic, roaring engines, and grinding machines, the Satsangees are familiar with the perpetual presence of hazardous sounds that surround their inhabited worlds. Although they can mentally differentiate between desired sounds and unwanted noise, it is impossible to separate these sounds practically in real-life scenarios. However, smartphones, which have become an integral part of their daily lives, can separate desirable sounds from unwanted noise, not only in terms of cognition but also in practice. One of the tools is the mute button. The politics of separation, which can be traced back to the Cartesian dualism of mind and body, theory and practice, discursive and material, and so on, is built into the mechanics of the mute button that sustains the hegemonic binary between desirable sound and unwanted noise. Therefore, the mute button instils the hope, desire, ambition, and agency of silencing unwanted sounds. Thus, the emergent practice of muting engenders the active separation between desired sounds and undesirable noise at a practical and material level. I contend that the ritual of silencing is not delimited to the act of muting; rather, it becomes a disciplinary practice that pertains to all aspects of life. In other words, noise is not delimited to sound as it exists as an undesired element or unwanted component that needs to be censored through devotional practices of self-discipline.

In e-satsang, a subtle but potent form of self-discipline manifests in the act of silencing. To combat *jaantrik golojog* or technical disturbance, disciples like Kalpana, Chandan, Gopal, and others have embraced self-disciplinary measures to prevent noise intrusion into the sacred ambiance of e-satsang. Chandan, for instance, diligently identified the source of technical disruption and advised Kalpana to relocate her physical presence. In response, Kalpana cleared her throat, adjusted her

position, and sought a more signal-friendly location. Gopal, residing amidst the bustling streets of Dhaka, took to his car and drove home, escaping the disruptive traffic noises.

Similarly, Jotno aimed his iPhone skyward in search of a better signal, resorting to wandering in pursuit of a peaceful shelter away from the cacophonous streets of South Kolkata. Meanwhile, nestled in a small room adjacent to the bustling streets of a metropolitan city, Kolkata, I took precautions to ensure that my device remained muted, preventing any inadvertent coughs or sneezes from intruding into the sacred sphere. When technical glitches persisted, I resorted to refreshing my WiFi connection, patiently waiting for the audio quality to improve. Likewise, the organisers take proactive measures by issuing advisory notices on various private messaging platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Telegram that explicitly instruct potential participants to mute their microphones and disable their cameras during the satsang. These disciplinary measures can be regarded as "attentional techniques" (Pedersen et al. 2021) or techniques of "attentional learning" (Luhrman, 2012), through which disciples not only learn to prevent noise from infiltrating the sacred atmospheres of e-satsang but *discover* noise in the first place.

American anthropologist Tanya Lurhman (2012), in her study of US evangelical congregations, has developed the attentional theory of learning to explain how practitioners learn to experience the presence of God by attending to their minds and emotions through prayer. In online congregation or e-satsang in Deoghar, silencing emerges as a form of "attentional learning" (Lurhman, 2012), through which disciples learn to experience the presence of their beloved guru, Sree Sree Thakur, by attending to and silencing background noise. Activities such as muting devices, disabling cameras, relocating the body from one place to another and relocating the device from one place to another in search for signals, refreshing WiFi connections, utilising high-definition music system with noise-cancellation features, and circulating advisory notices on private messaging platforms are not only mental or cognitive techniques. Instead, these are embodied techniques of attentional learning through which disciples learn to experience the divine presence while rediscovering the mundane sounds of their surrounding environments as noise.

This newly emergent form of attentional learning through silencing entails the act of otherization. Disciples identify noise as a realm of

unwanted and undesirable sound frequencies that must be silenced and disciplined. For instance, when I muted my laptop during the meetings, my intention was to shield the e-satsang from the inadvertent sounds of my own coughs and sneezes. In e-satsang, these sounds were designated as noise—the unwanted Other. What is interesting is that the same coughs and sneezes may not have been classified as noise outside the confines of e-satsang. However, within the sacred confines of e-satsang, a particular type of attentive listening was involved whereby my own body and immediate surroundings were otherised as noise—unwanted and disruptive. I refer to this act as noisification, wherein I otherised my own body and my surrounding environment as an undesirable Other. Similarly, Kalpana's decision to change her physical location exemplifies this concept of noisification. She relocated her body and device to a different location in her house to rectify the distorted audio signals. By changing her physical position and moving her device, Kalpana treated her own distorted voice and her immediate location as noise or the unwanted Other. In other words, she noisified her body, location, and surroundings, recognizing them as noise that demanded to be silenced. Likewise, when Gopal chose to drive back home and seek the solitude of his house, Chandan postponed his performance slot. Their collective actions aimed to shield the e-satsang from the noisiest city in the world. In this endeavor, Chandan and Gopal noisified the congested streets of Dhaka, designating them as unwanted Others. They prevented the sonic frequencies of Dhaka from encroaching upon the sacred audio vibrations of e-satsang. In the same vein of noisification, hundreds and thousands of Satsangees worldwide endeavor to silence their surrounding environments from infiltrating the e-satsang. This is how silencing becomes a form of techno-spiritual disciplining in the era of e-satsang, whereby practitioners noisify themselves and their surrounding environments by silencing the unruly frequencies of life.

Religion, Noise Pollution, and Public Life

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), noise has emerged as a leading environmental threat that can give birth to a range of short-term and long-term health problems, such as sleep disturbance, cardiovascular effects, poorer work and school performance, hearing impairment, etc. (WHO, 2010). Besides the burgeoning urban cacophonies of airplanes and the honking of cars, religious sermons and loudspeakers have often created disputes by causing noise pollution in public spaces. WHO's claim suggests that "noise has emerged as a

leading environmental nuisance in the WHO European Region," but the crisis of noise pollution is not limited to the European province. It is a global environmental threat. According to the Annual Frontier Report, published by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in March 2022, Dhaka has been declared the noisiest city in the world. This fascinating trivia can decode an invisible connection between Satsang and the global crisis of noise pollution if we ask a simple question: Is it a coincidence that the birthplace of the Satsang movement, Bangladesh, which is the world's noisiest nation, speaks in a language (Bangla) that does not have a vernacular term for noise?

In his book, "Religion Out Loud: Religious Sound, Public Space, and American Pluralism" (2014), religious studies scholar Isaac Weiner studied sonic disputes around religious noise among the people of Hamtramck City in Michigan, USA. Weiner's (2014) account suggests that while the sounds of Azaan played over loudspeakers appeared sacred to the ears of the Islamic practitioners, the same sounds appeared as disturbing noise and civil nuisance to other residents. The American law identified the loud sounds of Azaan as noise since they violated the threshold of legalized decibel limits; the sermon listeners of the city proposed a legal amendment to exempt the prayer sounds under the anti-noise ordinance. Such occurrences are not specific to the American context. There are endless accounts of conflict around the issue of religious noise in Indian metropolitan cities. The Mumbai-based organization, The Awaz Foundation, led by renowned environmental activist Sumaira Abdulali, has been running several awareness and advocacy campaigns on anti-noise in collaboration with local governments and members of religious communities. The pubic life of religious noise in India and outside is integrally tied to the domain of law, science, and politics. Therefore, what is noise in the eyes of the law may sound musical to the ears of religion. What is defined as noise in the legal and biomedical theories may appear sonorous to an adherent practitioner of devotional music. Therefore, an anthropological inquiry into religious noise is impossible without engaging with other forms of noise – legal, medical, and environmental. Noise is a complicated subject. On the one hand, there is a perceptual heterogeneity of noise, i.e., it can be perceived multifariously depending on respective vantage points of distinct traditions of thought. On the other hand, noise continues to exist as a global environmental threat. The concept of noisification can help us understand the role of religion in mitigating the crisis of noise pollution by demystifying the conundrum of noise as a global and vernacular

concept while drawing our attention toward new methods and techniques of studying religious noise from the global South.

Conclusion

In his seminal book titled *Noise: A Political Economy of Music* (1977), the French economist and cultural theorist Jacques Attali wrote, "[w]ith noise is born disorder and its opposite: the world" (1985: 6). Through the emergent techniques of noisification in e-satsang, a new Satsangee lifeworld comes into the formation through the order of silenced bodies, silenced devices and silenced audio vibrations. Each act is an act of disciplining the otherwise indisciplined vibrations of noise and creating a world of disciplined sounds. In doing so, disciples immerse in a complex nexus of silencing practices that operate across the material, spiritual, and technological realms – a nexus between noisified disciples and their noisifed environments.

Noisification in e-satsang offers an insightful path to rethink the *significance* of noise – the productive power of noise in unfolding what Sree Sree Thakur called the "secret workings" (*tuk*) of ensounded lifeworlds. Kahn (1999) argued that noise is often identified as a meaningless and unwanted residual component, but the genesis of its becoming is profoundly rich. That is why emphasis is placed on inquiring into the *becoming* of noise (Graham, 2023). When certain sounds are suppressed, silenced, and censored as noise, they reveal a set of "motives, strategies, gestures… [and] grammars." that unlocks the encrypted codes of social order (Kahn, 1999, p. 20). Hence the study of noisification in the sacred atmospheres of Deoghar-Satsang promises to unlock new "attentional techniques" (Pedersen, 2021) through which scholars of humanities and social sciences can learn the evolving semantics and grammar of religious spaces and surrounding environments in recent times.

In this essay, the sacred atmospheres of Deoghar in Jharkhand and the techo-spiritually disrupted lifeworlds of Satsangees helped us to understand the linguistic, cultural, and epistemic imbalances in devising a universal methodological tool to study noise. It helped us realize something. As long as there are multiple cultures worldwide, there could be endless meanings of noise. Since noise is perceived, imagined, and expressed differently in different cultures, we must meticulously unpack these differences to understand how they enable new modes of

"attentional learning" (Lurhman, 2012) – new ways of attending to the world and surrounding environments.

The phenomenon of noisification should not be limited to religious lifeworlds. Instead, it operates across distinct fields, such as religion, science, politics, and law, where noise exists in polymorphic avatars. Due to the untamable spirit of noise, it can never be subsumed under a particular lens of inquiry. Across divergent fields of study, such as physics, law, politics, and biomedicine, the meaning of noise is formulated at the intersection of ideas. In a time when noise has become one of the deadliest environmental pollutants of our time, this paper suggests that noise should not be seen as merely an ecological/climatic crisis limited to European lifeworlds. Instead, noisification curves an interdisciplinary stream of inquiry that attends to the existing problem of language and culture whereby noise can't be captured sufficiently within a single framework of disciplinary thought. It is a crisis of language, episteme, imagination, and culture. Noisification focuses on the becoming of distinct trajectories of thought, imagination, perceptions, and sensibilities, where the marginal voices are often noisified in the resounding hierarchies of knowledge. Our responsibility is to listen carefully and attentively.

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The Dexterity of Editing in Malayalam Films: A Case Study of 'Thallumaala'

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Abstract

This paper delves into the realm of contemporary Malayalam cinema, specifically focusing on the surge in experimental narrative techniques. Departing from traditional linear storytelling, filmmakers are embracing non-linear narratives to captivate audiences on various experience levels. 'Thallumaala,' a Malayalam film, serves as a prime example of this trend with its innovative editing techniques. Through an analysis of suturing techniques and suture rupture patterns within the editing process, this study aims to illuminate how 'Thallumaala' challenges conventional storytelling and editing norms, providing a deep understanding of film language and the intricate nature of editing techniques. Employing a content analysis approach within a qualitative methodology, this research scrutinizes the editing techniques utilized in 'Thallumaala.' By drawing upon film theory and content analysis, this study seeks to uncover the utilization and patterns of suturing techniques, as well as suture rupture methods, in the film. This exploration not only enriches the comprehension of film as an art form but also provides valuable insights for industry professionals striving to push the boundaries of storytelling within cinema.

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Introduction

In today's cinematic landscape, films wield significant influence, fostering profound connections between viewers and their personal experiences, memories, and sense of identity. Occasionally, the themes and messages conveyed within a film can deeply impact individuals' perspectives and convictions (Kubrak, 2020). Suture theory, rooted in psychoanalysis and expanded into film theory, offers insight into how filmmakers employ various techniques to immerse audiences in the narrative, fostering continuity and coherence (Butte, 2008). According to 'suture theory', the spectator is positioned as a subject within the narrative. It operates on the premise that the spectator is not just passively watching the film but is actively engaged in the process. It explores how a film strategically integrates or "stitches" the viewer into the storyline, fostering a strong sense of identification (Miller, 1977).

By encouraging viewers to engage with the storyline and embrace the fictional world presented on screen, suturing mechanisms enhance the cinematic experience. It posits that films are not merely passive experiences but are active engagements that "stitch" the viewer into the narrative, making them a part of the unfolding story. Suturing is not just about joining shots to tell a story linearly; it's about the seamless integration of visual, auditory, and narrative elements to create a cohesive and immersive cinematic experience (Magrini, 2006). Recent years have witnessed a notable transformation in Malayalam cinema, with filmmakers venturing into new storytelling avenues. Non-linear narrative techniques, deviating from conventional chronological order, have emerged as a prominent aspect of this evolution. These narratives do not follow a straightforward chronological order but instead weave in and out of different time frames, creating a tapestry of events that challenge the viewer's perception and engagement with the story.

Films like 'Thallumaala' stand out for their bold experimentation with non-linear storytelling and innovative editing techniques. The non-linear narrative allows filmmakers to juxtapose different time periods, perspectives, and realities, creating a richer and more multifaceted exploration of the themes. Malayalam movies have experienced a significant shift in narrative techniques, including

the adoption of non-linear narratives, which has been more evident in recent years. This shift involves interweaving several stories into one, and revealing past events through flashbacks or different storylines. Films like "Traffic" directed by Rjesh Pillai in the year 2011 have been pioneers in this shift, integrating multiple stories to create a complex narrative (Mohan, 2020). Other films, such as 'Friday' and 'City of God' effectively use non-linear narrative techniques, starting the story from the middle and using flashbacks to unfold the plot.

Moreover, Malayalam cinema has seen filmmakers deviating from traditional three-act structures, experimenting with non-linear storytelling techniques. 'Manjummel Boys' by Chidambaram and 'Aavasavyuham' by Krishand represent this experimentation, creating narratives that do not follow a linear progression. Overall, the narrative techniques in Malayalam movies have evolved, incorporating non-linear storytelling methods to engage audiences and offer unique storytelling experiences.

Technological advancements in filmmaking and editing have also played a role in facilitating the shift towards non-linear narratives. Modern editing tools allow filmmakers to seamlessly weave together different timelines and perspectives, making it easier to create complex narratives that would have been difficult to achieve in the past. This has opened up new possibilities for storytelling, enabling filmmakers to experiment with their narrative structures in ways that engage the audience more deeply.

'Thallumaala' is a 2022 Malayalam-language action comedy film directed by Khalid Rahman and produced by Ashiq Usman. The screenplay was done by Muhsin Parari and Ashraf Hamza. The film stars Tovino Thomas and Kalyani Priyadarshan in the lead roles and is known for its vibrant and energetic presentation, focusing on action sequences and stylishly shot stunts. Film editor Nishad Yusuf's innovative techniques and attention to detail are evident throughout the film, making 'Thallumaala' a standout in Malayalam cinema for its craft and storytelling style.

In 'Thallumaala', follow the story of Wazim (played by Tovino Thomas), a youthful and spirited man known for his involvement in numerous fights, who undergoes a profound transformation after crossing paths with Beevi / Beepathu (played by Kallyani Priyadarshan), a beloved vlogger. Despite Wazim's continued struggles with impulsivity and aggression, his encounter with Beevi

and the allure of her social media stardom begin to mellow his rough edges. Yet, the same fists that built his reputation as a fighter, threaten the delicate joy he has found with Beevi, weaving a narrative of love, change, friendship and the consequences of one's past actions. As the name suggests, "Thallu" means fight, and "Maala" means chain. The movie revolves around the chain of fights that Wazim finds himself embroiled in. His encounter with SI Reji Mathew (played by Shine Tom Chacko) marks a pivotal turn in Wazim's life. As the movie progresses, it sequentially unfolds the events that follow this transformative encounter.

The filmmakers employed a variety of techniques to unravel the story. The editing process of 'Thallumaala' plays a crucial role in unravelling the narrative, serving as the backbone of film storytelling. This study delves into the utilization of suture rupture techniques within the editing process of 'Thallumaala', which has significantly advanced traditional storytelling and editing practices. Suture rupture refers to the moments when the seamless narrative illusion or suturing is broken or disrupted.

The importance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding the evolving landscape of cinema, particularly within the Malayalam film industry. It sheds light on techniques and approaches contributing to the industry's success, offering insights that inform filmmakers and scholars globally. Moreover, the exploration of innovative editing practices enriches our understanding of film as an art form, offering a new perspective on the potential of cinema to engage, challenge, and transform the viewer. The study further examines the aesthetic qualities of the film 'Thallumaala' and how they parallel the characteristics of social media. Through this analysis, the study aims to uncover the ways in which 'Thallumaala' reflects the influence of social media on contemporary filmmaking, especially in its editing techniques. This comparison sheds light on the interconnectedness of digital culture and cinematic expression, revealing how social media's aesthetics and dynamics are increasingly mirrored in filmic narratives.

By delving into the specifics of how these techniques are employed in 'Thallumaala', the study not only enriches the understanding of the film but also contributes to the broader discourse on the evolution of narrative techniques and language in cinema. By focusing on how these techniques influence viewer engagement and narrative, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the psychological impact of cinema on the audience. It highlights the role of editing

as a critical tool in the filmmaker's battery, one that can be used to manipulate time, perception, and emotional response.

Methodology

This study adopts a content analysis approach within a qualitative methodology to scrutinize the editing techniques employed in the Malayalam film 'Thallumaala', recipient of the Best Editor Award at the Kerala State Film Awards-2022. This action-comedy film directed by Khalid Rahman and edited by Nishad Yusuf.

The film's storyline centres on a series of interconnected events, and a chain of quarrels that unfold in a non-linear narrative, where the story doesn't unfold in a chronological order. Instead, it revolves around a series of interconnected events, primarily fights, which lead to unexpected outcomes. The transitions between scenes were meticulously planned to be seamless and engaging, drawing inspiration from social media reels, particularly Instagram videos. This innovative approach to editing, featuring quick, quirky cuts, contributes to the film's dynamic and fast-paced nature. The sharp cuts, peppy transitions, and clever edits maintain the film's high energy and contribute to its unique viewing experience (Aswin, 2022).

The dictionary meaning of "Dexterity" refers to skill in performing tasks, often those requiring the use of hands (Woodford & Jackson, 2003). In the context of film editing, it implies a high level of skill, creativity, and precision. The use of the word "dexterity" highlights the editor's ability to navigate complex narrative structures, manipulate the flow of time, and evoke emotional responses from the audience through the judicious arrangement of shots and sequences.

Drawing upon insights from film theory and narrative analysis, the research seeks to uncover the utilization and patterns of suture breaking techniques in 'Thallumaala' and their influence on the audience's overall cinematic engagement. Considering 'Thallumaala' as a case study allows for an exploration of how such innovative techniques influence the broader landscape of Malayalam cinema. Analysing the innovative editing techniques and suture rupture methods set by 'Thallumaala's' editing and storytelling techniques could highlight its contribution to the dexterity and evolution of Malayalam films.

This study endeavours to answer the following research questions:

1. Do suture ruptures play a significant role in shaping the narrative style of the movie 'Thallumaala'?

2. How are post-production techniques used in the film 'Thallumaala' used to rupture the suturing?

3. Can any definite patterns be found in suture ruptures?

Through a meticulous examination of pivotal scenes and sequences, the research focuses on identifying instances of non-linear storytelling, suturing methods, and other editing techniques. Additionally, the researcher employs suture rupture methods such as graphics, cross cuts, Jump cuts, Flashbacks/Flash-forwards, transitions, overlapping images, fast intercuts, split screens, freezing frames, cut to black screens, overlapping videos, sound breaks, unusual camera movements, animations, and wipe transitions to analyse the suture rupture patterns, further enriching the understanding of the film's editing dynamics. Suturing techniques are designed to immerse the audience in the film's world, making the viewing experience seamless, on the other hands, suture ruptures intentionally disrupt the narrative, visual, or auditory flow to achieve specific effects (Tavares, 2024). The researcher intends to analyse the techniques that break the narrative flow, referring to these interruptions as instances of suture rupture.

The primary data collection involved a comprehensive frame-by-frame analysis of 'Thallumaala', with a specific focus on identifying instances of suture rupture. Each scene and shot was scrutinized to classify the type of rupture method utilized, its placement within the narrative, and its frequency. This granular approach ensured a thorough understanding of the editing techniques used and their contribution to the film's storytelling. A granular approach is about depth and precision, ensuring a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the subject matter by focusing on the finer details. In the context of film analysis; it would extend to examining specific editing techniques, camera angles, sound design, lighting, and how these elements contribute to the overall narrative and emotional impact of the film. Each of these components would be analysed in detail to understand their purpose, effect, and how they interact with each other within the film's context.

Following data collection, the analysis phase involved categorizing the identified suture ruptures based on their method, timing, and frequency within

the film's timeline. This categorization facilitated a deeper examination of the patterns and purposes behind the use of suture breaks, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the editing style and its impact on the narrative flow of the movie. A critical aspect of the analysis was identifying the pattern of suture breaks across the movie. This step aimed to uncover any strategic placements or recurring themes in the use of suture rupture methods, providing insights into the film's innovative editing and its effect on the overall cinematic experience. The categorized data was then converted into a pie chart, offering a visual representation of the percentage and distribution of suture breaks utilized in 'Thallumaala'. This visualization enabled an immediate and clear interpretation of the editing technique's prevalence and its thematic significance within the movie.

The selection of 'Thallumaala' for this study is rooted in its prominence within contemporary Malayalam cinema and its potential to reshape narrative structures. By focusing on non-linear storytelling and editing techniques, the study addresses a notable gap in the literature regarding their specific application in Malayalam cinema.

Suturing in film extends beyond the realm of editing, influencing various components of filmmaking. These components include narrative structure, cinematography, sound design, and character development. Each plays a crucial role in engaging the viewer and ensuring the seamless flow of the film's story and emotional impact (Butte, 2008). But in this study, the researcher focuses particularly on the use of suture rupture in the process of film editing. By systematically analysing and visualizing the use of suture rupture methods, the research highlights the innovative approaches to storytelling in Malayalam cinema, showcasing the creative and technical prowess that characterizes the genre.

Observation and Results

When analysing the movie 'Thallumaala', a multitude of suture ruptures were meticulously identified: cross cuts, split screens, wipe transitions, overlapping images/videos, unusual camera movements, flashbacks, graphics/animations, sound breaks, transition to black screen and freezing frames. Each of these suture ruptures serves to disrupt the linear flow of the narrative and introduce variations in the editing style, contributing to the overall visual and thematic complexity of the film.
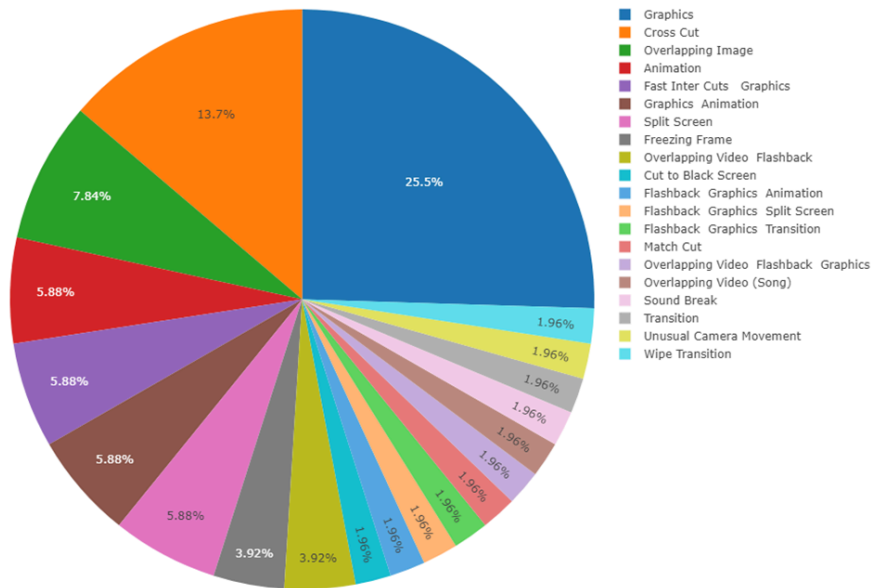
The analysis of suture rupture methods in 'Thallumaala' reveals a sophisticated use of editing techniques that contribute significantly to the film's narrative style and audience engagement. The breakdown of these methods into percentages highlights the predominance of certain techniques over others, offering insights into the film's visual storytelling approach.

Graphics, making up 25.5% of the suture rupture methods, play a pivotal role in 'Thallumaala'. This high percentage indicates a strong reliance on visual elements beyond traditional cinematography to enhance the narrative. For instance, the use of graphical overlays can be seen in scenes where characters' emotions or thoughts are visually represented on screen, adding a layer of depth to the storytelling. Graphics might also be used in transition sequences, where visually striking elements help bridge scenes in a non-linear narrative, making the transitions smoother and more engaging for the audience.

Figure 1: Graphics used in a fight scene to enhance a character's reaction

Shortly after the title sequence, the film transitions into a scene that is visually rich and engaging, marked by the use of graphics. It begins with a graphical representation of someone conducting an online search for the "Ponnani wedding fight." Through this introduction, graphics not only sets the tone for the narrative that follows but also creatively engages the audience by blending digital culture with the film's storyline. Following this, the scene smoothly transitions to feature graphics associated with the "Manavalan Wasim" song, and then unfold to reveal graphics depicting someone recording the fight involving Manavalan Wasim. This particular use of graphics serves a dual purpose: it visually narrates the story's progression while also commenting on the modern phenomenon of capturing and sharing moments through digital means.
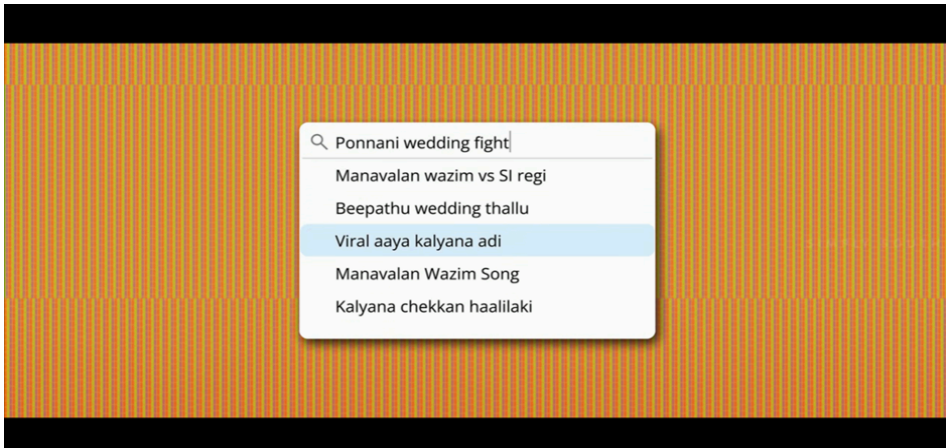
Figure 2: Ponnani Wedding Fight - Web Search

In this movie, a significant use of text graphics is employed to enhance the storytelling and visual experience. This creative choice involves integrating written words, stylized fonts, and dynamic text animations directly into the scenes. These text graphics serve multiple purposes: they can emphasize key moments, convey characters' thoughts and emotions or dialogue in a visually engaging manner, and provide contextual information or chapter details.

Figure 3: The use of text graphics to convey the character's confidence

Cross cuts, constituting 13.7% of the analysis, are employed to show simultaneous actions or events happening in different locations, enhancing the dynamism of the narrative. An example from 'Thallumaala' could involve cutting between two characters engaged in separate activities that, when viewed together, offer deeper insights into their relationship or the plot. This technique is effective in building tension or showcasing parallel developments in the storyline, engaging the viewer by keeping them guessing about the connection between these simultaneous events.

The film skillfully incorporates cross cuts to juxtapose scenes featuring Wasim with his friends against their opponents, Reji Mathew and his gang, unfolding simultaneously. This editing technique enriches the narrative by providing a multi-perspective view of the events, enhancing the storytelling's depth and complexity. Further, the uses of cross cuts are extensively employed to depict the escalating tension and eventual confrontation between Wasim and his friends and their adversaries. These cross cuts not only heighten the drama and intensity of the fight sequences but also serve to maintain a dynamic pace, keeping the audience engaged and invested in the outcome of these conflicts.

By alternating between the two groups, the film effectively builds suspense and anticipation, as the audience is led to wonder how these parallel narratives will converge. This method of storytelling, through cross cuts, allows for a richer, more layered narrative experience, showcasing the filmmaker's adeptness at using editing techniques to enhance the cinematic narrative.

Figure 4: The protagonist's migration to Dubai is indicated through animation

Animation, fast intercuts combined with graphics, graphics combined with animation, and split screens accounts for 5.88% of the suture rupture methods. Each of these techniques offers a unique way to enrich the storytelling. For example, the depiction of Wasim's migration to Dubai represents a significant plot point within the narrative, marking a pivotal shift in the storyline. The transition from his life in his hometown to his new life in Dubai is creatively portrayed through animation, starting from the farewell scene with his friends from the police station. This choice to utilize animation to showcase Wasim's Dubai experiences introduces a humorous and engaging element to the story, providing a distinct contrast to the film's earlier scenes.

The use of animation to depict this major life change is not only an innovative storytelling technique but also serves several narrative functions. Firstly, it visually distinguishes Wasim's life in Dubai from the preceding parts of the film, emphasizing the drastic change in his environment and experiences. The animated sequences allow for a more whimsical and exaggerated portrayal of Wasim's adventures and challenges in Dubai.

Figure 5: Animation used in chapter break

Moreover, this shift to animation during a crucial part of Wasim's journey adds a layer of creativity and freshness to the storytelling, engaging the audience's imagination and keeping them invested in the character's development. The decision to employ animation also reflects the film's willingness to experiment with different narrative styles and techniques, showcasing the filmmakers' versatility and commitment to storytelling. This approach not only enriches the narrative but also demonstrates the film's thematic exploration of change, adaptation, and the bittersweet nature of life events.

In the movie, the filmmakers have innovatively structured the narrative by systematically dividing it into 9 chapters, each introduced with its name creatively rendered in animation and graphics. These chapters are: Chapter 1: Adisthana Souhrudham, Chapter 2: Adi Vechu Munnottu, Chapter 3: Adiyil Anandakaalam, Chapter 4: Adi Jeevana Margangal, Chapter 5: Adiyanthiraavastha, Chapter 6: Adi Nirthal Prakhyaapanam, Chapter 7: Melodiyaal Meladi, Chapter 8: Adisthaana Souhrudham 2, Chapter 9: Adikkurippu. Dividing the movie into chapters with visually distinct introductions allows for a more structured and coherent narrative assembly. It provides clear breakpoints in the story, ensure narrative coherence, and thematic emphasize.

Figure 6: Fast intercutting with graphics used in a fight scene

The utilization of fast intercuts combined with graphics, particularly in fight scenes, represents a dynamic and innovative approach to film editing. This technique enhances the intensity and impact of the storyline. Fast intercuts, characterized by quick and sharp transitions between shots, serve to heighten the sense of urgency and chaos inherent in fight scenes. Graphics can visually depict sounds, such as the shouting and punching sounds in a stylized manner that emphasizes their intensity. Similarly, graphical representations of emotions, whether through expressive faces or symbolic imagery, offer visual shorthand for the characters internal states.

The integration of graphics combined with animation, particularly during scene breaks, serves as a unique narrative device within the film, especially in articulating major thematic shifts and character transformations. One of the most striking applications of this technique is in the depiction of Wasim's transformation, which is creatively presented in a manner reminiscent of a makeover game environment. This approach significantly contributes to the storytelling by providing a metaphorical representation of change and evolution within the film.
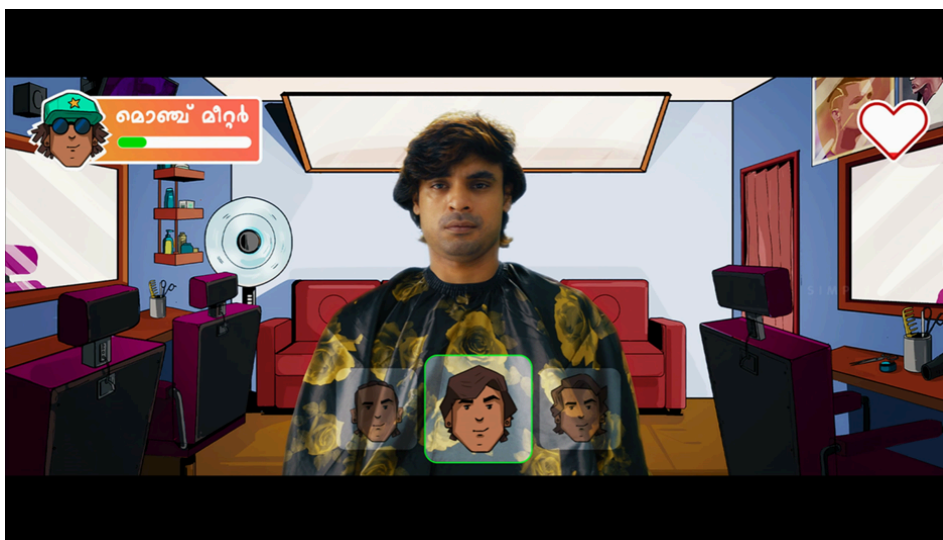
Figure 7: Depicting a character's makeover using the interface of a video gaming application

The use of split screens, particularly in fight scenes and telephone conversations, by dividing the screen into separate panels, each showcasing different visual information simultaneously. Filmmakers can convey multiple narrative threads or perspectives at once. The addition of movement within these split-screen dimensions further enriches the visual experience, adding dynamism and depth to the scenes.

Figure 8: Split screens used in a fight scene

In fight scenes, split screens allow the audience to witness the action from multiple angles and perspectives simultaneously. This approach can intensify the scene's impact by showing both the protagonist and the antagonist's actions and reactions in real-time, without cutting back and forth. The viewer gains a more comprehensive understanding of the fight's progression, capturing the full spectrum of movements, tactics, and emotions involved.

For telephone conversations, split screens serve to visually bridge the physical distance between the characters, presenting their facial expressions and reactions side by side. This technique effectively conveys the emotional nuances of the conversation, allowing the audience to experience both sides of the dialogue in a more connected and engaging way.

Figure 9: Split screens used in a telephone conversation

The incorporation of movement within split screens is a sophisticated technique that can elevate the storytelling. It prevents the split-screen format from feeling static or confining, instead making it a fluid element of the film's visual language. Each of these techniques contributes to the film's unique storytelling style, using visual innovation to break conventional narrative structures and engage the audience on multiple levels.

The use of freezing images and overlapping video with flashbacks accounts for 3.92% of the suture rupture methods. Freezing images can serve to highlight a specific moment, drawing the audience's attention to the significance of the scene or the emotional state of a character. When combined with overlapping video and flashbacks, this technique can create a poignant juxtaposition between past and present, seamlessly integrating memories into the current narrative flow. The technique of freezing images utilized to capture key moments of Wasim's wedding party, allowing the audience to linger on significant expressions or actions that define the character's emotions during this crucial event.

Figure 10: Overlapping Video

 Figure 11: Continuation of overlapping video

The remaining 1.96% encompasses a wide array of editing techniques, each adding its layer of meaning to the film. The transition from Wazim's wedding night to the following morning is marked by a cut to a black screen. This simple yet effective technique signals a significant temporal shift, providing a clear

demarcation between the two scenes. It allows the audience a moment of pause, preparing them for the narrative's progression into the next phase of the story.

Wazim's quest to find Beevi, triggered by the memory of her bicycle, is depicted through a flashback enhanced with graphics and animation. This sequence is creatively set up within a gaming app environment, adding a layer of interactivity and visual appeal to the reminiscence.

Figure 12: Shot with video game interface

The use of flashback with graphics and split screen to depict a fast-paced outline of Wazim's past altercation with his friends showcases the filmmakers' ability to convey crucial backstory information efficiently. This technique allows for a simultaneous presentation of multiple perspectives or time frames, offering a comprehensive understanding of the events in a condensed format.

Figure 13: Graphics of film ticket tearing

A particularly inventive use of flashback involves the depiction of past events at a theatre, where graphics of a film ticket and a tearing transition are employed. This method not only visually captivates but also symbolically represents the tearing away of layers to reveal hidden memories, enhancing the narrative depth.

Match cuts in 'Thallumaala' are utilized not just as a suture technique but in a more creative manner, where a scene freezes into a still photograph that subsequently crumples up and is washed away in a bathroom basin, transitioning to a different scene. The transition from a moving scene to a static photograph, followed by its crumpling and subsequent disposal in a basin, acts as a compelling visual metaphor. In the moment when the scene is still in motion, Wazim mentions that the story will be shared later, urging the audience to wait. Subsequently, the scene freezes and is washed away. This sequence could symbolize the postponement of the story, the concept of moving beyond past events, or the characters' intentions to momentarily set aside the occurrence. This technique enriches the narrative with symbolic elements, offering a more profound interpretation for the audience.

Figure 14: Freezing frame washed away in a bathroom basin

The intertwining of another storyline from the past, detailing how Wazim meets Beevi, is achieved through the overlapping of video, flashback, and graphics. This method enriches the storytelling by layering different narrative elements, providing a textured and multifaceted view of their relationship's origins. The use of overlapping videos in songs, where almost all shots are merged with another, creates a visually lush and dynamic musical experience.

The movie 'Thallumaala' incorporates memes as text and graphics, a creative choice that significantly enhances its narrative and visual storytelling. This approach reflects a deep understanding of contemporary digital culture and leverages the widespread popularity of social media platforms. The innovative use of visuals as stickers and the incorporation of certain shots styled as Instagram Live videos in 'Thallumaala' further exemplify the film's deep integration with contemporary digital culture and social media trends.

Figure 15: Memes are incorporated into the shot
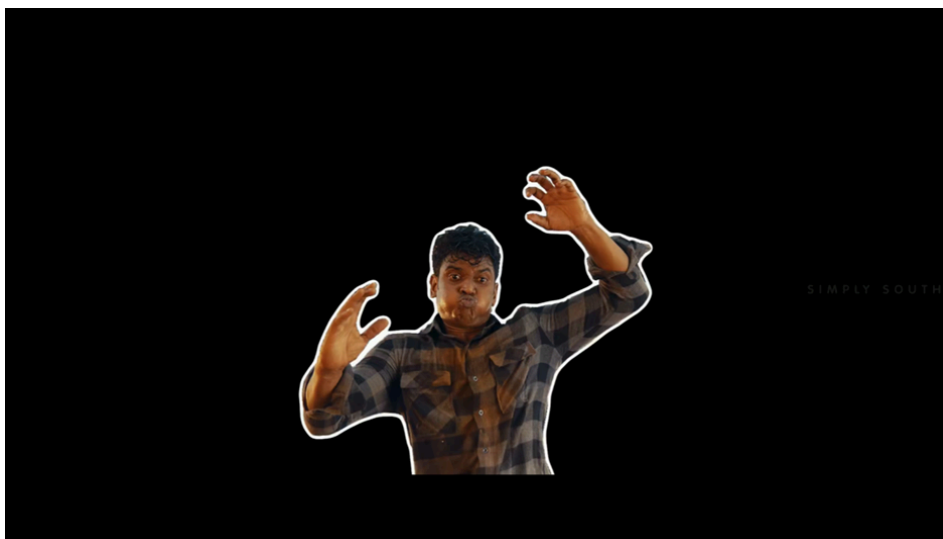
Figure 16: The shot being used as a sticker

The use of the Instagram Live interface indicates the life of influential vlogger Beepathu. By presenting certain shots as if they are being broadcast on Instagram Live, the film fosters a direct connection between its characters and the audience. This format allows viewers to feel as though they are part of the story, engaging directly with the characters. It breaks down the traditional barriers between the narrative and the viewer, fostering a more immersive experience.

This technique makes the narrative feel more contemporary and relatable, as viewers are accustomed to the live streaming format in their everyday social media interactions. It demonstrates the filmmakers' willingness to experiment with new forms of storytelling that resonate with a digitally savvy audience. This approach can make the film stand out, offering a unique viewing experience that leverages contemporary digital culture. The decision to set the dimensions of certain shots in 'Thallumaala' to resemble the aspect ratio of Instagram, rather than using the traditional full-screen format, is a deliberate and impactful artistic choice.
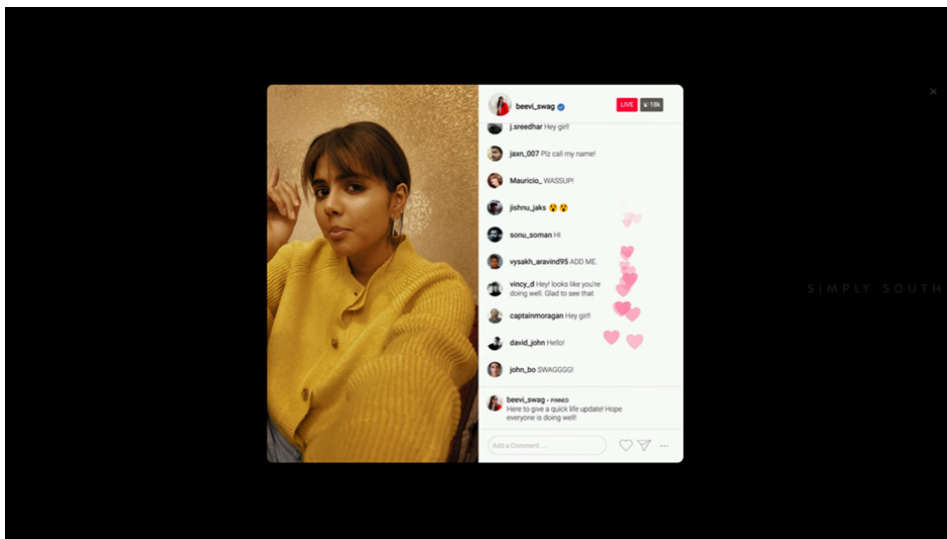
Figure 17: Use of Instagram live interface

Sound breaks are strategically used for transitioning between shots, enhancing the dramatic impact of scene changes. Additionally, the film employs fancy transitions that are rare in cinema, adding a unique stylistic flair to the visual

narrative. Rare camera movements in fight scenes and the use of wipe transitions for shot transformations further exemplify the filmmakers' commitment to innovative cinematography.

Figure 18: Unusual camera movement used in a fight scene

In a nutshell, by integrating cross cuts, the film seamlessly weaves together parallel storylines, creating a dynamic narrative structure that keeps the audience engaged and on their toes. Split screens are employed to present multiple perspectives simultaneously, enriching the narrative depth and allowing viewers to experience the story's multifaceted nature. Wipe transitions and overlapping images/videos add a layer of visual fluidity, connecting scenes and ideas in a way that is both aesthetically pleasing and thematically significant.

Moreover, the inclusion of unusual camera movements and flashbacks disrupts the chronological progression of events, inviting viewers to piece together the narrative puzzle themselves. This non-linear approach to storytelling not only enhances the mystery and intrigue but also encourages active engagement from the audience. The use of graphics and animations introduces an additional layer of fantasy narrative and thematic expression, often signalling shifts in tone, setting, or perspective, and adding a visually stimulating element that complements the film's storytelling.

Sound breaks and transitions to black screens are effectively used to create moments of tension, anticipation, and reflection, guiding the audience's emotional journey through the film. Freezing frames, in particular, emphasizing the film's thematic messages.

Major Findings

1. Frequency of Suture ruptures: The suture ruptures seem to occur frequently throughout the movie, indicating a dynamic editing style. The frequency and variety of these breaks suggest that they are intentionally used to disrupt the linear narrative flow and create a visual interest. These breaks are not incidental but are integral to the storytelling process, carefully chosen and placed to serve specific narrative and stylistic purposes.

2. Strategic Placement: Suture ruptures are strategically placed throughout the movie, occurring at different points such as scene breaks, transitions between flashbacks, and during action sequences. At the level of scene breaks, suture ruptures serve to punctuate the narrative, providing clear demarcations between different segments of the story. This not only aids in maintaining a consistent narrative structure but also allows for the introduction of new themes, settings, or characters. By strategically placing these breaks at scene transitions, the filmmakers effectively manage the pacing of the narrative, guiding the audience through the story's progression with precision and intent.

The transitions between flashbacks are another critical area where suture ruptures are employed with strategic intent. During action sequences, the use of suture ruptures adds dynamism and intensity to the visual storytelling. These breaks amplify the excitement and tension of the action, employing rapid cuts, unusual camera angles, and other dynamic editing techniques to immerse the audience in the cinematic experience. The strategic placement of suture ruptures throughout 'Thallumaala' is a clear indication of the filmmaker's dedication to crafting a film that is both narratively compelling and stylistically innovative.

1. Use of suture breaking techniques: This technique conveys multiple perspectives, themes, or timelines simultaneously, challenging the viewer's perception of the storyline. It invites deeper engagement by layering visuals and using unconventional filming techniques. Graphics and animation at scene break

signal shifts in theme, location, or narrative focus. It represents a sophisticated approach to storytelling.

2. Definite Patterns: The filmmakers segmented the film into 9 chapters, with recurring suture ruptures at the beginning of each chapter, often involving graphics and animations. This suggests thematic or narrative significance tied to these sections. It provides a unique opportunity to set the tone, mood, or thematic focus of the upcoming narrative segment. Additionally, suturing techniques, especially graphic elements and match cuts, are used at scene breaks. These techniques are not arbitrarily chosen; instead, they play a crucial role in maintaining the narrative's rhythm and coherence.

Through a sophisticated and strategic employment of various editing techniques, including cross cuts, split screens, graphic elements, and more, the filmmakers have crafted a narrative richly layered and visually dynamic. These breaks serve multiple purposes: they disrupt the conventional linear flow of storytelling, invite deeper audience engagement by challenging perceptions, and facilitate a seamless integration of multiple perspectives, themes, and timelines. The inclusion of shots with the social media platform interface in 'Thallumaala' significantly enriches the film's narrative and aesthetic appeal. It connects the film to contemporary digital practices and social media habits, offering a fresh and engaging way to tell stories that resonate with modern audiences.

This innovative approach to filmmaking challenges traditional cinematic conventions, engaging the audience in a deeply immersive and thought-provoking experience. Through its creative use of editing techniques, 'Thallumaala' stands as compelling evidence to the power of visual storytelling, leaving a lasting impact on its viewers and contributing to the evolution of cinematic art.

Discussion

The discussion surrounding the use of suture ruptures in the movie 'Thallumaala' reveals several key findings about the film's narrative style, editing techniques, language and overall cinematic impact.

Deviation from classical Hollywood editing and innovative narrative structure: Classical Hollywood editing used to maintain spatial and temporal continuity, guiding the viewer through the narrative without confusion or disruption. The

goal of Classical Hollywood editing and, by extension, suturing, is to render the technique invisible, allowing the story to unfold with apparent naturalness and ease. The use of suture ruptures deviates from the traditional continuity editing principles of classical Hollywood cinema, which typically prioritize seamless transitions and linear narrative flow. While those breaks depart from classical Hollywood editing norms, they can coexist with traditional editing techniques to create a hybrid style that balances tradition with innovation. Changes in these kinds of conventional narrative techniques not only end the boredom of viewers but also create visual interest. These breaks can be used to experiment with narrative structure, editing techniques, and visual styles, offering a fresh and innovative cinematic experience.

Artistic expression and narrative experimentation: The use of suture rupture reflects the filmmaker's artistic expression and creativity, shaping the overall aesthetic and thematic resonance of the film. Contemporary filmmakers often use suture ruptures as a means of artistic expression and narrative experimentation. Dexterity or the advanced and skillful editing techniques in Malayalam cinema, exemplified by 'Thallumaala', contribute to the art of storytelling, enhance the cinematic experience, and reflect the creative potential of the industry.

By playing with the conventions of cinema, directors and editors can explore new storytelling possibilities, engage with themes of reality and artifice, and offer unique cinematic experiences. This experimentation is part of the broader trend in contemporary art and media towards challenging traditional boundaries and exploring new forms of expression.

Enhanced audience engagement: Modern audiences are increasingly sophisticated and media-savvy, often seeking films that offer more than straightforward narratives and conventional techniques. Suture ruptures potentially engage passive audience members by disrupting the linear flow of the narrative and inviting active participation in deciphering the narrative structure. Viewers may find themselves more intellectually invested in the film's storyline due to the unexpected nature of these breaks. By momentarily pulling the audience out of the immersive experience, these breaks encourage active engagement with the film's content, inviting viewers to question, interpret, and analyse what they've seen.

Emphasizing themes and messages: Suture ruptures can be employed to emphasize a film's themes or messages, drawing attention to particular ideas or motifs by momentarily disrupting the narrative flow. This can make the themes more salient and encourage viewers to reflect on the film's deeper meanings. In contemporary cinema, where filmmakers often grapple with innovative narrative structure, suture breaks can enhance the thematic depth and resonance of the narrative.

Bridging cinema and social media aesthetics: The innovative use of suture ruptures techniques in 'Thallumaala', particularly the overlapping videos, graphics, and transitions, does suggest a stylistic approach that could be likened to Instagram Reels. Instagram Reels are known for their fast-paced, visually engaging content that combines quick cuts, vibrant graphics, and dynamic transitions to capture the viewer's attention within a short timeframe. 'Thallumaala' employs similar techniques to create a visually stimulating experience that resonates with the contemporary audience's consumption habits. The use of quick cuts and dynamic transitions in the movie mirrors the editing style popularized by social media platforms, making the narrative progression and storytelling visually compelling and modern. Just as Instagram Reels often rely on music to enhance the visual content, 'Thallumaala' utilizes overlapping videos in songs to create a rich, multi-layered audio-visual experience.

The stylistic resemblance to Instagram Reels also reflects 'Thallumaala's' engagement with contemporary culture and digital trends. By incorporating editing techniques and visual styles that echo popular social media content, the movie taps into the aesthetic sensibilities and viewing preferences of a generation accustomed to consuming stories through platforms like Instagram. This not only makes the film relevant and appealing to a younger audience but also comments on the pervasive influence of social media on storytelling and visual communication.

Suture breaks, as demonstrated in the editing style of 'Thallumaala', represent a significant departure from the linear, continuity-driven approach traditionally associated with classical Hollywood editing. These techniques, by interrupting the narrative flow in creative ways, offer filmmakers a myriad of opportunities to heighten visual interest, deepen audience engagement, and elevate artistic expression. The use of suture breaks, such as match cuts, freeze frames, and dynamic transitions, introduces a level of visual creativity and innovation that can make a film stand out. In 'Thallumaala', these techniques are not merely

decorative but serve to enrich the storytelling, making the visual experience more engaging. The blend of graphics, animations, and unconventional camera movements captivates the viewer's attention, ensuring that the visual narrative remains as compelling as the plot itself.

By employing suture breaks that challenge the conventional flow of scenes, 'Thallumaala' actively involves the audience in the narrative process. Techniques like sudden cuts to black screens, the integration of flashbacks with present action, and the overlay of videos and graphics, require viewers to piece together the storyline actively. This engagement fosters a deeper connection with the film, as audiences are not merely passive recipients of the story but participants in its unfolding. The interactive nature of the editing encourages viewers to pay closer attention, stimulating curiosity and anticipation.

The sophisticated editing style of 'Thallumaala', characterized by its diverse range of suture breaking techniques, invites critical analysis. Viewers are prompted to consider the significance of each editing choice and its impact on the narrative and thematic development. For instance, the use of a match cut those transitions from a still photograph to a different scene might symbolize the impermanence of memories or the interconnectedness of past and present. Such techniques encourage audiences to engage with the film on a deeper level, analyzing its visual language and the meanings conveyed through its innovative editing.

The film's departure from linear editing not only makes it visually arresting but also inspires it with a distinct style that contributes to its overall artistic merit. The blending of cinematic techniques with elements reminiscent of digital and social media platforms like Instagram Reels adds a contemporary flair to the film, making it a unique and enjoyable cinematic experience.

In summary, suture breaks can significantly impact the linear editing style of movies based on classical Hollywood editing principles, offering opportunities for enhanced visual interest, audience engagement, and artistic expression. They have the capacity to engage passive audiences, stimulating curiosity, encouraging critical analysis, and enriching aesthetic enjoyment. Overall, the data suggests that 'Thallumaala' employs a sophisticated and visually engaging editing style characterized by a diverse range of suture breaking techniques.

In 'Thallumaala', suture ruptures are not just stylistic choices but integral to the narrative structure and storytelling approach. By dividing the movie into nine chapters and employing suture rupture techniques, the filmmakers create a rhythm that allows for both immersion and reflection. This can be particularly effective in a film that deals with contemporary themes and digital culture, as it mirrors the fragmented, non-linear way we often experience stories and information in real life.

In this movie, various editing techniques are employed to achieve suture ruptures. These can include abrupt changes in editing style, such as sudden cuts or transitions that don't follow the conventional continuity editing rules. Other techniques might involve the use of graphic overlays, freeze frames, or shifts in aspect ratio—like the Instagram-like dimensions.

While each instance of suture rupture in 'Thallumaala' served a specific narrative, certain patterns emerged upon analysis. For example, the filmmakers might consistently employ these ruptures at chapter transitions to underscore the shift in narrative focus or tone. Another pattern is the use of suture ruptures to highlight moments of introspection or significant character development. Additionally, the film's engagement with digital culture and social media might be consistently marked by suture ruptures, using editing techniques that mimic digital interfaces or disrupt traditional cinematic presentation.

In conclusion, suture ruptures in 'Thallumaala' play a significant role in shaping the film's narrative style, employing editing techniques to disrupt the narrative flow and draw attention to the film's construction.

The importance of this study lies in its contribution to the understanding and appreciation of the evolving landscape of cinema, particularly within the Malayalam film industry. Ultimately, the results generated from the analysis are relevant to society as they contribute to peoples understanding of visual media and storytelling techniques, which play a significant role in shaping cultural discourse, artistic expression, and collective imagination. By exploring and innovating within the realm of filmmaking, creators can continue to captivate audiences, provoke thought, and reflect the diverse experiences of society.

Conclusion

In contemporary cinema, suture ruptures are not only relevant but are also a vital tool for filmmakers seeking to engage audiences through innovative storytelling, thematic exploration, and artistic experimentation. These disruptions serve as a reflection of the evolving nature of film as an art form, audience expectations, and technological advancements. By incorporating suture ruptures, contemporary films can offer richer, more complex, and engaging cinematic experiences that resonate with modern viewers.

'Thallumaala' as an experimental film that masterfully utilizes suture breaks to craft a unique narrative experience. The strategic employment of various editing techniques disrupts traditional storytelling norms and also enhances the narrative's complexity and engages the audience in a visually stunning and intellectually stimulating manner. This study analyses that immersion isn't solely about seamless narrative integration but can also be fostered through deliberate narrative disruptions.

The concept of suture in film theory refers to the techniques filmmakers use to create a seamless narrative flow, making the audience forget they are watching a constructed reality and instead immerse them in the story. Suture ruptures, then, are moments that disrupt this flow, drawing attention to the film's construction, often for stylistic or thematic reasons. The film 'Thallumaala' distinguishes itself from other Malayalam movies through its plethora of visual storytelling techniques. In 'Thallumaala,' the strategic use of suture ruptures, especially within the framework of dividing the movie into nine chapters, plays a crucial role in shaping its narrative style and visual emphasis. It features an abundance of graphics and animations that serve as chapter introductions, employs flashbacks for narrative depth, and utilizes characters that mysteriously appear and disappear within scenes. The innovative use of split screens, along with scenes that freeze into still photographs before folding and dissolving in a bathroom sink to transition into new scenarios, adds to its unique style. Moreover, the film incorporates transitions using wipes, blends in memes, displays animated news bulletins, and even integrates a video game that represents its characters. Additionally, the presence of web searching interfaces adds a modern touch that makes 'Thallumaala' stand out distinctly in the landscape of Malayalam cinema. The use of suture rupture elements highlighted the changes in the visual storytelling culture of Malayalam cinema.

The editing process in 'Thallumaala' is not just about piecing together a series of events but is a deliberate effort to immerse the viewer in the narrative, making them an active participant in the unfolding drama. This is achieved through a variety of techniques, including jump cuts, flashbacks, and montage sequences, which serve to disorient and reorient the viewer, drawing them deeper into the narrative loop. This study highlights the film's success in leveraging editing as a powerful tool for storytelling, making 'Thallumaala' a compelling study in cinematic innovation and narrative sophistication.

The study helps to gain a deeper understanding of contemporary filmmaking practices and the ways in which filmmakers utilize editing techniques to enhance storytelling. This expands our knowledge of narrative experimentation in cinema and the various techniques employed to engage audiences. In terms of future prospects, the insights gained from analysing the data can inform filmmakers, editors, and scholars about emerging trends in editing techniques and narrative experimentation and evolution in cinematic language.

In the present national and international scenario, the need of this study lies in its contribution to the understanding and appreciation of the evolving landscape of cinema, particularly within the Malayalam film industry. As Malayalam cinema gains recognition on the global stage for its innovation and creativity, studies like this one shed light on the specific techniques and approaches that contribute to its success. Furthermore, in an era marked by rapid technological advancements and changing audience preferences, the exploration of innovative storytelling and editing practices holds relevance beyond national borders, contributing to broader discussions on the future of cinema in an increasingly interconnected world. Thus, this study serves as a valuable resource for both practitioners and researchers seeking to understand the dynamics of contemporary filmmaking and its implications for the broader cultural landscape.

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Preserving the Moment: An In-depth Exploration of Wedding Photography Trends and Styles

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Abstract

This qualitative research study delves into the evolving landscape of wedding photography, focusing on trends and styles particularly within the context of South Indian Hindu weddings. Employing in-depth interviews as the primary methodological approach, thematic analysis was utilised to systematically analyze the data collected from 50 Hindu couples hailing from various South Indian states, including Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana. The purposive sampling method, facilitated through established wedding studios in these states, ensured a balanced representation. The study sheds light on the multifaceted dimensions of contemporary wedding photography, illustrating how it serves as a dynamic and evolving medium for preserving the moments, emotions, and narratives that define the essence of wedding celebrations.

Keywords: *South Indian Wedding Photography, Thematic Analysis, Trends and Styles, Purposive Sampling.*

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A South Indian Wedding Scene

The sun rises over a picturesque outdoor venue adorned with vibrant colours, flowers, and traditional South Indian decorations. A soft breeze carries the scent of jasmine as guests, dressed in elegant silk sarees and dhotis, begin to gather under a beautiful floral arch. The stage, or "mandap," is the focal point, draped in white and gold with intricate floral designs. A traditional Carnatic music ensemble plays melodious tunes on a veena, flute, and mridangam, creating an atmosphere of serenity and anticipation. The bride, radiant in a red and gold Kanchipuram silk saree, stands with her family. Her hair is adorned with fresh jasmine flowers, and intricate henna designs grace her hands and feet. Her eyes shimmer with excitement and a hint of nervousness. The groom, equally resplendent in a cream and gold silk dhoti and kurta, waits with his family at the other end of the mandap. He clutches a garland of white jasmine and rose petals, a symbol of his love and commitment.

The priest, dressed in traditional attire, chants sacred verses from ancient scriptures, guiding the couple through each step of the ceremony. The guests listened attentively, their eyes focused on the couple, and their hearts filled with blessings. The exchange of garlands takes place, symbolising their acceptance of each other as life partners. Laughter and cheers erupt from the crowd, and the couple's faces beam with joy. The tying of the sacred thread, or "thaali," around the bride's neck is a moment of solemnity. The groom carefully fastens it, signifying their eternal bond. Tears of joy glisten in the eyes of the bride's family as they witness this significant ritual. The "saptapadi," or seven steps, follow, where the couple takes seven vows, pledging their love and commitment to one another. With each step, they sprinkle grains of rice into the sacred fire, symbolising prosperity and blessings. As the ceremony nears its conclusion, the bride and groom exchange wedding rings, symbolising the union in the modern world. With the blessings of the priest, family, and friends, the couple is now officially married. A shower of flower petals and rice falls upon them, and the air is filled with joyous cheers and applause. The wedding feast, a grand South Indian spread, awaits everyone. The evening continues with lively music, dance, and heartfelt speeches, celebrating not just the union of two souls but also the rich cultural heritage of South India. As the night descends, the venue lights up with twinkling fairy lights, creating a magical ambiance. The couple, now

united, dances to the rhythmic beats of South Indian music, surrounded by their loved ones, their hearts filled with love, happiness, and the promise of a beautiful life together.

An Indian wedding holds profound cultural significance, symbolising the confluence of two lives, the amalgamation of two families, and occasionally the fusion of diverse cultures and religious affiliations. This momentous occasion assumes a position of great import in an individual's life, as underscored by Chadha, K. (2021). The Indian wedding ceremony encompasses a myriad of elements, including the presence of cherished loved ones, intricate religious rites, longstanding customary practices, and spirited celebrations encompassing gastronomy, dance, and notably, professional photography. Indeed, the incorporation of professional photography has become deeply entrenched in the fabric of traditional Indian weddings to the extent that couples seldom debate over whether to engage a photographer but rather direct their focus toward the selection of the most suitable professional (Sood & Thakkar, 2015). Indian weddings are celebrated for their elaborate demonstrations of culture and tradition, often serving as prominent symbols of an individual's social stature and affluence (Rao, 2003). As reported by Bhandari (2017), it is estimated that roughly one-fifth of a person's lifetime wealth is allocated to these celebratory events. In the contemporary landscape, the authenticity of lived experiences is frequently amplified by extravagant displays of opulence. According to the research of Getz and Page (2016), the incorporation of larger-than-life, vivid, distinctive, and exhilarating visual elements plays an instrumental role in crafting spectacular wedding experiences, thus assuming a pivotal role in the wedding industry.

As elucidated by John Berger (1989), the inclusion of professional photography practices and services introduces a distinctive perspective to the wedding experience. In modern times, the focal point of weddings has shifted from traditional, institutionalised unions to the creation of personalised experiences where couples openly exhibit their identities, personalities, and lifestyles to society. Weddings have thus evolved into symbols of individuality and choice, with couples endeavouring to commemorate their special day in a manner that is both unique and deeply personal, while still upholding reverence for time-honoured values. However, even amidst this modernization of weddings, traditional customs have not entirely faded into obscurity. As expounded upon by Carter and Duncan (2017), while couples embark on individual quests for

distinctiveness, the majority of weddings continue to adhere to well-established rituals and remain faithful to venerable practices.

According to Charles Lewis (1997), wedding photographs wield significant power due to their traditional, professional, personal, and seemingly accurate portrayal of reality, aiding couples in recollecting a pivotal period in their social and personal lives. Bourdieu (1996), asserts that the camera plays a substantial role in the "ritualization and perpetuation of familial milestones." From his viewpoint, the act of capturing moments through photography elevates them to a unique status, underscoring their significance and fostering enduring memories. Photographing significant events, like weddings, serves to solidify and commemorate these occasions, ensuring their timeless presence within the family's collective memory. Strano (2006), in his doctoral dissertation, titled "Ritualized Remembrance Through Wedding Photography," posits that the professional wedding album emerges as a paramount tool for formalising memory. According to her assertion, the meticulously crafted and professionally assembled wedding album assumes a pivotal role in cementing the recollections associated with the wedding day. Through deliberate curation and purposeful presentation of photographs, the wedding album becomes a tangible and symbolic embodiment of the ritualistic encounter, thereby safeguarding and perpetuating these memories over the passage of years.

D'Agostino (2021) points out that in the 1840s, couples seeking to immortalise their wedding day through photography turned to professional portrait studios. Unfortunately, due to the technological limitations of photography during that era, these photographers were unable to faithfully document the actual unfolding of the wedding event. It wasn't until the aftermath of World War II that the concept of candidly capturing the wedding ceremony gained momentum. This innovative approach involved creating a cohesive photographic narrative. As the prevalence of wedding photography increased, so did the demand for a comprehensive solution capable of not only archiving but also showcasing the entirety of the photographic collection. Bezner (2002) argues that wedding photographs symbolically represent the enduring significance of ritualistic practices within modern American society. Conversely, Kendall (2006) suggests that wedding photographs serve a dual role, both as witnesses to the event and as an extension of the essential social witnessing that substantiates the wedding ceremony itself. Chan and Ximin (2007) observe that in Asian cultures, couples allocate substantial financial resources to commission professional bridal photography, subsequently

preserving these images within dedicated wedding albums for their personal gratification and remembrance. Building upon these insights, this study will delve into the role of photography in South Indian Hindu weddings.

Methodology

In the framework of this qualitative research study, the research strategy was centred on the utilisation of in-depth interviews as the primary methodological approach. To systematically analyze the rich data obtained from these interviews, the research employed the technique of thematic analysis, complemented by the use of a coding sheet. Thematic analysis involves the systematic identification, analysis, and reporting of recurring themes or patterns within qualitative data, contributing to the development of a coherent and insightful narrative. The research sample, comprising 50 Hindu couples who married after 2018, was thoughtfully drawn from various South Indian states, namely Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana. Each of the five states contributed ten couples to the overall sample, maintaining a balanced representation across the South Indian region. The sampling method employed was purposive, utilising the networks of well-established wedding studios in the aforementioned cities. On average, the interviews lasted between 30 to 45 minutes. The two themes analyzed here are current trends and styles in wedding photography, and album design and presentation.

Theme 1: Current trends and styles in wedding photography

Within the ever-evolving landscape of Hindu weddings, a notable transformation in trends and styles has emerged (Kaur & Singh, 2013). Modern Hindu weddings have expanded beyond traditional customs and rituals to serve as a versatile platform for couples to express their unique narratives, aspirations, and personalities (Fernandez, Veer, & Lastovicka, 2011). This dynamic shift is influenced by changing societal values and the rapid advancement of technology, leading to questions about the authenticity, cultural significance, and environmental impact of these innovative trends. One of the most significant changes in the realm of Hindu weddings is witnessed in wedding photography. Departing from the traditional approach of posed snapshots, couples now prefer candid moments that authentically capture the emotions and narrative essence of their special day (Berger & Barasch, 2018). This shift in photography preferences reflects the evolving tastes of Hindu couples who seek a deeper narrative—a visual story that intricately weaves together their love

story and the celebration of their union. Candid photography, with its emphasis on unscripted moments, has ascended to prominence, ushering in a new era in wedding photography that prioritises authenticity and storytelling.

Sharika and Swathi Krishna say:

> *We chose candid photography because it allowed us to embrace imperfection without the pressure of appearing overly polished. Candid photography captures genuine moments, making them feel unscripted and authentic – this was our specific request to our photography team as a couple. Our desire was for authentic images rather than posed ones on our special day. We aimed to ensure that, when we revisit these photos in decades to come, we can still connect with and savour those precious moments. Thus, we decided on candid wedding photography because we wanted our special day to be captured as it happened – those genuine moments, the stolen glances, and our authentic emotions are now forever frozen in time.*

The couple's decision to opt for candid photography for their wedding was rooted in a desire to embrace imperfection without the pressure of appearing overly polished. They believed that candid photography possessed a unique ability to capture genuine, unscripted moments, lending an authentic quality to their wedding album. This preference for authenticity was explicitly conveyed to their photography team as a couple, underscoring the importance of clear communication in realising their vision. Their primary objective was to obtain authentic images that would stand the test of time, allowing them to reconnect with and savour the precious moments of their special day when revisiting their wedding photos in the decades to come. Ultimately, their choice of candid wedding photography was a deliberate effort to immortalise the real, unfiltered moments—the genuine emotions and stolen glances—that had defined their wedding day, ensuring that these fleeting instances remained eternally frozen in time. This aesthetic dimension extends beyond the mere physical realm, encompassing the emotive and ephemeral aspects of the celebration (Veloo & Mustafa, 2023).

The rise of documentary-style photography stands as a significant trend. This approach departs from traditional posed photography, emphasising authenticity and storytelling (Morton, 2017). Couples opt for this style to capture genuine emotions and candid moments, free from rigid poses. Each photograph

contributes to the narrative of the day, from preparation to celebration. Documentary-style photographers excel in immortalising fleeting, often overlooked moments, enriching the wedding's narrative (Gautreau & Kempf, 2019). This trend reflects a shift towards more authentic and storytelling-oriented wedding photography.

Poornima and Prajith say:

> *Choosing a documentary-style photographer was the best decision we made. Our wedding album is like a beautiful storybook. It's not just photos; it's the entire journey of our day, complete with all the small details and emotions*.

The couple's selection of a documentary-style photographer embodies the evolving predilections within the domain of wedding photography. Departing from traditional, staged photographic conventions, they opted for an approach steeped in authenticity and comprehensiveness, one that earnestly chronicled their wedding day. This preference is emblematic of a broader societal shift wherein couples increasingly seek to imbue their wedding photography with emotional depth, narrative coherence, and an emphasis on genuine moments. Their analogical reference to the wedding album as a "beautiful storybook" underscores the narrative potential inherent in documentary-style photography. Within this framework, the corpus of images assumes a structure resembling a chronicle, wherein candid captures not only depict the visual aspects of the day but also serve as conduits for reliving the emotional experience.

Traditional photography often referred to as classic or conventional photography represents a style of photography that adheres to established practices and techniques that have been in use for many years. This approach to photography typically relies on posed compositions, controlled lighting, and formal arrangements (Ma, 2023). Traditional photographers guide their subjects, often using a structured approach to capture specific moments and group shots. In the context of events like weddings, traditional photography involves capturing essential moments according to a predetermined list of shots, ensuring that all key elements and participants are included. Traditional photography is known for its time-tested and structured methods, which result in well-composed and organised photographs. It often serves as a reliable and predictable means of capturing important events and milestones. While traditional photography may lack the spontaneity and candid moments associated with other contemporary

styles, its emphasis on precision and clarity remains appealing to those seeking a polished and controlled photographic record of significant occasions (Ghosh, 2023).

Sangeetha and Nithin say:

> *We opted for traditional photography because it feels timeless to us. There's something magical about classic poses and elegant shots. We wanted our wedding to have that timeless, romantic touch.*

The selection of traditional photography by the couple signifies a deliberate departure from contemporary trends and an alignment with a more classical and enduring photographic style. Traditional photography, characterised by structured poses and compositions, encapsulates a sense of timelessness that has persisted over generations (Lewis, 1998). This choice reflects the couple's commitment to preserving their wedding memories in a manner that transcends fleeting trends. Their description of traditional photography as "magical" and "elegant" underscores the emotional and aesthetic appeal of this approach. The word "magic" conveys a sense of wonder and enchantment, suggesting that traditional photography can evoke a sense of awe and nostalgia. The term "elegant" alludes to the refined and graceful quality often associated with classical poses and compositions in this genre.

Destination wedding photography is a specialised niche in the realm of wedding photography, dedicated to capturing the unique moments of weddings held in picturesque and often remote locations (Etemaddar, Thyne, & Insch, 2018). It caters to couples who choose to celebrate their special day in settings like tropical beaches, historical landmarks, charming villages, or foreign countries (Agrawal, 2023). Destination wedding photographers face the challenge of not only documenting the wedding proceedings but also showcasing the beauty and ambiance of the chosen location. They must adapt to varying lighting conditions, unfamiliar surroundings, and sometimes unpredictable weather, all while ensuring that the essence of the destination and the couple's love story are vividly captured (Wang, Udomwong, Fu, & Onpium, 2023).

Gopika and Shankar say:

> *We intentionally selected a tranquil and idyllic resort nestled amidst the breathtaking backwaters of Alleppey for our destination wedding*

> *photography. Our choice was motivated by the captivating natural allure of the setting, which provided an unparalleled and picturesque backdrop for our photographs.*

The decision to host a destination wedding at a tranquil resort in Alleppey, set against the backdrop of the mesmerising backwaters, signifies a growing trend in contemporary wedding planning. Destination weddings are increasingly popular as they offer couples a unique and captivating environment for their special day. The selection of this particular location showcases the importance of aesthetics and natural beauty in modern wedding photography. Couples today seek picturesque settings that not only enhance the overall ambiance of their wedding but also provide a stunning backdrop for their photographs. In this case, the allure of the backwaters in Alleppey played a crucial role in influencing the choice of the wedding venue. This decision underscores how couples are prioritising the visual aspects of their wedding, aiming to create a visually memorable experience not only for themselves but also for their guests.

There is a notable upsurge in the prominence of drone photography within the realm of visual narrative. This surge can be attributed to the heightened accessibility and cost-effectiveness of advanced drone technology, thereby affording both amateur and professional photographers the capability to capture striking aerial perspectives (Smith, 2023). The multifaceted topography of South India, encompassing luxuriant forests, immaculate beaches, and historical architectural marvels, serves as an enthralling canvas for the pursuit of drone photography. Notably, within the domain of South Indian wedding photography, drone technology has catalysed a transformative shift, introducing a cinematic dimension to wedding albums by adeptly preserving the grandeur of nuptial ceremonies and picturesque venues (Shekhar, 2015).

Sreya and Siddharth say:

> *We desired breathtaking aerial shots for our wedding, so we included drone photography in the package we selected. This turned out to be one of the best decisions we made regarding wedding photography, as it beautifully captured our outdoor venue. We were captivated by those aerial shots.*

The inclusion of drone photography in the wedding package underscores the growing popularity of this technology in capturing unique and mesmerising

perspectives of wedding events. It allows couples to view their special day from a vantage point that was previously unattainable (Knotty Tales, 2023). Drone photography not only captures the wedding but also the surroundings, providing a comprehensive view of the outdoor setting. These aerial shots contribute to the narrative of the day, offering a sense of place and context (Marcus, 2014). The use of superlatives like "best decision" and "captivated" in their description of the drone photography's impact emphasises the emotional resonance that such visuals can evoke.

Underwater photography is a specialised form of photography that involves capturing images and videos while submerged beneath the surface of water (McNeil, 1971). This genre of photography has gained significant popularity in recent years due to advancements in camera technology, underwater equipment, and increased access to underwater environments (Emberton & Simons, 2022). Underwater photographers use specially designed cameras and housings that are water-resistant to various depths, depending on the intended shooting environment, whether it's a swimming pool, a coral reef, or the depths of the ocean (Knapp, 1947). These cameras are often equipped with underwater strobes or powerful external lighting to compensate for the loss of colour and contrast underwater (Adams & Hulburd, 1971). Underwater photography presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities. The underwater environment is dynamic and constantly changing, with factors like water clarity, temperature, and currents affecting the quality of the shots (Er, Chen, Zhang, & Gao, 2023). Photographers must also consider buoyancy control and dive safety while operating in underwater environments. The subjects of underwater photography are diverse and include marine life, coral reefs, shipwrecks, and even human subjects like divers and models (Gietler, 2009).

Shwetha and Niraj say:

> *We are both aquaphiles, and it was a dream for us to engage in underwater photography. Our team did an exceptional job in capturing our love beneath the water's surface. This was a one-of-a-kind experience, and we will cherish it for a lifetime.*

The couple's choice to engage in underwater photography underscores a distinctive and adventurous approach to wedding photography. Their shared love for aquatic environments and the underwater world inspired them to integrate this passion into their wedding experience. This reflects a broader

trend where couples are increasingly seeking unconventional and personalised ways to capture their love stories.The reference to their photography team doing an "exceptional job" highlights the importance of skilled professionals in translating unique ideas into captivating visual narratives.

In recent times, South India has witnessed a noteworthy proliferation in the practice of pre and post-wedding photoshoots, marking a substantial departure from traditional wedding photography practices. Firstly, within the rich cultural milieu of South India, pre and post-wedding photoshoots hold a significant cultural significance, enabling couples to intertwine their visual narratives with regional traditions and customs, thus fostering a sense of cultural continuity and preservation (Kartika Pratiwi, Suastika, & Kebayantini, 2021). Secondly, this trend reflects the contemporary emphasis on personalization and the celebration of individuality within the institution of marriage (Carter & Duncan, 2017). Couples now perceive pre and post-wedding photoshoots as opportunities to craft and articulate their unique love stories, interests, and personalities, thereby yielding enduring visual testimonials of their marital journey (Singh, 2023). Lastly, the ascendancy of pre and post-wedding photoshoots in South India is concomitant with the rapid advancements in photography technology and equipment, rendering the practice more accessible and yielding higher quality imagery (Bull, 2019). This paradigm shift in wedding photography underscores the transformative nature of visual storytelling in the region, fostering an evolving discourse surrounding wedding traditions and the representation of love and matrimony.

Deepthi and Aravind say:

> *While dating in Kochi, we cherished numerous hangout spots that held significant sentimental value for us. We made the deliberate choice to include these meaningful locations in our wedding albums. Opting for a pre-wedding photoshoot at these venues fills us with joy as we relish the resulting pictures.*

This decision serves as a poignant reminder of the power of personalization in wedding photography. By incorporating their favourite hangout spots into their pre-wedding shoot, the couple ensured that their wedding album would not only be a collection of beautiful images but also a heartfelt narrative of their journey

together. It is a testament to the importance of infusing one's unique love story into every aspect of the wedding celebration.

Theme 2: Album design and presentation

Wedding album design and presentation hold a pivotal role in preserving the precious memories of a couple's special day. These albums are far more than mere collections of photographs; they are meticulously crafted visual narratives that capture the essence of the celebration. The design of the album serves as a storytelling canvas, guiding viewers through the various moments, emotions, and intricate details that unfolded during the wedding (Bezner, 2002). Personalization is key, as couples often opt for designs that reflect their unique style, incorporating personalised touches such as colour schemes, fonts, and personal messages. Quality materials, from the cover to the pages and binding, are chosen not only for aesthetic appeal but also for durability. Thoughtful layout and composition ensure that images flow seamlessly, emphasising significant moments and creating a visually engaging experience. Ultimately, a well-designed wedding album has the power to evoke emotions, preserving the joy and love of the day, and becoming a cherished heirloom passed down through generations (D'Agostino, 2021).

As posited by Tillmann (2014) wedding albums function as tangible artifacts imbued with the capacity to elicit emotions and facilitate the recollection of the joy, mirth, and affection shared during matrimonial festivities. In the absence of photographic documentation, these cherished recollections might succumb to the erosive effects of temporal passage; however, visual preservation ensures the enduring emotional resonance of the wedding day. As embodiments of affection, commitment, and the inception of a novel life voyage, wedding albums have managed to retain their perennial allure and relevance.

Shilpa and Deepak shared their wedding album, embarking on a narration of their wedding story while gazing at the photographs. They articulated:

> *Memories are fleeting, and over time, they may dim. However, a wedding album serves as a time capsule, preserving the most cherished moments from our significant day. Flipping through the album's pages*

> *years later reignites the nostalgia and affection for that momentous occasion.*

As the years elapse, the album evolves into a treasured possession, rekindling memories of vows taken, promises made, and shared dreams. It becomes a poignant reminder of the love that united two souls and the unwavering commitment to support each other through life's challenges. As time progresses, wedding albums assume an even greater significance as cherished heirlooms, bequeathed to future generations.

The presentation of a wedding album is a vital aspect of its overall appeal and emotional impact. Elements such as layouts, colours, and fonts contribute significantly to the album's aesthetic and storytelling qualities:

Layout:

1. Chronological Flow: Many couples prefer a chronological arrangement that starts with pre-wedding preparations, followed by the ceremony, reception, and concluding with post-wedding moments. This layout helps narrate the day's story in a structured manner.
2. Thematic Sections: Organising the album into thematic sections, such as "Getting Ready," "Ceremony," "Reception," and "Candid Moments," allows for a more dynamic presentation.
3. Collage Style: Collage layouts blend multiple images into a single page, creating visual diversity and highlighting a series of related moments.
4. Full-Page Spreads: Full-page spreads for particularly impactful images can make a powerful statement.

Colours:

1. Theme Matching: Colours in the album can be coordinated with the wedding theme or colour scheme. Consistency in colours can create a harmonious look throughout the album.
2. Emotional Tones: The choice of colours can evoke emotions. Soft pastels may convey a romantic atmosphere, while bold and vibrant colours might add energy to the album.
3. Contrast: Carefully chosen contrasting colours can make specific elements, such as text or photographs, stand out.

Fonts:

Readability: Fonts should be chosen for readability, ensuring that captions and text are easy to read.

1. Consistency: Maintaining a consistent font style and size throughout the album maintains visual coherence.
2. Personalization: Couples often personalise their albums with fonts that reflect their personalities or match their wedding stationery.

Soumya and Hemanth says

> *We were very particular about the wedding album. We opted for a chronological arrangement starting from the wedding eve to the reception. We included a few collages on certain pages where there are group pictures. Our portraits and main ceremonies were presented as full spreads, as these hold great significance for us and our families.*

Divya and Karthik say:

> *We wanted our wedding album to feature minimal designs and pastel shades, reflecting our personalities. Since the wedding theme was in pastels, the same approach was followed for retouching and design. We are delighted with the outcome.*

The couple's deliberate choice of minimalistic design and pastel shades for their wedding album is indicative of a purposeful approach to visual storytelling that extends beyond the mere documentation of their special day. This decision aligns with the principles of minimalist aesthetics, characterised by simplicity, elegance, and a focus on essential elements. In choosing pastel shades, the couple has employed a colour palette known for its softness and subtlety, creating a visual backdrop that allows the photographs to take centre stage.

Reshmi and Abhishek say:

> *Incorporated within our wedding album are select quotations pertaining to love and marriage. Uniformly, the 'Poppins' font was employed for all textual content, both within the album's pages and for embossing on the cover.*

Physical prints and their quality, as well as the binding of a wedding album, are fundamental aspects of preserving and presenting the cherished memories of a couple's special day. Here's a closer look at these elements:

Paper Quality:

1. Photo Paper: High-quality photo paper is the standard choice for wedding album prints. It is designed to display images with exceptional clarity, colour vibrancy, and longevity. Options include glossy, matte, or semi-gloss finishes, allowing couples to choose based on their preferences.
2. Texture: Some couples opt for textured paper to add depth and a tactile element to their prints. Textured papers can range from fine art paper to canvas textures, each providing a unique look and feel.
3. Thickness: The thickness or weight of the paper can vary, with heavier weights often associated with more durability and a premium feel.

Printing Technique:

1. Digital Printing: Most modern wedding albums utilise digital printing techniques, which provide high-resolution and precise reproduction of images.
2. Offset Printing: Offset printing may be used for certain artistic and custom wedding albums, offering a wide range of colour options and precision.

Binding:

1. Flush Mount: Flush mount albums are renowned for their durability and premium look. The pages are mounted onto a thick core board, allowing for lay-flat pages and seamless, panoramic spreads.
2. Lay-Flat: Lay-flat binding enables pages to remain open and flat without any curve or bend at the centre, ensuring that panoramic images span across two pages without disruption.
3. Traditional Book Binding: Some couples opt for traditional bookbinding methods, which provide a classic and timeless appearance. These albums often have a spine and pages bound together with thread or glue.

Wedding albums come in various sizes, from small coffee-table albums to larger, more elaborate designs. Couples can choose the size that best compliments their preferred layout and the number of images they wish to include. The choice of cover material, such as leather, linen, silk, or a custom design, can significantly impact the album's overall look and feel. It also affects the durability of the album. Couples often have the option to customise various aspects of their album, including cover design, layout, and the number of pages. This allows for a highly personalised keepsake. High-quality paper, printing techniques, and binding methods are selected with longevity in mind. Wedding albums are meant to withstand the test of time and be passed down through generations as cherished heirlooms.

Harini and Anirudh say:

> *We chose a coffee table wedding album because we wanted to focus on a select few images that hold a special place in our hearts. A coffee table book style wedding album represents a truly luxurious and visually stunning means of preserving the cherished memories from our wedding day. Our album has been meticulously designed, incorporating high-quality materials, elegant binding, and large-format pages that beautifully showcase every detail of the photographs. We view it not only as a keepsake but also as an exquisite piece of art that can adorn any coffee table, inviting friends and family to revisit the enchantment of our wedding day whenever they gather.*

The couple's decision to opt for a coffee table wedding album carries significant implications for the presentation and preservation of their cherished wedding memories. By selecting this style of album, they have chosen to focus on a curated selection of images, underscoring the importance of quality over quantity. The coffee table book style, known for its luxurious and visually captivating attributes, aligns with their desire to encapsulate the essence of their wedding day in an artful and sophisticated manner. The meticulous design, use of high-quality materials, elegant binding, and the inclusion of large-format pages further enhance the album's appeal, elevating it to the status of a tangible work of art. In this context, the album transcends its role as a mere keepsake and assumes the position of an exquisite centrepiece that can grace any coffee table. This choice invites friends and family to partake in the couple's joyous memories whenever they gather, effectively transforming the album into a cherished conversation piece and a source of perennial enchantment.

Digital wedding albums represent a modern approach to preserving and presenting cherished memories from a couple's special day. These albums have evolved with advancements in technology, offering several advantages. They provide easy accessibility and portability, allowing couples to relive their memories anytime, anywhere on various digital devices. Digital albums can incorporate multimedia elements, enhancing the storytelling experience with videos, music, and interactive features. Sharing is convenient through email, social media, or cloud storage, ensuring that loved ones near and far can experience the celebration. Moreover, digital albums are environmentally sustainable, eliminating the need for physical materials like paper and ink. They offer longevity and preservation through secure storage and backup options, while customization allows couples to personalise their album to reflect their unique style. Digital albums are versatile, cost-effective, and secure, making them a contemporary choice for preserving and sharing wedding memories in the digital age.

Parvathy and Adarsh say:

> *Digital wedding albums offer unparalleled accessibility and convenience for us and our family members. Unlike traditional albums that are limited to a physical copy, digital albums can be easily shared with family and friends across the globe through email, social media, or cloud storage. Also, digital albums are easily stored on various devices, ensuring that the memories are always at hand.*

The statement highlights the notable advantages of digital wedding albums over their traditional physical counterparts. In an era characterised by digital connectivity and the global dispersion of families and friends, accessibility and convenience are paramount considerations. Digital albums offer unparalleled accessibility by transcending geographical boundaries, allowing couples to easily share their cherished memories with loved ones around the world through email, social media platforms, or cloud storage. The convenience of digital storage ensures that these precious memories are readily available on various devices, providing instant access to the nostalgia and emotions encapsulated within the album's digital pages. This shift towards digital albums aligns with the contemporary lifestyle, where information and memories are increasingly stored and shared electronically. However, it also raises important questions about the preservation and longevity of digital formats in comparison to the enduring tactile nature of traditional albums, underscoring the ongoing debate

about the evolving role of technology in preserving and sharing the memories of significant life events like weddings.

Amalendhu and Sailesh say:

> *In an age where sustainability is a growing concern, digital wedding albums offer an eco-friendly alternative to the traditional albums. Physical albums consume valuable natural resources in their production, and as they age, they may require additional preservation measures. On the other hand, digital albums are environmentally friendly, as they do not require paper, ink, or physical storage. Therefore, we chose a digital album.*

In an era characterised by growing environmental consciousness and sustainability concerns, digital wedding albums emerge as a commendable ecological alternative to traditional physical counterparts. The conventional production of physical albums entails the utilisation of significant natural resources, primarily paper and ink, contributing to environmental impact. Moreover, as physical albums age, they often necessitate additional preservation measures, exacerbating their resource footprint. Conversely, digital wedding albums present an eco-friendly solution, as they obviate the need for physical materials, such as paper and ink, and negate the requirement for physical storage space. This environmentally responsible choice aligns with global efforts to mitigate waste generation and reduce the ecological burden associated with various forms of media and consumption.

Conclusion

Contemporary wedding photography has evolved to encompass a diverse array of trends and styles, each catering to the unique preferences and artistic visions of couples. These trends not only capture the essential moments but also contribute to the overall storytelling and aesthetic of the wedding narrative. Wedding photography serves as a profound visual medium employed for preserving the most cherished moments during a couple's matrimonial celebration. In the capable hands of skilled photographers, these moments are meticulously captured with artistic finesse and precision, thereby transforming them into enduring reminiscences. Beyond mere event documentation, wedding photography serves as a conduit for encapsulating the manifold emotions, interconnections, and intricacies defining the essence of the nuptial ceremony. It

unfolds a comprehensive chronicle of love and commitment, delineating the day's progression from anticipation-laden moments at dawn to the jubilant and festive revelries that ensue. These photographic records transcend mere imagery, assuming the mantle of temporal capsules that summon forth the spectrum of emotions, laughter, and elation permeating the wedding day. Photographers, in their role as visual storytellers, adroitly interlace an array of vignettes, immortalising not only ostentatious grandeur but also nuanced subtleties—furtive glances, stolen embraces, and authentically radiant smiles. Each photograph stands as a testament to the profound love uniting two individuals and the solemn covenant they pledge to uphold throughout their shared odyssey of existence. Wedding photography offers a platform for artistic expression, allowing photographers to harness their creative faculties and unique perspectives to capture the aesthetic allure of the day. Through adept manipulation of elements like lighting, composition, and framing, photographers craft images that transcend visual captivation to resonate with profound emotional profundity. In an era characterised by the omnipresence of digital media, wedding photography perseveres as an enduring tradition. While photographic mementos are often relegated to the digital realm within smartphones and social media platforms, the wedding album remains a tangible and revered keepsake. Meticulously curated albums represent compendiums of the day's most cherished memories, bound together as a tangible testament to love, commitment, and the inauguration of a new life chapter.

In summation, wedding photography emerges as a potent visual medium that transcends mere aesthetics. It constitutes a profound and evocative mode of preserving and elucidating pivotal moments, emotions, and reminiscences enveloping a couple's wedding day. In doing so, it encapsulates the essence of the celebratory occasion, transforming it into an indelible and timeless narrative, ensuring the enduring legacy of the love story for posterity.

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Moving from Offline to Online: A Study on the Digital Education Experience in Kerala during the Pandemic

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Abstract

This paper explores the impact of transitioning from traditional offline education to online learning on a single family in Kerala, offering a microcosmic view of the broader societal implications. Recognizing the family as the fundamental unit of social structure, the research employs an in-depth, open-ended conversational approach to engage with each family member. Conducted in August 2021, the interviews provide a rich dataset subjected to narrative analysis, yielding nuanced insights into the family's experiences with respect to the shift from offline learning to online education. The narrative analysis unveils the multifaceted challenges and adaptations faced by the family, highlighting their struggles, resilience, and evolving dynamics during the shift. The paper delves into their anxieties, and the emotional landscape shaped by the shift to online education. By presenting detailed depictions of their lived experiences, the research contributes valuable knowledge to the discourse on educational transitions in the digital age, offering a unique lens on the social and cultural ramifications of this radical change.

***Keywords** : Narrative Analysis, Offline and Online Education, Digital Divide, Family, Emotional Well-being*

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Introduction

In February 2021, the researcher engaged in a conversation with a thirteen-year-old boy from his neighborhood.[1] The boy asked the researcher if he knew when his school would start again, to which the researcher replied, "I don't know." The boy's disappointment prompted the researcher to reflect on the circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the sudden shift from offline to online education. The pandemic has radically altered nearly all socioeconomic patterns of life, forcing us to adopt new ways of living and learning to survive. Many people had no choice but to adapt, yet, unfortunately, some lacked the tools or resources to cope with these changes effectively. This paper explores the impact of transitioning from traditional offline education to online learning on a single family in Kerala, offering a microcosmic view of the broader societal implications. Through the narratives of each family member, the paper captures their worldviews, identities, and the cultural norms influencing their experiences. It delves into their anxieties, limitations, and the emotional landscape shaped by the shift to online education. By presenting detailed depictions of their lived experiences, the research contributes valuable knowledge to the discourse on educational transitions in the digital age, offering a unique lens on the social and cultural ramifications of this radical change

How COVID-19 changed the world?

The novel Corona virus disease (COVID-19) was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020 (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020), and there was a sense of fear and panic all around the globe. This was an unprecedented crisis in our lifetimes. Nearly 4.5 billion people are forced to stay in their homes (AFP - Agence France Presse, 2020). Many lost their jobs due to economic and health constraints imposed by the pandemic. The pandemic has changed almost everything related to our lives - how we work, learn and interact, and do business. Social distancing guidelines have led to a more virtual existence, both personally and professionally. It presents tough choices for governments, local communities, families, and businesses.

The pandemic has had significant psychological and social effects on the population. Researchers have highlighted the impact on the psychological well-being of the most exposed groups, including children, college students, and health workers, who are more likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, and other symptoms of distress (WHO, 2020). Social distancing and security measures have affected relationships among people and their perception of empathy toward others.

The after-effects of COVID-19 have deeply affected workers in the informal economy and those in poorly protected, low-paid jobs, including youth, women, older workers, and migrants. The economic slowdown caused by the pandemic has significantly impacted businesses and employment. Major companies worldwide have increased their use of digital technology to respond to the crisis. However, firm sales have dropped by half during the crisis, forcing companies to reduce hours and wages. With less income, families are compelled to balance their spending and sacrifices, potentially harming health and learning outcomes for a generation.

To understand the physical and emotional burdens related to pandemics, it is crucial to grasp the specific responses of families. Their psychological and economic resources may have been compromised. Parents and children in third-world countries face various challenges that present a constellation of risks affecting their work, children's health and education, and the well-being of family, friends, and relatives outside their household (Saladino et al., 2020). These challenges include high levels of state and economic uncertainty, reduced social support, limited access to physical schooling, and decreased availability of essential clinical, community, and recreational activities, including green spaces.

The impact of COVID-19 on education

In India, 247 million students enrolled in elementary and secondary schools have been affected by the shutdown of 1.5 million schools as a result of the pandemic and lockdowns in 2020. Furthermore, before the

COVID-19 issue had started, nearly six million children were already out of school (UNICEF, 2021). With the closure of all schools on March 17 to contain COVID-19, in-person classes were no longer permitted. Many educational institutions began offering online classes, primarily through digital applications. However, online education remains inaccessible to many, especially in rural areas of the country (India Today, 2021). The transition to online teaching occurred abruptly and on an unprecedented scale, without prior testing. Not only did teaching move online, but assessments and evaluations also shifted to digital formats, resulting in significant trial, error, and uncertainty. Many examinations were canceled. This issue extends beyond the short-term, with long-term consequences for the affected communities, likely exacerbating existing inequalities in society.

The government had to implement control measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. In an academic context, this meant reducing contact between children, teachers, and academic staff while maintaining safe social distancing. To achieve this, many countries have reduced class sizes. For example, the UK and France have recommended limiting primary classes to 15 students to maintain safe distances (Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children - BBC News, 2020). Looking to the next generation, girls in many countries may face increased expectations to take on healthcare-related tasks, potentially affecting their long-term engagement in education. UNESCO has projected that 11 million girls might never return to their studies following the pandemic (UNESCO, 2020). Many scholars have studied how the virus outbreak has changed the daily lives of children and youth, leading to significant alterations in their routines and those of their families.

India is among the countries with the highest gender gap in access to technology (Mehrotra, 2018) The gender gap in mobile use typically exacerbates other inequalities for women, including access to education, economic opportunities, and networking. These inequalities are visible not only socio-economically but also regionally. Digital infrastructure and connectivity vary significantly between states and between urban and

rural areas. Beyond the challenges of access and affordability, students face the daunting task of keeping up with their studies and peers.

The present paper stems from the conviction that we have the responsibility to find proper solutions for these issues and to provide systematic steps to improve the quality of online classes. However, to find these solutions, we first need to have a clear understanding of the issues. But where do we find these issues? From textbooks, websites, or interviews with experts? To grasp the 'actual' concerns, we need to talk directly to children, parents, and teachers about their current experiences. Unfortunately, there are limited academic investigations in this direction. In this context, the present study, which aims to examine how a middle-class family in Kerala responds to these changes, is significant. This study is situated within the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It explores the possibilities and challenges of moving from offline to online education by analyzing how a family responds to the changes brought about by the pandemic, specifically in our academic system.

Research Questions

The paper aims to investigate how a middle-class family in Kerala navigates the changes brought about by the adoption of online education amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, and to understand the impact of transitioning from offline to online on family communication dynamics. To achieve this overarching objective, the study addresses the following specific questions:

1) What are the possibilities and potential benefits offered by the online mode of education?

2) What kinds of challenges and difficulties do students and parents encounter when the academic system incorporates digital and new media technologies for teaching and learning?

3) How does the transition to online education affect the communication dynamics within the family?

4) Does this shift raise concerns regarding the digital divide?

Research Method

The present study focuses on a single family residing in Arkannoor, Kollam district of Kerala, comprising three children enrolled in different classes. Utilizing in-depth and open interviews with each family member, the research collects data without relying on a concrete and structured questionnaire. Participants are encouraged to express themselves freely, without constraints, allowing them to compare their experiences with others or discuss any relevant topics. This approach aims to gather unbiased and comprehensive information to address the research objectives effectively. The interviews were conducted in August 2021, and the collected data underwent narrative analysis, a prominent approach in qualitative research. Narrative analysis is well-suited for studies relying on participants' narratives of their experiences, enabling a deeper understanding of their perspectives and insights.

In this analytic framework, the study investigates the living conditions of a middle-class family in Kerala confronted with the sudden shift from traditional to online education. The family members, as research participants, narrate their experiences of adapting to online education. While interpreting the conditions of a single family does not allow us to generalize these conditions across the entire social system, it is significant because the family is part of a wider society. An in-depth study focusing on a single family helps us understand the nuances of the problem under study. This approach is valuable as people frequently reveal their worldviews, identities, issues, limitations, helplessness, points of view, cultural norms, standpoints and beliefs, love, anxieties, thoughts, emotions, and all aspects of the social and cultural world around them.

This study addresses changes within the framework of the digital divide, which is hypothesized to describe differences in access to and usage of information and communication technology. Historically, the digital divide was considered a matter of having or not having access to technology. The term can refer to inequalities between countries, societies, geographic areas, demographic communities, households,

individuals, businesses, and more. There are at least three factors that contribute to digital divides:

    A. Information accessibility
    B. Information utilization
    C. Information receptiveness

These aspects of the digital divide are explicitly addressed in this study and help the researcher make informed proposals to reduce inequalities in digital accessibility and literacy.

Participants of the study

The study was conducted in a middle-class family in Arkannoor, a remote village in Kollam district, Kerala, India. The family has eight members, including three children:

1. Manoj Kumar (52)
2. Anil Kumar (46)
3. Devaki Amma (88) - Mother of Manoj Kumar and Anil Kumar.
4. Seethamma Manoj Kumar (38) - Manoj Kumar's Wife, mother of both Karthik and Kashi.
5. Nayana Anil Kumar (40) - Anil Kumar's Wife, mother of Bavin.
6. Bavin A (20) - Son of Anil Kumar and Nayana. He is the eldest son in the family, who is now pursuing graduation (B.Com) in ST. Johns College, Anchal.
7. Karthik M (13) - Son of Manoj Kumar and Seethamma, who is in 8th standard (VHSS Arkkannoor).
8. Kashinath M (11) - Son of Manoj Kumar and Seethamma, who is in 6th standard

(SSM UPS Karalikonam).

Manoj Kumar doesn't have a fixed salary; it depends on the number of days he works. During the lockdown, he averaged 15 to 20 days of work per month. Anil Kumar worked in the UAE (Dubai) before the COVID-19 pandemic, but he lost his job due to the crisis and returned

home without any savings. Devaki Amma receives a monthly welfare pension. The household has electricity, a television, and four mobile phones, including two smartphones. However, it does not have wireless internet connectivity.

The following part is devoted to discussing the themes that are emerged after analyzing the participants' narratives in detail.

Discussion and Analysis

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in August 2020, all at the respondents' home. The researcher ensured the privacy and comfort of participants, encouraging them to openly share their experiences. Throughout the interviews, both the interviewer and the interviewees wore new masks and maintained a distance of six feet to adhere to COVID-19 safety protocols. In-depth communication with the family members helped the researcher formulate additional interview questions that were most relevant to their experiences. This chapter provides a detailed and thorough description of the participants' experiences, offering insights into how the family coped with the transition from offline to online teaching and learning.

Transformation from offline to online mode in education

Bavin says:

> The class was conducted regularly before the arrival of COVID-19. I was in my final year of high school then. We were very excited to enjoy the last few days of our school life. But suddenly, everything changed. The lockdown came unexpectedly. We lost some beautiful moments and memories. We had a lot of plans. I had planned a few trips with friends, but nothing happened. In an effort to stop the spread of COVID-19 immediately, most educational institutions have been closed since the end of March. It is difficult to predict when schools, colleges, and universities will reopen.

Bavin's words indicate the drastic changes that occurred when schools and our entire academic system suddenly embraced the online mode of teaching and learning. He also suggests that offline or regular classes are not only meant for learning but also for having certain experiences that we wish to cherish forever. This leads us to think that a good classroom always has some creative elements to make learning more interesting and interactive. Offline classrooms are not only academic but also social and psychological. A good classroom environment is essential for a child to become an authentic human being and a social animal.

Karthik joins the conversation and says:

> When my school was shut down, I was very excited. I looked forward to being home, playing with friends, and not having any homework, assignments, or examinations - it seemed amazing. I prayed that this lockdown won't end. My senior year ended early, the exam was cancelled, and the sun was shining brightly. After a while, the reality of the situation began to haunt me. I feel bad missing my classroom and classmates.

> Bavin takes Karthik's words forward and expresses similar feelings. Bavin said: "I often have nightmares and cannot sleep most nights. It's like I'm trapped, both in my house and in my own head. However, over time, I found a way to deal with the stress." He further says:

> I started doing things I love. I began gaming on my phone, painting, and playing with my brothers again. I feel free for the first time in months. I started to spend more time with my family, but I realize how much I miss my friends.

Bavin and Karthik draw our attention to the emotional and other kinds of trauma created by the lockdown. They were suddenly confined to home without meeting their peers. Bavin's words also highlight the fact that people tried their best to deal with the situation. He tried to find hope in the period of frustration and utter dismay. The words of the children

indicate that they greatly missed their classes, friends, and the teaching atmosphere. They coped by finding new activities and following their passions. It happened in the initial days of the lockdown when the classes remained suspended; there were no online classes either. Then, the schools began conducting online classes, and there were classes and tutorial sessions aired on Television. Bavin says: "Due to the lack of physical classrooms and adequate digital infrastructure, both teachers and students face unprecedented challenges. We didn't even get any time for preparation."

Bavin clearly indicates that the radical transformation of education after the pandemic came abruptly with little or no preparation plan. They were excited at the first few days of lockdown, but after three to four months, they realized that the schools would not open for a year. They were compelled to attend online classes without much excitement. Bavin said that the higher secondary classes internal assessment (C. E) comprises 20 marks for all subjects. It includes some practical content like projects, assignments, and lab work. But now there is nothing for us. He further says:

> The teachers only consider the 'notes' as the tool for internal evaluation. Also, in papers like Computer Application, which carries 40 marks in the 'practical' category, most students in my class don't have computers at home, and classes have continued with great difficulties. How we are supposed to study 'Computer Application' without a computer? I don't understand the logic behind it. They already share the notes in PDF format, so why do we need to write them in a notebook? What we write in the notebooks is the same as what is in the PDF.

The children of the family are of the opinion that online classes are not suitable for science subjects since they have practical components. These words clearly illustrate that replacing face-to-face learning experiences with online classes is challenging. Compared to conventional classroom learning, online learning presents significant challenges, such as a lack of interaction, critical analysis, scientific experiments, opportunities for

collaborative learning, teacher supervision, and difficulties in understanding complex subjects like science and mathematics..

Digital learning has become the new normal. With schedules of the classes arriving on WhatsApp and students taking classes through mobile, the entire learning system is now just a click away. More and more institutions began utilizing the most effective e-learning technologies to make classes accessible to students from the safety and comfort of their homes. Karthik draws our attention to another issue.

> My 7th-grade exams were cancelled last year. I was promoted to 8th without any examination. The same happened for Kashi; he was also promoted to 6th from 5th. I don't know the formula used for preparing our results. I'm unsure whether they will conduct exams this year.

Karthik, an 8th-grade student, said that in the beginning he was excited about the Kerala government's decision to cancel all board examinations up to the 9th standard. Then he became concerned about the absence of a proper evaluation mechanism. When discussing the matter of examinations with students of the family, two key considerations arise: the risk posed by the pandemic and the consequences of exam cancellations, as well as the feasibility of conducting exams online. The issue becomes more complex, particularly concerning practical classes and examinations.

Both the parents and children draw our attention to another significant issue. Seethamma says:

> Initially, they had only one class in a day, which has now been elevated to four. Sometimes classes are prolonged until night, and then the children have to finish their homework. The teachers gave ten minute breaks for children to loosen up and wash their eyes. However, my children are having issues like redness around the eyes and mental stress. They often get bored with online classes. Sometimes, the children

switch off the camera and do other activities. It's like a time pass for them.

Seethamma seems very anxious about the mental and physical health of their children via online education. She is not very confident about online classes. Anil Kumar also discussed how children studying in various classes are now facing diverse physical and psychological issues due to prolonged online classes during the lockdown. He noted that whether it's physical fitness, mental well-being, or a combination of both, children have experienced their share of health challenges during this pandemic period. These issues include eyesight problems, backaches, headaches, fatigue, and insomnia. He then added that children have developed a negative attitude towards online classes and tend to skip them. He says:

> Children's frame of mind towards online classes is also not very serious. There are many reasons for this. The school has a different social and cultural environment. Children want to study with their classmates. They want to interact with each other, play and jump, and share the tiffin with one another.

According to the parents, it's preferable for children to stay safe at home rather than being in close contact with their peers. However, they express concern about the lack of social interaction for children. This discussion highlights the challenges faced by students and parents in the selected family due to the sudden shift to online learning. These challenges include inadequate planning at the administrative level, the irreplaceable nature of classroom/school learning experiences, and the physical and emotional traumas experienced by students.

Digital divide

Lack of devices

This part is devoted to discussing another important theme that emerged from the data. Bavin says:

After lockdown, teachers began to send the course materials and study notes through WhatsApp. Classroom discussions were done through Google Meet. There are a few reasons why I like to take online classes in the beginning. Firstly, I can stay at home; there's no need to wake up early, which gives me more leisure time. I believe that with classes moving online, I can persuade my family to buy a new mobile phone. Additionally, online classes enable me to study independently and progress at my own pace.

However, Bavin adds that this initial enthusiasm does not last long. Karthik interjects, saying,

When the online classes began, we needed to install Google Meet and Zoom applications on our phones. Additionally, different WhatsApp groups were created for different subjects, and the same was required for my siblings. Altogether, we had nearly thirty class groups. Each group was inundated with numerous messages and documents. The smartphone we used had only 32 GB of internal storage, which was not enough for us.

Karthik points out a serious problem caused by everyone moving to online learning. In his family, they only have one smartphone, which is used for his siblings' online classes and for his parents' work and personal tasks. This situation creates numerous challenges: the children struggle to complete their schoolwork, and the parents find it difficult to manage their work and personal tasks efficiently.

Parents also faced unprecedented challenges during this transition. They discussed how their children found it nearly impossible to learn subjects through WhatsApp or other platforms. This difficulty arose because the internal memory, storage, and other specifications of their smartphones were insufficient to accommodate multiple applications like Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, Edmodo, and numerous class groups on WhatsApp. Their remarks highlight the stark reality of the digital divide in India, with lower-income and middle-income families being significantly affected. Nayana shares a relevant experience. She says:

One day, Karthik told me he needed a new mobile phone because his current one couldn't handle all his classes. It's old and has limited storage capacity; he can't even save a single note on it. Plus, the camera quality isn't good either. He specifically mentioned wanting a new Redmi phone, but I'm a bit puzzled because I thought all smartphones had similar features.

The discussions with the parents also indicate that initially, they didn't consider this issue seriously. They believed their children were just trying to persuade them into buying a new smartphone for gaming. They couldn't comprehend that a mobile phone, typically used for calls and messages, could also be essential for learning. However, they slowly came to realize the significance of having a reliable smartphone for attending online classes. "People like us don't have enough money to buy advanced smartphones," Nayana said.

Bavin and Karthik discussed how it took the older members of the family some time to grasp the gravity of the situation and how they faced challenges in dealing with it. Anil Kumar mentioned that he borrowed money from someone to purchase a new phone because he didn't want his children to miss their classes. He expresses his sorrow:

The family has already experienced the burden of buying a smartphone, and now it is difficult to pay for the monthly data recharge. Now we must find around 600 rupees monthly for mobile data. Some days, we don't have money to buy groceries, and how are we going to recharge a data pack? I do not know.

Bavin, Karthik, and their parents illustrate the issues of the digital divide, which stretches across society, separating the haves from the have-nots and the tech-savvy from the technically disadvantaged. The family suggests that educational institutions or the government should provide financial relief to students and households with lower incomes. As the educational system relies entirely on digital tools and online modes of teaching and learning during the lockdown period, this family is

struggling to cope with the situation. They face new challenges with economic, technical, and socio-cultural implications. Their words highlight the seriousness of the digital divide, which significantly impacts the prospects of many students during the lockdown period.

Issues of disconnect

Karthik mentions that they have encountered numerous technical challenges due to limited internet availability. He explains that the internet connectivity in their area is quite poor, often limited to just 2G. With such a slow connection, it is challenging to accomplish even basic tasks like sending a photo to their teachers. Additionally, the electricity supply is highly unreliable, and at the slightest indication of rain, the power was cut off, leaving them waiting for hours until it was restored. Bavin continues the discussion by saying that his village is one of those places where basic communication facilities are lacking, and they have to sit on the roof of their house to get a signal on their phones. Karthik continues to express his concerns; "A high-speed internet connection is required to access course materials online. Spotty connections and constant buffering diminish our interest. We often get logged out of classes when connectivity is lost." Kashi joins the discussion and adds:

> Most often, I cannot hear the teachers well. When everyone starts to speak at once or the teacher asks me to respond, I try but in vain, and eventually, I turn off the application and leave the class. Teachers might think I'm mocking them.

Bavin, Karthik, and Kashi discussed the challenges they face with internet connectivity and poor signals. Their conversation serves as a stark reminder of the unresolved issue of the digital divide, which continues to separate the privileged from the disadvantaged. This disparity is painfully evident during the pandemic as students struggle to access online classes. Moreover, the integration of digital technologies into our society has been haphazard and unequal. Just because a household has a device or internet connectivity doesn't mean that the

connection and devices are sufficient or reliable. Their words also highlight how the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed a fundamental structural imbalance between rural and urban areas, and between the rich and the poor.

Impact on peer group communication

In this section, the paper aims to explore the impact of the pandemic on peer group communication. The discussion draws from the narratives shared by both the parents and children/students in the family under study. The students/children expressed a profound longing for the moments spent face-to-face with their friends at school. Nayana, Bavin's mother, reflects:

> Bavin was quite the social butterfly before the lockdown. He always relished playing football, going to the theatre, and spending ample time with friends. However, the lockdown has disrupted his social activities and connections. His world has transitioned to the online sphere, and he often experiences feelings of loneliness.

Bavin adds: "Now, we maintain our relationships only through mobile phones. We are not able to see each other. There are strict restrictions on playing outdoors or holding any kind of meetings. It's a very difficult time that we never imagined." These words indicate that the lockdown has significantly impacted peer group friendships and interactions, which play a crucial role in students' growth. "When social communications move online, only certain kinds of relationships appear to survive. We can't blame anyone for it," explains Anil Kumar. Bavin expresses that the activities he used to enjoy with his friends, like gossiping and cracking jokes, don't occur as naturally when they connect online. He believes their online relationships lack depth. Kashi appears visibly saddened when discussing the inability to meet and play with his friends in person. He articulates feelings of loneliness due to the lockdown measures preventing social gatherings. Through his words, we discern that prolonged lockdowns foster feelings of isolation, and limitations on peer-group interactions pose particular challenges for young children.

Anil Kumar also shares his perspective, emphasizing the importance of children's opportunities to engage with their friends for maintaining strong bonds. He observes that the pandemic severely restricts these opportunities. According to him, schools provide the optimal environment for children to interact with peers from diverse backgrounds, but the pandemic disrupts this possibility.

Increased social media engagement

Kashi and Karthik said that they started their social media activities after the lockdown began. They created accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube together. They also helped their mother, Seethamma, establish her online presence. Manoj Kumar says:

> Instagram and YouTube are highly popular among children, emulating other media activities. They are now using these applications for many hours daily. It is a good way to kill time. Also, Karthik started his own YouTube account and began posting content. He believes that YouTube will give him money if he gets a certain number of people watching his videos.

All three children in the family said they are spending more time on YouTube and Instagram during the lockdown. Karthik (13) has a YouTube account titled 'KK Brozz' and posts videos regularly. He said he may spend hours on the application. He likes creating content for it and is now trying to increase the number of subscribers. Karthik says: "I may plan to spend around 5-10 minutes on YouTube, but once I start, I'll end up scrolling for 2 hours. I know, it's simply addicting – once we start scrolling, we just keep doing it." Similarly, Kashi (11) described feeling a bit addicted to YouTube, and Bavin said he spends approximately 2 hours a day on the platform. All three of them find YouTube very interesting during the lockdown period. They search for videos on YouTube whenever they need to find information about something.

Parents are disturbed by their children's use of new media and mention that it is becoming difficult to handle them as they are getting hooked on mobile phones to attend online classes. They said that the children are spending hours on the phone watching videos, gaming, and using social media to interact with friends. In their opinion, participating in an online lecture is entirely different from engaging in other forms of entertainment on the phone. Karthik takes the discussion to the next level. He says:

> Unfortunately, our parents continuously assume that we are using mobiles just for gaming and watching videos on YouTube. However, in fact, we usually use it for chatting with our friends during our leisure time. To stay mentally healthy, we need breaks during continuous online classes. Spending time on WhatsApp or YouTube is a relief for us. There is no other way for us to feel relaxed during this lockdown period. We can't come together, sit together, or play together. So, gaming on mobile phones is the best way for us.

The parents are also aware that, with everyone locked down in their homes, it is natural for children to rely on alternative social networking platforms. So, even though they are anxious about their children spending more time on Instagram or Facebook, they do not completely dismiss the role of online technologies in maintaining relationships among children when in-person meetings are not possible.

Conclusion

This paper delves into the experience of digital education during the pandemic, focusing on a single family to explore the matter in depth. The narratives provided by the family members, including three school-going children, offer insights into the nuanced aspects of digital education. The study also investigates how the pandemic-induced changes shaped communication dynamics among family members. Data collected through in-depth interviews with the family reveal that the COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges, particularly when the education system transitioned online. Educational institutions employed various applications such as Google Meet, Google Docs, Google Classroom,

Zoom, Skype, Edmodo, and SlideShare to facilitate virtual classrooms. The family initially faced difficulties due to a shortage of smartphones for their three school-going children. Even after acquiring a smartphone, the children had to share it, leading to disruptions as their classes often overlapped. The family's experience highlights the limitations of digital education, especially for the children in this household.

By listening to the children and their parents, we understand how the abrupt transition to digital learning exacerbates the digital divide. The children in the family explain that they are not able to readily adopt digital learning tools unlike some of their classmates, underscoring the gap between the privileged and the less privileged. The family members mention that those with financial resources and more privilege can easily afford the latest smartphones and have access to unlimited internet. Conversely, the children from low-income households in this study face significant challenges in attending online classes. This disparity highlights the inequities in access to digital education resources.

Children in the family have been unable to access high-speed internet during instructional hours due to the lack of mobile network availability in their village. These essential tools for participating in online learning activities have become a significant challenge for the household. Additionally, the children have expressed that their teachers did not understand their situation and blamed them for being "inactive" during classes. This underscores the need for teachers, the government, and mobile network providers to be aware of these constraints that hinder children from receiving adequate instruction during their online classes.

Parents in the family are deeply concerned about the growing screen time of their children, fearing both physical and psychological repercussions. They find it challenging to discern whether their children are spending hours in front of their mobile phones for academic activities or online gaming. However, the children dismiss their parents' anxieties as irrelevant, despite acknowledging their excessive use of social media platforms, video streaming applications, and online gaming platforms. They argue that they require breaks from continuous online lectures and

perceive these applications as tools for leisure rather than solely for academic purposes.

Both parents and children express the desire for administrators to provide the necessary digital tools to facilitate digital interactions. They believe that administrators should take steps to bridge the gap in technology accessibility, thereby assisting students from low-income households to access academic opportunities on par with their more privileged peers. The discussion with the family members highlights the need to address social, technological, and psychological barriers that hinder children from engaging in digital learning effectively. The authorities should also take necessary steps to provide adequate internet connectivity to enhance access for children in low-income households, who often face disadvantages. The study also emphasizes the importance of parents encouraging their children to cultivate both online and offline relationships. However, parents should maintain certain monitoring practices or awareness of these relationships without infringing on the children's privacy and freedom.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become indispensable in today's world. ICT plays a crucial role in addressing significant social issues, strengthening economies, democratic institutions, and local communities. However, the digital divide, or inequality in access to technology, creates a barrier that separates people and prevents certain groups from reaping its benefits. Real access to technology enables individuals to utilize it effectively, thereby improving their living conditions.

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[1] The first author engaged in the conversation with the boy, which led to the development of this paper.

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Swapnatanam: Malayalam Cinema's Early Attempts with the Idea of Psychoanalysis

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Abstract

Malayalam cinema, which claims to be one of the major contributors to the Indian art cinema, has initiated various innovative trends. This is especially true regarding the time period identified as early middlebrow cinema. Directors like P N Menon, KG George, Bharathan and Padmarajan whom cine enthusiasts generally refer to as the pioneers of middlebrow cinema have made efforts to induce global trends into Malayalam cinema. They address not merely the question of new genres, but narrative patterns and content as well. Questions on content and form are the traditionally inquired zones in any art form. The binary of arguing cinema as an art and material of content and form have put many inquiries in an undermining status. The attempts made on cinema are not purely on the content if such a specificity is claimed anywhere. The nature and environment from where the thread of the cinema is nurtured also has a significant claim in related debates. This study searches the pattern of the cinema Swapnatanam (Dream Walk) directed by K G George in the year 1976, in Black and White. The debut film of K G George has some particularities within the content and its extended bond towards the social from which it draws much input. The study inquires this connect between the prevalent environment and the capacity to hold the global vision of the newly identified theme of Psychoanalysis of the period. The environment outside the realm of traditional content platform of cinema is the concern of this inquiry. The director, the story and script writers and the emergence of the literary radicalism are the major concerns of this study. It also tries to post this attempt of making such a film as one of the early gestures showing an affinity towards embracing the theme of Psychoanalysis in Malayalam cinema, though if strictly defined may lack its scope as a psychoanalytic film. But the study engages Swapnatanam as a cinema that contributed to the genesis of psychoanalysis in Malayalam cinema. The inquiry is an attempt to indicate the traces of psychoanalysis in the cinema and no claims and questions are leveraged up on the merits of this tendency.

Keywords : *Swapnatanam, Psychoanalysis, Malayalam Cinema, Social*

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Introduction

Questions of content and form are the traditionally inquired zones in any art form. Cinema as an artform has a wide canvas in which content is an important concern. This content is often understood as the story and its narrative lines. Once the debate over form is initiated, generally the technical and technological sophistication come to the scene. This general assumption also has exceptions. The binary of arguing cinema as an art and material of content and form have put many other inquiries in an undermining status. The attempt to study cinema is not often based on the content even if such a specificity is claimed. The nature and environment from where the thread of the cinema is nurtured also have a significant claim in related debates. The inspiration or the inception has several choices and options. Only some among them are usually chosen or collectively articulated. They may be generally referred to as political, social, cultural, philosophical etc, if stratified for the ease of understanding. But, beyond these broad and singular categorization, different realms of plural reading possibilities co-exist in cinema as in any other art form. This indeed provides the scope to place cinema beyond the usual art-commercial categorization. The middlebrow cinema, other than the literal meaning it propagates, has implications on the selection of themes and treatment of the content. Invariably it focuses on the success of cinema as a product, appealing itself to deal with issues of popular themes. Thus popularized subjects became the content but it consciously broke the routine paths of commercial successes. This selection is done from the choices and often not connected with the investigations on content. The study focuses on this area of selection and treatment of the content in *Swapnadanam*, the debut of the director K G George, in Black and White. Many earlier cinemas in Malayalam also have shown similar concerns. But what marks the uniqueness of *Swapnadanam* is the crew who had a strong background in the respective areas the film embarked upon. Many of them were strongly grounded in their art work as well as in their professional engagements with psychology.

Debates on progressiveness and art's commitments

Malayalam cinema which has shown interests towards psychological and emotive matters as its content from the early 60's of the last century, has

produced cinemas like *Bhargavi Nilayam* (1964), *Iruttinte Athmavu* (1966), *Yakshi* (1968), Punarjanmam (1972) etc. But the major thrust of these cinemas were enquiries outside the individual psyche and rather focused on aloofness, loneliness and isolation. The focus was also much on the social stigma. How these characters were set onto the traditional social fabric of psychological trauma was the central theme of the content. The treatment of this content seemingly has faced a problem as the art forms of the period were not really bothered about dealing the issues with a proper medical or scientific engagement. The stereotypical shades of such portrayals and narratives in the related art forms also might have influenced this traditionality. Early cinemas also showed an enthusiasm to create a sense of thriller genre during the period rather than concentrating the main theme on psychological issues. Very often these cinemas involved a narrative pattern of enquiry focussing on the individuals whom the cinema and society find as cause of these issues. The reason, as one may search for it, may be somewhat abstract or may be absent in the narrative. This issue may have arisen due to the urge to have a specificity in terms of storytelling as Malayalam fiction was also moulded as if to address the reasons beyond the imagination of conceiving fiction as a sole track. Also it would be interesting to note that the paradigm of modernity had not hitherto influenced the pattern of content treatment in many of the art forms. The debates on art initiated by the progressive art and literature groups in Kerala during the same time-period might also have influenced the method of art forms including cinema. Marxist theoretician and leader from Kerala K.Damodaran in his writings describes it as a movement formed to satisfy certain social commitments. The organisation was called Jeeval Sahithya Sangham when it was formed in 1937 and later renamed as progressive literary movement in 1942. There were many edicts by the organisation that were discussed widely and which unfolded controversial debates in the cultural public sphere of Kerala. This is a movement by writers who deliberately write for social progress (Damodaran 2009-2020). K. Damodaran further expands the responsibility of this movement by explaining that the organisation is formed with an objective to fulfil some social requirements and to accomplish certain new cultural responsibilities. They severely criticized the romantic movement and called on to model socialist realism. The conservative writers according to the movement were who possess and promote despondency, mysticism, helplessness of humankind, deterioration, sexual anarchism, contempt to the cultural values, disbelief in good and belief in the evils, high regard to the war and massacres, hostility to ideals. (Damodaran 2009-2020). Thus, it tried to publish the idea, art

is for art's sake by fixing certain standards for a work of art and created an unrest in the socio-political spectrum of Kerala.

The cinema *Swapnatanam* is a cynosure, in its point of departure, if revisited in the backdrop of this proclamation. *Swapnatanam* created a pathbreaking treatment on the theme of soundness of human mind. Unlike the many similar contemporary cinema tropes this cinema opened up a new discussion floor. It focussed on the introspection of personal mental trauma with a new approach to the Malayalam cinema. Therefore the theme of Psychoanalysis had not directly set foot into the narrative lines of Malayalam cinema as seen in *Swapnatanam*. This climacteric shift may find sapless if we dissect content, but would prove otherwise if the social segments of its conception are considered.

Individual pin in the social settlement

The first democratic election mandate in the state of Kerala in 1957, in favour of the Communist Party, strongly claimed progressive stands in the making of the new state. This might also have influenced and directed the art forms of the region to find a social reason or imagination for the art works produced within the state. This logic of propaganda has been strongly backing up the initiatives in theatre movements like Kerala Peoples Arts Club, KPAC as well as literary groups like Purogamana Kala Sahithya Sangham (Progressive Arts and Literature Society) in Kerala widely during the period. KPAC's history as briefed in the kpackerala.com describes the early years as *"The new cultural humanism in Kerala began to take shape in the early decades of 20th century. The renaissance in the socio-political scenario paved the way for a new and progressive approach in the cultural arena also. The tradition of entertainment which revolved round the aristocratic tastes was forced to highlight the plight of the sidelined and the neglected. It infused new blood to transform the keralite spirit and concept of art. The impetus for the new culture was strengthened by the literary works of eminent poets and playwrights"*.

One could see the social concerns behind the art forms which have won the awards in the national as well as in the state especially in the field of cinema. Cinemas, which had their perturbs towards the social, often trying to suggest ways to resolve them were also a customary practice. The easy matrix of cause and effect was seen quite evidently in such cinema plots. Though attempts were made parallel to the stream of this ideological fumble, the central theme remained to continue as social reason. Social reasons that probe the intricacies

with an individual pin is the shift that was visible later in the 70's. This is important for many reasons. Firstly, it tried to figure out the complexity of the human mind and found issues in the terrain of tangibility to the social by individuals. Also, the fictitious narration had to coalesce with the rational scientific explanation as a reason to the "defined cause". The intention to explain the reason with a fictitious vigour couldn't match the narrative orthodoxy of the past. This shift has to be further examined in detail beyond the limits of a single cinema during the inception period of modernity. The study also has no further claims in this regard as the scope of further investigations may describe it with variant capacities.

New cinematization method

The cinema *Swapnatanam* released in 1976, had censorship certification of (A), adult watch. A certificate is generally given to the cinemas if the content has strong violence, explicit and strong sexual scenes, abusive language etc. The cinematograph Act of 1952 and censor board of film certification also insists on the same. Besides the fact that the cinema has some intimate scenes (not nude or sex scenes in its real sense, one may argue) for two minutes, the certification suggests something else present in the cinema. The viewing standards and interpretations surely matter in such cases. But this is stated as to pose the argument that the normal way of cinematisation has been kept off. The sensitivity may not be towards the issues of the body; but what the cinema is doing to the mind. This is also a serious shift that showcases the deviation. The overall setting of this treatment is beyond the control of normal assessment which might have mattered in this cinema. The extent to which this sensitivity is extended beyond the language, cinematic metaphors and visual pattern and the different way of cinematizing with this new sense of theme, is the matter of discussion. This level of treatment, 'innovative cinematization' if named, might have drawn energy from the production crew and their association with the theme. If the crew was not thematically bonded this cinema would not have turned away from the routine methods of cinematization.

Psychoanalysis as Means of a Narrative – Discussion

Swapnatanam, the debut of the director K G George had a resourceful team within the production as well as a setting outside. The crew included Pamman, (real name R P Parameswaran) as one of the script writers. The story was by Psycho Muhammad (real name Prof. E. Muhammad) and K G George, the

director. They often had this tint for analysing mind in their artistic and professional life. Pamman, a popular novelist in Malayalam, had a wide range of literary works that showcased a poignant treatment of the human mind. He had overtly dealt with issues of the body, sex and lust with psychic metres in the mainstream, unusual in the public during the period. It is pertinent to understand that Pamman was chosen for co-scripting the story with the director K G George. The argument that their treatment of the content beyond the level of fiction and cinematic language is ascertained by the works they had performed before and after the cinema *Swapnatanam*. Pamman's most celebrated work titled *Bhraanthu* (1980) has a theme of lust and recognition. In her urge to accomplish both the central female character, Ammukutty, turns insane. Other than the parameters involved in the popular novels of the time, *Bhraanthu* proposes the involvement of mind and psychological engagements as the reason that requires a clinical solution; a rare occurrence as it surpasses the fictitious boundary of mere illusions and fantasies. The novel was released only in the year 1980, four years after the cinema *Swapnatanam* was released. But during the process of its production, Pamman was deliberately chosen for the co-scripting as some of his works like *Chattakkari*(1974) and *Adimakal* (1969) had been commercial successes. The underpinnings of Pamman's storylines always inquired about the mysterious espousal of human minds.

The story was written by Prof. E. Muhammad, popularly known as Psycho Muhammad. He was one of the founding members and former president of the association of clinical psychologists in India. He took his Psychology graduation (Honors) in 1958 from the Madras Presidency College. He was the student of the first batch of BA Honors Psychology from the college. Later he joined National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences, Bangalore (NIMHANS) in 1959 for DM and SP diploma programme. In an interview with Dr. Rajan Chunkath published by Mathrubhumi in June 2013, he had observed that out of the twelve students he was the only one from Kerala and most of them had completed MBBS. Psychology and Psychiatry classes were engaged together during those days. He successfully completed the programme and joined the same institution as an assistant research officer. Later he joined the army as a clinical psychologist in 1963, at the Pune command hospital. Film and Television Institute of India was established in 1960. It was during this period that he met many filmmakers. The producer of the cinema, T Muhammad Bapu was a close friend of E Muhammad. Prof E Muhammad recalls that during the period he began writing Psychological articles in the weekly Chandrika. Later with the support of the editor V M Korath he started writing a column on

Psychological matters "Alpam Manasastram" (Briefly on Psychology) in Mathrubhumi. As he started his career in NIMHANS, he realised the importance of attending the layman queries regularly in a popular magazine, and thus began the column ask the psychologist. He disclaims the claim that he had initiated the column and instead gives credit to Dr. V. K. Alexander, who used to write in Manorama. Prof. E. Muhammad once received a letter from a forty-eight year old woman from Coimbatore asking his advice. She was seeking help to find a solution to her fifty year old husband's suspicion and trust issues regarding her. But before his reply was published, he came to know that the husband murdered her and committed suicide. This real life incident may have had the capacity to trigger him as a writer. Muhammed had said that the way in which the thread to the story "Palayanam" ("Retreat"), later became the story draft of the cinema *Swapnatanam*, was also coincidental. He had to attend the case of a man found unconscious from Egmore, Chennai who couldn't recall his past. Once they did narco analysis some of his life stories got unveiled. The man who had gone to Thiruvananthapuram Chala market in a scooter later reached Egmore in a condition where he was blank and lost. When his friend, producer T Muhammad Bapu urgently needed a story for his cinema, Prof Muhammad decided to make a script out of this story and suggested Pamman to the director and producer.

Prof Muhammad, an ardent admirer of Sigmund Freud and left leaning, was fond of Russia. Being a Government servant he had some concerns in engaging his thoughts as a Psychologist and writer. Hence, he wrote under the Russian pseudonym PsychoV. Later it was the editor of Mathrubhumi weekly who changed it to 'Psycho' as he was writing continuously on Psychological problems. The title card of the cinema *Swapnatanam* also credits the story to Psycho instead of his real name.

K G George, a self-declared passionate lover of the cinemas of Federico Fellini, the Italian film maker, inadvertently hints on the themes of his cinema. Fellini's cinemas like $8^{1/2}$, *I Vitelloni, Juliet of the Spirits* and *Amarcord* later had readings stating the influence of Psychoanalysis. Fellini's works were also categorised as showing nuances of the famous discourses of Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Yung. *Swapnatanam* being his debut, George has thematically favoured this taste. The title of the cinema was changed to *Swapnatanam* (Dream walk) from *Palayanam* (*Retreat*) by Uroob, (real name P C Kuttikrishnan) famous Malayalam novelist. K G George's experiments with this

theme of Psychoanalysis didn't end with Swapnatanam. He continued this long journey with cinemas of Psycho genre with mildly dilated themes.

The social setting, during the period had also shown similar gentle shifts. One could remember that in 1960 the cinema, *Psycho* directed by Alfred Hitchcock was released. Cinema has no claims as it is under the thematic genre of Psycho; and finds its place under the banner horror/thriller. But beyond the level of crime or murder, cinema enquires the possibility of the reason connected with human mind. As argued earlier, this relocation of cinema on the reasons as justification of an act are seen as a point of departure from the traditional treatment. *Psycho*, raging the temperament in the title itself is a global imagination in cinema that happened during the period. Much to add to the argument, Kerala also witnessed the launch of special interest magazines which were exclusively marked with psychological contents. The magazine in Malayalam, *Psycho* started from Kozhikode in 1969. The editor Chelavoor Venu claims it to be the second of its kind following *Psychology Today*, an American magazine published in 1967. The content of the magazine was supported from clinical psychologists and academicians. As this paper argues, the pure fictitious art works learned and demanded the support from the experts of the field. The editorial advisory board consisted of Dr. S., Santha Kumar, MBBS, MRCP, FRCP, DPM, Dr. T.O. Abraham MBBS, DPM, Dr. A K Rajan, MBBS, Dr P M Mathew MADM & SP together with Ettumanoor Hariharan MA. (DPM means Diploma in Psychological Medicine, MADM means maintenance antidepressant medication in its contemporary usages). The new era writers of Malayalam literature like Paul Zakharia also contributed in Psycho. One of the surprising coincidences is that the editor of the new trendy magazine *Psycho* himself became the founder of a Film Society movement in Malabar region of Kerala in 1969 by establishing the film society Aswini.

Presence of an invisible Freud

The characters in the cinema *Swapnatanam,* in its simple observation itself reveals that, even if the social is punched as a layer of storytelling, each character tries to tell a different story. So, the narrative pattern or the treatment of the content itself has multilayers of understanding the social, withering the long-established social stigma from the pivotal spot. This can not be counted as a mere fortuity as this scattering of the social to the individual mind as separate entities possessing a region of social within its separate individual patches have been finely argued by Sigmund Freud.

In the work History of Psychoanalysis*,* Freud argues that the subjective experiences, regression and repression are the ideas where Psychoanalysis has roughly mounted its base. This subjective experience which has its units deeply invested in the personal memory often comes in conflict with the social anxieties. In case if the analysis to find the cause fails to attend this personal memory of the individual and laid out on the mock executions of the social, the attempt to extend the plot may not get an exit. The haphazard social anxieties of the period were confusing in the real-world projections as well as in the imaginations of art works.

As proposed by Freud, unconscious memories, thoughts, and urges of individuals constitute personal memory. He says that the psyche comprises three aspects: the id, ego, and superego. The id is entirely unconscious, while the ego operates in the conscious mind. The superego operates both unconsciously and consciously. So, the operative tools may assume a position not to fix a specific spot of cause or solution which is tangible in the social. Thus, a presupposition, not to conclude the reasons with social anxieties alone may be one of the aspects for this transition phase to psychoanalysis in cinema. Once this new imagination emerged, cinema witnessed a drastic shift in the treatment of the content. Content and the treatment came into equal possessions. The storyline that has been presented earlier showing straight answers to social disquiet were revisited with an alternative. This alternative narrative obviously focussed the individual and the personal woes more. Being personal didn't ignore the social stanchion. This is evident if one dissects the works of the period. In the absolute stringent method of psychoanalysis, the design and the narrative may disapprove this imagination scientifically in the art works including cinema. But the study is only an attempt to plot the shift as is evident from the many circumstances in and around the period of production of the cinema *Swapnatanam*. Also, there were many initiatives globally many attempted this new stream of imagination in art forms including cinemas, *Secrets of a Soul* (1926), *Now, Voyager* (1942), *Spellbound* (1945) *Captive Wild Woman* (1943) and *Shock* (1945) in the earlier period after Freud's *The History of Psychoanalytic Movement* in 1914.

The study is only a rock bottom attempt to delineate the shift that happened in the history of Malayalam cinema. The social settings outside the realm of cinema and how it correlated this outer existence is the prime concern of this inquiry. The concepts of Psychoanalysis as discussed in this work is an attempt to tie in as a base study, if at all it can be called as a pilot study. More rigorous efforts are to be engaged to sufficiently articulate the bends and loops of this

trajectory. Prudent processing of the data and diligent field work may help the study to theorise and comprehensively assess the climatization process of the period.

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Transnational Flow of Television Dramas between India and Türkiye: Contestation between Geopolitics and Transculturalism

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Abstract

Transculturalism is a concept that emphasises the blending and interaction of different cultures, transcending traditional cultural boundaries. It acknowledges the interconnectedness of the globalised world and highlights the importance of cultural diversity and cross-cultural understanding. Transculturalism plays a significant role in shaping contemporary societies in fostering cultural tolerance. Cultural products like entertainment television productions have become increasingly prominent in fostering transculturalism in this globalised world. The study aims to scrutinise how the transnational flow of television dramas fosters the transculturalism between India and Turkiye. India and Türkiye are rich in transnational export of television content. The exchange of television dramas between India and Türkiye is in contrast with the geopolitical narrative between the countries. This study analyses the dynamics of contestation between the geopolitical narrative and transculturalism in the exchange of television dramas between India and Türkiye. The study explores how television dramas act as a soft power tool in transculturalism, by doing qualitative content analysis of select dramas from both sides and in-depth review of comments of the audience on the YouTube comment section of each drama. The result suggests that the intercultural communication between the two countries is diverted from the existing geopolitical narrative between them. It means the power of cultural products overpowers geo-political narratives created by mainstream media and political agencies.

Keywords: Transculturalism, Television Series, Transnational Flow, Soft Power

Introduction

India and Türkiye share a cultural past and present from time immemorial. From the 'Romani tribe' migration from India to the diplomatic relationship between

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the Mughals and the Ottomans, the two countries have been in a perpetual relationship. Roma people live in 30 countries across West Asia, Europe, America, and Australia, with their largest community in Türkiye, with a population of around 2.75 million. The Roma or Romani, the travelling people's origin, is widely accepted by anthropologists, historians, and geneticists as lying in northern India (Liégeoi, 1994). They are believed to have migrated from the 5th century onwards, beginning with the invasion of Alexander. The Romani tribe can be considered one of the foremost cultural diplomats that carried Indian culture to the outer world (Fraser, 1995). From this point of view, India and Türkiye have been keeping their strong cultural relations for over a millennium.

With great cultural overlap, Türkiye has had a considerable impact on India in areas such as culture and civilisation, art and architecture, and costumes and cuisine from ancient times. The Indo-Islamic architecture was highly influenced by Persian and Turkish architecture. Turkish architecture started in India after the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. The arch and dome design are aspects of Turkish architecture (Desai, 1970).

The twenty-first century witnessed a drastic transborder flow of television dramas. Apart from major English television drama series, several Asian television industries, including those in Türkiye, have marked their signature in exporting their drama series internationally. Since the mid-2000s, Turkish television drama series have been exported to different countries and have attracted a transnational audience (Özalpman, 2017). Turkish series gained popularity in India primarily after the broadcast of the series 'Adını Feriha Koydum', dubbed in Hindi as 'Feriha', in September 2015 on the 'Zindagi' television channel of Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd. The channel later moved to the video on demand platform Zee5. Along with Zee5, MX Player is a major platform updating with the latest Turkish dramas dubbed in Hindi for the audience.

The past few years have witnessed the growing popularity of Indian soap operas on Turkish television channels. 'Star TV' sold the rights to air 'Iss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon?', a Hindi soap opera, to the Turkish channel 'Kanal 7' in 2015. The series was dubbed in Turkish and aired as 'Bir Garip Aşk' in Türkiye. Since then, more than 20 Indian soap operas have been dubbed and aired on 'Kanal 7'. Apart from these official exports, series are available online with subtitles the very next day after the broadcast in both countries.

In the contemporary world order, India and Türkiye hold different positions with competing political ideas and power relations. Moreover, in India, Türkiye is politically perceived with a certain level of unfriendliness. To a certain extent, the perception of India by Turkish people is also not particularly friendly. However, when we closely analyse the intercultural understanding and appreciation from a lens of soft power transactions between these two nations, the scenario set is not in line with the politically propagated standpoints. In both countries, cultural assets, including entertainment content over television screens, are exchanged more than ever before and are well appreciated by the public audience. How this soft power-based cultural communication overpowers political narratives of animosity is a crucial question to find an answer to.

Indo-Turkish political relation: A historical overview

The late 19th and early 20th centuries are one of the significant ages of Indo-Turkish relations. The shrinkage of the Ottoman Empire and the diminution of the Caliphate-Sultan institution coincided with the stirrings of national consciousness in India. Along with the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, the Sunni ulema of the Deoband madrassa in India sought material assistance from Türkiye in their resistance against colonial state rule.

World War I witnessed the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate. In India, the Khilafat Movement was launched in response to British policy against Türkiye and the planned dismemberment of Türkiye after the war. Led by Maulana Muhammed Ali, Maulana Shoukat Ali, and other Muslim leaders of the time, it was supported by Mahatma Gandhi and Congress leaders like Vallabhbhai Patel, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and others.

Following the Turkish War of Independence, the Ahmedabad meeting of Congress in 1921 pledged India's support to the Turkish struggle and passed a resolution:

"This Congress congratulates Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha and the Turks upon their successes and assures the Turkish nation of India's sympathy and support in its struggle to retain its status and independence" (Grover, 1992).

The Indian National Congress hailed the victories of Atatürk as a victory against colonialism and raised donations to help found the Iş Bank, one of Türkiye's largest banks today.

During the Cold War, despite the past affinities and interactions, Indo-Turkish relations failed to reach their potential. The Indo-Pakistan partition cracked the ties between India and modern Türkiye. Türkiye, at the same time, started creating a strong bond with Pakistan. The factors that bound Pakistan and Türkiye together were rooted in their common religious background as well as worldviews.

India and Türkiye followed diverging paths, with Türkiye joining NATO in February 1952 and India leading the Non-Alignment Movement. Pakistan was drawing closer through economic and military strategies. India formed a closer relationship with Greece, a state in political animosity with Türkiye and the Greek-dominated southern part of Cyprus. India's position on Cyprus often developed ill-feeling between India and Türkiye. Neglecting the offshoot of this between New Delhi and Ankara, the first cultural agreement was signed way back in 1951 by India's first education minister Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

Between Jawaharlal Nehru's visit to Türkiye in 1960 and Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Özal's trip to India in 1986, Indo-Turkish relations underwent a quiescent phase. The visit of Özal marked a modest beginning of an enduring friendship. "Given the momentum of rapid and sustained growth in both our countries," Özal wrote in a special message to the Economic Times, "I believe the time is ripe, and opportunities are in front of us to develop joint economic interests with a view to realising durable and concrete cooperation" (Economic Times, 1988).

In his return visit, Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, saw Indo-Turkish relations achieve another dimension. The Özal government agreed to ban the routing of nuclear inverters to Pakistan and granted permission for the screening of Sir Richard Attenborough's film 'Gandhi' in Türkiye. In March 2000, the Prime Minister of Türkiye, Mr. Ecevit, during his visit to India, shared India's concerns on the issue of cross-border terrorism by pointing out that Türkiye had itself been faced with a similar menace for a long time posed by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) aided by its southern neighbours.

Along with these developments, cooperation in the education sectors has also been active. Since 1995, an Indian professor has been on deputation to the Indology Department in Ankara University to teach Hindi. Similarly, two Turkish language professors have been deputed to Jawaharlal Nehru University

and Jamia Millia University. Nevertheless, the bilateral relations between these countries have become multidimensional in recent years.

Cultural significance of television dramas in India and Türkiye

Until 1991, India possessed only a single state-owned television channel, Doordarshan. Since then, there has been a rapid expansion in independent satellite channels, which came as a complete break from the statist control of the past. Television has a non-deniable hand in shaping Indian conditions. It altered Indian social practices, making possible new ways of imagining identities, conducting politics, and engaging with the state. Satellite television initially came to India as a representative of global capitalism, but it was appropriated by Indian entrepreneurs and producers who Indianised it (Mehta, 2008).

Indian television dramas have a significant impact on Indian society, with regard to national integration, identity, globalisation, women's issues, ethics, and social issues in rural areas. They have been used to address various social issues and have helped to shape public opinion on these issues. For example, the popular Hindi serial "Balika Vadhu" dealt with the issue of child marriage and its impact on young girls. The show was successful in raising awareness about this issue and contributed to the national debate on child marriage. Indian television dramas also play a role in shaping cultural identity. Television is considered to be an in-between agent that has the potential to perpetuate the homogenisation of regional cultures as well as secure the longevity of cultural heterogeneity. They often depict traditional values and customs and can help to reinforce cultural norms.

The adaptation of the Hindu epic poem "Ramayana," aired on Doordarshan, is credited as the catalyst in sparking a Hindu awakening across India and bringing Hindu nationalism to the forefront of public and political spheres. Soap themes underwent a paradigm shift from the year 2008, with social problems like child marriage, female foeticide, child labour, bonded labour, and farmers' suicides providing the thematic context.

Turkish television dramas, also known as dizi, have been growing in popularity since the 1980s. Since the 1980s, television dramas have been one of the most dominant formats on Turkish TV channels, occupying major slots on primetime throughout the 1990s and 2000s. They play a significant role in shaping the historical and cultural landscape of Türkiye. Dizi storylines cover everything

from romantic comedy to scheming Ottoman queens. Dizis are usually loyal to certain narrative themes. They are always family-centric. The series is scheduled for broadcast according to the season. There are summer dizis and winter dizis. Usually, the summer dizis are of the romantic comedy genre. As the season changes, the genre changes. There come family dramas, action thrillers, historical fiction, and more. These dramas often depict traditional values and customs and can help to reinforce cultural norms. Turkish culture is deeply rooted in family relationships (Evason, 2019). These shows often depict traditional values and customs related to family life. Historical dramas and historical fictions act in reinforcing cultural identity and have had a global impact.

Emergence of transnational television drama

The history of transnational television flow can be traced back to the early days of television broadcasting, but it gained significant momentum with the advent of satellite technology and the globalisation of media markets. In media and communication studies and disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, globalisation, technological shifts, and media flow have been discussed extensively. The increase in transnational information and cultural flows has been enabled by new communication technologies and shifts in the economic, political, and legal infrastructure. This includes the harmonisation of international regulatory and legal frameworks and the globalisation of ownership and control in the telecommunication and media sectors.

During the Cold War, the influence of television as a tool of soft power became apparent, with countries using it to showcase their ideologies and cultures to a global audience. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the proliferation of cable and satellite television, as well as the rise of the internet and streaming services, further accelerated the transnational flow of television content. This led to an increase in cultural exchange and the blending of different media cultures. Today, transnational television flow is a dynamic and complex phenomenon. International streaming platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+ have a global reach, making it easier for audiences to access content from various

countries. This has also given rise to a diverse range of programming that caters to different cultural backgrounds and languages.

Asian countries are playing an increasingly significant role in the multiple and horizontal flow of media with a profound impact on transcultural communication in a polycentric world. Even though the United States still maintains its leading position in the field of global media and television flow, countries like India and Türkiye have established their positions in the international market through Bollywood and dizis respectively.

Indian TV content has a rich history and a significant present presence, especially Bollywood among the global audience. Bollywood started gaining international recognition in the mid-20th century with films like "Mother India" (1957) and "Mughal-e-Azam" (1960), which captivated audiences beyond India. In the following decades, actors like Raj Kapoor and Amitabh Bachchan garnered popularity abroad. The 1990s saw the rise of Bollywood's global appeal with films like "Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge" (1995) and "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai" (1998). These films resonated with a wide range of viewers due to their relatable themes and vibrant musical numbers. The 2000s further expanded Bollywood's presence, with films like "Lagaan" (2001) receiving an Academy Award nomination and "Slumdog Millionaire" (2008), which featured Indian actors and garnered global acclaim.

The international success of Turkish dizi is a sign of the way new forms of mass culture from the East - from Bollywood to Korean-pop - are challenging the dominance of American pop culture in the 21st century (Bhutto, 2019). According to the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Türkiye exported 36,000 hours of television to 76 countries between 2005 and 2011. A think-tank report declared Turkish dramas to be 'an important part of Türkiye's soft power' and having 'the potential to have a lasting effect on Türkiye's image' (Yesil, 2015).

The Turkish TV series have entered the international market of selling and distribution of TV entertainment programmes, claiming a

counterflow to the dominant American TV products in the last decade. The major components in the flow of transnational television series are the localising factors of the dramas. Dubbing and subtitling in different languages make them accessible to global audiences. This localisation strategy has allowed international content to reach diverse markets with varying language preferences.

Cross-cultural themes of both Indian and Turkish shows explore universal themes such as family, love, and relationships, which resonate with audiences worldwide. The familiarity in this culture and tradition between India and Türkiye makes it more appealing to the audience.

Review of Literature

Indo-Turkish cultural relations have a rich and historical backdrop. Both India and Türkiye have deep-rooted cultural ties that date back centuries.

In his "Mughal-Ottoman Relations: A Study of Political and Diplomatic Relations between the Mughal and the Ottoman Empire, 1556-1748," Naimur Rahman Farooqi (1989) studied the political, diplomatic, and anthropological relations between the Mughals and Ottomans and the attitude of the Mughal Empire towards the Ottoman Caliphate.

Aswini K. Mohapatra, in his article "Bridge to Anatolia: An Overview of Indo-Turkish Relations" (2008), examined how India and Türkiye's bilateral relations have improved as a result of a wide convergence of views on a variety of topics, including international terrorism, the post-Saddam Iraq situation, the promotion of democracy, and the free trade system post-Cold War.

In an analysis of the relationship between India and Türkiye, "Forging a New Partnership: India and Turkey," M. S. Hussain & Y. Chavan (2011) examine the reasons behind the growing relationship between the two countries, as well as the areas of cooperation in political, economic, defence, and security sectors.

Abroo Aman Andrabi, in her "Indo-Turkish Relations: A Historical Overview and Analysis" (2014), provides a concise historical overview of Indo-Turkish relations. Since 1948, and more specifically in recent years, there has been a revival in Türkiye's relations with India as part of ongoing multidimensional foreign policy vicissitudes.

The notion of soft power was first explored by Joseph Nye in his work 'Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power' in 1990. The theory was later advanced in 2004 by Nye in his work 'Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics'. Soft power is the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment. A country's soft power rests on its resources of culture, values, and policies. A smart power strategy combines hard and soft power resources (Nye, 2008).

Blarel, N., in his "India's Soft Power: From Potential to Reality?" (2012), states that the Indian government has explicitly incorporated a 'cultural' element into its foreign policy. He also identifies that the Indian government's efforts over the last decade have helped promote a new and modern image of India abroad.

Miriam Berg identifies Turkish drama series' significant contribution to the rise of the country's soft power, even though the drama sector's financials have been far from soft, representing a major economic/trade interest with important repercussions for tourism. The research, "Turkish Drama Serials as a Tool for Soft Power" (2017), finds how the international success of Turkish dramas has fallen nicely into the soft-power strategy of the AKP government. Türkiye's culture, political notions, and policies are considered attractive, which is the essence of soft power.

Transnational television culture is anchored in national and regional television cultures, which are transcended as discussed by the authors, and can be conceptualised as a social and cultural process in a transnational arena where agents, institutions, and structures interact with one another, states Mikos, L., in his "Transnational Television Culture."

In "Transnational Television Worldwide: Towards a New Media Order" (2003), Jean K. Chalabi provides a global perspective on transnational television channels and their impact on globalisation, nation-states, regional culture, and politics.

Miyase Christensen, in her journal "TransNational Media Flows: Some Key Questions and Debates" (2013), examines the implications of contemporary media flows from both material and symbolic perspectives, drawing upon the theoretical tools of geopolitics and cosmopolitanism to reflect upon the technological, spatial, and cultural dimensions of these flows.

Özalpman (2017) argues that the transnational flow of Turkish dramas is not primarily an outcome of cultural or religious affinities between the two countries; rather, it is a by-product of economic and technological factors that created a favourable environment for Turkish dramas' distribution and production within the limits of the global media market.

In his paper "Popular Culture, Geopolitics, and Identity" (2019), Dittmer examines the relationship between popular culture, geopolitics, and identity. It explores the ways in which popular culture can be used for both propaganda and entertainment, and how it is shaped by geopolitical histories, discourses, and mediation.

Objectives of the Study

General objective

The general objective of the study is to examine the dynamics of contestation between geopolitics and transculturalism in the exchange of television dramas between India and Türkiye.

Specific objectives

1. To examine the geopolitical narrative of the relationship between India and Türkiye.
2. To analyse the current status of soft power flow between India and Türkiye with special reference to the exchange of television dramas.
3. To identify the strategies of appropriation and contextualisation of Indian television dramas for the Turkish audience and vice versa.
4. To examine the audience response to the television dramas exchanged between India and Türkiye.

Methodology

This study primarily relies on qualitative analysis that examines the dynamics of contestation between geopolitics and transculturalism in the exchange of television dramas between India and Türkiye. The paper examines how smoothly transnational television dramas flow between

two countries that are at odds politically. As the objectives of the research warrant a multi-dimensional approach the researcher adopted a qualitative methodology that involves multimodal data collection methods such as qualitative content analysis, comment analysis and in-depth review.

Corpus Indian Dramas in Turkey	Methodology and Theme	Corpus Turkish Dramas in India
1. Iss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon? 2. Kumkum Bhagya 3. Uttaran 4. Balika Vadhu	**In-Depth Review** A: Indo-Turkey Relation B: Geopolitics C: Soft Power **YouTube Comment Analysis** A: Fandom B: Cultural Elements C: Historical View **Content Analysis** A: Family in Drama B: Appropriation C: Genres	1. Ask Laftaan Anlamaz 2. Fatmagulun Sucu Ne 3. Yemin 4. Dirilis Ertugrul

The central thread of methodology is comparative analysis in which similarities and differences between the corpus of data elicited from the Indian and Turkish television ecosystem are identified and detailed. For materializing this three data collection techniques are used: In-depth review of secondary sources like media reports, policy papers and strategic studies etc. This data primarily focuses on geopolitical developments between India and Indo-Turkish cultural relations. YouTube Comment Analysis is used to measure the sentiment, opinions, emotions, and topics of the viewers. This helps to identify and analyze the perception and reception by the audience of the dramas. Content Analysis identifies the appropriation and contextualization technique of transnational dramas exchanged between India and Türkiye.

Geopolitical narrative of Indo-Turkish relationship

India and Türkiye have maintained friendly relations since India's independence in 1947, with diplomatic ties dating back to the 15th century. However, geopolitical dynamics have evolved over time, with Türkiye undergoing significant political changes, including the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Türkiye under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Despite internal political instability, Türkiye has maintained a strong diplomatic understanding with India, marked by cultural agreements and official visits between leaders of both countries.

One major area of contention between India and Türkiye has been Türkiye's stance on the Kashmir issue. Türkiye's expressions of support for the rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir have strained bilateral relations, particularly after India's abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. Türkiye has raised the Kashmir issue at international forums, leading to tensions between the two countries.

Indian responses to Türkiye's statements on Kashmir have included criticism of Türkiye's military operations in Syria and cancellation of official visits. Türkiye's stance on Kashmir has garnered support from Pakistan and Kashmir, leading to social media trends praising Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's statements.

In return, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has held meetings with leaders of countries with disputes with Türkiye, such as Cyprus, Armenia, and Greece. Additionally, Türkiye's continued references to Kashmir in international forums, including the United Nations General Assembly, have further strained relations.

Recent incidents, such as Türkiye's mention of Kashmir at the United Nations Human Rights Council and the rejection of Ilker Ayci's appointment as CEO of Air India by Tata Group, have intensified tensions. Social media trends in India have reflected growing animosity towards Türkiye, with some accounts celebrating natural disasters in Türkiye as karma for its stance on Kashmir.

The presidential election in Türkiye has also affected geopolitical relations, with the Indian Prime Minister's congratulatory message to Recep Tayyip Erdogan contrasting with preferences for a different candidate with closer ties to Western countries.

Overall, Indo-Turkish relations have faced challenges due to geopolitical differences and domestic incidents, leading to growing tensions and animosity among citizens of both countries.

Figure 4.1: Infographics of 'How much time do we read in a week?'

The post titled 'Haftada Kaç Kitap Okuyoruz' (How many hours we read books in a week), an infographics posted on Instagram by GZT a new media company in Türkiye highlights India's position at the top, with an average of 10.42 hours spent reading books per week, while Türkiye ranks 19th with 5.54 hours. Comments on the post reflect the reception of India by Turks, expressing surprise at India's top position and questioning the reliability of the source. Some commenters even question the correlation between reading and knowledge, speculating on why Indians are ranked highly.

Furthermore, the post by the same media house on Instagram mentions recent incidents, such as BJP leader Nupur Sharma's speech on Islam and Prophet Muhammad, and the state's bulldozer action on protesters. These events have sparked concern among Turks, particularly due to their implications for Indian Muslims and their connections to Uyghur Muslims and Palestinians. This highlights the awareness of Turks on global issues and their solidarity with fellow Muslims facing challenges elsewhere.

Soft power flow between India and Türkiye

The recent developments in the relationship between India and Türkiye indicate that India is gaining more relevance in Türkiye's Asia policy than before. Türkiye's interest in shaping a new approach to India is a reflection of Ankara's evolving foreign policy under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's AKP, which has aimed to expand the country's relations with emerging powers. Despite recent tensions, both countries have demonstrated astute diplomacy by extending aid during times of need without resorting to military or economic coercion.

The soft power flow between India and Türkiye has been growing, with cultural diplomacy playing a significant role in promoting their interests abroad. Indian soap operas have long been popular in Türkiye, while Turkish dramas are also gaining traction in India. This mutual appreciation is partly due to the shared cultural heritage and high production values of both sets of dramas.

Turkish television dramas, or dizis, have particularly gained popularity in India in recent years. The broadcast of Turkish series like "Adını Feriha Koydum" on Indian television channels has contributed to this trend. However, cross-border flows of popular culture faced obstacles following events like the Uri attack in Jammu and Kashmir, leading to the suspension of Pakistani programs in India.

Turkish dramas have expanded their soft power by incorporating regional dialects and offering plots that are both captivating and rooted in tradition. This has not only increased tourism to Istanbul but also strengthened Türkiye's soft power globally. Conversely, while Indian cinema, especially Bollywood films featuring actors like Amir Khan, remains popular in Türkiye, India has not utilized television dramas as a deliberate tool of soft power.

Overall, the exchange of cultural content between India and Türkiye reflects a growing affinity between the two nations, despite occasional geopolitical tensions. Through soft power initiatives, both countries are enhancing their global influence and deepening their cultural ties.

Appropriation and contextualization of Indian tele dramas

Indian series, the soap operas make up one of the biggest portions in the world's television industry. In 2016, Star India made history by taking the first-ever Indian TV Drama Series to Türkiye, which is one of the biggest producers and

exporters of drama series in the world. The immensely popular romance drama, Iss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon, was showcased to television audiences in Türkiye on local Turkish channel Kanal 7. Since November 2015, the show, dubbed in Turkish and entitled Bir Garip Aşk, has been delighting viewers to such an extent that it has quadrupled its ratings, increasing the channel's ranking significantly across different target groups in the slot in which it is airing (The Times of India, 2016). The popularity of Indian soap operas has skyrocketed in Türkiye in the past few years, gaining great recognition in the last decade. The reason why Indian soap operas are so popular in Türkiye is their making. The colorful and traditional plot linked with family and culture is relatable to the audience with their roots in family relationships and tradition. The catchy soundtracks with magnificent and vivid songs make them attractive. Besides, Indian series represent different social problems, which are still relevant in Indian society. Indian television soap operas have become serial hits across the world, rising demand for the soap in the global market.

Turkish television series have become increasingly popular in India, particularly since the telecast of the dubbed version of Adını Feriha Koydum in 2015. While India has a strong market for regional language television series or serials, as they are known locally, international shows, except for syndicated television content from the United States, have hardly been popular in traditional television broadcasting. However, the rising popularity of Turkish television series and their circulation through digital media in India have opened up a rich site for exploring changing practices of audience engagement with transnational television content. The circulation of Turkish television series in India is mainly through social media platforms, such as Facebook, video-sharing sites like YouTube, and file-sharing torrent sites. Hence, Turkish television series become an emblematic instance of understanding transnational media flow through alternative digital channels in India. In November 2015, Kanal 7 (Channel 7) started airing the dubbed version of Iss Pyaar Ko Naam Doon, one of the popular drama series which has a pan-Indian fandom, entitled Bir Garip Aşk, in Turkish. Iss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon, a Star India drama series, was the first-ever Indian serial to be sold to Türkiye. Star India drama series have resonated with audiences in over a hundred countries worldwide, including Türkiye. Since then, more than twenty Indian dramas have been aired in Türkiye. For a detailed analysis, four Indian television serials aired in Türkiye are considered. The serials are selected based on their popularity and genre.

Iss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon?

"Bir Garip Aşk" captures the essence of "Iss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon?" by bringing to life the intense love story between Arnav Singh Raizada (ASR) and Khushi Kumari Gupta. Produced by Gul Khan under 4 Lions Films, the Turkish dubbed version maintains the romantic drama's core elements while resonating with Türkiye's audience.

Set against the backdrop of Delhi and Lucknow, the series delves into the dynamics between a wealthy businessman, ASR, and a spirited middle-class girl, Khushi. Their relationship unfolds amidst themes of revenge and redemption, weaving a captivating narrative that captivates viewers.

Starring Barun Sobti and Sanaya Irani, the chemistry between the lead characters adds depth to their love story, drawing audiences into their world of passion and conflict. As ASR and Khushi navigate their tumultuous journey, the series explores themes of love, sacrifice, and resilience, resonating with viewers across cultures.

"Bir Garip Aşk" not only entertains Türkiye's audience but also serves as a testament to the universal appeal of love and human emotions depicted in "Iss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon?" The Turkish adaptation pays homage to the original series while adding its own cultural nuances, creating a memorable viewing experience for audiences in Türkiye..

Kumkum Bhagya

"Ah Kalbim" brings to Türkiye the captivating storyline of "Kumkum Bhagya," portraying the journey of Pragya Arora, a dedicated teacher, and Abhishek Mehra, a rock star. Against the backdrop of Sarla Arora's marriage hall, the series follows the lives of Pragya and her sister Bulbul as they navigate love, dreams, and challenges.

The Turkish adaptation of "Kumkum Bhagya" has garnered a significant fan base in Türkiye, evident from the nearly one lakh followers on the YouTube channel Ah Kalbim. By analyzing comments from both the earliest and latest posts on the channel, we can gain insights into the audience's reception and engagement with the series.

Similarly, "Uttaran" and "Balika Vadhu," dubbed into Turkish as "Kördüğüm" and "Ikimizin Yerine" respectively, have also found popularity among Türkiye's households. "Uttaran" tells the story of friendship and love between two girls,

Ichha and Tapasya, while "Balika Vadhu" explores the journey of a child bride, Anandi, from childhood to womanhood in rural Rajasthan.

The social relevance and compelling narratives of these Indian soap operas have resonated with Türkiye's audience, as reflected in the high viewership numbers on YouTube trailers and the engagement seen in comments sections. These series not only entertain but also provide a glimpse into different cultures and societal issues, fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

Turkish television dramas in India

Over the years Turkish dramas have seeped out of the borders of the country and gained a worldwide fanbase. And that is mostly because of the high production values and universal themes featured in the shows. From high-octane crime thrillers to coming-of-age dramas, the genre has it all. From this, few Turkish dramas are selected randomly from different genres. The Indian audience to the Turkish dramas is used to the art of subtitling. Most of the dramas are unofficially available on websites like Turkish123, serial4u, osmanonline and more. MX player is the platform which brings dubbed versions of Turkish dramas to India. India unlike Türkiye which is unilingual is a multilingual country. So, the dramas are mostly with English subtitles. However, Turkish television series are dubbed to different languages in India especially Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Urdu and Bengali.

Ask Laftaan Anlamaz

Pyaar Lafzon Mein Kahan is a Turkish drama series originally titled Ask Laftan Anlamaz starring Burak Deniz and Hande Ercel. It was launched on the Show TV network on 13 October 2017 and has already surpassed 45 million views on YouTube. The series follows a workplace romance in an Istanbul multinational company. The show has gained a lot of popularity in India, especially among the youth. The YouTube channel of Pyaar Lafzon Mein Kahan has six million subscribers with ninety million people watching the first episode of the series. Apart from this, MX player has the series on their platform with millions of viewers. These episodes are trimmed to 45 minutes which is appropriate for the Indian audience. Aşk Laftan Anlamaz is dubbed not only in Hindi, but Urdu, Telugu, Tamil and Bangla.

For 'meet the youth icons' at FCCI Frames India 2023, Burak Deniz, the lead of Ask Laftan Anlamaz, attended as the youth icon from Türkiye in the program in Mumbai. The actor shared his first ever visit to India on his social media handles which was busted by his Indian fans. In 2024 Hande Ercel surprised her fans with a visit to India.

Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne

Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne? (*What is Fatmagül's Fault?*) is a Turkish television drama series produced by Ay Yapım and broadcast on Kanal D. The series is based on Vedat Türkali's scenario which revolves on a young peasant girl Fatmagül who was raped by four men. Fatmagül gained a lot of popularity in Türkiye, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Arabic countries and many other countries all around the world. The show was seriously criticized for the relationship between the lead characters.

On June 30, 2016, the series was launched on Zindagi, Indian television channel for the audience dubbed in Hindi entitled Fatmagul. The show was even remade in India by Star Plus in Hindi under the title of *Kya Kasoor Hai Amla Ka*. This is the first official remake of the series. The show aired from 3 April 2017 during the noon slot. The show features Pankhuri Awasthy as Amala (Fatmagul), Anant Joshi as Dev (Mustafa) and Rajveer Singh as Abeer (Kerim). The original show titled *Fatmagul* first aired on Zindagi TV and became a rating success and thus the remake was commissioned

Yemin

"Yemin," also known as "The Promise," is a popular Turkish drama that has been exported to several countries. Unlike other Turkish dramas, "Yemin" is a daily soap aired on Kanal 7. The story revolves around a young woman, Reyhan, and the male lead, Emir. The series has found success in India because it appeals to the cultural values of Indian audiences. The show's focus on family, tradition, and love resonates with Indian viewers. Additionally, the series features many Indian actors, making it more relatable to Indian audiences. The visual appeal of "Yemin," with its cinematography and costumes, also appeals to Indian audiences who are accustomed to watching high-quality productions.

Diriliş Ertuğrul

"Diriliş Ertuğrul," also known as "Resurrection Ertuğrul," started streaming on Netflix in October 2017. Since then, the Turkish historical drama has become immensely popular in India, especially among young Muslims. The drama first aired in Türkiye in December 2014 and ran for 150 episodes, each lasting two hours, spread across five seasons. Netflix later converted these episodes into 45-minute segments. The show was subsequently made available with Urdu subtitles, further increasing its popularity among Urdu speakers. It resonated with Indian audiences, who have a history of resisting foreign rule. In Kashmir, several babies have been named after the protagonist Ertugrul (The Outlook, 2020). Additionally, during the winters, Ertugrul-style caps with claret-colored fur have become popular in Kashmir (J&K Valley News, 2020).

Audience response to teledramas from India and Türkiye

Using comment analysis as a tool in media studies, researchers can delve into audience responses to media content. In this context, comments posted on the comment section of YouTube by audience serve as valuable data for studying the audience response to television dramas exchanged between both countries. The hashtag #hintdizileri, which means "Indian television series," has 1.5 lakh followers on Instagram. These tags are mainly used by hardcore fans to post clips and visuals from their favorite Indian series. Another trend on social media is sharing clips and snippets from television dramas. These clips from the series are often shared with Turkish background music, highlighting the cultural connection the audience has built over time through the series.

Bir Garip Ask

Considering the comments on the Kanal 7 YouTube channel, the trailer of the first episode of Bir Garip Ask was uploaded on 21 November 2016. The serial originally aired on the channel for the first time in 2015. The trailer has garnered a viewership of 2.2 million on YouTube alone. The channel mainly posts dubbed Hindi serials along with Pakistani dramas and Turkish dramas, and it has a total of 4.29 million subscribers. The depth of the place the serial holds in the hearts of the audience can be analyzed via a few randomly selected comments.

A comment posted eight months ago for the trailer reads, "the perfect series that I can hold on to and watch forever. I'm still watching this like a crazy viewer. There is no other couple who has such chemistry and bond between them. I will continue to wait patiently for the new season of this best series ever. I wish there is a new season which is more than enough for me."

Another comment, posted by a user named 'hint sevdals,' which translates to "lover of India," expresses, "I wish they would telecast this again. I miss Arnav and Kushi (the lead characters) a lot. They have re-telecasted all those series except for this one. Please, let there be a re-telecast."

When the sister channel of Kanal 7, Kanal 7 Dizileri, posted the trailer of Bir Garip Ask two years back on 24 October 2020, which was during the re-telecast of the soap on the channel Kanal 7, a comment on the session reflects the commitment of the audience to the Indian series.

One comment says, "I screamed when I saw this like I had met my beloved. You are the one Kanal 7; now leave the way the owner of the city is back."

Another comment on the post reads, "11 years have passed, and all of a sudden, I opened this serial again and started watching. Few years from now, the wish to watch this again will resurface in me. Leaving a note for myself here, one day I will come again to see this."

Ah Kalbim

Ah Kalbim is another Indian television drama dubbed and aired in Türkiye. The series is one of the popular dramas dubbed in the country.

Following are translations of a few comments on the first episode of the first post on the Ah Kalbim YouTube channel: "As you are airing the Zee TV series Ah Kalbim, can you please broadcast other Zee TV series dubbed?"

"If it aired again, I would definitely watch it during the daytime. It's one of the rare Indian series that doesn't bore. Abhi's (the lead character) charisma is different."

Kördüğüm

The YouTube channel of Kördüğüm, the Turkish dub of the Indian drama Uttaran, has a total of 2.4 lakhs subscribers. The very first post, the trailer of the drama Kördüğüm posted six years ago on 7 August 2020, had a total view of six lakhs on the Kanal 7 YouTube channel. Analyzing the comments from the posts on the channel provides insight into the audience's response. Local viewers from Türkiye shared their excitement for the new Indian series.

A comment originally posted in Turkish has the username 'mohabbateinhint', which reflects the adaptation and adoption of the culture by admiring television soap operas. The user shares, "A new Indian series is starting and looks really interesting. At first glance, it reminded me of Sadhna and Ragini (the characters of another Indian television drama Sapna Babul Ka... Bidaai). I hope this would be a good one too."

Uttaran/ Kördüğüm is a daily soap opera that has literally 1495 episodes with an average of 20 minutes each episode. Some comments from then expressed disappointment with this angle. "For me, it looks like a very old series and, as told, the series is too long. I wish series that break records in India are aired here than series like this," the comment says.

Though the series is too long, it has maintained an average number of viewers throughout the period. The final trailer of the series on Kanal 7 Dizileri channel broke the number of views and had 1.4 million viewers. The comments had emotions from different angles by the hard-core fans of the Indian drama.

A viewer wrote, "for normal people, kordugum is a tangled node, for Indian serial fans it is: Icha-Tapasya friendship, love of Meethi and Akash, the irritating grandmother and so on."

Another comment gives a hint to the demography of the audience. "My first-ever Indian series was Kordugum. I watched it randomly while my grandparents watched the series." The trailer from four years ago still has updated comments. This mentions that the series is still watched online by the Turkish audience.

Balika Vadhu

On YouTube, the channel Kanal 7 has uploaded the trailers of the episodes of Balika Vadhu under the Turkish title 'Ikimizin Yerine'. There is a channel named "Ikimizin Yerine" with 222 thousand subscribers with complete episodes. Ikimizin Yerine's first trailer has received 936 thousand views in total. On September 7, 2018, Kanal 7 posted the trailer.

The comment section is pretty excited for the new series after the finale of the Indian series Uttaran (Kördüğüm). One of the comments expresses their struggle to shift to a new drama after Kördüğüm.

"It's bad that Kördüğüm ends today...it was a beautiful series and İkimizin yerine is going to replace it. Hope we will watch this too with all the excitement."

Some comments highlight the issue the drama addresses.

"What on earth is this? Marrying a child! I just want to spit on the face of the parents of Anandi (the female lead). Won't these pitiful traditions and customs end in India?"

The disappointment regarding the custom of marrying a child and how deeply involved they are in the drama is pretty visible in these comments. The drama's final episode drew 659 thousand viewers, which is marginally fewer than the number of people who watched the first episode. Still, a 562-episode television series had kept viewers interested throughout the drama. The final trailer was an emotional rollercoaster, with comments expressing viewers' opinions on the entire drama as well as their dismay at the series' conclusion. One intriguing observation made by a viewer concerned what the show had taught the audience.

"To have eyes, to fight for the truths we believe in, even if it ends in your death not to give up on honesty and righteousness....to be successful through learning...to kill ignorance and maintain family bond through efforts."

The comment is quite enthusiastic and related to cultural practices regarding family relationships, struggles, and successes in the series, which is related to the same in Turkish culture.

Audience response to Turkish tele-dramas in India

The researcher has identified four distinct Turkish television dramas from diverse genres. Four comments each, two from the initial episode and two from the concluding episode, are chosen for analysis. These comments are then scrutinized to discern patterns and gauge the reception of Turkish television series among Indian audiences.

Pyaar Lafzon Mein Kahan

The lead characters Hayat and Murat, portrayed by Hande Ercel and Burak Deniz respectively, continue to be addressed as such by fans worldwide on their social media platforms. Interestingly, the official YouTube channel of Pyaar Lafzon Mein Kahan, the dubbed version of Ask Laftan Anlamaz, boasts more subscribers and views than the original channel. With a total of 6.03 million subscribers and 90 million views for the first episode, along with 35,823 comments in the comment section, the series has garnered significant attention.

Pyaar Lafzon Mein Kahan narrates a romantic comedy centered around two individuals leading contrasting lives who unexpectedly fall in love and form a strong bond. Audiences are particularly drawn to the charmingly silly scenes featuring the lead characters, which contribute to the addictive nature of the drama. This attraction is further evidenced by the proliferation of short clips from the series shared on platforms like YouTube Shorts and Instagram reels.

Indian viewers have embraced the drama, as evidenced by clips featuring Indian songs as background music. The final episode of the series accumulated a total of 29 million views, with many comments focusing on character development and the endearing romantic storyline rather than cultural or traditional elements. Overall, it is the sweet romantic melodrama that has captivated audiences.

Fatmagul

The YouTube channel Drama Central, boasting a total of 6.2 million subscribers, hosts complete episodes of the Hindi dubbed version of Fatmagulun Sucu Ne. Given that the show revolves around a young woman who faces abuse by four men and her subsequent journey, comments on the platform tend to focus on the themes addressed in the series. Despite the show originally airing on the Zindagi Channel in 2016, its presence on YouTube since 2020 has garnered significant attention, with the first episode amassing 2.3 million views.

One top comment underscores the strong connection between Indian audiences and Turkish dramas, highlighting the influence they have. Another comment reflects on the tension surrounding the portrayal of a story involving rapists and the depth of its narrative. Most other comments praise the lead actors, Beren Saat (as Fatmagul) and Engin Akyurek (as Kerem), for their captivating performances. Beren Saat, particularly celebrated for her role in Magnificent Century as Kosem Sultan, further enhances the appeal of the series.

The final episode of Fatmagul garnered one million views on the Drama Central channel, with comments praising the drama for its handling of socially relevant issues. Despite facing criticism for potentially romanticizing and normalizing rape and abuse, the series is commended for ultimately delivering justice.

The Promise

The gripping domestic drama chronicles the tumultuous relationship between Reyhan and Emir, a couple thrust into marriage against their will, ensnared in a web of misery and conflict. Alongside the central narrative, the show weaves in various subplots and characters, including Emir's manipulative mother, Cavidan, his father Hikmet, and other characters whose presence adds layers of conflict and confusion to the protagonists' lives. The Indian audience primarily accesses "The Promise" through the platform Mx Player, where it is available in multiple Indian languages such as Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, and Marathi.

Comments from viewers often reflect their deep understanding of the toxicity, pain, and hardships depicted in the drama. Despite recognizing these aspects, viewers remain committed to the series due to their attachment to the lead characters and their on-screen chemistry. The allure of Turkish culture, people, and the intricacies of the plot further captivate the audience, drawing in viewers from diverse regions across India. Even in regions where the series is not dubbed in the local language, such as Kerala, viewers opt for Hindi dubbed versions or watch with English subtitles.

Many comments highlight the strong emotional attachment viewers have formed with the characters. When the female lead of the first three seasons departs from the show, there is a noticeable decline in viewership for subsequent episodes, indicating the significant impact of character dynamics on audience engagement.

Resurrection Ertugrul

Dirilis Ertugrul, the Turkish Historical fiction started its broadcasted on TRT on 17 December 2014. It gained immense popularity since October 2017 when it began streaming on Netflix as 'Resurrection Ertugrul'. The drama grabbed the attention of the viewers from India and gained popularity among the audience especially among young Muslims (Scroll). Selecting comments from the comment section from episodes with English subtitles or the Urdu dubbed episode is a great task for the researcher. To select comments of Indians, the researcher had to go for comments that mentioned they are from India. The elements considered while selecting the comments include the cultural elements, historical elements and fandom.

Audience praises how the show encompasses the portrayal of Islamic values. The show is influential and attracts audiences to its cultural, historical and political plot. The major attraction to the drama is the religious elements. The audience praises the religious practice in the fiction. Viewers appreciate that there is unbiased portrayal of Muslim characters, a refreshing departure from the stereotypical depictions of Muslim historical figures. The show is also praised for its production values, the brilliant performances, master storytelling and the gripping action.

As mentioned earlier, Resurrection Ertugrul is popular amongst the Muslims as the show is based on the story of Ertugrul Gazi father of Osman 1, the founder of the Ottoman Empire. Kashmir has had a great influence on the show where the audience get attached to the characters and even end up naming the newborns in the city after the characters.

Findings

India and Türkiye share a strong historical and cultural tie but have a complex geopolitical narrative. Kashmir is the sensitive issue that cracks the diplomatic relationship between the countries. Türkiye's comment and stand on the case of Kashmir and developing relationship with Pakistan backs this. At the same time, India's approach to Armenia and Greece is creating chaos between India and Türkiye.

Evaluating the current status of soft power flow between India and Türkiye, both countries have lent their helping hands in each other's worst time.

Operation Dost while Türkiye was struggling after the quake hit in the southern part and Türkiye sending aids to India during the peak time of covid pandemic is an example. Keeping all the disparities aside, there is strong intercultural communication via television going on in the base of both countries. Number of Turkish television dramas are received and watched by Indian audiences either dubbed or with subtitles. Similarly Indian television dramas are broadcasted in Türkiye dubbed in Turkish through television channels. For Türkiye the television dramas are a strong soft power tool. In the case of India, the same has not been used yet, though it works in some cases.

The appropriation and contextualization elements of Indian dramas in Türkiye is found that the culture, family and dramatic elements hold the audience to the screen. Indian soap operas usually follow a dramatic family serial with some toxic traits. A wide variety of genres of Turkish dramas are received by the Indian audience. Even though the popular ones in the list are comedies, family dramas, action dramas, historical fiction and science fiction are equally accepted by the audience.

Indian dramas are critically analyzed by the young audience in Türkiye. There are YouTube channels where the soap operas are analyzed and criticized by the film analysts. A keen discussion on the area analyzing the scenes especially illogical scenes from Indian soaps are discussed.

Indian audiences stalk the actors playing the lead character in their favorite drama and keep addressing them with the fictional name years after the drama. The family relationship, food culture, tradition and festivals of both countries have some similarities that the audience finds connection with. These elements boost the interest of the audience to the drama.

Conclusion

The relationship between India and Türkiye has become increasingly complicated with each political development. Recep Tayyip Erdogan's victory in the presidential election and his reelection as President have heightened tensions, as both countries' politics and ideologies reach extreme points. Khan et al. (2023) suggest that Erdogan's reelection will make it challenging for India to improve relations with Türkiye, particularly due to Türkiye's anti-India sentiments on the Kashmir issue. India's strengthening ties with Armenia and Greece, including selling arms to Armenia and enhancing strategic partnerships

with Greece, have further strained relations with Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and Pakistan, as viewed by Rathore (2023).

Despite political tensions, public sentiments between the two countries are not necessarily in contrast. Ilker Ayci's potential appointment as CEO of Air India was met with hostility in India, particularly by right-wing activists, leading to his rejection of the post. Additionally, Nupur Sharma's hate speech against Prophet Muhammad and Islam received strong criticism in Türkiye, as did an incident involving a teacher encouraging peers to slap a Muslim boy, sparking outrage among Turkish Muslims.

However, communication and art continue to bind the two nations together, even amidst political disparities. Transnational television dramas flow between India and Türkiye, counter to the geopolitical narrative. Both countries have offered assistance to each other in times of need, such as Operation Dost initiated by India for Türkiye during a deadly earthquake, and Türkiye sending aid to India during the pandemic. Intercultural communication through television is a significant aspect of this soft power flow, with Indian viewers enjoying Turkish dramas in dubbed or subtitled versions, and Turkish-dubbed Indian dramas airing on Turkish television channels.

Moreover, Over The Top (OTT) platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hotstar produce original web series that gain global attention. Indian OTT releases like "The Family Man" and "Mirzapur" have strong fan bases in many countries, including Türkiye. Similarly, Turkish OTT dramas like "Hakan Muhafiz," "Atiye," and the crime thriller "Sahsiyet" have a global audience. Audiences connect with the similarities in family relationships, food cultures, traditions, and festivals of both nations, further increasing interest in the dramas.

In conclusion, despite political disparities and narratives, strong intercultural communication through cinema, television serials, and web series continues to break stereotypes and narratives, largely due to the historical and cultural ties shared by the two countries.

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Assessing Public Perceptions towards Sample Cell Broadcast (CB) Alerts in Nilambur, Kerala

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Abstract

In times, the utilisation of Cell Broadcast (CB) alerts has emerged as a tool for authorities to quickly share critical information with the public during emergencies. This research paper explores how people perceive and interact with the Sample Cell Broadcast (CB) alerts in Kerala, a region prone to disasters such as floods, landslides and cyclones. Given the frequency of these calamities it becomes essential to have crisis communication strategies in place to minimise human and property losses. Cell Broadcast (CB) alerts play a pivotal role in Kerala's disaster management plan, highlighting the need to examine their reception among the population of the state. Several mobile users in India have received an "Emergency Alert" from the Department of Telecommunication (DoT) in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) as part of their efforts to improve emergency communication during disasters. The government launched this initiative back in July 2023. They recently conducted a test broadcast on October 31st. The government has taken this step to improve safety during emergencies. To collect data, two micro Kudumbashree units were selected from the hazard prone Kalikavu Village in Nilambur Taluk, Malappuram District. This study employed a survey method that entailed distributing questionnaires to the participants. Through this approach, the study assessed participants' awareness, perceptions, and experiences with the Sample Cell Broadcast (CB) alerts.

The study offers an exploration of how individuals in disaster-prone regions of Nilambur Taluk perceive Sample Cell Broadcast (CB) alerts, with a focus on factors such as trustworthiness, credibility, and communication strategies affecting the system's functionality. The findings offer insights for disaster management agencies and policymakers not only in Kerala but also, in other similar regions. These insights can help refine communication strategies and improve preparedness. These findings also offer recommendations to enhance communication strategies to improve alert systems and better prepare the public. By understanding how people perceive Cell Broadcast (CB), alerts authorities can improve their crisis communication strategies. This research contributes to the discussions on crisis communication and public

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perceptions in regions prone to disasters ultimately promoting stronger and more knowledgeable communities.

Introduction

Cell Broadcast alerts are the silent messengers that echo through communities, ensuring that in times of crisis, no one is left unheard. -Anonymous

Between 2018 and 2020, Kerala encountered a string of unprecedented natural disasters, emphasizing the need for effective emergency communication. Despite technological progress, the understanding and use of Sample Cell Broadcast (CB) alerts have not been thoroughly investigated. The objective is to comprehensively explore public perceptions and improve the effectiveness of emergency communication strategies in the region.
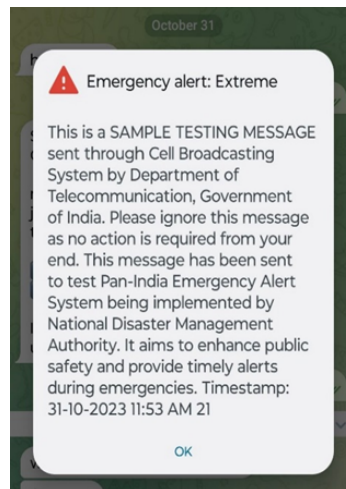

Figure 1. Screenshot of Sample Cell broadcast message received

Effective communication is crucial in disaster response, guiding communities through uncertain and challenging times. As an anonymous quote wisely reflects, "Cell Broadcast alerts are the silent messengers that echo through communities, ensuring that in times of crisis, no one is left unheard." Cell Broadcast (CB) alerts have quietly emerged as a vital means of communication

during crises. Unlike Short Message Service (SMS) or app-based notifications, CB alerts uniquely reach a large audience, bypassing mobile network congestion during disasters and operating without requiring recipients to subscribe or opt in, compatible with all devices. These alerts have proven instrumental in sharing crucial information, enabling informed decision-making and necessary actions during crises in various countries.

Widely used in disaster communication, CB alerts play a pivotal role in sharing vital information simultaneously with a large audience, especially crucial when traditional communication channels are disrupted or inaccessible. The popularity and effectiveness of CB alerts have been on the rise, overcoming limitations posed by radio signals or poor cellular reception in certain areas. They swiftly reach audiences, offering an alternative to traditional media like national TV, radio, and print during disaster message dissemination.

Kerala, nestled on the south-western coast of India, is susceptible to a range of hazards, including floods, landslides, and tropical cyclones. Leveraging the potential of Sample Cell Broadcast (CB) alerts in such a dynamic environment holds the promise of revolutionizing emergency communication strategies. The unique geographical characteristics of the state such as its areas, dense forests and network of rivers make it more vulnerable to disasters. In the context of Kerala, there has been a notable shift in the mood, character, and pattern of rainfall across the state, resulting in tragic loss of life and extensive destruction. Since 2018, climate-change induced floods and landslides have plagued various regions of Nilambur in the Malappuram District, jeopardizing public safety. The importance of Cell Broadcast (CB) alerts in swiftly disseminating vital information is accentuated in light of this circumstances. As the first line of defence against natural disasters becomes increasingly reliant on digital communication platforms, understanding the nuances of public perception is paramount for refining and optimizing these alert systems.

This study aims to assess how the women in Kudumbashree units of Nilambur Taluk perceive Sample Cell Broadcast (CB) alerts. In those areas where a significant portion of the population resides in landslide and flood prone zones, understanding how people perceive and interact with CB alerts can provide insights into the effectiveness of this emergency communication tool. This investigation also seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on emergency communication by evaluating whether Sample Cell Broadcast (CB) alerts surpass traditional channels in terms of speed and reliability. The literature

surrounding emergency alert systems is vast, but insights specific to the context of Kerala are scarce. Consequently, this study will fill a significant gap in the existing research landscape by providing region-specific findings that can inform policy-makers, emergency responders, and technology developers alike. Through a multidimensional examination encompassing public awareness, technological efficacy, and emotional responses, this research aims to offer valuable insights that pave the way for the evolution of emergency communication strategies in Kerala and potentially beyond.

Literature Review

Throughout history, the development of emergency communication technologies has showcased humanity's efforts to improve readiness, response, and resilience when dealing with disasters and emergencies. Traditional systems, such as bells and visual signals, were limited in reach and speed. Modernization began with radio and television broadcasts, followed by automated telephone alerts. These methods, while effective, lacked scalability and real-time targeting. But, CB alerts emerged as a game-changer. Leveraging cell networks, they swiftly broadcast location-specific messages to multiple devices. Advantages include rapid dissemination, precise geographic targeting, and inclusivity across various mobile devices.

However, challenges like privacy concerns and technological limitations persist. Despite this, the transition to CB alerts signifies a move toward efficient, targeted, and scalable emergency communication, demanding ongoing innovation for greater effectiveness. Also, understanding how individuals perceive and respond to emergency is crucial for crafting effective alert systems that resonate with the public, ensuring prompt and appropriate responses during emergencies. Researchers have extensively studied the processes that individuals undergo when they receive CB alerts. This process is often described as a series of steps (Lindell and Perry, 2011; Mayhorn and McLaughlin, 2014; Wood et al., 2018). Usually, when alerts are triggered, they evoke emotions such as fear, stress, and anxiety (Cvetković, 2021). People may also experience scepticism, disbelief, or denial when they read these messages (Drabek and Stephenson, 1971; Vermeulen, 2014). Moreover, individuals might feel the need to confirm the authenticity of the messages by checking with others around them. They may reach out to friends or family members to verify if they have received the message (Fenet and Daudé, 2021).

When creating an emergency alert, it is crucial to consider factors like the level of trust in the sender, language used in the message, the emotions that may evoke in readers, and demographic parameters such as age, ethnicity, length of residence etc. These considerations help to ensure that people comprehend the message effectively and respond appropriately (Morss et al., 2018; Lindell, 2017b).

Recent surveys have also examined how the public perceives emergency alerts. These studies often involve collaborations with providers and civil authorities (Kim & Lee 2021b; Bean et al., 2022; Douvinet et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2022).

Bean et al. (2016) discovered that unclear hazard descriptions and insufficient information can cause confusion and raise doubts about the authenticity of an alert. Meanwhile, according to a study conducted by Kim et al. (2019), it was observed that people's reactions to content are influenced by both environmental factors and the content itself.

In another survey carried out by Cain et al. (2021), they recruited 404 students from a university in the United States. Placed them in various scenarios to gauge their responses. The results of the study showed that both content and spatial information play a role in enhancing the perception of danger. Similarly, Smith et al. (2022) conducted a study involving 80 students who received flood alerts through CB systems. Interestingly, 34% of the volunteers considered the instructions to be positively received.

Douvinet et al. (2022) focused on observing 51 university students who received fire alerts through CB systems. Surprisingly, 43 participants found the sound of these alerts to be extremely unpleasant. However, it is important to note that these studies have limitations in terms of representing a population as they have not been conducted on a large scale yet.

A noteworthy common finding across all these studies is that when recipients receive loud tone alerts (for countries adhering to CAP standards), their body language indicates discomfort and disturbance. Some participants physically recoiled from their devices, covered their ears, or displayed expressions of pain or discomfort (Smith et al., 2022). It's important to note that these studies examined responses to situations.

Rationale of the Study

The rationale behind this study stems from the need to bridge the gap between the technological innovations in disaster communication and the diverse needs of local communities. The broader context of the study can be outlined as follows:

i) *Increasing Reliance on Digital Communication in Emergencies:* The global trend towards an increasing reliance on digital communication for emergency information dissemination is a crucial backdrop for our study. With the widespread use of mobile devices and advancements in technology, digital platforms play a pivotal role in delivering timely and critical information during emergencies.

ii) *Unique Socio-Cultural and Geographical Attributes of Kerala:* The specific socio-cultural and geographical characteristics of Kerala contribute to the uniqueness of our study. Kerala's diverse population, multilingualism, and susceptibility to various natural disasters create a distinct context for emergency communication. This context highlights the need for tailored and culturally sensitive approaches to alert systems.

iii) *Global Concerns about Disaster Preparedness and Response:* Globally, there is a growing emphasis on disaster preparedness and response. The effectiveness of communication strategies during emergencies is a critical aspect of this preparedness. Insights gained from this study in Kerala can contribute not only to the local context but also to broader discussions on improving emergency communication worldwide.

Research Objectives

1. To assess public awareness and perceptions of Sample Cell Broadcast (CB) alerts as a means of receiving emergency information during disasters.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of Sample Cell Broadcast (CB) alerts in delivering timely and critical information during emergencies and to determine whether they are considered more reliable and faster than other communication channels.
3. To understand the emotional responses and first impressions of public upon receiving Cell Broadcast (CB) alerts.

Theoretical Framework

The study draws theoretical guidance from the Diffusion of Innovation theory as well as Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), enriching the analytical lens with insights into the acceptance and adoption of technological innovations. Diffusion of Innovation theory outlines the stages through which individuals adopt new innovations, from early adopters to laggards. Understanding these stages can help identify where the Kudumbashree women in Kerala stand in terms of adopting CB alerts. It aids in tailoring communication and implementation strategies for different adopter categories. The theory also emphasizes the role of communication channels in spreading innovations. Applying diffusion theory can guide the study in identifying effective communication channels to promote awareness and acceptance of CB alerts among this specific community.

TAM considers whether individuals perceive a technology as useful in fulfilling their needs or improving their performance. For the study, TAM can help assess how Kudumbashree women perceive the usefulness of CB alerts in emergency situations. Understanding if they see these alerts as beneficial could predict their acceptance and adoption. TAM also evaluates the perceived ease of using a technology. This aspect can be particularly relevant in understanding how comfortable and convenient the participants feel about receiving and understanding CB alerts. Assessing ease of use could predict the likelihood of adoption among Kudumbashree women.

Methodology

In the pursuit of comprehensively understanding the public perceptions towards Sample Cell Broadcast (CB) alerts of Kudumbashree women in Nilambur, Kerala, the researcher employed quantitative analysis techniques which would systematically capture and interpret the diverse array of perspectives held by the respondents.

The study involved a sample of 32 Kudumbashree women from Kalikavu village in Nilambur, Kerala. Kudumbashree is a community-based women's empowerment programme in Kerala, making this group particularly relevant for understanding community perceptions. The selection of Kudumbashree women as the study's focal point is driven by critical factors aligning with Kerala's unique socio-cultural context and the study's objectives. Their involvement in

vibrant community development initiatives, fostering empowerment and resilience, offers insights into their perceptions and roles in disaster communication. Capturing diverse perspectives from women of varied backgrounds ensures representation and inclusivity. Utilising Kudumbashree's community-based approach aligns with disaster risk reduction principles, shedding light on the effectiveness of Sample CB alerts at the grassroots level. Ultimately, this choice holds practical relevance in informing localized policies and strategies for emergency communication in Kerala.

A random sampling technique was employed to ensure the representation of diverse opinions within the Kudumbashree community in Kalikavu village. A list of eligible participants was obtained from Kudumbashree records, and 32 participants were randomly selected from this list.

The research tool used for data collection was a structured survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to assess the perceptions, awareness, attitudes, and readiness to adopt Sample Cell Broadcast (CB) alerts in emergency situations. The questionnaire comprised of 20 close-ended questions, allowing for quantitative analysis of responses.

Prior permission and cooperation were sought from Kudumbashree authorities (Community Development Societies (CDS), Area Development Society (ADS). Information about the study's objectives, confidentiality, and voluntary participation was provided to the selected participants. The survey questionnaires were distributed among the selected participants during their Kudumbashree meetings and/or at convenient locations in the village. Clear instructions were given regarding how to fill out the questionnaire.

Analysis and Findings

In this section, we will thoroughly examine the data collected and present the findings derived from the study. The analysis encapsulates a meticulous examination of various dimensions, aiming to unveil insights into the reception, effectiveness, and emotional impact of CB alerts among the Kudumbashree women in Kalikavu village of Nilambur Taluk. The study also unfolds a detailed exploration of the perceptions and attitudes of Kudumbashree women towards CB alerts, illuminating their awareness and reliance on this communication tool during crises. Furthermore, we scrutinize the comparative effectiveness of CB alerts concerning the delivery of timely and critical information, assessing its

reliability and speed in contrast to conventional communication channels. Beyond mere effectiveness, we will also delve into the emotional responses and initial impressions triggered by the receipt of CB alerts. This segment unveils the nuances of emotional resonance and the immediate impact on decision-making and response mechanisms during emergency situations.

The data analysis is presented and analysed using frequency tables, figures and text. The analysis is based on a sample size of 32 individuals, with a response rate of 75% for the questionnaire.

The table 1 presented here displays the distribution of education levels across different age groups based on the sample data.

Table 1

Distribution of Education Levels across Age Groups

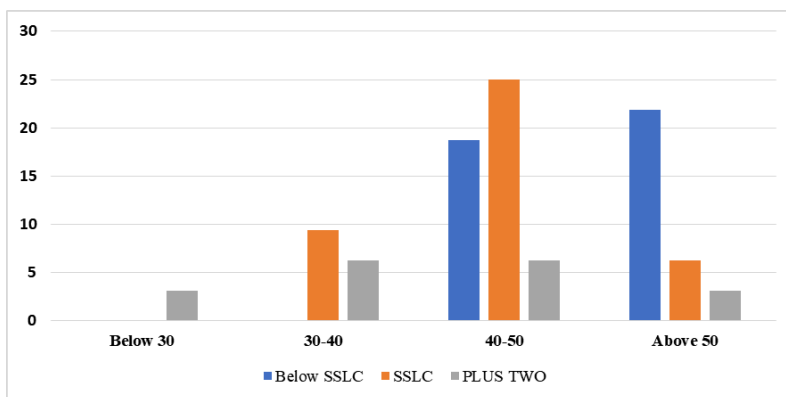| Age	Education			
	Below SSLC	SSLC	PLUS TWO	Grand Total
Below 30	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (3.125)	1
30-40	0 (0)	3 (9.375)	2 (6.25)	5
40-50	6 (18.75)	8 (25)	2 (6.25)	16
Above 50	7 (21.875)	2 (6.25)	1 (3.125)	10
Grand Total	13	13	6	32

Figure 2. Distribution of Education levels across Age groups.

Table 1 provides an understanding of the distribution of education levels (below SSLC, SSLC, and PLUS TWO) among Kudumbashree women categorized into different age groups (below 30, 30-40, 40-50, and above 50 years) involved in the study. The majority of respondents in the sample are in the age group of 40-50 years, followed by those above 50 years, 30-40 years, and below 30 years.

Table 2

Awareness of Indian government's Disaster Management Efforts Related to CB Alerts

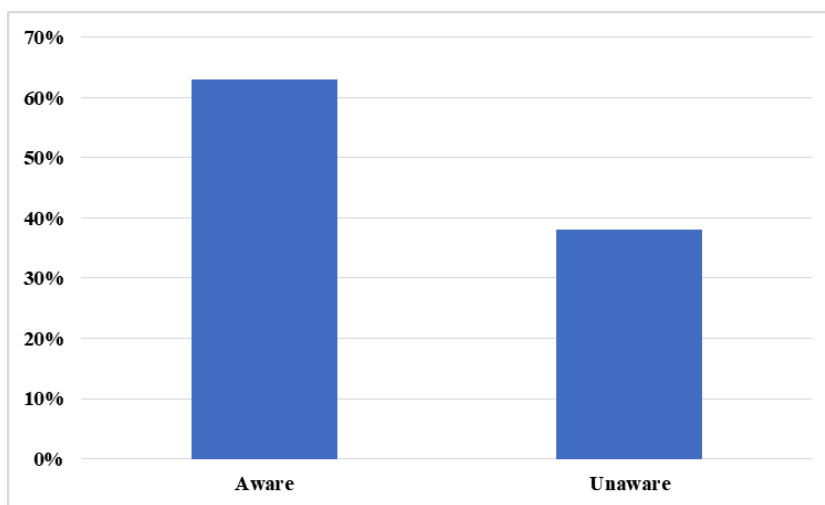| Awareness of Indian Government's Disaster Management Efforts	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Aware	20	62.5%
Unaware	12	37.5%

Figure 3. Awareness Level: Indian government's disaster management efforts among surveyed participants.

The majority of respondents (62.5%) indicated that they are aware of the Indian Government's disaster management efforts. This suggests a relatively high level of awareness within the sample population. A notable proportion (37.5%) of

participants reported being unaware of the Indian Government's initiatives in disaster management.

Table 3

Awareness of Cell Broadcast Alerts during Emergencies

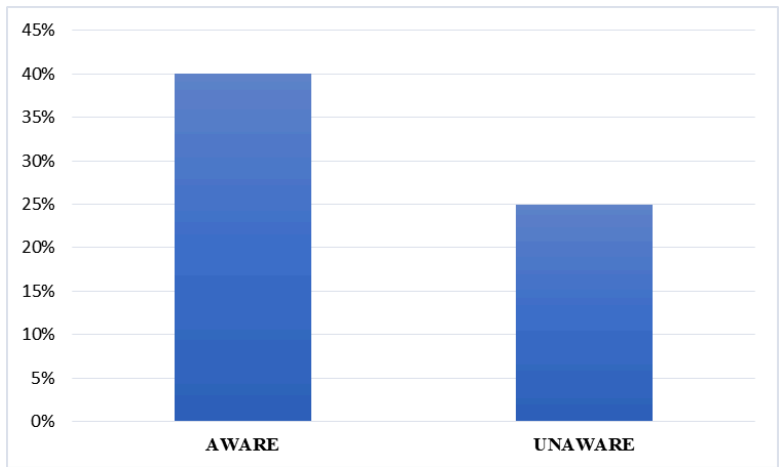| Awareness of Cell Broadcast Alerts for Emergencies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	11	34%
No	21	66%

Figure 4. Awareness Level: Cell Broadcast Alerts as a means of receiving emergency information during disasters among surveyed participants.

According to the data, 34% of respondents reported being aware of cell broadcast alerts for emergencies. This indicates that a minority of participants are familiar with this specific communication method for disseminating emergency information. The majority (66%) of participants indicated that they are not aware of cell broadcast alerts for emergencies. This highlights a significant knowledge gap or lack of exposure to this emergency notification system within the study population. The following table illustrates the reception and impression associated with the sample cell broadcast alerts received by the participants.

Table 4

Frequency of Sample Cell Broadcast Alerts Received in Different Languages by Respondents

Language	Frequency	Percentage
Malayalam	5	16%
English	12	38%
Both	7	22%

 The majority of respondents (38%) indicated that they received the sample cell broadcast alert in English. Approximately 16% of respondents expressed that they received the alert in Malayalam. About 22% of participants received the alerts in both Malayalam and English languages.

Table 5

Frequency of First Impressions by the Respondents on Receiving Sample Cell Broadcast Alerts

First Impression	Frequency	Percentage
Annoyance	1	3%
Curiosity	10	31%
Fear	5	16%
Fear, Curiosity	1	3%
Fear, Shocked	4	13%
Shocked	1	3%
Surprised, Shocked	1	3%

The most common first impression reported by respondents is curiosity, with 31% of individuals expressing interest or intrigue upon receiving the alerts. Approximately 16% of respondents indicated feeling fear upon receiving the alerts. A notable proportion (13%) of respondents reported feeling both fear and shock upon receiving the alerts, indicating a complex emotional response to the content of the messages. Smaller percentages of respondents reported feelings of annoyance (3%), shock (3%), surprise (3%), or a combination of surprise and shock (3%) in response to the received alerts.

Table 6

Frequency of First Impressions of Alert Sound by the Respondents on Receiving Sample Cell Broadcast Alerts

Sound	Number	Frequency
It was annoying and unpleasant	1	3%
It was loud and effective in grabbing my attention	11	34%
It was too loud and startling	7	22%
No comments	5	16%

The majority of respondents (34%) reported that the alert was loud and effective in grabbing their attention. This suggests that a significant portion of the sample found the alert to be impactful and attention-grabbing, which is a positive attribute for emergency notifications. A notable proportion (22%) of respondents expressed that the alert was too loud and startling. This highlights a potential concern regarding the volume and intensity of the alert, which may have led to discomfort or negative reactions among certain individuals. A small percentage (3%) of respondents described the alert as annoying and unpleasant, indicating a negative perception of the sound characteristics of the broadcast. Approximately 16% of respondents did not provide specific comments or feedback regarding the sound of the alert.
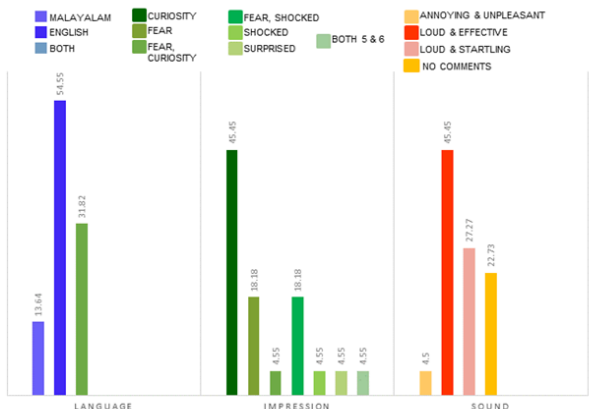

Figure 5. Reception and Impression of sample cell broadcast alerts received by the participants.

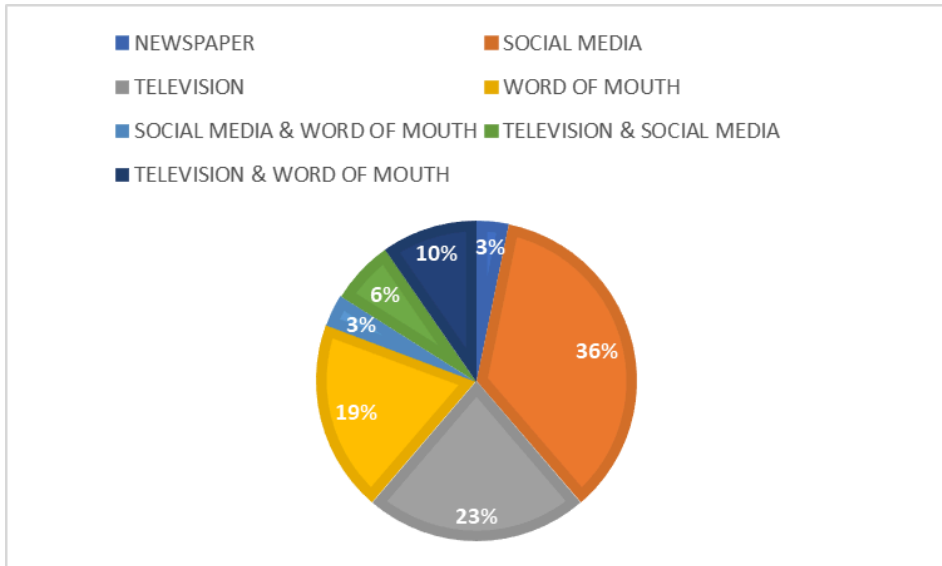### Preferred sources of information during emergencies

Figure 6. Preferred sources of information during emergencies

The surveyed participants identified their most relied-upon sources of information during emergencies. According to the data, social media was the primary source, with 34% of respondents relying on it. Television followed closely behind, with 22% of participants turning to TV broadcasts for emergency information.

Effectiveness of Cell Broadcast Alerts

The study also assessed perceptions of cell broadcast alerts for delivering timely and critical information during emergencies. Impressively, 41% of respondents found cell broadcast alerts to be effective in providing crucial updates during crisis situations. Looking ahead, 47% of participants expressed a preference for relying on cell broadcast alerts as a primary source of emergency information in the future.

Table 6

Cross Tabulation

	Primary Source of Information Reliance During Emergencies							
Perceived Speed of Cell Broadcast Alerts Compared to Other Information Sources during Emergencies	Newsp aper	Social media	Televi sion	Word of mouth	Social media , ,Word of mouth	Televi sion, Social media	Televi sion, Word of mouth	Tot al
I don't know	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
No, about the same	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
No, much slower	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Yes, much faster	1	8	6	2	0	1	3	21
Total	1	9	6	5	1	2	3	27
x^2 = 41.771, df - 18, P- value < 0.001								

A cross-tabulation analysis was conducted to examine respondents' opinions on the speed of Cell Broadcast alerts compared to other information sources during emergencies, alongside their primary reliance on various sources of information.

Chi-square tests revealed a significant association (p = .001) between reliance on different information sources during emergencies and the perception of Cell Broadcast alerts reaching faster than other sources.

Conclusion

This data underscores the need for targeted awareness campaigns and educational initiatives to further enhance understanding and knowledge about the Government's efforts in disaster management. Strengthening awareness can empower communities to actively engage in disaster preparedness and response activities, thereby contributing to overall disaster resilience.

There are limitations in this study that we need to recognize to grasp the extent of its scope and significance. The study mainly focused on Kudumbasree women, in the Nilambur taluk which could restrict the applicability of the results to categories or regions. Another major drawback of this research pertains to recall bias that may exist among the participants. The precision of

their answers could be influenced by their capacity to remember details or provide an account of their experiences and knowledge.

The findings also emphasize the importance of enhancing awareness and promoting the use of cell broadcast alerts as an effective means of delivering timely and critical information during emergencies. Efforts to educate communities about the availability and benefits of such alert systems can significantly improve overall disaster preparedness and response capabilities. It is also noted that to enhance the effectiveness of cell broadcast alerts, it is crucial to tailor notifications according to language preferences to ensure that emergency information reaches and resonates with diverse segments of the population.

The study also discusses a cross-tabulation analysis performed to investigate respondents' views on the speed of Cell Broadcast alerts versus other information sources during emergencies, in conjunction with their primary reliance on different sources of information. The analysis utilised chi-square tests to explore the relationship between reliance on various information sources during emergencies and the perception that Cell Broadcast alerts reach recipients faster than alternative sources. Results indicated a significant association (p = .001) between the reliance on different information sources during emergencies and the perception of Cell Broadcast alerts as being quicker than other sources. This finding suggests that individuals' preferred sources of emergency information may influence their perception of the speed and effectiveness of Cell Broadcast alerts.

In summary our research indicates that there is a level of understanding regarding government disaster management initiatives. There is less awareness of Cell Broadcast alerts among Kudumbasree women. The responses to the alerts varied, reflecting a range of emotions among participants. While many recognized the effectiveness and urgency of Cell Broadcast alerts there was a difference in how they perceived their reliability and speed compared to communication channels. Interestingly individuals who are more active on media tended to view Cell Broadcast alerts as quicker during emergencies. This suggests that Cell Broadcast alerts could become a source of information during crises for those who are actively involved in media platforms. To maximize the effectiveness and reach of Cell Broadcast alerts in situations it is essential to invest in education and promotional activities. By raising awareness and highlighting the advantages of Cell Broadcast alerts we can increase their

adoption and impact ultimately enhancing emergency communication and response capabilities, within the community.

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New Media Platforms for Local Storytelling: Community Journalism in the Digital Age

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Abstract

This article explains the ways in which online hyperlocal media initiatives enable a sophisticated local storytelling network. Local media are essential institutions for the development and preservation of a democratic public sphere and political system. The declining local coverage of legacy media has frequently served as the driving force behind the emergence of new hyperlocal media. The study examines the types and functions of hyperlocal news media to understand the content they produce and their role in a local community. The review of content from hyperlocal apps and local websites centred in Koyilandy, located in the Kozhikode district of Kerala, suggests that these new media platforms have the potential to develop into comprehensive community-based media, filling the gaps in local narratives.

Keywords: *Hyperlocal Media, Community Journalism, Local Storytelling, Civic Participation*

Introduction

The proliferation of new media on news platforms has altered how news is produced and distributed. The mainstream media have lost ground in the ultra-local space, which has been occupied by online platforms (Hess & Waller, 2015). Local issues and locally relevant content continue to matter to audiences, perhaps more than ever. In this scenario, the emerging hyperlocal platforms

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provide opportunities for audiences to share and discover relevant content within their own networks and communities. Hyperlocal can effectively connect with local residents by delivering local news, reporting on local politics, and involving them in matters pertinent to their region (Youkongpun, 2015). We have seen examples of this trend in the increased use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook for community organisation and local update sharing, despite their lack of feature support for these activities. This situation necessitates the rise of dedicated web platforms for hyperlocal content. The trend is visible across the global media landscape, as independent websites and mobile applications have emerged as the primary sources of local updates. Radcliffe, in his report for the UK innovation foundation NESTA, defines this form of community news as "online news or content services pertaining to a town, village, single postcode, or other small, geographically defined community" (Radcliffe, 2013).

Online activities have become increasingly crucial in catering to the needs of local audiences. Emerging hyperlocal media models and community-based media, which tend to be online are gaining significant interest in communities around the world (Youkongpun, 2015). Harte and Williams (2019) argue that hyperlocal media's approach to engaging news audiences in the United Kingdom and the United States has the potential to promote local communities and civic involvement. They say it is incredibly encouraging that in hyperlocal media, so many people are producing varied, important, and necessary public interest journalism, often without the legal and institutional support previously provided by the likes of established local newspaper companies. Hyperlocal offers a space for new entrants to contribute to local reporting and discourse, and the sector is likely to become more prominent as a social network in the future with the prospects of citizen journalism and community media (Radcliffe, 2013).

However, compared to legacy media, hyperlocals received limited academic attention (Jangdal, 2020). Harte and Williams (2019) argue that the majority of studies on hyperlocal journalism have focused on the United Kingdom and the United States, particularly on topics like presence and sustainability (Harte et al., 2019). According to Lottie Jangdal (2020), there is a gap in this area as far as understanding how hyperlocal content can be used to assess the actual democratic contribution (Jangdal, 2020). The current study aims to expand our understanding of the significance of hyperlocal media in the emerging media landscape by investigating the types of content they produce and disseminate.

Review of Literature

The rise in popularity of hyperlocal news platforms has led to a surge in research in this field. To date, it has primarily focused on comparisons of hyperlocal sites with those of conventional news organisations, the current market, business strategies, challenges, and future perspectives. According to Andy Williams and David Harte (2016), a demand for insights into fragmentary news and information systems is emerging outside of mainstream newsrooms, such as in hyperlocal journalism. They say the research findings on the economics of hyperlocal news serve as a reminder that a lack of financial security can have serious consequences for these news outlets' long-term viability, as well as the security, independence, and sustainability of hyperlocal news publishing as a whole.

Marco van Kerkhoven and Piet Bakker (2014) indicated that the motivation for starting a local online news website is generally grounded in the perception of a local news gap. They say that many of the hyperlocals in the Netherlands started out with the goal of filling in a gap in local news, but their strategies and forms of engagement employed undermine their ability to achieve their goals.

In a similar study, analysing the community news sites in the UK, Andy Williams, Dave Harte, and Jerome Turner (2015) suggest a lack of critical, investigative, and campaigning journalism at a hyperlocal level. At the same time, they identify some small but effective groups of hyperlocal sites that devote themselves almost entirely to public interest news production.

Kyungsik Han, Patrick C. Shih, and John M. Carroll (2014) emphasize that the Local News Chatter (LNC) application enhances the prominence of hyperlocal community news by consolidating local news items and tweets into a tag cloud. According to their findings, this community-oriented tool aims to increase the diversity and visibility of local community information to facilitate social connection and interaction.

Pisapat Youkongpun (2015) indicates that hyperlocal media share many similarities with community media. They both focus on even smaller geographic areas than national media. It serves the interests of both local and regional audiences. According to him, there are four essential characteristics of community-based media: localism, storytelling, empowerment, and diverse participation.

Kristy Hessa and Lisa Waller (2016) proposed viewing hyperlocal as a cultural phenomenon rather than a product or object. They also believe that there is a need for further research on the relationship between the media and the "local," as well as a greater emphasis on the social and cultural components of hyperlocal news. It could aid in identifying aspects of social and cultural life that mainstream media do not or cannot address, providing vital insights about the future of journalism and the importance of being extremely local in a globalised world.

Likewise, Carol Arnold and Shane Blackman (2021) argue that independent hyperlocal operations represent a media subculture. The findings show that independent hyperlocal publishing has borrowed elements from the mainstream, particularly the socially cohesive aspects. Examining hyperlocal operators as a news subculture revealed their resistance to the mainstream parent culture, yet they repurposed and retrieved elements of it in their daily activities.

Evelien D'heer and Steve Paulussen (2013) describe how regional and local newspapers can use citizen journalism to provide hyperlocal community news coverage. According to the study, the community news provided on hyperlocal pages is a mix of hard and soft news, similar to what print local newspapers have been providing for years. The findings suggest that citizen journalists prefer to report on personal interests and experiences, as well as information from the local organisations with which they are involved.

According to Jack Rosenberry (2010), hyperlocal online news sites have an untraditional way of delivering news, but they fulfil roles and functions that are very similar to the ones documented in historical research about community press and social organisations. The paper establishes that the underlying patterns in news-topic selection generally support the idea that contemporary hyperlocal coverage sustains the construction of community ties.

Methodology

Quantitative content analysis is the primary methodology employed in this study. This approach is particularly well-suited for investigating the complex dynamics of content available on hyperlocal platforms. Quantitative content analysis entails a systematic examination of the content accessible on the platform, enabling a thorough investigation of the themes, subtleties, and patterns within it. The evaluation entails determining whether these platforms

exhibit the key elements of community-based media that Pisapat Youkongpun (2015) identified as localism, diverse participation, storytelling, and empowerment.

The study examines content from two hyperlocal media sources in Koyilandy, located in Kerala's Kozhikode district. The first is the hyperlocal website koyilandynews.com, which operates exclusively in this area with local ownership and control. The second is Public, a hyperlocal short video app operating in multiple languages and regions around the country. Public is owned by Inshorts, a popular Indian short news app. This study considers the content published between January 1 and January 31, 2024.

Analysis

The following headings structure the analysis of hyperlocal content: local updates, local issues, and human-interest stories.

Local updates- Overview

	Category	koyilandynews.com	Public App	Total (%)
	Politics	45	27	72 (27.58%)
	Crime	14	12	26 (9.96%)
Local Updates	Accidents	25	25	50 (19.15)
	Obituary	14	0	14 (5.36)
	Programmes & Events	33	25	58 (22.22)
	Health	6	4	10 (3.83)
	Religion	9	4	13 (4.98)
	Announcements	10	0	10 (3.83)
	Development	4	4	8 (3.06)
	Total	160	101	261

Table 1- Local Updates Overview

The table shows that political news is the most dominant category on both platforms, followed by news on programmes and events. A single story can encompass multiple themes and subjects, and the categories may not always be mutually exclusive. In all categories, koyilandynews.com leads in the number of news stories compared to the Public app. The coding criteria for politics encompassed articles on political protests, reporting on the local council, statements of local political leaders, and other political activities.

The heading Programmes and Events lists non-political programmes held by various organisations. Announcements are notifications or communications from local government institutions, including information on power outages, temporary vacancies, and other relevant information. As the table shows, the public app does not provide any content related to obituaries and announcements.

Local issues- Overview

This section explores the representation of local issues in these hyperlocal news outlets over a period of one month.

Category	koyilandynews.com	Public App	Total
Local Issues	4	7	11

Table 2- Local Issues Overview

As previously stated, hyperlocal media is crucial for addressing local issues that conventional media ignore. In January 2024, 11 different articles on local issues appeared on these platforms. This includes reports on pollution, agriculture damage, industrial challenges, and damaged roads. The article given below deals with the issue of pilgrims causing pollution in a nearby lake.

Figure 1- Local issue report

Human-interest stories- Overview

Apart from the hard news explained above, community-based media demands neighbourhood storytelling, which entails sharing stories about the community. It involves sharing opinions, success stories, memoirs, and cultural and historical articles about the region. This section concentrates on the human-interest stories or soft news published on these two platforms.

	Category	koyilandynews.com	Public App	Total
Special Stories	Success Stories	25	8	33
	Literature	2	0	2
	Opinion	1	0	1
	Memoir	2	0	2
	Customs	1	0	1

Table 3- Special Stories Overview

The Public app lags behind koyilandynews.com in showcasing human-interest stories in all given categories. Most of the special features published in January 2024 are success stories. These stories include the accomplishments of individuals and groups in the community. Regardless of the degree of achievements, these platforms, especially koyilandynews.com, make an effort to highlight them in the community. The website also features literature highlights, social issue viewpoints, stories depicting local customs, and memoirs of locally notable people. Here are some examples of human-interest stories published on the website. The first article depicts a local religious custom, while the second article delves into local history, narrating the story of the local independence leader.

Figure 2- Local Custom

Figure 3- Local History

Civic participation

The digital ecosystem's features enable hyperlocal initiatives to improve citizen involvement in their operations. The literature studied indicates that hyperlocal projects source content from local individuals and promote citizen journalism. In the same way, anyone can post news about their area on the public app, along with the app's local reporters. However, the account "newskoyilandy", which the app has verified with a reporter badge, is the only source of articles published. The app offers the feature of commenting on stories, although there are hardly any comments available. This indicates that though the app has many features to foster civic participation in hyperlocal environments, they are not so popular in the selected location, Koyilandy.

At the same time, the website koyilandynews.com publishes articles written by local citizens, especially feature stories. Local citizens have authored articles regarding social issues, local cultures, and history. The series "Pravasiyude Koyilandy" showcases Gulf residents' memories of their native place. In this way, the website provides an opportunity for local residents to share their opinions and emotions. Some examples are given below.

Figure 4- Pravasiyude Koyilandy

Figure 5- Campaign for Fishermen Community

Discussion and Conclusion

The results indicate that hyperlocal media extensively cover a wide range of topics, offering inhabitants a diverse array of information about what's happening in their community. The emphasis on local material over regional or national content demonstrates their commitment to a hyperlocal focus. The findings also show that the locally based website koyilandynews.com outperforms the multilingual, multiregional platform "Public." The website showcases the local culture, people, issues, and civic involvement, indicating its strong connection to the community. In contrast, the public app focuses solely on hard news, lacking a sense of attachment to the neighbourhood. According to Koyilandynews.com, they received around 27 million readings in 2023. As per their data, human interest stories, or soft news, are the second most read after crime news (B, 2023).

According to the study, politics turned out to be the most frequently discussed subject. Hyperlocal initiatives, with their focus on generating news about local politics and civil society, have the potential to inform and engage local residents with crucial political information. They provide citizens with information about

nearby protests, local opinion leaders' statements, and local governance issues. Covering local governance and politics in deep, hyperlocal media fulfils one of the major tasks assigned to the media in a democratic society. Similarly, hyperlocal media devoted particular attention to the exclusive challenges faced by local residents. Hyperlocal platforms significantly cover local issues, often overlooked by mainstream media.

Additionally, the research identifies hyperlocal media as an emerging web-based platform for local storytelling that has the potential to foster community cohesion and engagement. This narrative is supported by koyilandynews.com's particular emphasis on telling the tales of local people and culture. The articles on local barber, postman, and fisherman communities exemplify the profound integration of this media within the community's fabric. Undoubtedly, it is achievable exclusively through community-based media.

Figure 6- Local Storytelling

In conclusion, the study provides insights on how local media, in the era of information society, remain sustainable and relevant in local markets. Hyperlocal media addressing local politics and governance, expressing local concerns, and endorsing local culture and people nurture a sense of local identity and uphold community cohesion. Ultimately, the website koyilandynews.com exhibits the key features of community-based media, such as localism, diverse participation, storytelling, and empowerment.

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Breaking the Spiral of Silence: An Analysis of the Newspaper Coverage of Deepa P Mohan's Hunger Strike

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Abstract

Elisabeth Noelle Neumann's spiral of silence theory states that individuals may not express differing views in a community due to fear of social exclusion and isolation. The theory is applied in the context of caste discrimination experienced by students belonging to Dalit and backward caste in academic institutions. Deep-rooted institutional casteism poses challenges, besides silencing students from these castes. Resisting the dominant discourse happens rarely. A female Dalit PhD scholar from Mahatma Gandhi University launches an indefinite hunger strike against institutional casteism. The print media coverage of the strike is analysed in the background of the spiral of silence theory. The fear of isolation and social exclusion are set aside by the researcher in her fight against caste discrimination. Her differing viewpoints gradually become the dominant narrative. The study demonstrates a clear reversal of the spiral of silence theory.

Keywords: *Institutional Casteism, Spiral of Silence, Caste Discrimination*

Introduction

Noelle Neumann's (1974;1993) seminal Spiral of Silence theory proposes that if a majority agrees on an opinion, a lone opposing viewpoint is ignored and isolated to the extent that the individual with opposing viewpoint silences themselves and becomes introverted. The dynamics, intensity, obstacles, and

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rationale of this communication hypothesis have been investigated across various levels of gender, nationality, religion, socio-economic status, and professions. In today's globalised world, we can observe the spiral of silence and fear of isolation almost everywhere (Jin & Ye, 2018).

An individual's opposing viewpoints are interpreted as deviations, and pressure builds up on such persons, preventing them from articulating their opinions. As a result, such individuals either deny their existence or, fearing a schism caused by the minority position, join the majority while silently distancing themselves (Neumann, 1974; Kennamer, 1990; Moy et al., 2001). This finding has been further revalidated by research at the micro and macro levels. Although individuals have clear views on a system or an incident, they will evade debates or discussions to avoid being ostracised by the majority.

The social standing in India, specifically the upper caste–lower caste hierarchy can be analysed in the background of the spiral of silence theory. The caste system is one of the oldest and still active centres of social power in the country. The power structure of the caste system is divided into four levels. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas acquire social, economic, and cultural power through caste hierarchy. Power and resources are controlled by these castes. Shudras, the lowest caste, survive due to their skilled labour (Srinivas, 2003). Dalits, comprising the oppressed caste and tribe (SC & ST), do not fall into the caste system and are deemed untouchables, separated from the rest of society. Untouchability was criminalised after the enactment of the Indian Constitution, and reservations were legally mandated for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. However, social, cultural, and economic imbalances that persisted for generations under the caste system continue to endure, resulting in an uneven social equilibrium. The literacy rate among the Dalits is low as they continuously face institutional and caste discrimination. Consequently, a large number of Dalits abandon their education halfway through. If Dalits resist conforming to their traditional jobs and practices, they often face widespread societal boycotts and physical abuse. Fearing ostracisation and retaliation, Dalits fall in line with the dominant caste structure both at the micro and macro levels.

The dominance of the upper caste is almost complete in all spheres of government such as the legislature, executive, judiciary, administration, and law enforcement. Academic institutions, including schools, colleges, universities, and other certification-issuing bodies for government services, largely discriminate against Dalits. For example, OBC, SC, and ST form nearly 75% of

the Indian population, but faculty from these categories make up barely 9% in Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and 6.1% in Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) (Sharma, 2019). Similarly, ST made up 2.1% of PhD students at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore (IISc) while SC and OBC students made up 9% each from 2016 to 2020. In the PhD enrollment in IITs, ST accounted for 1.7%, SCs 9%, and OBCs 27.4% (Kumar, 2021). The dropout rate among the students of these categories is also very high. A similar tendency can also be seen in academic positions in colleges and universities (Raveendran, 2022).

Visible and invisible caste discrimination in academic institutions has taken a toll on Dalit students. In 2010, Dalit student Balmukund from UP committed suicide in his AIIMS hostel. Unable to bear racial slurs such as "sarkari bacha" and "quota student," he ultimately ended his life (Deshpande & Zacharias, 2013). The suicide of Dalit research student Rohith Vemula on January 17, 2016, at Hyderabad Central University had emerged as a hot topic of debate across the nation. Vemula was isolated and sidelined by the administration and a section of the student organisations for voicing his opinions. The apathy from the administration and repeated caste discrimination caused him severe mental strain, leading him to hang himself and leave a suicide note that read, "...my birth is my fatal accident" (Vemireddy, 2019). Fathima Latheef, a 19-year-old student from Kerala, hanged herself in her Madras IIT hostel after writing a suicide note condemning the faculty for discrimination and causing her profound mental anguish (Nath et al., 2019). In 2019, Payal Thadvi, a Dalit postgraduate gynecology student at Nair Hospital in Mumbai, also committed suicide after detailing numerous caste-based atrocities, including upper-caste students using her bedsheet to wipe their legs (Kamble, 2019).

Fear of isolation, despair, and helplessness in the overbearing caste structures lead several students from Dalit and backward communities to backtrack from their academic pursuits. Resisting the dominant caste hierarchy and hegemony is rarely questioned due to the fear of isolation, further reinforcing the spiral of silence theory. However, there are instances of challenging dominant discourses. One such example is Deepa P Mohan, a Dalit PhD scholar from Mahatma Gandhi University in Kottayam, who valiantly fought against caste discrimination by the authorities.

Breaking the Spiral of Silence

There is a widespread belief that atrocities and discrimination based on caste are rare in Kerala. According to statistics, Kerala is far ahead of other Indian states in several development indices, including those related to SC, ST, and OBC status. However, both visible and invisible caste violations are rampant in Kerala, and many such cases do not receive media attention. The indefinite hunger strike by Deepa P Mohan, a Dalit PhD research scholar, in front of Mahatma Gandhi University in 2021 was a notable exception.

Deepa, a postgraduate medical microbiologist, joined Mahatma Gandhi University's Inter-University Centre for Nanoscience and Nanotechnology (IUCNN) in March 2011 to pursue her MPhil. She was supervised by two IUCNN joint directors. As per her narration, she had to face caste discrimination and partisan remarks from one of her upper-caste supervisors. She never retaliated initially due to her insecurity caused by her gender and caste. During the second phase of her MPhil project, three Dalit students, including Deepa, were forced to complete their project at another institute, while other students completed their research at IUCNN. With her GATE score, she was admitted to PhD programme in IUCNN in 2015. Deepa faced a series of discriminations from the same teacher while her PhD work was progressing. She filed a complaint at the university and it was not fairly redressed by the university. She approached the media and shared her grievances. She also utilised digital media to air her grievances. She forwarded complaints to the Scheduled Caste/Tribe Commission, Kerala State Women's Commission, District Collector, District Superintendent of Police, and High Court, alleging violence against women and caste discrimination. An investigation launched under the supervision of the university syndicate recommended action against the erring teacher (Mohan, 2016; John, 2021; Sabith, 2021).

Student organisations chose to stay away from the caste and gender discrimination faced by Deepa. However, her Facebook (2016) post was picked up by one of Kerala's most popular media outlets, bringing widespread attention to her case. Deepa staged numerous solo protests, prompting the university to form committees to investigate the issue. These committees recommended retaining the accused faculty and allowing Deepa to continue her PhD programme. Nonetheless, she stood firm in her demand that the accused faculty be dismissed from service.Deepa convened a news conference at Kottayam Press Club and announced her plan to launch an indefinite hunger strike in front

of the Mahatma Gandhi University campus on October 29, 2021. She demanded the dismissal of the accused faculty and the right to complete her research. Her lone hunger strike lasted for 11 days (October 29 to November 8, 2021). The protest garnered massive support as days passed. Increasing media coverage including digital campaigns generated favourable public opinion. The university authorities were ultimately forced to find an amicable resolution, accepting most of her demands. Consequently, Deepa called off the strike on November 8.

The spiral of silence theory suggests that when a majority agrees on an opinion, opposing viewpoints are ignored and isolated, often leading individuals with dissenting views to silence themselves. However, Deepa P Mohan's hunger strike serves as a reversal of this theory, where a lone opposing viewpoint gains traction and becomes the dominant opinion. This investigation examines newspaper coverage of the hunger strike to assess how a minority opinion is transformed into a dominant viewpoint.

Method of Study

The research method employed was content analysis. The researchers analysed the space dedicated to covering the strike in selected newspapers, considering all news reports and photos related to the strike as units of analysis. Four newspapers were selected for the study. Two newspapers, *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* were selected based on their circulation. Third newspaper, *Mangalam*, was chosen based on the popular newspaper of the locality. The fourth newspaper, *Deshabhimani,* was chosen as it largely allied with the University authorities.

Period of study

Deepa launched the hunger strike on October 29 and ended on November 8, 2021. Hence reports/photos appeared in the selected newspapers from October 30, 2021 to November 9, 2021 were considered for the study.

Analysis of *Malayala Manorama*


Total Space allocated for Deepa: 1856.8 CM²
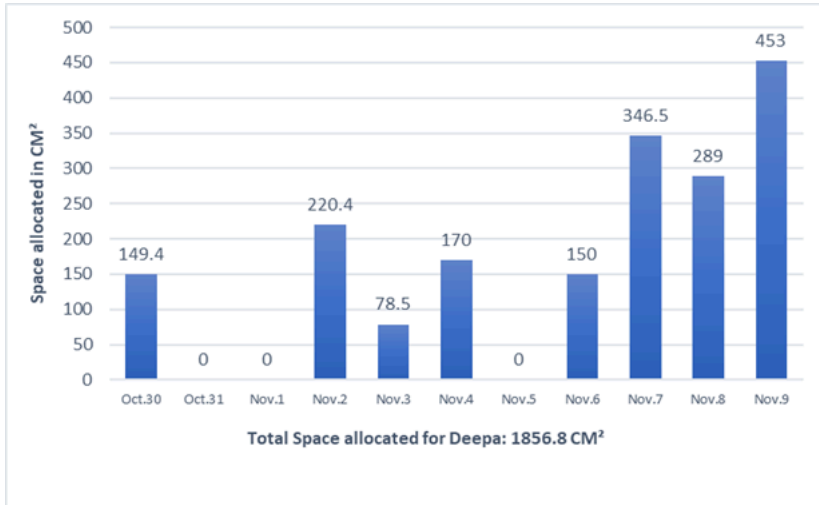
Malayala Manorama devoted the largest space to cover the event, consistently printing reports and photos on its third page. The report on October 30 was 8.2 cm x 15 cm news item accompanied by 8 cm x 3.3 cm photo. From the beginning, the newspaper paid close attention to the issue, with a gradual increase in the allocated space. On November 9, *Manorama* featured 17 cm x 21.5 cm report and 12.5 cm x 7 cm photo on the centre page. In total, *Manorama* allocated 1,722.5 cm² for news reports and 134.25 cm² for photos to cover the strike.

Analysis of *Mathrubhumi*


Total Space allocated for Deepa: 1091.8 CM²
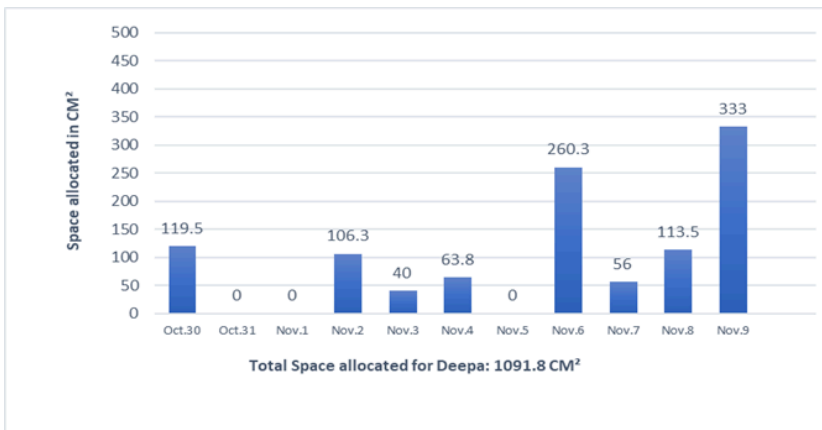
Mathrubhumi, the second-largest circulated newspaper in Malayalam, allocated a total of 1,091.79 cm² of space to cover Deepa P Mohan's hunger strike. The photo space for the 11-day strike was 79.74 cm. As the protest gained momentum, the volume of space dedicated to the event gradually increased. 12.5 cm x 7.5 cm news item was printed on October 30, in the local page along with 7.8 cm x 3.3 cm photo. The culmination of the strike was reported on November 9 with 12 cm x 5 cm news item, and 21 cm x 13 cm article was published on page 8.

Analysis of *Mangalam*
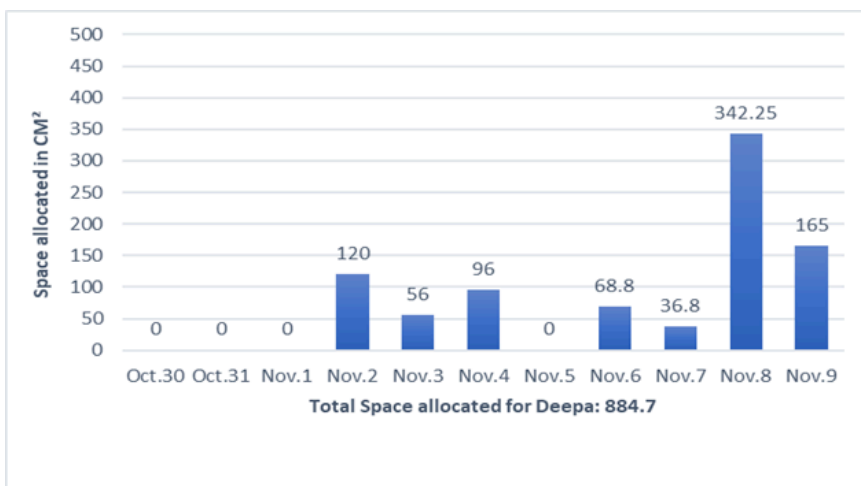
Mangalam's first report of the strike measuring 12 cm x 10 cm was published on its second page on November 2. As the event gained more attention, regular news reports followed. A 15 cm x 11 cm report was featured on the front page on November 9 when the strike was called off. In total, 884.74 cm² was allocated for the coverage of the strike.

Analysis of *Deshabhimani*
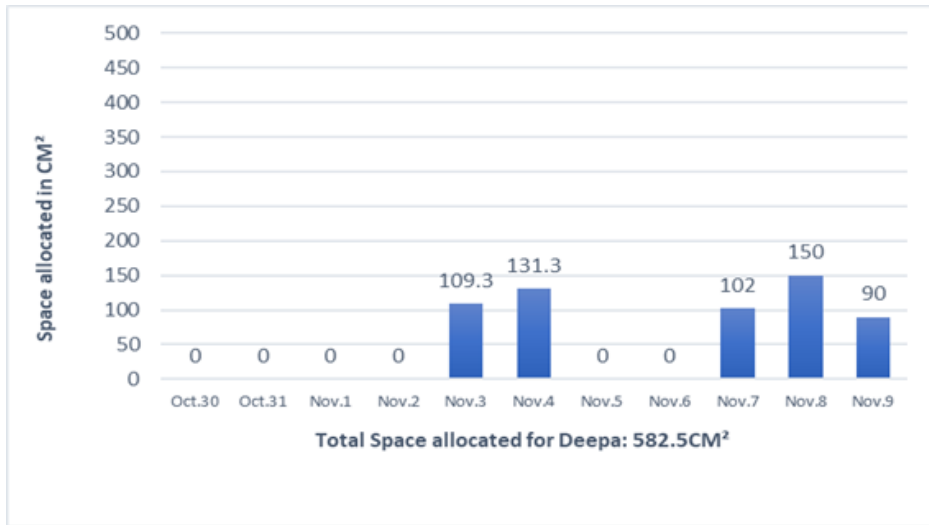
Deshabhimani largely supported the University and presented the issue from the perspective of the authorities. Unlike other newspapers in the study, *Deshabhimani* first reported the event on November 3, allotting a space of 11.5 cm x 9.5 cm. On November 8, the newspaper published two separate reports justifying the University authorities. In total, *Deshabhimani* dedicated 582.5 cm² of space to the strike during the period.
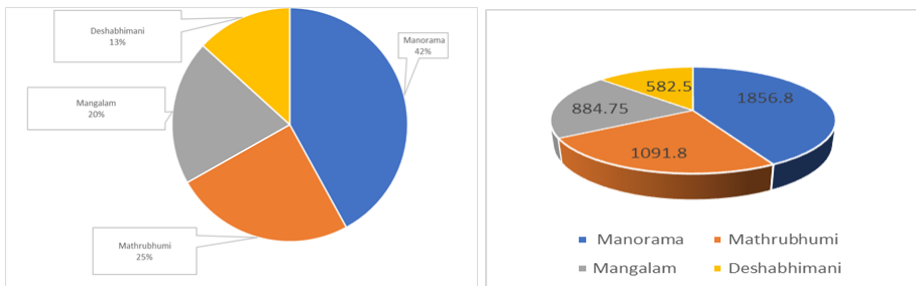
Consistently, *Malayala Manorama, Mathrubhumi*, and *Mangalam* provided extensive coverage of the hunger strike, playing a pivotal role in shaping favourable public opinion towards the issue. In contrast, *Deshabhimani* allocated the least amount of space for covering the strike. Between October 30 and November 9, *Malayala Manorama, Mathrubhumi, Mangalam,* and

Deshabhimani dedicated 1856.75 cm², 1091.8 cm², 884.75 cm², and 582.5 cm² of space, respectively, for reporting the strike.

Conclusion

In the realm of education, Dalit students consistently encounter discrimination, spanning from schools to universities. The discrimination permeates various aspects of campus life including classrooms, laboratories, canteens, and hostels. Many Dalit students refrain from speaking out against caste-based discrimination by faculty, administration, and peers due to fear of ostracisation from the majority. However, Deepa P Mohan's hunger strike serves as an example of overcoming this fear of isolation. The majority of newspapers examined in the study played a crucial role in breaking the silence surrounding institutional casteism. Even the newspaper that initially allocated the least space for covering the strike eventually joined the bandwagon. This highlights how a dissenting opinion can gain momentum and become the dominant viewpoint. The findings of this study suggest the potential for a reversal of the spiral of silence hypothesis.

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